Ladder of change

The Ladder of change is a quick, easy and informal evaluation and assessment tool that provides feedback about the impact or change brought about by an event, activity, project or decision. Ladders are useful ways to imagine scales and make comparisons between different points in time (e.g. before and after). This method is particularly helpful for making qualitative assessments of changes that are difficult to measure in other ways, for example capturing information about changing attitudes, degrees of co-operation or feelings of success.

Each single ladder represents one particular indicator or criteria. It is possible to ask people to report against several ladders at one time. The indicators represented by the ladders can be predetermined or discussed and selected as part of a group exercise. The rungs on the ladder represent the scale of measurement. '0' should be situated in the middle of the ladder so that a positive and negative change can be indicated. The number of 'rungs' in the scale and what they mean can be tailored to each situation. For example, a scale of five rungs could include 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. One side of the ladder represents one point in time (e.g. before an activity, project or decision), and the other side of the ladder a different time period (e.g. after an activity, project or decision). Participants are asked to mark scores on the ladders to show how they viewed the level of that indicator at either point in time. Scores can be used to generate quantitative values against the indicators. Often the greatest value of this tool is the information and debate that comes from the group discussion fixing the scales and choosing personal levels of difference.

Resources and requirements

Skills
- Some facilitation skills are needed.

Equipment
- Sheets of paper.
- Pens.

Time
- Very little preparation time is needed, and time required to complete, although dependent on the number of people involved, is also short.

Costs
- Staff time.

Level of engagement

INFORMING:

CONSULTING: ★ ★

INVOLVING: ★ ★

PARTNERSHIP: ★ ★

Strengths

- It is quick and easy to do.
- It is a very visual method that shows results to everyone.
- It can convey qualitative information using numbers (i.e. quantitative measures).
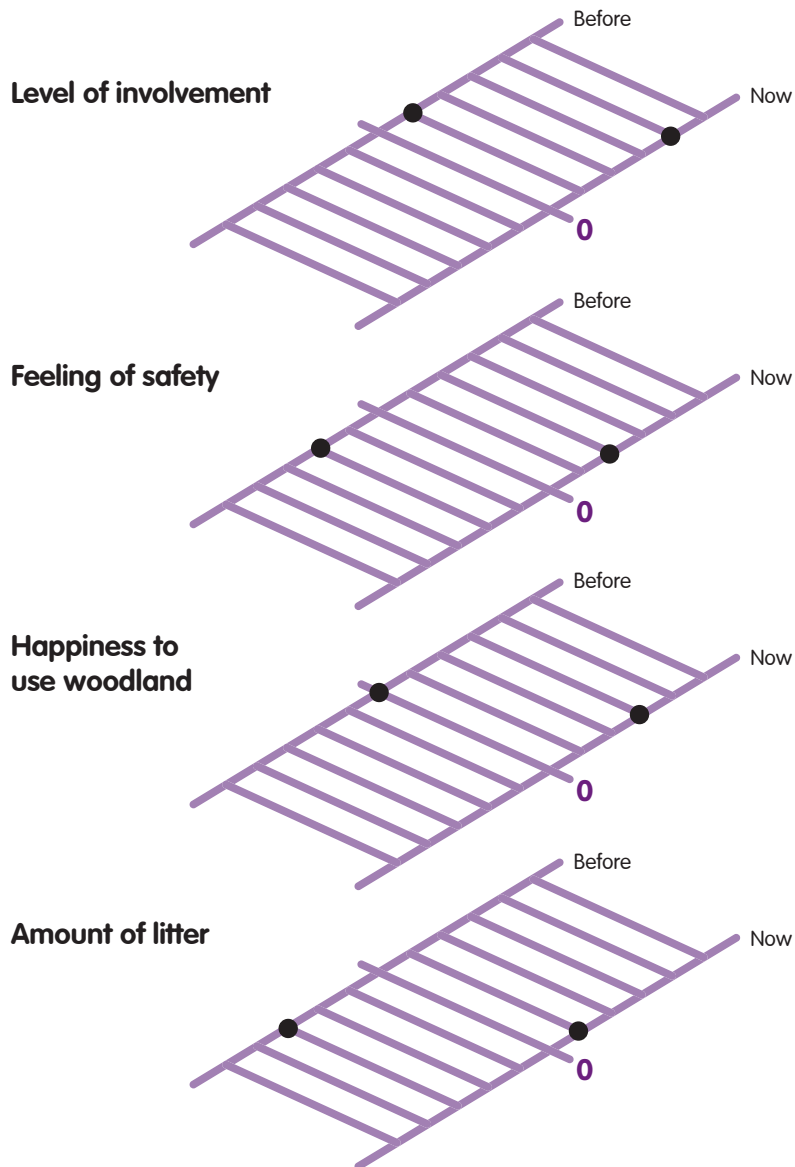
Weaknesses

- Some people may find this method simplistic.
- Qualitative information may be mis-represented as 'quantitative scores'.

Forest Research

Useful sources of information

Example of a ladder used to measure the effects of actions to reduce anti-social behaviour in a woodland.

Level of involvement

Before

Now

0

Feeling of safety

Before

Now

0

Happiness to use woodland

Before

Now

0

Amount of litter

Before

Now

0

This toolbox is designed to assist Forestry Commission staff when they are considering which tools they could use to involve the public in the forest and woodland planning process. For more information please visit the website at: www.forestry.gov.uk/toolbox