

4 June 2008

Mr Bruce McKirdy
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Dear Bruce,

Comments on Version 5 of the Proposed Framework for Stage 4 of the MRWS Site Selection Process.

The LSE team are well-pleased with the current version. We feel that the document is now much clearer than the initial version, and helpfully describes the proposed stages in sufficient detail that the reader can see they will provide a fair, transparent process in which all key players are given opportunities to be consulted, and that voluntarism and community support are seen as essential elements.

Our comments are very minor:

Page i: In the paragraph starting 'Version 3 took account...' perhaps you could refer to either 'Professor Phillips and his colleagues,' or just 'the LSE team.'

Page 3: The paragraph beginning 'In order to...', the first sentence doesn't scan. The word 'transparent' is too far from 'the process will have to be ...'. It isn't the people or their understanding that should be transparent. Perhaps reword "...the process will have to be rigorous yet sufficiently simple and transparent that people can understand and question what is to be evaluated and why, as well as how the evaluations are to be made." Then the last sentence in the paragraph isn't needed.

Page 5: First paragraph, second sentence. After 'underpinning the broad criteria' you might add another step in the procedure: 'translating the broad criteria into clearly-defined objectives...?'

Page 6: It's not clear what 'this' in the second sentence refers to. This document or Stage 4? Stage 4 is about applying the methodology proposed in the document, not defining it.

First sentence after the bullet points. Suggest the following re-wording. "Each of those parts can then be the subject of a separate process, establishing objectives, identifying and defining the criteria and their associated scoring scales, scoring the options on the criteria and weighting the criteria." The word 'within' is included to ensure that the 'parts' are not separately contracted out to different parties, for example, contracting out a process to identify criteria before knowing how they will be put together.

Page 7: Third paragraph from bottom. ‘...broad criteria should be redefined as objectives...’ is more accurate.

Page 8: First paragraph. More precisely, the parenthetical remark should read, ‘capable of being evaluated without knowledge of evaluations on another criterion.’

Page 10: Second paragraph under Scoring Methodology. Slight re-wording as follows: “It is recognised that some of the evaluation criteria identified in the preceding section of this note may not be considered wholly independent and that this is an issue that needs to be addressed in the site assessment methodology. Advice from the LSE is that this is not a problem as long as the scores on one evaluation criterion can be determined without knowing the scores on the related evaluation criterion.”

Page 12: Second paragraph from bottom: It isn’t clear who provides the provisional scores. If it is workshop participants scoring at an early stage of information gathering, then that might be just acceptable. If the preliminary scores are established by any other means, it isn’t acceptable because of the anchoring effect.

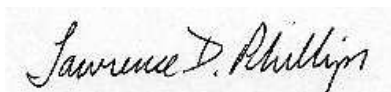
The problem here is that once a score is tabled, it becomes an anchor, and the research literature shows that anchors have a powerful effect because people only then adjust insufficiently away from the anchor once data are available. This is even true when an anchor is irrelevant, established by, for example, first asking people whether the score for a particular option on a criterion is above or below the last digit in their telephone number. Subsequent assessments of the score tend to be higher for those with larger digits, and lower for the smaller digits.

Page 13: The paragraph just above the sub-heading “Process for Weighting...” doesn’t have a full stop at the end. Also, the Figure should be “As in Figure 2...”.

There are several references to the role of PSE in refining the criteria in stages 2 and 3. In the document there is no indication of how these PSE sessions will be conducted, but it would be useful if a decision analyst with MCDA experience could facilitate or take part in these events. This would ensure as close coupling of the concerns and views of the public and stakeholders with requirements of the MCDA, and could help participants to engage more effectively with the process.

Finally, we wish to say that the open and fair process of commenting on the various versions of the proposed framework, and your constructive responses to our previous comments, augers well for the site selection process itself.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lawrence D. Phillips". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name.

Dr Lawrence Phillips
Dr Alec Morton
Ms Mara Airoidi