



# Talking Rubbish

A novel approach to deliberative research

# Making Waste Consultation Work

- Providing an alternative to landfill is a tricky business; consulting with the public on residual waste solutions can be even trickier
- For consultation to be meaningful people need to understand a range of complex issues

Phoenix Market Research & Consultancy has developed a successful approach to help you make the most of your consultation budget

# Our approach

- We asked members of the public to participate in discussions about residual waste solutions, the issues that Councils must consider and the relative importance of those issues

What's the point of consultation when people don't understand the issues?

- By using a **deliberative approach** people have the time to understand the issues they are being consulted on
- By using a **trade-off process** people can appreciate the real decision-making dilemmas faced by Councils

# What did we find out?

- Current perceptions and opinions about residual waste
- Factors the public consider most important and less important when considering solutions for residual waste
- Changes in perceptions and opinions after people have been informed as part of the deliberative process
- Effect of procurement stage on knowledge and attitudes



# How can this help you?

The results of this kind of consultation can help Councils identify:

## Insight

- Public preferences and key points of concern

## Actions

- Successful messages and approaches to inform the public

## Solutions

- Understanding of what drives public opinion

# The finer detail



# Why deliberative research?

Waste issues are highly technical  
as well as emotive

- Need to devote as much time to sharing information as to eliciting opinions
- Many competing and conflicting factors for Councils – and members of the public – to weigh up
- Requires considerable moderator and expert input

# Why trade-off?

Although a harder task for participants...  
... and requires higher levels of engagement

- Presents choices between pairs of issues
- Mimics real decision-making process by making the choices explicit
- Quantifies the hierarchy of importance of factors



# How did we do it?

## 18 Focus Groups, 2½ hours each

Locations selected to include Councils at different stages in procurement  
Participants recruited as hi/ lo social engagement in urban/ not urban areas

### Step 1

- Initial briefing: verbal briefing, video, Q&A
- Spontaneous discussion of the issues

### Step 2

- Information sharing: the options, issues & factors
- Further discussion

### Step 3

- Trade-off questionnaire of 13 detailed selection criteria

### Plus

- A very short pre/post questionnaire: trade-off between 3 high-level criteria; Cost, Suitability and Environment

# Selection Criteria

These issues are typical of those used by Councils

High-level	Detailed	Description
<b>Environment</b>	Local Environment & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visual impact, Odour and noise, Traffic and health, Local community benefits, Impact on local economy</li> </ul>
	Wider Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainable actions/measures; Continuous environmental improvement; Impact on wider environment (pollution, climate etc.)</li> </ul>
	Collection Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact on collection services; Other waste contracts; Partnership working</li> </ul>
	Compliance & Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compliance with regulations and emissions; Monitoring service impacts; Data management</li> </ul>
	Energy Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Energy efficiency; Electricity markets; Heat recovery</li> </ul>
<b>Suitability</b>	The Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead time; Life span</li> </ul>
	Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes in waste; Improvements to the system</li> </ul>
	Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changing waste legislation in UK and EU; Other legislation changes</li> </ul>
	Materials Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guaranteed and proven markets for material products recovered or by-products</li> </ul>
	Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land status; Planning risk; Centralised or dispersed solution</li> </ul>
<b>Cost</b>	Track Record of the Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial and performance record of the technology</li> </ul>
	Waste Management Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial track record; Capacity of the company</li> </ul>
	Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial cost to build and operate (£)</li> </ul>



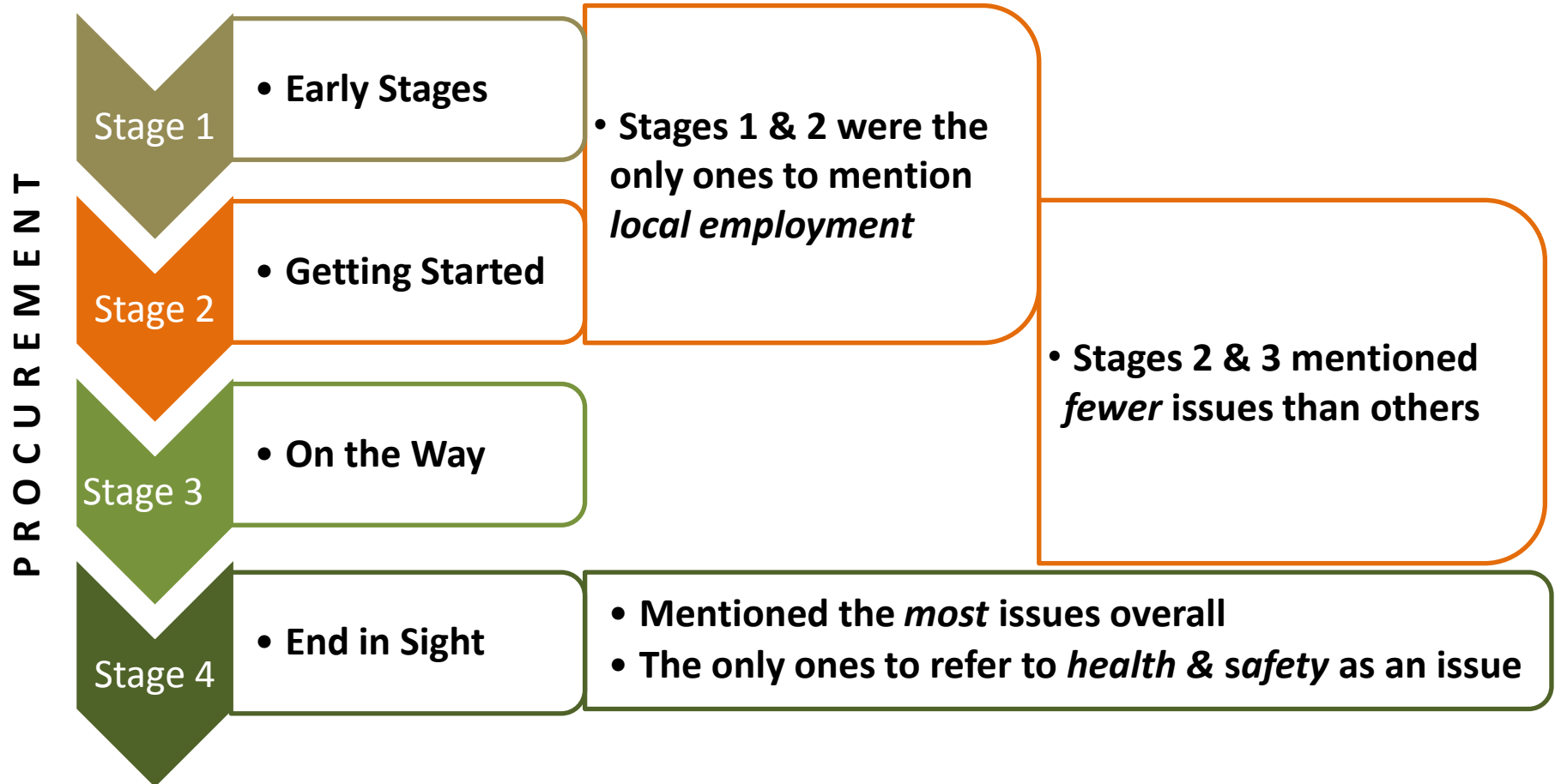
# What we discovered

# Residents had basic, local knowledge only



**N.B. All knowledge very local... My street, My district (or nearby)**  
primarily from local media sources: TV, local paper, radio

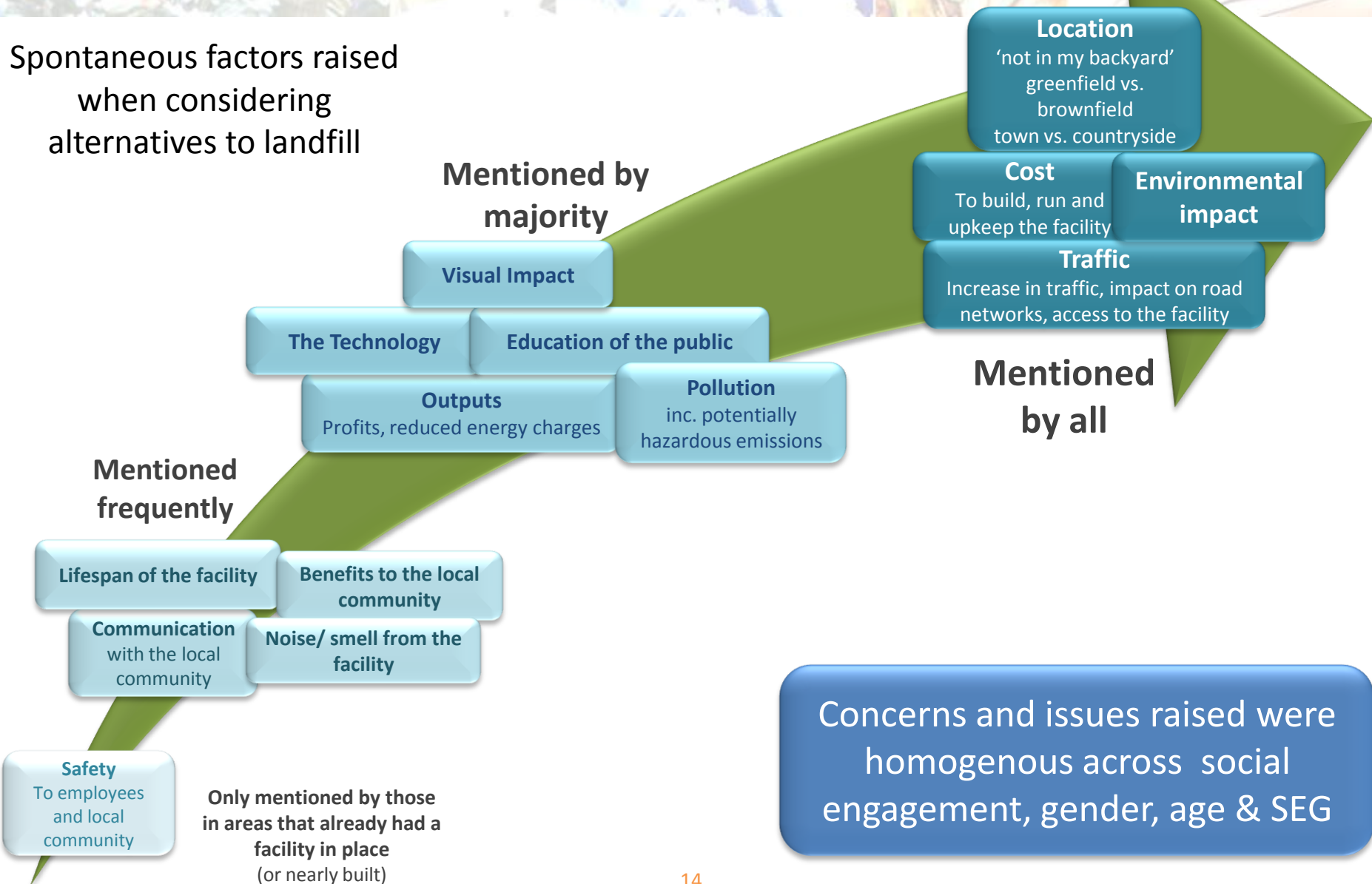
# Similar issues raised spontaneously by all



Concerns and issues raised were homogenous across social engagement, gender, age and SEG

# Many issues raised spontaneously by all

Spontaneous factors raised  
when considering  
alternatives to landfill





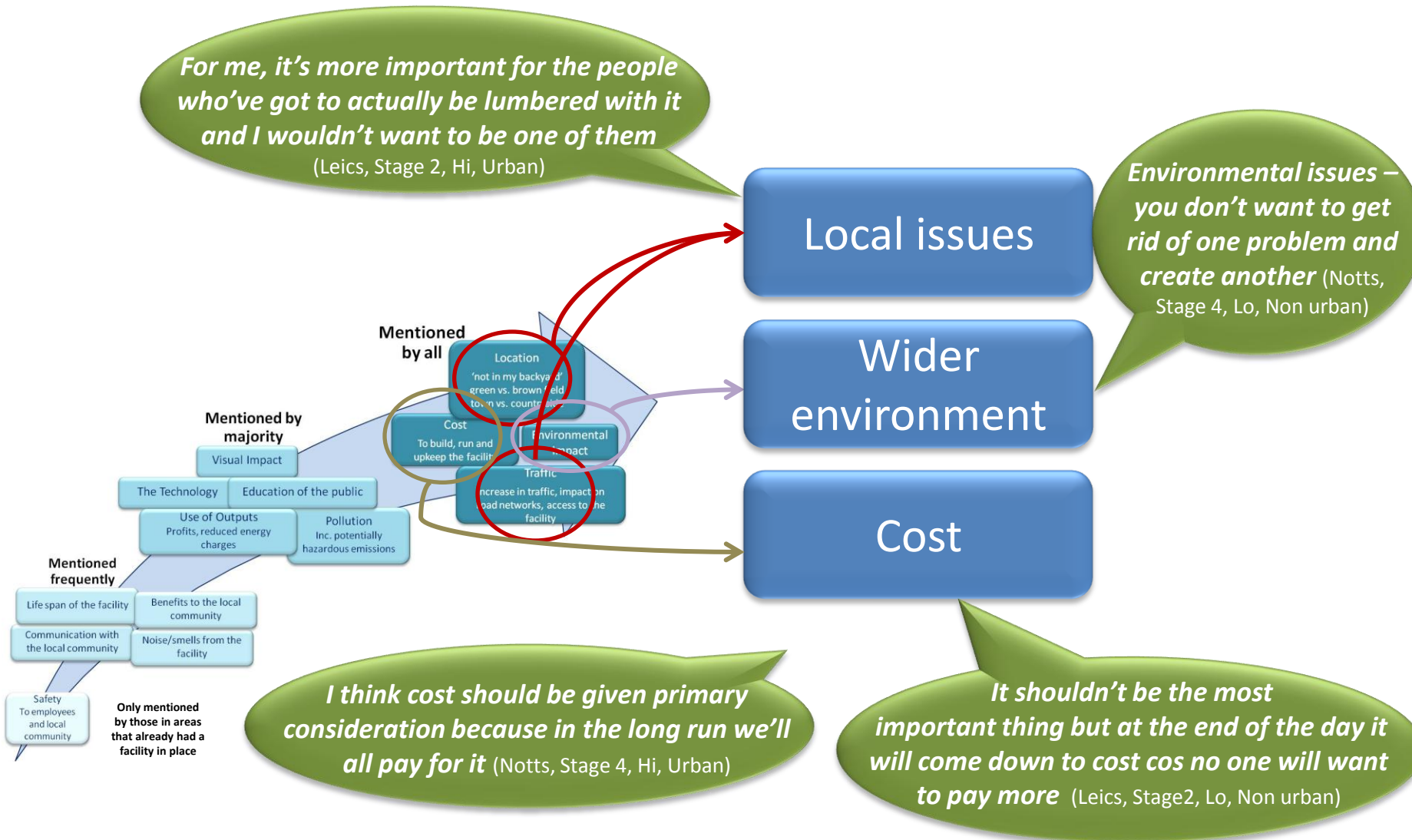
# Trade-off shows relative importance...

Detailed Criteria	%
Local Environmental & Community	8.4
Cost	8.3
Wider Environment	8.3
Planning	8.0
Energy Recovery	7.9
Track Record of the Technology	7.8
Compliance	7.7
The Facility	7.6
Flexibility	7.4
Materials Recovery	7.4
Waste Management Company	7.3
Legislation	7.0
Collection Services	6.8
<b>Total weight</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**No difference in traded importance** by procurement stage, location, gender, social engagement...

Except *Materials Recovery*: significantly more important to urban (7.9%) vs. non-urban (7.0%)

# ...and reflects issues raised spontaneously



# Some differences after deliberation...

## *Environment*

- **most important** pre and post deliberation
  - significantly higher after deliberation among high social engagement citizens

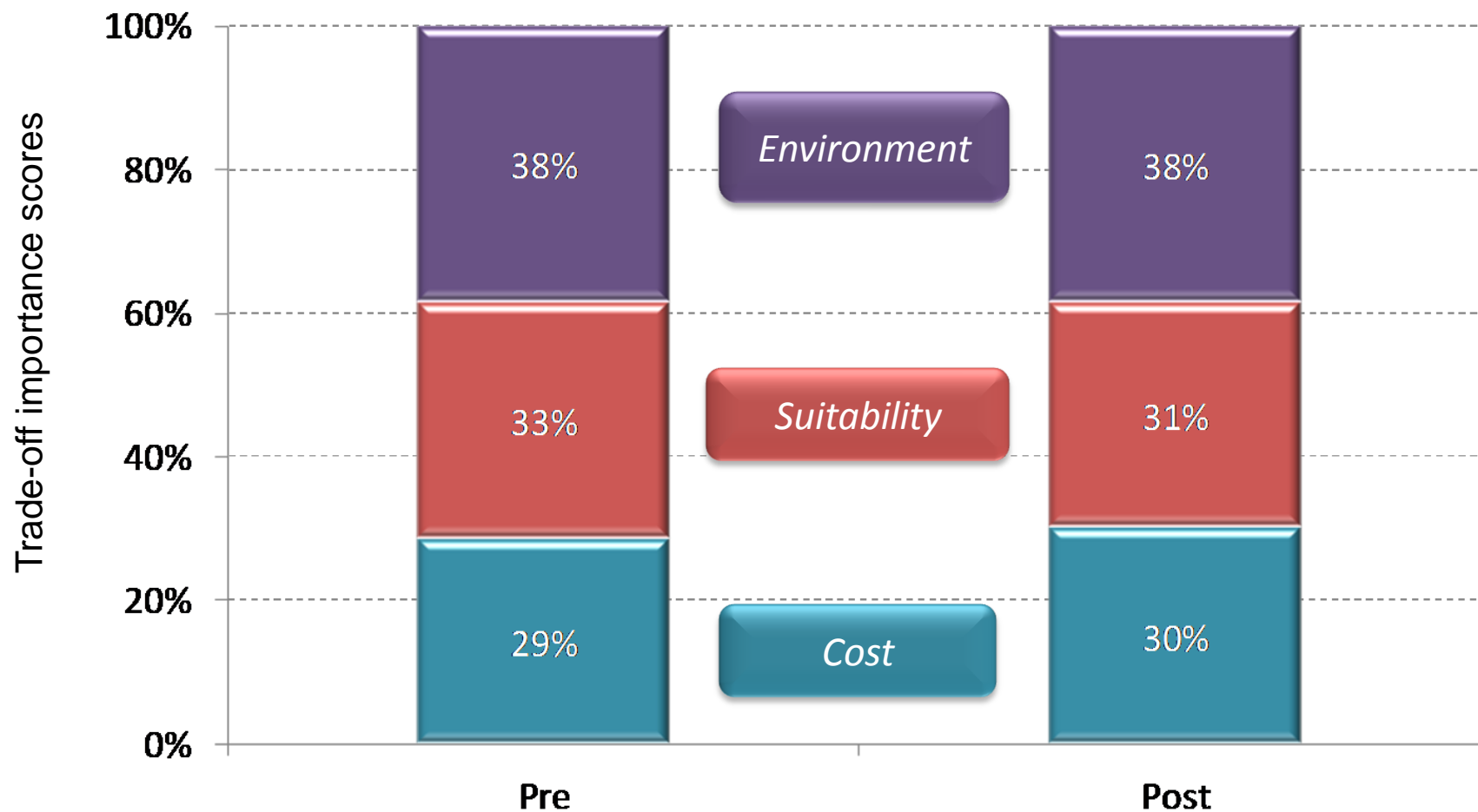
## *Suitability*

- **decreases** in importance after deliberation
  - becomes increasingly important as procurement progresses

## *Cost*

- **increases** in importance after deliberation
  - becomes less important as procurement progresses
  - increases in importance significantly among low social engagement

# ...though only small changes overall



# The deliberation experience was positive

- Deliberation felt essential for seeing & understanding the 'big picture'

*I think when you talk about it anyway you've got a better understanding of things and situations, and how it works, cos you know, if you don't read about it, you don't know, and often you're quite naive. So although [my opinions]'ve slightly changed, I think they've changed for the better* (Leeds, Stage 2, Hi, Urban)

- Benefit from discussion, not just being provided information

*I always think I'm right on these things but I've discovered tonight that everybody's got different opinions*  
(Leics, Stage 2, Hi, Urban)

*It's probably the fact that you've had a little bit of debate about it as well isn't it...you might perceive a question to be one way, whereas after a bit of discussion you think 'ooh I can see that point of view' or you read it in a different manner* (Devon, Stage 3, Hi, Non Urban)

Rating issues without complete information relies on individuals' knowledge & preconceptions

awareness of issues  
often limited or none at all



# The trade-off exercise was challenging

- Harder to decide between two options...  
... especially as forced to choose one over the other

*Some are very similar, you want to be right in the middle, they're both very important* (Beds, Stage 1, Hi, Urban)

*Cost and Wider Environmental Issues, I found quite difficult, I wanted to put it right in the middle really* (Devon, Stage 3, Hi, Non Urban)

... but trade-off exercise delivered realism to the decision-making process and empathy for Councils

*It's quite good that you can't sit on the fence, I can never understand why market research questions say 'I don't know' because what's the point? You've gotta go one way or the other* (Essex, Stage 3, Hi, urban)

Although no difference in importance scores overall, patterns were distinguished within some subgroups when traded





# Other learnings

# More information, more communication please!

## Consultation

- people want to be involved...  
...but shouldn't have to go looking for it

## Perceptions

- public cynical about Councils
  - don't listen to the public
  - seen as poor at communicating with the public
  - residual waste solutions a national issue
    - should be dealt with centrally

## Waste Technologies

- people want to know more
  - independent, unbiased information pre-empting misconceptions

# Stage of procurement affected attitudes

Stage  
4

raised more issues spontaneously

Stage  
4

considered Cost less important than  
Environment and Suitability

...despite lack of awareness of Council  
communications

# Recycling is great but...

97% engaged  
with recycling

- Residual waste is part of the broader waste & resource issue; not to be viewed in isolation
  - Call for legislation to compel manufacturers, retailers, businesses to reduce packaging
- Residual waste facility shouldn't divert from 3Rs
- Reduce>Reuse>Recycle message has been grasped by public...

...now call to action!

***R1: You have to get it built!***

***R2: Get on with it!***

(Beds, Stage 1, Hi, Urban)

# This deliberative process provides...

## Insight

- Public preferences and key points of concern

## Actions

- Successful messages and approaches to inform the public

## Solutions

- Understanding of what drives public opinion

# Phoenix MRC provides...

## Quality

- A consultation process that stands up to scrutiny

## Experience

- Tried and tested approach

## Value for money

- Making the most of your consultation budget



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