

Option: 4

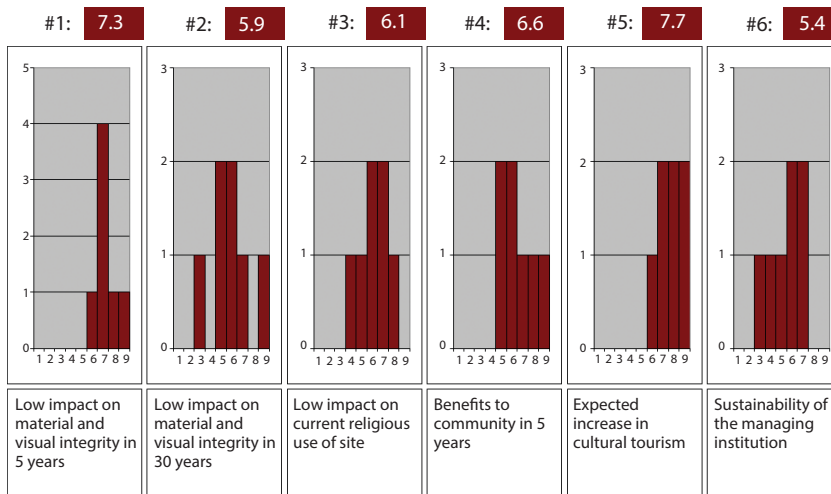


Figure 4. The voting charts for option #4 of the SCD 2008 case study.

option using the six criteria, on a scale of 1 to 9. In Figure 4, one sees that the voting on criterion #1 had the sharpest peak, four people voted a ‘7’, so strong agreement, whereas voting on criteria #2 was twice as widely spread. All the other criteria showed spreads in opinion of 4 to 5 points. The good news is that none of the charts showed votes spreading over all 9 points, and none showed a bimodal distribution (two peaks) which usually signifies a disagreement on what the criterion actually meant. (During this case study, time did not allow iteration of the votes after discussion.)

Participatory decision-making

“Building shared understanding is a struggle, not a platitude” (Kaner, 2014, p. 20). Kaner’s book, now in its third edition with a wealth of plaudits, explains the tactics that a facilitator needs to help groups reach sustainable decisions. The primary diagram in his book is a full-page diamond (shaped like one of the blue diamonds in Figure 3). The point on the left represents the beginning of the discussion, the point on the right represents the conclusion. Between the two is a period of divergent thinking followed by a period of convergent thinking. Kaner states that the fundamental mistake is to address difficult decisions the same way as one addresses routine decisions (which Renn (2014) called linear decisions). To find sustainable decisions for difficult problems Kaner insists that we sit in the middle of the diamond for as long as it takes to discover common ground. He calls it the “groan zone”. Without shared common ground there will be none of the “insightful collaboration” needed for a sustainable decision. Tactics for difficult decisions, compared to tactics of routine decisions, require a shift from ‘either/or’ to ‘both/and,’ from ‘analysis of parts’ to ‘synthesis of a whole.’ Sharing must produce long-term unanimity, not just short-term majority rule.