

Community Engagement



Independent Framework for Transfer and Delegation

Community Engagement

Background

Both the word and the spirit of the [Scottish Crown Estate Act 2019](#) (the Act) encourage, support and demand strong community engagement in management of the Scottish Crown Estate (the Estate). The power to transfer or delegate aspects of the Estate exists to support local and community aspirations and decision making opportunities. The process of applying to take on the transfer or delegation of management of assets requires significant community input to the design of proposals, as well as a commitment to real and ongoing partnership working with affected organisations and communities.

Statutory footing

Scottish Ministers are committed to furthering community empowerment in relation to aspects of land use and ownership. This key commitment has been incorporated and developed into a number of wider policies and strategies designed to further deliver the community empowerment objective. Such policies include:

- Land Use Strategy;
- Land Rights and Community Engagement Statement;
- Land Rights and Responsibility Statement;
- Guidance issued by Scottish Ministers or other organisations such as the Scottish Land Commission; and
- New opportunities for community empowerment through Asset Transfers/Improved Community Right to Buy/Forest Transfer Scheme.

Throughout the [Scottish Crown Estate Strategic Management Plan](#) (the Plan) reference is made to the desire to engage strategically with communities. For example, the Plan says that Scottish Ministers want the “processes of transfer and delegation of the management of assets to be open and transparent and promise to

consult with relevant parties.” The Plan also says that “prospective managers are expected to be open and transparent and engage proactively within the community in which the asset they wish to manage is located.”

Benefits of engagement

It is clear that a manager, or prospective manager, should engage with their local communities when developing proposals for the management of assets within the Estate. Early engagement can help to mitigate the potential for conflicts of interest as well as garner support for proposals from those most likely to be affected by them. Engagement with a wide variety of interested and affected groups is essential to unearth the full range of opportunities available to a proposal of any type, whilst also helping to define the less tangible benefits of proposals including, environmental and social wellbeing and other broader societal impacts.

Engagement with stakeholders helps to inform strategic planning and builds alignment to local and regional priorities. It also provides new ideas for management planning and helps to enable access to new revenue, capital and grant funding streams. Everyone from ministers to investors will see good engagement as a mark of a mature and robust organisational set up.

Whatever the benefits, ‘engagement’ can be perceived as an open ended term, with long-term and significant staff and budget implications and whilst proposals for transfer and delegation are likely to vary widely, below we have provided some overarching guidance to help you put together an appropriate engagement plan to accompany your proposal.

Guidance

Core principles

At the heart of it, the guiding principles are that engagement should be *effective*, *fair* and *efficient*. That is both for the participant but also the organisation undertaking the work. The terms 'effective', 'fair' and 'efficient' are, like 'engagement', open to interpretation, however building on the Scottish Community Empowerment Act of 2015, the [National Standards for Community Engagement](#) we define them like this:

- effective – in meeting the needs and expectations of the people involved;
- efficient – by being well informed and properly planned; and
- fair – by giving people who may face additional barriers to getting involved an equal opportunity to participate.

Planning

Engagement need not be an onerous task and should add significant value to your proposal. We ask that all applicants develop an engagement plan, appropriate to the scale of their proposal. This plan should be kept under review and updated to reflect lessons learned at each stage of engagement.

An engagement plan, which is easily available to the public, should be designed to fit the needs of your proposal however, useful elements to include are:

- An outline of the proposal including the geographical extent
- A timeline for the proposal including **when** key decisions will be made
- Information about **how** participants can engage, **when** and **where**
- How input will be gathered, reviewed and processed
- What participants can expect in terms of feedback
- A point of contact

In 2019 the [Scottish Government Engagement Good Practice Guide](#), provided a useful insight into how the Scottish Government(SG) create plans. However, there are many approaches and you need to choose what is right for your situation. The [engagement in planning section](#) of the SG website provides some more useful pointers.

Levels of engagement

When undertaking engagement, it is useful to frame your work by asking what level you want to work at and how this will change through the lifetime of the engagement plan. Planning Aid Scotland in their [Successful Planning = Effective Engagement and Delivery](#) (SP=EED) framework recommend the following levels of engagement:

Inform - where communications are largely one way with the public receiving information. This is an appropriate level to work at where there is limited opportunity for people to influence decisions.

Consult - this is the most common way of undertaking engagement and offers a promise to the participant that they will be able to influence decision making at some level. Working at this level means that feedback should be acknowledged and decisions taken should reflect public input.

Partnership - the most intensive, and potentially most valuable approach to engagement. Working in partnership with the affected and interested groups means that they have a seat at the table, co-designing the proposal and not only influencing decision making but also helping to bring it to life with their ideas, commitment and energy.

Ideally, your proposal will be working at the 'Inform' stage in the pre-application phase of transfer and delegation, moving into 'Consult' as a minimum and to 'Partnership' as you approach the full proposal and negotiation phase. This is the best approach to

ensure that conflicts of interest are addressed and that the most appropriate and advantageous proposals are brought to light.

Testing your engagement

The aim of including community and stakeholder engagement guidance in the transfer and delegation process is to help you enhance and de-risk your proposal by ensuring that the local need and support for the proposal has been well understood and defined. To help you gauge whether your engagement plan is effective, efficient and fair, we have drawn on the National Standards of Community Engagement and SP=EED and summarised a series of tests under the following seven headings, which together, deliver higher value, better quality engagement. They are:

- Inclusion
- Support
- Transparency and Integrity
- Working together
- Methods
- Communication
- Impact and Learning

Title	Aim	Test
Inclusion	People and organisations that are affected by the focus of the engagement are identified and involved.	A wide range of people and organisations have been identified and given an early and ongoing opportunity to engage. An effort has been made to listen to seldom heard groups.

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Support	To give everyone a fair opportunity to participate.	Barriers to engagement have been identified and attempts made to overcome them. Assistance has been offered to help overcome barriers.
Transparency and Integrity	Ensure a clear understanding of the purpose of the engagement. People understand how and why they should get involved.	A community engagement plan has been created and published, including realistic timescales. The plan has been advertised and sufficient resources are available to undertake the actions in the plan. Information is easy to access.
Working together	Effective joint working.	Roles, responsibilities, decision points and procedures are clear and obvious to those involved. Communications are open, clear and honest. Collaboration is welcomed.
Methods	Appropriate methods of engagement are used.	An appropriate variety of methods have been used in an effective way. Methods have been tailored to the audiences. Methods used have been evaluated and adapted if necessary.

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Communication	Quality, clear, regular communications.	<p>The process is obvious and the impact of engagement has been made clear.</p> <p>Relevant information is easy to access, accurate and comprehensible.</p> <p>Options are clearly considered and decisions taken are explained.</p>
Impact and Learning	Ongoing improvement.	<p>The outcomes identified in the engagement plan have been met.</p> <p>The proposal has improved as a result of the engagement.</p> <p>Monitoring of delivery has resulted in learning which has been collated and embedded.</p> <p>Findings of engagement have been analysed, disseminated and potentially incorporated.</p>

The engagement undertaken to support your proposal should be appropriate to the scale and impact of the proposal and will be assessed using these key tests on a case-by-case basis.

Notes/resources

For helpful ideas and advice about choosing engagement methods have a look at the resources provided by Involve - <https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/methods>

If you would like to undertake training or get some specialist advice on engagement a range of training providers are available, for example the [Institute of Cultural Affairs](#) provides a useful set of resources.

There is a [Participation Framework](#) under development by the SG which will include a published version of the Good Practice Guide (linked to in the text above). This is currently an internal SG document, made public via a Freedom of Information request in 2019, and so is subject to change. There is a commitment by the SG to publish an updated version of the Framework, however the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a delay.

[VOICE](#) is a free online system, created by the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) which helps you to plan, monitor and evaluate community engagement practice.

The [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) has a specific focus on promoting effective engagement and participation to help communities achieve greater control and influence in the decisions and circumstances that affect their lives.

The [National Standards for Community Engagement](#) are important in supporting organisations in putting the Act into practice. They can be used to shape the participation processes of public bodies as well as shape how community organisations can involve wider community interests.

For some inspirational case studies of community engagement in action have a look at [Planning Aid Scotland](#).