

Community Engagement & Development Planning

Prepared by Community Energy Scotland



Document compiled by:

Kathleen MacDonald

Manager, Outer Hebrides
Community Energy Scotland
01851 707 881

Kathleen.macdonald@communityenergyscotland.org.uk

Rona MacKay

Head of Operation and Governance
Community Energy Scotland

Rona.mackay@communityenergyscotland.org.uk

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CONTENTS

CONTENTS	3
1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	5
2.1. Why Engage?.....	5
2.2. Starting the engagement process:	6
2.3. Methods of engagement.....	7
2.3.1. Community engagement is changing	7
2.3.2. Local media & newsletters	8
2.3.3. Social Media and emails.....	9
2.3.4. Surveys.....	9
2.3.5. Public meetings	10
2.3.6. Drop-in sessions	11
2.3.7. Focus groups	11
.....	11
2.3.8. Informal engagement.....	12
3. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (CDP)	13
3.1 Context.....	13
3.2 Engagement Overview	14
3.3 Priorities.....	15
3.4 Planned actions.....	16
3.5 Resources.....	17
3.6 Timetable	17
4 MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS	19
5 CONCLUSION	20

1. INTRODUCTION

Community Engagement and Planning is essential to the success of any community enterprise. This guide reviews methods for best engaging with your community and describes how to detail the results of engagement in a Community Development Plan.

This guide follows on from a Community Engagement Support Programme which was run by Community Energy Scotland in 2019 and funded through the Scottish Government's Aspiring Communities Fund. The purpose of the Community Engagement Programme was to help community groups throughout the Western Isles, who are developing renewable energy projects, to learn more about best practice and procedures for engaging with the wider community and to support community groups to carry out engagement events in order to inform their Community Development Plans.

Often the primary focus for community groups developing a project (whether a renewable energy project or not) is that of the technical project, whether it is a wind turbine, a hydro scheme or a new community facility. Although the technical side may be essential to income generation, successful impact through community development comes from good engagement and communications with the wider community throughout the project. A community organisation must ensure it is doing what the wider community want to see happen, and that the development outcomes from the project are linked to the priorities and needs of the wider community.

Community organisations should have a clear mandate for their development plans from their community. The community need to have given the board of directors authority, direction or instruction as to what their key aspirations and needs are and how they anticipate these should be met. This guide will run through why it is important to engage, what type of engagement methods there are out there and how to then consolidate the engagement work into a clear and well defined community development plan.

As this guide progresses we would encourage you to think about your own community group's engagement journey and assess where you feel your community group scores in terms of information dissemination and engagement. This will then help you review what is missing and how you could improve. Start the process by evaluating your current situation, what is being done well, and what is lacking.

2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In this context community engagement is about your organisation giving information, data, statistics, knowledge and news out to the people within your community, and community members and stakeholders contributing their thoughts, views and ideas back to your community organisation. It is important that the members of your community feel that there is a process in place for them to not only be informed but also to be heard. Community engagement is a two-way process.



2.1. Why Engage?

There are many different reasons as to why it is important to engage with your community members, including:

- To ensure that what you are doing is supported and endorsed by the community.
- To define the key priorities of your community, enabling you to shape your plans and actions around the community's key needs.
- To build good relationships and trust within the wider community.
- To encourage equality and the opportunity for each member of the community to be heard.
- To enable your community group to update and inform the community with news on projects/plans.
- To enable collaboration with community organisations or agencies operating in your area and carrying out complementary work.
- To access a wider pool of ideas and skills.
- To encourage the wider community to become involved and support initiatives.

Regular engagement can take many forms and is not something which is only done when you have a significant piece of news. What may seem insignificant or unexciting to you will still be of interest to those who are not involved in the project, or are not aware of the day to day running of the community group. Continuing to update and inform your community is vital to ensuring you build trust between a board and the community, and your decisions are seen as transparent by your members. In situations where you feel there have only been very minor developments or the project is taking much longer than planned the community will still be reassured by an update to this effect. Anything you have done, no matter how small you think it is, can be of interest to the wider community and assure them efforts are ongoing.

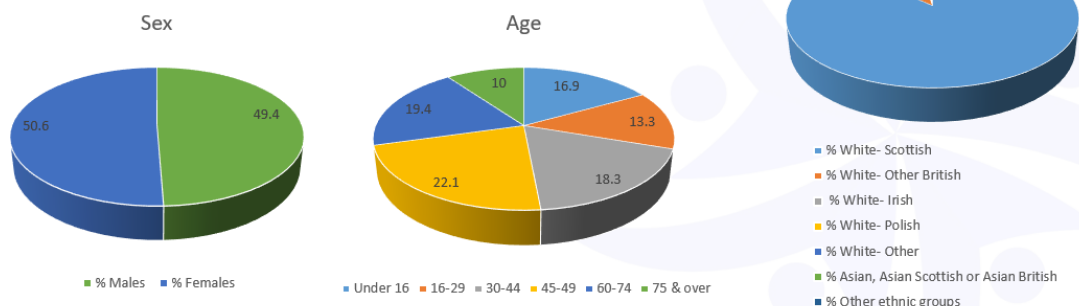


Benchmark where you think your community group is in terms of community engagement by filling in the self-assessment sheet in Appendix 2. This can be completed by committee members and compared, or filled in together as a committee or by staff in an organisation. The self-assessment can be repeated annually to gauge how your organisation is doing.

2.2. Starting the engagement process:

Before you plan on how you are going to engage you need to fully understand your community, its demographics, and the various groups and businesses which operate within it. In order to do this effectively it is recommended that you carry out a community audit which looks at the age, sex, ethnicity of the people in your community, as well as the activities which are carried out within the community. Below is an example of figures taken from www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk for the Outer Hebrides as a whole.

Outer Hebrides Demographics



A similar but more specific audit can be carried out by your community to give you a better understanding of the people and groups which live and work in the area your community group represents. **While carrying out an audit gather baseline information on employment, housing, the local environment, economy, services & facilities and other key factors against which you could measure the impact of your future community development work and help you to prioritise need.**

Once you have a better understanding of who lives in your community you can check that you are engaging with a proportional representation of each demographic and target harder to reach groups.

Tip: A community audit not only provides you with a better understanding of your community and the people who live and work within it, but it also starts to open up channels of discussion and communication with local businesses and agencies which can be used to further engage in the future.

2.3. Methods of engagement

2.3.1. Community engagement is changing

Public meetings still have a place in the engagement process, but many community groups are moving away from this as the predominant method of engagement. With social media and new technology there are now many different methods of engaging with large groups of people and specific demographics. Decide which methods of engagement will best help you reach your target audience. **Combining methods which enable you to target who you want to reach** to ensure you get a better spread of opinions and ideas and reach more people in the process.

Once you have carried out your community audit, meet with your board to think through the best strategy to reach out widely to people within your community. Review what engagement has been done to date by other community organisations and agencies to avoid duplicating effort. Be clear about what information you want to send out to the community and also what information you need to get from your community. If you are asking the right questions, then you will get the answers you need in return.

If you are at the very beginning of your engagement journey it is important to **keep the questions simple**; What do you like about our area? What would you like to see happen in the next five years? What are your top priorities? What could the Trust do to make a positive change? Give example themes to prompt reaction and leave space for people to express new opinions and ideas freely.

Engage people with short, medium and long-term ideas for change, long-term can be looking as far as 20 years in the future. Transformational changes may take many years to come to fruition. Encourage people to move away from just talking about projects – it's about looking at what the top priorities are within the community and then which projects are best placed to tackle these priorities.

Tip: It is essential that you have an engagement strategy in place before you act. Be clear about what your aims are from the engagement work and how best to go about meeting these.

2.3.2. Local media & newsletters

Local media sources can be one of the best ways of getting general information **out** to people, but is not so effective for getting views and suggestions back.

Local media sources include:

- Local newspapers or radio stations
- Local newsletter
- Postal leaflet drop
- Prominent signage in and around the area
- Local websites



Horshader community
Development Newsletter

Include regular updates on your progress and ideas in your local newsletter or paper on a monthly basis. If you don't have a local newsletter or paper, then think about bi-annual or

annual newsletters to send out to all members with updates of everything your group/committee have been working on.

2.3.3. Social Media and emails

Social media can be a very powerful tool, but needs to be managed carefully as it can sometimes give only the loudest voices in the community a platform. Short posts with pictures seem to gain the most engagement on social media platforms and so try and be succinct and to the point with posts. More detailed information can be uploaded onto your website and a link provided on social media so as to direct people to these resources.

Emails are a very direct and inexpensive way of providing information to your community, reaching a large number of people quickly and with ease. Be mindful of GDPR regulations when collecting contact details of people in your community.

It is **important that you provide your community organisation's contact details for any enquiries or questions from your community**, not just for specific feedback but also for ad hoc communications. Give several options, including a phone number or address, for communicating as some people may not have access to emails and social media. Try to keep the community contact details the same throughout the project(s) you are delivering to avoid confusion and ensure people are confident and comfortable with communicating with your organisation.

Tip: Get your directors out in to the community talking to the public and collecting contact details (in line with GDPR regulations and health and safety best practice). This can also be a good way of starting to collect informal views about your work to date as it is providing people with an opportunity to voice their opinions to a board member face to face. Get your directors to write down the suggestions or thoughts which come out of the exercise. If you have a particularly large community perhaps there are interested students who can help.

2.3.4. Surveys

Surveys are useful for collating data to analyse and gathering the views of many people. Online tools and platforms are available to help you distribute the surveys and collect information digitally. Social media and emails can be used to disseminate the surveys widely and target specific demographics. **Survey questions should be clear, direct, short and as to the point as possible.** It often helps to stimulate answers using multiple choice questions, but ensure the survey isn't too prescriptive and there are opportunities for people to

include their own ideas or answers. It is also important to ensure questions are not leading, or encouraging people to answer a certain way.

Test out your survey on a few people before you send it out. Often directors or staff are likely to be so invested and involved in the work of the community organisation that it takes someone out with to point out something which isn't clear or which doesn't make sense. Ensure that if you are doing an online survey that you also have paper copies for any members of the public which do not have access to a computer. Some people may need help filling out the survey.

Tip: Increase the number of responses to surveys by offering incentives like entrance into a prize draw for a voucher, money or other prize.

2.3.5. Public meetings

People often think of public meetings when they think of community engagement. The typical format is to have a public meeting at a community hall or public premises in an evening, with presentations followed by a Question and Answer session. Although this can be a good way of relaying or showcasing important information in a short space of time, if not chaired well



public meetings can become conversations between those presenting and the most vocal in the community. People who are most active in their community may be more likely to attend public meetings and therefore it does not always give a fair representative view of the wider community. Sending out direct invitations to people will help encourage them to attend.

If you are arranging a public meeting, ensure there is a two-way conversation with the community so people feel their views are being taken account of. **Have several different means of communication available**, such as speaking one-to-one, writing comments and group discussions so people can communicate the way they feel most comfortable with. It is important that people can give their views anonymously if they wish to. Group discussion sessions can stimulate new ideas and are an opportunity to have more informed conversation. If possible tie public meetings in with other events which will entice people out, for example an interesting speaker, food or drink, a ceilidh or a short quiz.

Tip: Get people moving around and interacting, as new conversations may spark new ideas and moving around keeps peoples energy up.

2.3.6. Drop-in sessions

Drop-in sessions are usually less formal than public meetings and may entice different people to come and talk to you. Drop in sessions usually run over a number of hours and can be held in different locations across the community on different days to maximise the number of people able to attend.

Visual aids or prompts such as maps or pictures can be used to get everyone thinking. **Explore methods for people to feedback their priorities and ideas simply**, for example by providing coloured sticky dots which can be placed on key priorities to gauge consensus on the needs and wants of your community.

Tip: If possible run the drop-in session alongside another event, particularly if you know that event will be well attended. For example, a pop up café, school event or a community BBQ.

2.3.7. Focus groups

Focus groups can be a great way of getting more detailed and in-depth information from your community members. Use this opportunity to specifically invite people who have a detailed understanding around a topic you want to discuss, for example inviting a bus operator to a transport engagement event. It gives you the opportunity to get in touch with the people you think will be most affected by something, or who have the most experience and knowledge of what you want to discuss.



Focus groups are a good way of getting good quality feedback. **There should be a clear agenda for discussion from the outset and they should be facilitated well to ensure attendees stay on topic and avoid one or two louder voices from dominating the meeting.** Have a clear strategy or plan for the focus group and ensure participants are clear about what is expected of them, and what you want them to achieve. If there are papers to read, send them out to participants before the event.

Targeting key groupings in the community who meet regularly can supply you with a readily available focus group. For example, if you want to focus in on elderly care you could meet with a local over 60s group in the area who could help by discussing their needs and where they may experience shortcomings or gaps in existing services.

Tip: Give those you invite a bit of background and information about what you want to discuss beforehand. This gives them an opportunity to think through the issues and can give you well thought-out more thorough feedback.

2.3.8. Informal engagement

Informal engagement can either be opportunist, such as engaging someone in conversation in the street, or planned, such as organising a time with a local café or shop when you can come in and talk to customers. If staff or directors are informally engaging with community members **it is good practice to agree a few key and relatively open questions to allow aggregation of responses**. Notes should be taken on the feedback if possible. This is a time consuming way of accessing feedback but can often give more honest and wider feedback than surveys or forms do. One-to-one engagement is the best way to interest people in your activities who might not otherwise engage.



All events which your Trust hold where contact is made with the wider community can be classed as community engagement, whether it is a school event, a community clean up, an organised walk or an open day event at your organisation's premises. **Once you have started collecting feedback from your engagement, refer back to your community audit to ensure your**

feedback represents the different demographics in your community proportionately.

Tip: Take a note and photos of all events which you run or take part in throughout the year. This will help you prove your commitment to community engagement and is useful for demonstrating what you have done to funding organisations.

3. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (CDP)

Community Development Plans **document the community engagement work carried out, summarise the results and key community priorities taken from it, and then set out the projects which will be taken forward to action on the priorities, giving timeframes and assigning responsibilities for delivery.**

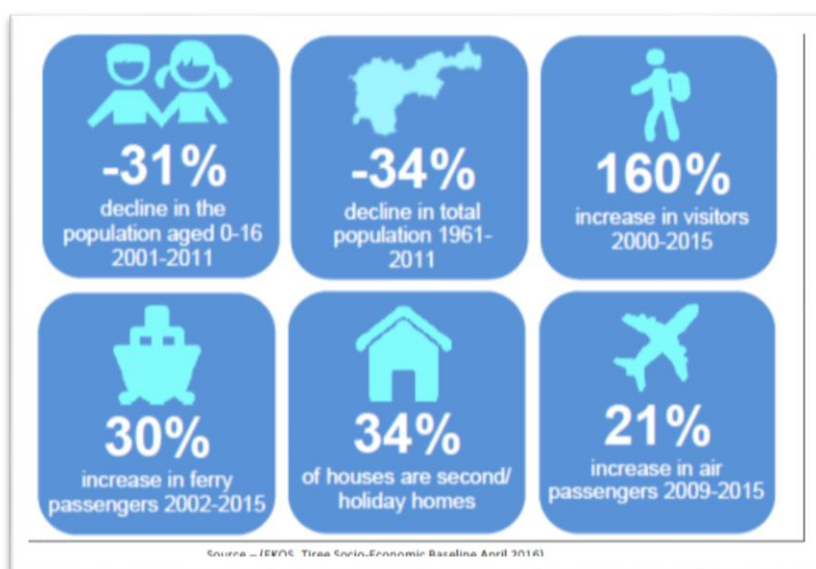
A Community Development Plan should also set out the aims and objectives of your organisation and show how they relate to the planned projects. **It is therefore important that as part of this work you review what the aims of your community trust are – which are usually clearly stated in your constitution.**

Tip: Get in touch with your local Third Sector support network who will help you review or write a constitution.

There is no standard format for a community development plan, however there are certain key headings which are important to ensure are included. These are:

3.1 Context

It is essential that you include some background information to benchmark where your community is currently in terms of demographics, employment, economy etc. The information in the community audit can provide background information. Not only does this give you a better overall community context and overview, but it provides the Trust with baseline figures. Once you have figures you can review these to see what improvements have been made, or what areas you need to focus on to encourage growth.



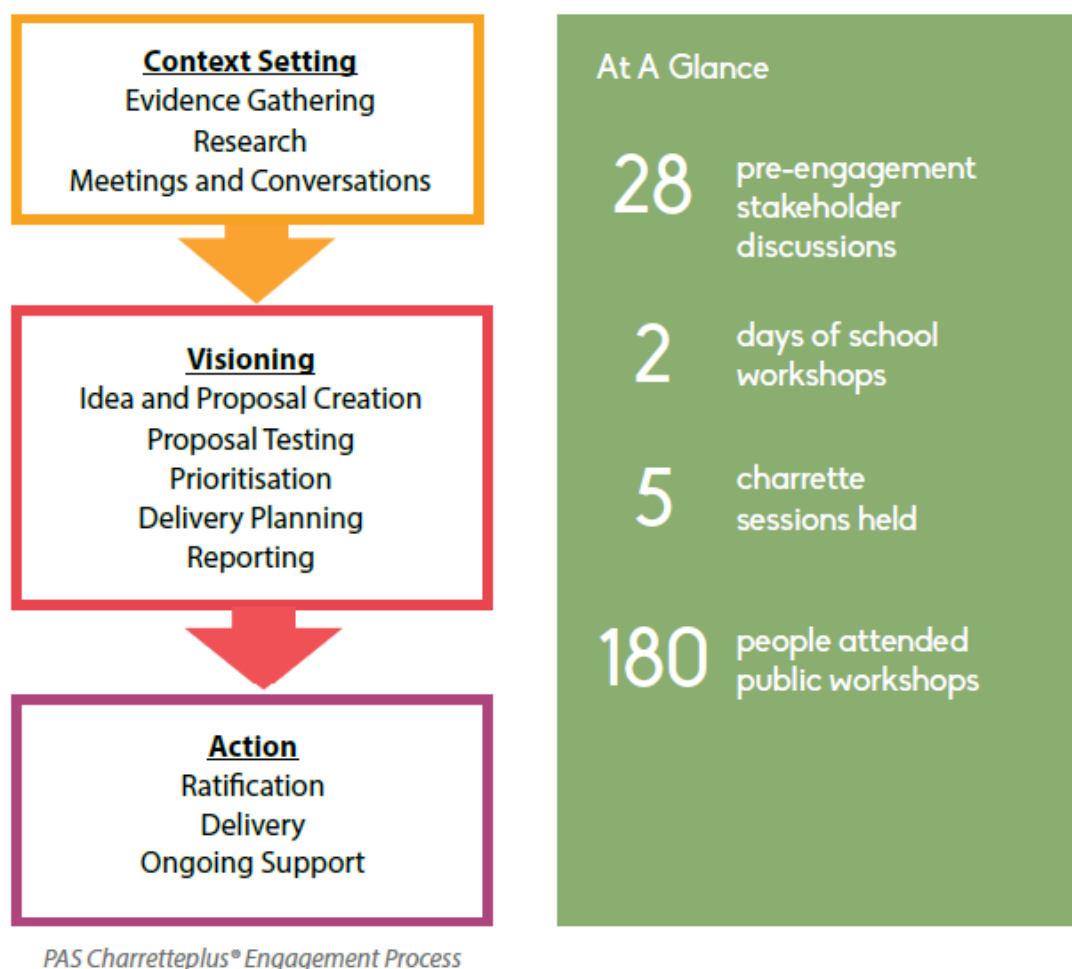
Tiree Community Growth Plan

It is also important to remember that people reading the plan may not always be familiar with your community. This is particularly important if the plan is being read by external bodies such as funders as you want to ensure they have a full and clear understanding of the current condition your community is in, the opportunities and the challenges you are facing.

Tip: Not only does this context inform those reading the plan it also provides with you with baseline figures which can help you in the future to highlight the social impact the trust has had within the community.

3.2 Engagement Overview

Summarise the engagement work carried out to evidence what engagement took place and how it was carried out so it is clear to the reader how decisions were taken based on the results. This section of the development plan does not have to go into lots of detail but should provide the headline information of what work was carried out and how many people were engaged with. The diagram below is taken from Udney's Community Action Plan which shows the process they carried out:



Tip: If you summarise the engagement work and feel it is lacking in detail or feedback from some demographics, go back out and try different or alternative methods of engagement to see if you can reach the people you previously missed.

3.3 Priorities

What are your community's priorities? It is easier to think in terms of tangible projects, such as a new community facility, improved broadband or a new sports track than the priorities that they seek to address. The priorities they address may be lower energy usage, increased job opportunities, improved health services or better connectivity.

Set out the community's top priorities in the plan and how they are being addressed by the projects you are focusing. Here is an example from the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership (OHCPP) Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) which details one of the key priorities for the area and the project being undertaken to tackle it. This is also a useful example of how graphics can help to break up a development plan. It can help highlight headline information you want people to take away from the report, as not everyone is going to read the whole plan.



The priorities, once you have a full understanding of them from your consultation exercises, should be the basis for the remainder of the plan.

Tip: Priorities don't need to be new or different, and can even be quite similar across communities. Some common priorities to help you think include:

- Lower Energy bills
- Improved transport
- Healthier lifestyle
- Less money leaving the community
- More sustainable businesses
- Locally generated energy
- Increased employment
- Improved housing provision
- Less poverty

3.4 Planned actions

It is at this stage in the development plan that you need to focus in on which projects can best meet your community's key priorities, bearing in mind projects which may have been suggested by the wider community during your consultation work.

It is also worth highlighting that different age demographics are likely to prioritise auctioning different projects. Galson Estate Trust highlighted this in their Strategic plan and have split the key responses by age group:



As this example highlights, **not every age group will have the same priorities or desired projects and therefore it can be useful to separate them out** and highlight to the community that you are looking at tailoring support to match the demands of the various different sectors of the community.

Tip: If some work has already been started on some projects in the area which match the priorities, it is still worth including them in order to review their progress in the future.

3.5 Resources

It is likely that you have a number of agencies, organisations and groups working within your community which all have varying aims. **Find out what these organisations do, and how they could help you realise your community's priorities**, and how your priorities can fit in with their plans.

Medium and long-term projects take a lot of time and resource in order to progress and other public, private or third-sector organisations working in your area may be able to provide resources to support your projects.

Tip: Determine who the lead delivery body is for each project and who the delivery partners are to define the working group to take it forward. Make sure you approach these organisations early on to ask for their support rather than assume their involvement.

3.6 Timetable

Create a realistic timetable for tackling priorities and include project to give the community clear **expectations** of how long each project will take to fruition. The timetable will also serve as a reminder of what each delivery partner needs to do and by when. Unst's Community Development Plan is a good example of how you can highlight the priority/theme, the project which sits under it, which organisations or partners may help and then the timetable for works. It is a very clear but detailed way of showcasing the communities plans for each year over a five-year period:

Community Energy Scotland – Engaging your Community 2019

Year 1			
Development Theme(s) & principle outcomes	Description	Delivery Partners	Milestones
Tourism/Business/ arts and heritage <i>Increased employment</i> <i>Population increase</i>	Tourism Strategy for Unst UP will work with local businesses and community groups to establish online trading for local products and new tourism opportunities, which extend the length of stay of visitors.	Lead: Unst Partnership Unst public halls Unst Heritage Trust Saxavord resort Unst Fest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinated summer events programme 2012. Weekend/short stay 'package style' tourist opportunities trialled and evaluated Online marketing/point of sale, through www.unst.org. Begin garnering interest in a local craft/heritage trail Creation of Tourist Map for Unst
Environment/ Renewables <i>Carbon Reduction</i> <i>Community sustainability</i>	Unst Recycling Centre This project began in 2010. A disused Hangar at Baltasound Airport has been leased, and some equipment purchased for the project, which will include a recycling outlet and a charity shop.	Lead: Unst Partnership Shetland Islands Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recycling centre established and operational with essential equipment purchased and partitioning of interior of hangar as required (refer business plan). No longer applicable at the Hangar. Exploring other options in Unst.
Environment/ renewables <i>Carbon Reduction</i> <i>Community sustainability</i> <i>Health and wellbeing</i>	Unst Allotments This project began in 2010, and five polytunnels are under construction on land adjacent to Baltasound Junior High School for community use.	Lead: Unst Partnership URGE Ltd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Polytunnels covered and completed Ground prepared with raised beds and project fully operational
Industry/Economy <i>Increased employment</i> <i>Growth in local business</i> <i>Population increase</i>	Micro Business Support Mentoring The Development Officer will work in partnership with local agencies to improve the way business support is delivered in Unst.	Lead: Unst Partnership Highlands and Islands Enterprise Shetland Islands Council Business Gateway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot Local Business Support 'mentors' established, as part of business enterprise forum supporting with 2-3 businesses. Subletting the Northern Lights Bistro

Tip: Make sure your timetable is challenging but realistic so that there is some sense of achievement when it comes to reviewing it.

4 MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS

Once you have compiled your Community Development Plan ensure it is easily accessible to your community and fed back to those who took part in the engagement process. **The CDP should be updated regularly** and shared with other agencies and organisation with similar aspirations.

It is important that the CDP is also used to measure performance and progress, or used to inform of changes in circumstances. Below is a performance status indicator which Lochaber Community Development used when reviewing and updating their community plan.

Performance Status indicator key: Priority Sections

RED		R	No progress
GREEN		G	Achieved/complete
AMBER		A	In progress, developing well
Blue		B	Progress stalled
White		W	Identified no longer a priority – to be removed

Your CDP will change and adapt over time, and you need to make sure you are updating your engagement and planning processes in line with these changes. It helps you monitor your success by reviewing the plan at least annually (although preferably more regularly), and updating your community to any changes within it.

Tip: Some Trusts have a separate performance status document which sits behind the CPD and is used as an internal document to be adapted as and when new challenges or opportunities arise.

5 CONCLUSION

Community Trusts lead on community-based activity to develop communities in line with the needs of the people who live there, and therefore engagement and consultation with these members and the wider community is essential in order to shape and create the best plan for the future of the area. Your community trust has its own aims and objectives which are likely to be focused on community development, and these should be reviewed if they are not in line with the needs of the community.

As a community organisation you need to ensure that you take the wider community with you on your development journey. That means regular and clear channels of communication as well as more significant engagement work at key times in the development process. These more detailed engagement measures help you to define the priorities of your wider community. From these priorities can then come planned actions and projects, including details of delivery partners and timescales. It is also essential that you bear in mind the different demographics of your community and the varying needs they have in order to try and tackle their priorities effectively.

Community engagement can be challenging and often takes a number of different methods in order to get the right mix of techniques and feedback from as many people as possible. It is important to remember that you need a strategy for engagement and that this strategy should provide a clear and well planned out process for consultation.

The feedback and information you obtain from this process should be collated and a detailed Community Development Plan is one of the main outputs from this process. The CDP is can be seen as a manifesto of how you plan to support and develop the community within an allocated period of time.

Community opinions and priorities change over time so make sure you continue to review both your engagement processes and your Community Development Plan, and by doing so strengthen your linkages with the community, and the agencies, organisations and businesses that operate within it. Community engagement and planning is essential to a well-run organisation which has a clear and well defined vision, as shaped by those whose future it will impact upon.

Appendix 1: Useful Links

- Unst Community Development Plan
- <http://www.hie.co.uk/common/handlers/download-document.ashx?id=9ac27542-ac13-4747-a088-a3596e6d1639>
- Tiree Community Growth Plan - <http://www.tireetrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Tiree-Growth-Plan-2017-2020.pdf>
- Lochaber Community Development Plan
- <https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/6448/lochaber-community-development-plan>
- Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn Strategic Plan - https://af53f456-f8ff-4269-8f0d-9f9ef9f6820e.filesusr.com/ugd/682f71_f94c61f241044838b29a99fcd4c44aa2.pdf
- Udney Community Action Plan - <https://www.pas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Imagine-Udney-Action-Plan.pdf>
- OHCPP Local Outcome Improvement Plan - <http://www.ohcpp.org.uk/>

Appendix 2: Community Trust Self-Assessment

LEGALITY - the Trust complies with any legal and regulatory requirements

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Our Trust is an incorporated organisation with charitable status and complies with any legal and regulatory requirements						
Our Trust continues to have a clear purpose for existing						
Our Trust has clear specific aims which it wishes to achieve						

EFFECTIVENESS - the Trust understands the community's wants and needs and uses them to create a plan for the community which will deliver the Trust's

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Our Trust has undertaken a community needs analysis to identify its priorities						
Our Trust reviews its plans periodically to ensure they will enable it to achieve its objectives						
Our Trust has mastered the ability to change						
Our Trust has undertaken community engagement to identify the community's priority wants and wishes						
Our Trust is open to and explores new ideas						

TRANSPARENCY - the management arrangements should be transparent so as to ensure trust within the community

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Our Board reflects the broad interests of our community						
Our Trust has a clear selection process based on skills and experience for its board						
Our Board and staff members interact openly and trustfully						

Community Engagement Programme Community Trust Self-Assessment Sheet

ACCOUNTABILITY - the Trust should have clear governance and accountability						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Our Trust has set up systems and processes for its day to day running						
Our Trust has a strong funding policy which relates to our Community Development Plan and sets out the principles for guiding decisions on the spend of any existing or proposed income						
Our Trust has procedures in place for future monitoring use of funds						
Our Trust has clear decision-making protocols in place						

COMMUNITY FRIENDLY - the Trust's policies, processes and plans should be easily understood and accessible to local people and organisations and enjoy their confidence						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Information on our Trust's arrangements are open and publically available						
Our Trust understands our community and is up to date with what is happening in it						
Our Trust shares its vision with other local organisations						
Our Trust has good communication with the wider community						