

## Section 8: Organisation, Consultation and Development Planning

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### 8. Organisation, Consultation and Development Planning

This section discusses the reasons behind, and a selection of ways to organise and consult with the local community on both small and large scale projects. Assistance on why and how to create a development plan is also given.

#### 8.1 Why and how to be organised

To take forward any project on behalf of a community requires a level of organisation. Whilst it may be possible to undertake a low-risk voluntary activity that does not involve any financial transactions as an informal group, any project entailing funding and risk should only be undertaken by a legally constituted organisation.

The level and complexity of the organisation depends on the scale and complexity of the project and how the community may benefit from it.

The Organisation and Planning table in Annex 1 summarises the main legal structure options in relation to the type of project envisaged.

#### 8.2 Community Consultation

##### 8.2.1 Why is it essential?

If presenting a project as a community project and seeking funding on that basis, it is essential to demonstrate a mandate for representing the community and that the community's priorities or requirements have been taken into account. Progressing with what may become a complex project only to find that there is strong opposition to it locally will affect credibility with funding bodies and may cause lasting local antagonism.

For larger-scale projects, strong community support allied with a clear description of how the project will meet demonstrable local needs will be influential in the planning consent process.

Although there are always likely to be local individuals who do not like change, their impact is much less if it can be shown that there is strong support for the project locally.

**Note:** Community consultation does not remove the need for any statutory consultation (e.g. with neighbours) required under planning law.

### 8.2.2 How much community consultation is required?

There is no particular standard for the level of community consultation, but it is prudent to scale this according to the nature of the project. The following rule of thumb can be applied:

Type of project	Level of consultation
Heat and power installations in buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All building users</li> <li>• Potential users (this is useful anyway to help scale potential heat requirements)</li> <li>• Neighbouring households / land holders (e.g. if wind turbine is under consideration)</li> </ul>
District heating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All building owners and households that could connect onto the scheme</li> <li>• Householders / landholders neighbouring boiler house.</li> </ul>
Wind or hydro project designed to generate and sell electricity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation (e.g. based on electoral roll) to identify and prioritize community needs</li> <li>• Present in development plan format</li> <li>• Information provision at critical stages e.g. using displays in local libraries or other community venues, events, website, etc</li> <li>• Consider vote prior to submission of planning application</li> </ul>
Securing benefit from nearby commercial wind farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation to identify and prioritize community needs</li> <li>• Confirm development plan</li> </ul>

### 8.2.3 How to carry out consultation on larger projects

There is no set procedure for community consultation on larger scale projects (e.g. such as a large wind turbine to generate and sell electricity) and each community will have different circumstances. However, good practice is emerging from a number of different community projects. This can be summarised as follows:

#### Step 1

Hold open meeting to outline project idea and gauge support and volunteers

Speaker from community project elsewhere or local development officer

Seek mandate to undertake local renewable energy assessment if necessary

Seek mandate to consult on local community needs if necessary

Seek mandate to undertake feasibility study

Seek mandate to constitute group or subcommittee of existing organisation

*Consider local events, displays, website, and articles in local newspaper or community newsletter.*

#### Step 2

Hold open meeting to

- report findings of assessment
- report findings of feasibility study
- agree preferred options
- agree process and timescale for consultation on preferred options

*If possible, prepare display for local people to visit and comment*

*Consider article in local newspaper or community new sheet and/or website*

#### Step 3

Hold open meeting to confirm preferred option

Seek mandate to proceed to detailed development

Confirm development plan priorities and ultimate objectives for project

#### Step 4

Hold open meeting to

- agree planning application
- consider, if necessary, community vote on project

#### Step 5

Hold final open meeting to

- Address any outstanding issues
- Conclude and report on community vote - this could be done through a website or newsletter

### 8.3 Community development plans

For maximum benefit from a large scale, revenue generating, renewable energy project (or to take advantage of someone else's) then some form of community-wide development planning is invaluable, if not essential.

Equally, if there is an aspiration within a community to become more sustainable by using renewable energy to reduce the collective carbon footprint, then this process can help clarify and identify needs/opportunities. A community development plan will help focus on the best way to address these.

However, if a project is such that:

- it is not going to generate substantial investment revenue
- there is presently a focus on one particular smaller scale project on a single site
- there is an established community group with no desire to get involved in wider community development

then the advantage of this process may not immediately be obvious. Nevertheless, it will probably still be a benefit to go through an equivalent process on a smaller scale to help produce a clear project development plan for any proposal. In addition, the process may uncover broader community needs or aspirations that inform the group's work.

With this range of interest in mind, the main emphasis of this section of the guide focuses on the first two scenarios that require wider community development planning. If successful, this section should help plan a path for renewable energy development that: best chimes with the community's vision for the future, that is supported by a group and the community it represents, will address key needs that a community has identified, and ensures that any projects undertaken can clearly relate to the meeting of one or more of these needs.

Many development trusts have been through such a process of community appraisal and have produced community strategies as a result. The Development Trusts Association Scotland can provide further information and may be able to put you in touch with trusts who have taken this approach. Visit [www.dtascot.org.uk](http://www.dtascot.org.uk) for contact details.

See case study 19, Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre, Orkney Islands as an example of a group which has undertaken development planning; the case study covers the key issues and learning points and the results for the community

This section acknowledges other previous guidance on this topic, and points the reader to substantial amounts of information contained in earlier publications such as:

[Community Toolkit: Could your community benefit from renewable energy development? \(The Highland Council/HIE\)](#)

[Re: Sourcebook – planning for your community \(Alan Caldwell Associates\)](#)

[Developing a community project idea & Funding for community projects \(Forward Scotland Guidance Notes 1 and 2\)](#)

[Delivering Community Benefits from Wind Energy Development: A Toolkit \(DTI\)](#)

[Small Town and Rural Development \(STAR\) group](#)

### 8.3.1 Why create a community development plan?

There are no set rules or structures as to what a community's development plan should be. However, a well thought out community development plan should:

- Identify key aspirations, needs and resources within a community
- Check that proposed ways of meeting these are widely welcomed and actively supported,
- Create a clear strategy for involving the community in decisions on how local income is to be spent
- Create a clear procedure and process for updating and reviewing spend priorities
- Provide a good practical management framework and structure to turn general good aspirations into practical realisation of actual projects on the ground
- Identify any resources, possible partners and timescales for making this happen

In addition to this, a good community development plan can also be a very useful tool for interacting with the wider community. It is especially good as a way of making sure activities remain in line with the aspirations of a community. It illustrates to potential funders and permitting bodies how activities and projects can really contribute to the identified needs within that community. It provides a tool to inform the community of the plans, provides evidence to funders that the community has shaped the plan and provides a means of measuring progress.