

Community Benefits Route Map

Scan the QR code to access the full Route Map, including resources, case studies, and guidance on agreeing community benefits.



Scottish Land Commission
Coimisean Fearainn na h-Alba

Summary

1

Carry out background research

- ✓ Carry out background research to identify who the local community/ies is/are
- ✓ Understand their plans, needs and ambitions
- ✓ Begin to think about the kinds of community benefits your project might be able to provide that match what the community wants.



2

Engage with the community

- ✓ Engage directly and widely with the community
- ✓ Discuss potential impacts of your project
- ✓ Refine understanding of community needs and aspirations
- ✓ Develop a shared understanding of the benefits that your project can realistically deliver.



3

Develop a written agreement

- ✓ Develop a written agreement on community benefits, which includes how the baseline will be identified, a process for monitoring and regular reviews.



4

Deliver early benefits and continue engagement

- ✓ Deliver early community benefits
- ✓ Communicate and meet with the community as required.



5

Measure, monitor and report

- ✓ Measure, monitor and report delivery of community benefits
- ✓ Regular community meetings
- ✓ Schedule reviews of written documents.



✓ Tick off each section when complete

Start here



1

Carry out background research

Identify the local community or communities. What are the geographic boundaries? Who lives in the area and who are key contacts that may be able to help? Is there a community council? Are there any constituted groups such as a development trust? Are there any existing relationships between project partners and the community that you need to be aware of (positive or negative)?

Find helpful resources on page 33 of the Route Map.



Once you have identified the community, consider how your project could impact them (positively or negatively) and what you can find out about their needs and aspirations.

Does a development plan or a Local Place Plan exist? Are there key people you can speak to (confidentially if necessary) to find out more? What are the cultural/ social views of the land being used for the project?

Consider who from your project team would be best placed to lead your community engagement. Ideally this person should be skilled in engagement and have decision-making powers.

Include agreed and potential project partners in early considerations around identifying the community and potential community benefits, if necessary, on a confidential basis.

At this point, all parties should be open to considering a wide range of delivery models. If you are looking to purchase land for your project, consider whether alternative forms of ownership and tenure could deliver your project aims equally well or better and align with community needs and aspirations. For example, investing in community owned land, joint ventures, leasing or other forms of collaborative working.

Discuss within the project team the kinds of community benefits that align with your purpose and are realistic and proportionate for you to deliver considering the nature of your project, financial model and the context of the landholding.

Think creatively about possibilities here, and at the same time remain open-minded when you start engaging with the community.

Explore examples of community benefits on page 19 of the Route Map.



Consider who from your project team would be best placed to lead your community engagement. Ideally this person should be skilled in engagement and have decision-making powers.

2

Engage with the community

Community organisations will be well placed to advise you on how best to engage with the wider community. They may also be able to advise you on other engagement activities happening that you may be able to take part in, learn from, or support. Where relationships between project team members and the community already exist, consider how to build on and strengthen these. A range of resources on how to carry out community engagement are available which should be used.

Find helpful resources on page 33 of the Route Map.



Provide the community with accessible contact details for the person you have chosen to lead community engagement. It would be good practice to also share wider information about who else is involved in making decisions about the project and who else might benefit from the project, such as investors and owners, and how they are expected to benefit.

When engaging with the community, include questions about:

- Who the local community includes, particularly those who will be impacted by the project;
- How the community wants to be communicated and engaged with in the future;
- What impacts (positive and negative) the community perceives the project may have and how you might address these; and
- What ways the community could imagine benefitting from the project

Together you should be able to develop a good understanding of how to mitigate any negative impacts from the project what kind of community benefits would be proportionate to the project and meet community needs. Community engagement should continue through the development of the project.



Provide the community with accessible contact details for the person you have chosen to lead community engagement.

3

Develop a written agreement

As you develop the project plan, you should work with project partners and the community to identify and agree proportionate community benefits that are tailored to the community's needs.

The actual defining of benefits should come from the community and this requires the community to have a good basic understanding of the proposed project and the potential scale and scope of community benefits that could be delivered. They should understand why these are proportionate and should put forward their needs and ideas, including ideas about their participation in the project. (The community may need professional or financial support to enable them to participate equally in the discussions and in the following stages.

Once you have decided to go ahead with the project, you should develop a written agreement about the arrangements for ongoing engagement and the community benefits that will be delivered. This could be a Memorandum of Understanding, a Community Benefit Agreement or a Sale/Lease Agreement. Any agreement made should be with an appropriate community organisation who will be acting on behalf of the wider community.

Find out more about good practice in developing community agreements on page 26 of the Route Map.



As part of the agreement, the signatories should agree how the delivery of community benefits is measured and by whom. They should also agree what baseline will be used to measure progress, whether any work is needed to establish this baseline, who will pay for it, and who will carry it out.

Any agreement should include a timescale for regular reviews. The reviews should track progress against what was agreed and consider whether the agreed benefits need updating.

Community needs and aspirations may have changed, as well as the project, which may change the types or amounts of benefits that can be reasonably and proportionately delivered.

4

Deliver early benefits and continue engagement

Once you start to deliver the project, communicate about and mitigate any negative impacts as agreed. This may include temporary impacts on access, increased traffic, noise, dirt etc.

Start delivering the agreed community benefits appropriate for this project delivery phase, for example, the use of local contractors and/or suppliers and/or volunteering opportunities. Early community benefits may also include transfer of land and/or assets to the community, employing local staff or contractors, or benefits which are best delivered while groundworks take place e.g. access improvements or making firewood available.

Read inspiring examples of projects delivering community benefits on pages 21-25 of the Route Map.



It is likely that an increased level of communication between all parties and regular check-ins with the community will be required during this phase.



Any agreement made should be with an appropriate community organisation who will be acting on behalf of the wider community.

5

Measure monitor and report

Once the project reaches its maintenance phase, e.g. when the trees are planted or the peatland or river restoration work is completed, you should continue to deliver agreed benefits and have regular community engagement. You should monitor and report on the delivery of community benefits and review the agreement/s in accordance with your plan.



The actual defining of benefits should come from the community and this requires the community to have a good basic understanding of the proposed project and the potential scale and scope of community benefits that could be delivered.

