

Stakeholder and Corporate Engagement



Context

This case study discusses the approach North Lanarkshire Council are taking to engagement in preparing its Local Development Plan (LDP). Engagement has taken place across multiple stages of LDP preparation, including in local place plans, place-based work, preparing the Evidence Report and Call for Ideas and Sites, and this engagement will continue throughout preparation of the Plan.

What Happened

Engagement was undertaken in a multi-channel way throughout the process using online tools alongside in-person meetings, workshops and facilitated sessions. Various methods were used to publicise in-person events, including through the Council's Community Matters team by accessing their extensive reach through communities and third sector organisation groups. Events were publicised on social media and advertised via our GovDelivery subscription list (this is effectively our LDP mailing list).

Facilitation of in-person events was adjusted and tailored for each event. We used an independent facilitator for our Local Place Plan events; other events were facilitated by a member of the planning team.



For online engagement, GIS Survey 123 was used to gather place specific responses. This tool allows the respondent to place a dot on a map to tell us exactly where they are commenting on. Microsoft Forms was used to collect data specifically relating to sites.

To communicate and explain what the LDP is to those less familiar with the process, we collaborated with the Corporate Communications team to create an easy to access video. The video explains what the LDP is and how it impacts on people and communities in North Lanarkshire and is available here: [Our new Local Development Plan | North Lanarkshire Council.](#)

Areas of Collaboration

Engagement was carried out with a broad range of audiences – communities, agencies, developers, partners and corporate services. During the preparation for the Evidence Report, the Council's Local Transport Strategy was also under development. We took this opportunity to host combined 'drop in' events in libraries over each community board area to ensure a corporate approach.

We also attended a tenant and residents' event being undertaken as part of the development of the Local Housing Strategy to allow us to further promote and increase awareness of the LDP. We also became involved in Local Health Partnerships in order to share progress, raise awareness and learn what our partners were doing within the place environment.

Overall Result

On reflection, we learnt that people came with very different starting points in terms of awareness and experience. That mattered because it shaped how much explanation, support and facilitation was needed. Many agencies, partners and groups simply didn't know about the new system, what was expected of them and how they could or should interact.

We sought out to communicate openly but would reflect that in being so open and trying to involve everyone, particularly online, a one-size-fits-all approach to engagement simply didn't work and led to confusion. That means additional work is required to target engagement to specific interest groups and considering what other messages are needed when groups operate more widely than just the North Lanarkshire area.

We are focussing on making engagement visible through outputs — dashboards, StoryMaps, topic papers, workshop reports and the Evidence Report. Closing the feedback loop matters as people want to see how their input is being used, not just that it had been collected.



Lessons Learned

- Managing expectations around influence, delivery and timescales was one of the most challenging aspects this of engagement.
- A key learning is that neither in-person nor digital engagement works on its own. Digital approaches give reach and efficiency, but face-to-face engagement is essential for trust and for dealing with complexity.
- There were real positives in our experience. We experienced strong buy-in from those engaged, partnership working was improved, and we noted greater collaboration across services. At the same time, we saw consultation fatigue, alignment issues, and ongoing gaps in evidence. We've tried to frame these not as failures, but as signals about pressure points in the system.
- Many challenges persist, including a lack of awareness of how the system works, raised expectations of what LDPs can deliver, uncoordinated messaging, limited capacity, timing pressures, scope creep and corporate alignment. These are structural and cultural challenges — not things that can be fixed simply by doing more engagement.

This case study has been prepared in collaboration by North Lanarkshire Council and the National Planning Improvement Team at the Improvement Service. We publish good practice case studies identified through our work on the National Planning Improvement Framework and the National Planning Hub. They aim to support the sharing of good practice and build collaboration across the sector in addressing common challenges. Please email us at npi@improvementservice.org.uk if your authority has a good practice case study to share.

