

Briefing note:
Communicating community
wealth building to key
audiences

About CLES

Founded in 1986, the Centre for Local Economies is an independent economics think tank and charity. We work collaboratively across the UK and Ireland to develop solutions that ensure economies are rooted in the places people call home.

At CLES, we partner as equals with all levels of government, local institutions and communities – challenging outdated methods and tackling local issues with practical, long-term solutions.

About the Improvement Service

The Improvement Service (IS) is the go-to organisation for local government improvement in Scotland. Established in 2005, the IS supports councils and their partners to deliver better outcomes for communities, reduce inequalities, and achieve efficiencies.

We do this through leading transformation, building capacity and capability for improvement across the sector, supporting collaboration to tackle shared challenges, providing data and intelligence to inform policy and decision-making, and delivering national shared service applications and technology platforms.

About this briefing note

This briefing note offers practical guidance on how to communicate community wealth building to key audiences, for anyone working to bring others on board with this approach. The guidance is drawn from a workshop delivered by the Improvement Service and CLES for the CWB Practitioners Network in March 2026, and reflects real-world experience of what helps CWB land and what gets in the way.

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Introduction

Community wealth building (CWB) succeeds or fails on how well it is understood. This briefing note offers practical guidance on how to communicate CWB in ways that make sense to different audiences and build genuine buy-in. It is primarily aimed at public sector practitioners developing, consulting on and delivering CWB plans, but is relevant to anyone working to embed CWB in practice.

General communication principles

- **Start with the audience.** Focus on what CWB means for the person you are speaking to. What is the impact for them, their organisation and their place? How does it help address the challenges they are already dealing with?
- **Recognise people's multiple roles.** Someone may be a business owner or public servant, but they are also a resident, parent, neighbour or community member. Connecting CWB to place and lived experience builds relevance.
- **Use clear, accessible language.** Avoid jargon and abstract concepts wherever possible. Break CWB down into practical actions or pillars rather than leading with the label.
- **Connect to what is already happening.** Acknowledge and legitimise related work that is already underway. Make the links to CWB explicit and show how it brings allied activity together around shared goals.
- **Focus on common ground.** Emphasise outcomes that resonate widely: stronger local economies, better jobs, healthier communities, more resilient supply chains and wealth that stays locally.
- **Use examples.** Case studies, stories and analogies are powerful tools for showing what CWB looks like in practice and why it matters.

Community organisations

Community organisations may already be contributing to the outcomes CWB seeks to achieve. Effective communication should recognise this leadership, connect CWB to lived experience, and show how it can strengthen their work.

Key messages

- **CWB helps to address local needs and inequalities.** Show how CWB restructures the local economy to support long term, systemic change. Make the link to the impact that community organisations are working towards.
- **CWB supports healthy, thriving communities.** Describe impact in wellbeing, empowerment and community resilience terms, not only financial outcomes.
- **CWB creates income and opportunity.** Highlight how CWB can direct public spending towards local and social organisations, opening up procurement, funding and partnership opportunities.
- **CWB is an enabling platform for your work.** Recognise and value the existing work of community organisations and their role in shaping local economic outcomes. CWB provides a shared framework that can support, amplify and give legitimacy and help unlock funding, partnerships and influence.

Potential challenges

- **Scepticism and lack of trust.** Some communities may doubt CWB will lead to real change if they have experienced short-term initiatives or unmet promises before.
- **Language and accessibility.** CWB terminology can feel abstract, technical or exclusionary. Language should be relevant and rooted in people's lived experience, so that communities can see how CWB applies to them.
- **Long-term nature of change.** CWB focusses on systemic, long-term transformation and demonstrating this long-term impact will take time.
- **Feeling invisible or undervalued.** If CWB is presented as something 'new', it can overlook and undermine the work communities already do.
- **Community capacity.** Different communities will have different levels of capacity to engage with CWB.

Effective channels

- Local conferences on CWB
- Community meetings
- Local media
- Social media
- Community anchors and Third Sector Interfaces
- Schools
- Local Action Groups
- Community Planning Partnerships
- Local Employability Partnerships
- Elected members
- Community energy owners

Examples

- [Greater Community Media CWB Film](#)
- [Creative Scotland CWB Toolkit](#)

Businesses

Businesses engage best with CWB when it is framed as a practical partnership that strengthens local economies and supports long-term business success, rather than as a compliance exercise.

Key messages

- **CWB is a joint endeavour.** Businesses have an important role to play in embedding community wealth building. They play an active role in shaping local economies, so partnership is essential to creating an economy that works better for everyone.
- **CWB delivers tangible business benefits**, such as: improved worker wellbeing, retention and productivity; access to public contracts; enhanced reputation; contribution to environmental commitments.
- **Thriving people and places support thriving businesses.** When more wealth sticks in local places and benefits communities, businesses benefit too.
- **You may already be doing CWB in some ways.** Businesses may be familiar with community benefits, Buy Social Pledge and already focus on strengthening local supply chains; CWB builds on and strengthens this activity.

Potential challenges

- **Concerns about cost, competitiveness and growth.** Some businesses may believe CWB will increase costs or restrict growth, despite evidence of workforce and procurement benefits.
- **Risk of tick box approach.** Where CWB is perceived as a tick-box exercise, it can undermine long-term commitment. Some businesses may see Community Benefits and CWB as the same thing, which limits the potential for deeper cultural and structural change and potentially favours large businesses over smaller ones.
- **A fragmented support landscape** for business' can lead to mixed messages about CWB. Enterprise agencies and Business Gateway have an important role in communicating CWB to business' and consistently sign-posting to specialist advice.

Channels

- Chambers of Commerce
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Business Gateway
- Enterprise development agencies
- Economic development teams
- Social Enterprise Scotland and local social enterprise networks
- Ministerial engagement with businesses

Examples

- [Leeds Business Anchors Network](#)
- [The impact of good employment in Greater Manchester](#)
- [Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce CWB award](#)

Public sector

For the public sector, CWB should be communicated as a practical way to maximise public value and support better outcomes for people and place using the tools available.

What messages will help you get this audience on board?

- **CWB helps you to** get more bang for your buck, by ensuring that as much value as possible is generated for local places with the resources available.
- **CWB enables joined-up working.** It aims to break down siloed working, develop cross-service relationships and provoke new conversations about how different parts of the public sector work together.
- **CWB complements a range of other priorities.** Concepts such as Fair Work, sustainable procurement and community empowerment may be more familiar to colleagues and linking CWB to them can help you to get buy-in.
- **CWB is about real impact, not compliance.** Focus on what CWB can help to achieve organisational priorities and address long-standing socioeconomic challenges, rather than statutory requirements.
- **CWB is a lens.** CWB offers a new way of looking at your work. CWB pillars map well onto service areas, so they can be used to refocus activity.

What challenges might you face when communicating with this audience?

- **Risk aversion and perceived constraints.** Particularly in procurement, colleagues may be uncertain about flexibility or compliance with existing rules.
- **Pressure on time and resources.** Public sector resources are stretched, and CWB can be seen as an additional responsibility rather than a way to work differently.
- **Competing messages and priorities.** Teams may be asked to make decisions that oppose the principles of CWB from competing agendas. For example, the public service reform agenda around centralised procurement comes into direct conflict with CWB. It is important to recognise these and look for opportunities to use different agendas together to maximise public value.

Channels

- Social media
- E-learning
- Case-studies and Q&As
- Lunch and learn sessions
- Elected members engagement
- CWB practitioners network
- Internal departmental meetings
- Community Planning Partnerships
- Anchor Networks
- Local Employability Partnerships

Examples

- [Ending extraction the UK care system](#)
- [North Ayrshire Council Community Wishlist newsletter](#)

