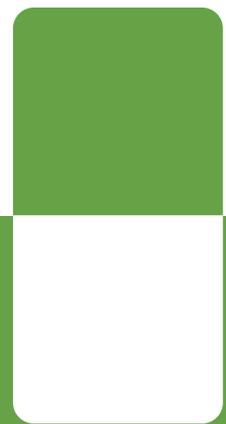


# Engaging local communities

Guidance for local authorities seeking  
to develop sustainable and low carbon  
travel and transport services



# Summary

Travel behaviours are often constrained by perceived or physical barriers to the local transport system. Engaging communities to develop their range of low carbon transport choices will enable them to change their travel for the better.

Many journeys are made using more than one form of transport and people use different transport modes at different times for a range of reasons. Changes need to work for end-to-end journeys, not just individual transport modes.

Changes to the transport system need to address issues that users care about most. That means understanding the needs and expectations of current and potential users and putting these at the heart of the transport system.

Communication, community engagement and consultation are important parts of delivering a new transport or travel service, and often form part of an overall project plan. However, due to time, staff and resource pressures, these elements are often not delivered in the most effective way.

Effective, empowering, evidence-based engagement and communication can support a modal shift to low carbon travel. This is essential to successful transport decarbonisation and achieving Net Zero.

Research has shown that well-planned, meaningful, and sustained engagement can lead to the community mobilisation needed to support transport decarbonisation.

Councils can work with communities to change the [high level of climate concern](#) felt by many residents into meaningful action.

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*Effective engagement empowers those taking part to make decisions by building trust and implementing solutions co-designed with the community*

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# Background

Widespread behavioural and system change is [essential](#) to meeting the UK's 2050 Net Zero target. It is a critical factor in the scenarios considered in the [sixth carbon budget](#). Effective community engagement can support and encourage these changes and help meet our climate targets.

Behaviour change on an individual and community level can play a significant role. Currently the largest single source of emissions in the country, transport was responsible for [34% of UK emissions](#) in 2022, mainly from road transport. Supporting people to choose lower carbon transport is key to decreasing these emissions.

## The challenge



Two thirds of low-income communities don't believe they are considered in local transport decisions. In addition, there are significant gaps in [transport accessibility](#), and barriers to transport are increasing.

Traditional behaviour models do not always account for people's motivation for choosing a mode of transport. [Research](#) by the University of Nottingham found that travel choices are influenced by mood, logistics, habit, trust, and willingness. Switching to other transport that would be better for the community are secondary considerations.

These issues are important to consider when engaging on transport. Effective engagement will acknowledge the complexities, and present positive solutions.

## The solution



Community engagement can help councils understand and address local issues, ensure solutions work for the whole community and deliver socio-economic benefits.

Involving and empowering communities and other stakeholders in low carbon transport projects can build local pride in an area, improve social, economic and environmental values, and improve relationships within a community, alongside supporting the decarbonisation of transport.

The UK [government's ambition](#) is to improve walking and cycling infrastructure and encourage sustainable transport behaviour. In recognition of the roles that local authorities play, the [Transport Decarbonisation: Local Authority Toolkit](#) provides advice on how to deliver transport decarbonisation projects. Several sections feature specific actions on engagement, including those on [lift sharing](#), [demand responsive transport](#), [car clubs](#) and [active travel](#).

# Communication vs Engagement

Communication and community engagement are not the same, but they are very closely related. *Communication* is part of the process of engagement, and good communication is essential to deliver *effective community engagement*.

## Communication



The [Oxford dictionary](#) defines communication as “*the activity or process of expressing ideas and feelings or of giving people information*” and the act of communicating as a way “*to exchange information, news, ideas, etc*”. Effective communication is regular, consistent, open, and interactive, with information flowing both ways. The process should be flexible, with more than one way to get involved.

Two way communication is essential to show that councils are involving, listening, and responding to communities. By demonstrating a willingness to listen and act on conversations with stakeholders, you will enrich the delivery of your plans and strategies.

This can be achieved by bringing together community groups, residents, and transport operators (and others) to improve understanding, and co-design solutions.

## Engagement



Community engagement involves developing and maintaining a working relationship between your organisation and a diverse variety of stakeholders. Good engagement does not need to be resource intensive; however it does require long-term investment in building meaningful relationships and trust.

Effective engagement is an ongoing process and evolves over time as relationships develop. The process should involve open, constructive communication, and not be one way and top-down.

All transport decarbonisation interventions will benefit from good community engagement. Taking a proactive approach to engagement that empowers communities will lead to better outcomes.

Engagement should not be considered a separate activity to main project delivery. Enabling the community to engage with, understand and contribute to the

development of projects, schemes and proposals is essential to securing widespread support, acceptance, and ownership.

Well delivered community engagement is far more than community consultation. Consultation may form part of the overall engagement approach – but should be supported by other forms of engagement for maximum benefit.

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## Case study: Improving connectivity in Leeds

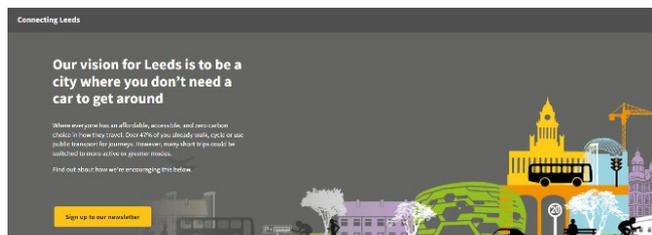
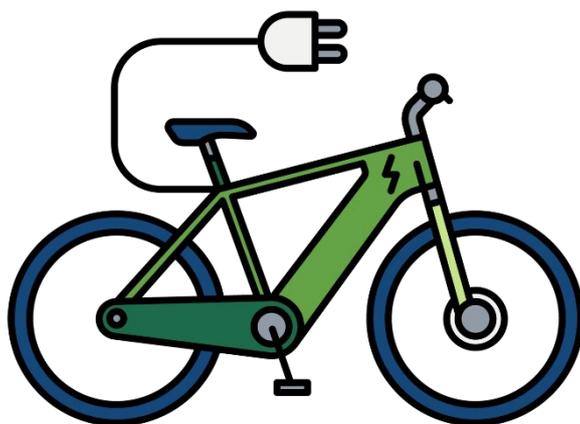


Image from <https://leedstransport.commonplace.is> accessed 18 January 2024

*Leeds City Council planned significant investment for five travel routes into the city centre, plus city centre improvements. Their primary objectives were to improve connectivity, increase bus use and promote healthy travel options. Wide reaching, continuous community engagement was essential to the project.*

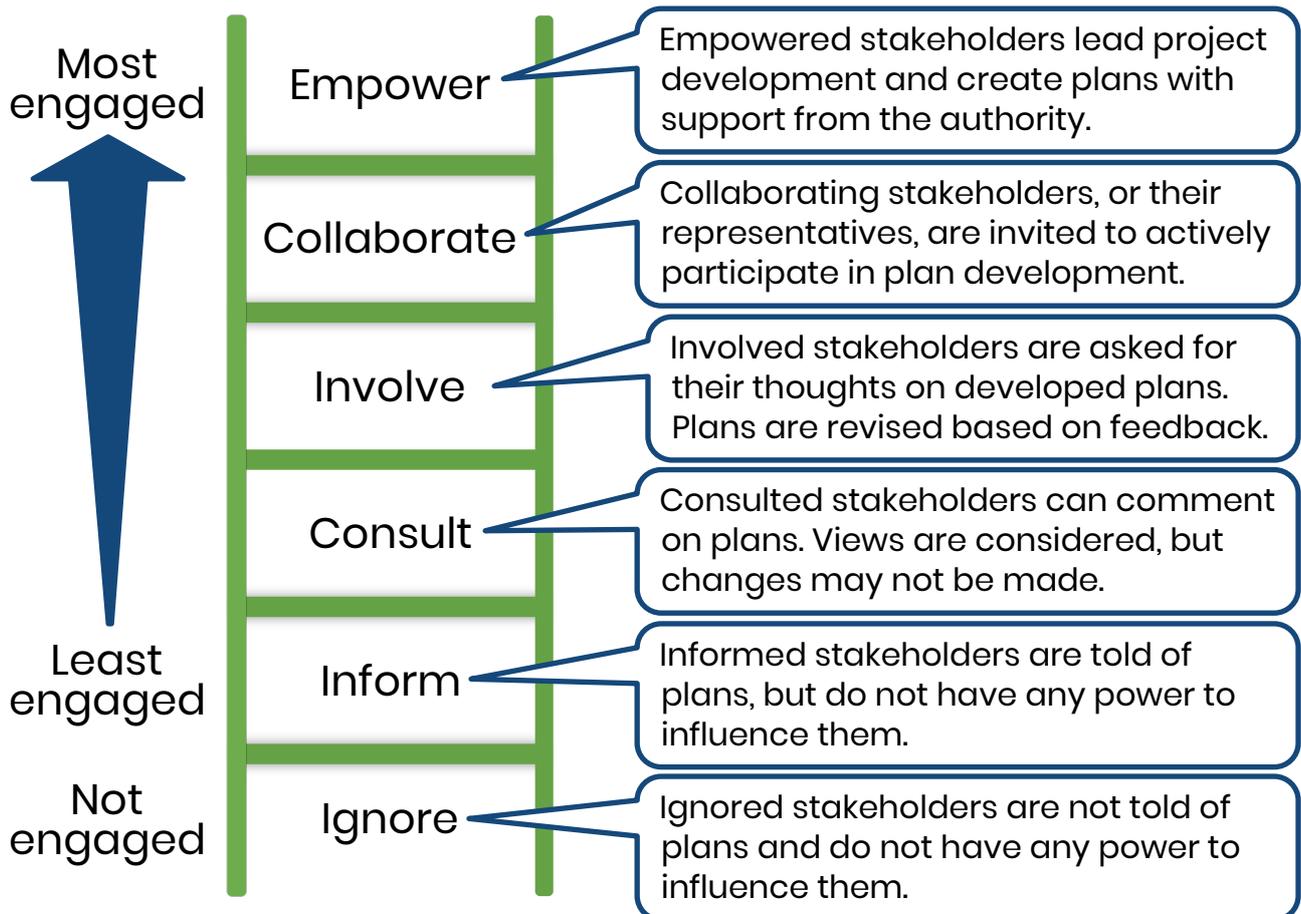
*Working with WSP and Commonplace, the council set up webpages that allowed residents to view and comment on each proposal. This was supported by strong branding, public meetings, social media, and wide publicity. Residents were able to view and respond to other residents' comments, as well as adding their own.*

*Responding to community feedback, the Council enhanced its plans to promote active travel. This included an additional 100km of segregated cycle lanes, active travel neighbourhoods and temporary widened footways.*



# The ladder of participation

[The International Association of Public Participation](#) identifies 5 levels of participation. We have included a sixth level representing no participation:



## Collaboration and empowerment



Achieving higher levels of engagement will involve local authorities allowing stakeholders a significant role in project development and delivery. Involving the public in decisions through co-creation or co-design improves understanding, [legitimacy](#), and perceptions of fairness in decision making as well as increase support for measures which may otherwise be polarising.

Collaborating with and empowering communities will tap into local knowledge and increase residents' understanding of issues, as well as help councils recognise local barriers. It can also ensure that solutions meet identified local needs.

# The role of local authorities

Local authorities do not always have to lead or take sole responsibility for community engagement. For some projects, this may limit the range or depth of engagement. There may be community and third sector organisations who are actively working on transport decarbonisation projects that include community engagement activity who will be able to deliver more effective activity than the local authority working alone.

Local authorities can facilitate and empower these groups to develop projects and deliver greater benefits. One of the ways authorities can add value to the engagement activity of these groups is to bring transport operators into discussions. This can demonstrate joint working and a commitment to listening and acting on feedback.



## The Public Sector Equality Duty



Engagement activity conducted by a local authority must comply with the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) (PSED). Equalities officers, who monitor compliance with the PSED, will be able to assist with this, and can signpost to relevant policies and procedures.

Communication and engagement plans should identify how activity will work towards equitable outcomes. Although compliance with the PSED is a requirement, it is an opportunity to build relationships and trial innovative techniques to ensure engagement is inclusive, and that new transport solutions work for all.

Guiding principles for developing an inclusive engagement plan include ensuring that:

- engagement plans are not discriminatory
- people with protected characteristics are engaged
- engagement activity incorporates an accurate representation of communities
- plans remain flexible to better incorporate views of people with protected characteristics

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has published [guidance](#) on the PSED.



# Tips for engaging successfully

## 1. Develop an engagement strategy



Developing a project specific engagement strategy early on in the project will ensure that engagement is embedded within delivery.

A strategy will help to define and set out the vision, core stakeholders, and the messages and methods of engagement. It will also enable officers to clarify the intended level of engagement for each group.

A central question to guide strategy development is what the council will do with the information gathered. Wider considerations include:

- What is the purpose of engagement activity? Is it part of a formal consultation or an ongoing programme of engagement?
- Identifying the limits of engagement – what is open to influence?
- Can the scope of the engagement or project be led by the community?
- What are the budgetary or time constraints?
- Does the community know the background to the project, or will you need to develop their knowledge to ensure that engagement is effective?
- How will information be fed into internal decision-making processes?

The strategy should also set out how the engagement process will be monitored and evaluated throughout delivery and into the evaluation phase of a project. This will help gauge the effectiveness and understanding of messages and communications.

Officers should discuss the creation and content of their strategy with their comms team. This will ensure your strategy does not conflict with existing communications policy and help officers understand the process for using the council's channels.

## Community visioning



Community visioning is a method of developing a vision for an area that allows residents to set out what they want for their area in the future. Working with the community to understand their vision helps create a sense of ownership as residents are empowered to shape the future of their area, increasing interest in development, and use, of solutions.

The process of visioning can produce short or long-term visions, and the visions created can take various forms – one overarching statement, several more specific visions, or a set of guiding principles. Visioning exercises should [consider](#):

- what people love about their community
- the challenges that they want to solve
- new elements they want to develop for the community

The goal is to create an aspirational vision that guides the decision-making process and ensures that actions will deliver the solutions that the community wants. It requires active engagement from the council and community and can be an effective way to build trust, if you are clear on any limitations.

## Create an engaging narrative



Developing a clear, positive, narrative early in the project can increase engagement and support for change and is as important as creating a positive vision and using effective engagement methods. Creating the vision and narrative with stakeholders allows both to use language that resonates with them.

The narrative should be compelling and articulate the purpose of engagement. Focus on the positive choices residents can make and align with the challenges and motives identified through engagement. Highlighting the wider social and community benefits of a project will engage a broader audience than focussing on sustainability alone.

The use of imagery as part of the narrative is as important as using the right language. Images can help bring projects to life and support a wider understanding of a project.

## Monitor and evaluate

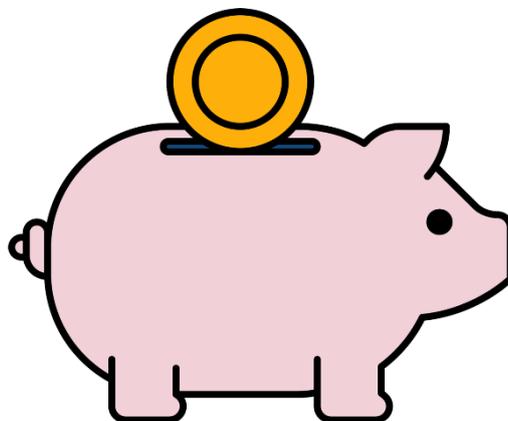


Monitoring and evaluation is an important part of engagement and should be part of your strategy. Setting out an ongoing monitoring and evaluation programme in the engagement strategy will ensure that engagement is [delivering on aims and objectives](#).

Effective monitoring will enable identification of issues in delivery and allow consideration of alternative approaches. It will also ensure that councils are delivering high quality projects that meet the needs of communities and achieves the transport decarbonisation aims of the council. The [Government Communication Service](#) questions to guide evaluation design include:

- what are the outputs of activity?
- how can achievement of the objectives be measured?
- have stakeholders been asked for feedback?
- what worked well and what did not work well?
- what could be changed in future activity?
- what is the best way to present the evaluation data?
- who needs to see it?

There are a range of tools, resources and frameworks available from the [National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement](#) and [Involve](#) that can help councils and their partners design and implement an effective evaluation process.



## 2. Identify your stakeholders



An early step in planning engagement is to begin identifying stakeholders within the community that will be influential in delivering a successful project. This is an ongoing process, and more stakeholders will be identified as projects are delivered.

Your approach to stakeholder identification needs to be flexible and open to new groups throughout the project. One way of ensuring this is to ask, 'who's missing?' at the start of all engagement events.

### Internal stakeholders



Internal stakeholder groups are just as important to identify as external ones. Identifying and engaging with committees, working groups, and other relevant groups across the council may also help answer the question of how the data gathered through engagement will be used.

Officers should work with colleagues across the council to compile a stakeholder list (being mindful of GDPR compliance). This will identify groups and individuals who are already engaged with the council. However, this does not replace other stakeholder identification work as there may be gaps that need to be filled to ensure fully inclusive engagement.

Transport authorities should also engage with district, borough, town and parish authorities and representative bodies, who may have closer relationships with residents and can share local insights.

### External stakeholders



Climate Outreach identifies [six types of stakeholders](#) to engage with for effective public engagement on climate issues, including advocates, decision makers, experts, non-climate communities, social scientists and visual media producers.

Conducting a stakeholder mapping exercise will help identify who to engage and why it is important to engage them. Work by [Government Communications Service](#) (GCS) identifies some questions that will help guide this activity. Combining your initial stakeholder map with a [Stakeholder Analysis Tool](#) can help identify additional stakeholder groups, and define a target level of engagement for each according to their power and influence.

For projects aimed at increasing uptake of public, active and low carbon transport, an important group to identify is non-users of these modes. Understanding their barriers and motivations will likely benefit other groups in the community as well.

### 3. Understand your communities



Undertaking desktop and primary research to develop your understanding of the communities you want to engage is the first step in building good relationships. Research will help identify groups within the community, their behaviours, values, and attitudes.

Some information will be available from official statistics (such as the [2021 census](#)) and other publicly available [sources](#). Community engagement or communications officers will already be using some to inform their work – how can this support engagement on transport decarbonisation? Community groups and transport operators are another useful source of data on user groups.

Conducting your own research will add time to the project but is an important step in effective engagement. Research can identify what the community does and does not want, and what types of messaging they respond to. It can also assist in identifying traditionally under-represented groups.

Surveys are a good way of gathering this data. Well-constructed surveys can also improve understanding of local barriers and concerns about shifting to more sustainable travel and gather ideas to address these. A positively framed survey can acknowledge the role of low carbon transport as part of a whole transport system and set out how the council wants to make it accessible to all.

### Demographics



Considering the demographic profile of your community will develop an understanding of their travel preferences and habits and help shape engagement approaches. Your strategy should consider the needs of all groups, including acknowledging of those who choose not to engage.

For example, the 2021 [National Travel Survey](#) showed that young people (aged 17-29) used public transport more than any other age group, and that those over 50 used private transport more. Using the right techniques, younger people can be empowered to encourage other groups to make better use of public transport.

### Engaging young residents



Research conducted for the [Transport Decarbonisation Plan](#) identified that 11- to 18-year-olds are the most aware of, and concerned about, the environment. They are also the group most likely to feel it is important to take action to reduce transport emissions.

Young people will respond to different methods of engagement than other groups. An informal, interactive, empowering approach is likely to be most effective.

The [Youth Engagement Toolkit](#) suggests effective strategies when engaging young people, as well as identifying benefits of, and barriers to, engagement. [Looking to the Future](#) by Community Rail Network identifies the benefits of youth engagement work and provides a number of case studies on activity taking place across the network.

Organisations such as youth parliament or councils, and locally active children's organisations offer ways to engage with different perspectives of young people.

## Engaging under-represented groups



Groups with protected characteristics often stand to benefit the most from improved low carbon transport but are frequently underrepresented in engagement due to technological, cultural, language, literacy, or social barriers. Ensuring that these, and other seldom heard voices are included is an important part of engagement planning.

These groups are often well represented by local and national groups and charities. Councils can work with these organisations to identify and address potential barriers to both engagement and use of proposed transport solutions.

Ensuring the needs of all are considered in low carbon transport can help realise a range of benefits, including improvements in wellbeing and confidence, and access to opportunities that would not otherwise be possible.

The [Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy](#) notes that without active engagement, new transport solutions can accidentally design out sections of society. The [Inclusive Transport Strategy](#) makes it clear that new mobility services and technologies should be accessible and inclusive by design.

The [Towns Fund](#) has produced a guide to engaging with underrepresented groups that includes suggestions on creating effective messaging, and considerations on diversity and inclusion, accessibility, and digital exclusion. Community Rail Network has also produced a range of guides and webinars on [social inclusion](#).

## Community personas



Within a community, there are likely to be a number of different personas present. Each will have different perspectives on an issue, and there will be differences in their motivations and priorities.

Understanding the range of perspectives that may be present within a community, and the differences between and within groups will help shape messages and engagement methods for the project.

Research by Department for Transport has identified 9 groups based on these perspectives and motivations. For each group (or segment), DfT has developed several transport user [personas](#) as an example of the type of people in each segment. For each persona, DfT has developed supporting information on transport habits, enablers and barriers to different modes and opportunities for change.

DfT segment	Persona characteristics	Barriers to low carbon transport
<u>Less mobile, car reliant</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car is the primary mode of transport (for convenience and accessibility)</li> <li>• Use of public transport is infrequent</li> <li>• May have mobility impairments</li> <li>• Journeys mostly &lt;10 miles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobility issues</li> <li>• Poor weather</li> <li>• Distance to &amp; from stops</li> <li>• Train fare is expensive</li> <li>• Bus services perceived as slow</li> <li>• Limited ability to carry heavy items</li> <li>• Anxiety due to other passengers</li> </ul>
<u>Young urban families</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One car households</li> <li>• Car is the primary mode of transport</li> <li>• Routines built around childcare and work</li> <li>• Use of public transport is rare despite good access</li> <li>• Walk or cycle for short trips or leisure</li> <li>• May become heavier car users in the future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convenience and speed of journey is key</li> <li>• Previous negative experiences with some modes</li> <li>• Personal/ family safety concerns</li> <li>• Reliability of services</li> <li>• Cost for family trips</li> </ul>
<u>Older, less affluent</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car is the primary mode of transport</li> <li>• Older (50+)</li> <li>• In work but approaching retirement</li> <li>• Negative attitude to cycling</li> <li>• May have adult children and travel to visit them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not seen as enjoyable</li> <li>• Existing health issues</li> <li>• Reliability of services</li> <li>• Poor connections</li> <li>• Cost perception (it's cheaper to drive)</li> <li>• Duration of journeys</li> <li>• Not as convenient as car</li> </ul>
<u>Comfortable empty nesters</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car is used for convenience and necessity in rural areas</li> <li>• Older (60+)</li> <li>• Public transport is used for longer trips and leisure</li> <li>• Active travel use is influenced by health, cost, and attitude to the environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active travel may not be seen as enjoyable</li> <li>• Lack of changing facilities (when cycling)</li> <li>• Safety concerns</li> <li>• Availability, cost, and reliability of services</li> <li>• Lack of space for luggage or bikes</li> </ul>

DfT segment	Persona characteristics	Barriers to low carbon transport
<u>Suburban families</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typically 30-40 with children</li> <li>• Car is used for convenience</li> <li>• Likely to use public and active travel</li> <li>• Prefer walking for local trips</li> <li>• Active travel is perceived as leisure activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lifestyle and personal preferences</li> <li>• Lack of infrastructure</li> <li>• Poor connections</li> <li>• Cost for family trips on public transport</li> <li>• Multi-stop journey convenience</li> </ul>
<u>Heavy car user, frequent flier</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typically 30-50 with children</li> <li>• Owns multiple cars</li> <li>• Car is main mode of transport</li> <li>• Travel includes school, sports, appointments, and leisure</li> <li>• Occasional user of public transport for work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active travel is perceived as suitable for short journeys only</li> <li>• Public transport does not fit with lifestyle choices often</li> <li>• Car is more convenient for many journeys</li> <li>• Reliability is a concern</li> <li>• Cost of family trips on public transport</li> </ul>
<u>Elderly and low income without cars</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Older, often live alone</li> <li>• May have health issues</li> <li>• Reliant on public transport or family members</li> <li>• Buses are seen as a good option for local trips</li> <li>• May have owned cars before</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active travel may be less practical for health reasons</li> <li>• Availability &amp; reliability of public transport is key</li> <li>• Safety concerns when travelling late</li> <li>• Distance to nearest stop</li> </ul>
<u>Urban professional without a car</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predominantly 20-40</li> <li>• Live near public transport stops</li> <li>• Travel choices are a combination of cost, distance, and weather</li> <li>• Likely hybrid workers, commuting 2-3 days per week</li> <li>• May become heavier car users in the future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May feel unsafe due to lack of infrastructure (for cycling)</li> <li>• Concerns over pollution from other vehicles</li> <li>• Train travel is expensive</li> <li>• Services are crowded and unreliable</li> <li>• Poor connection between modes</li> </ul>
<u>Young, low income, without a car</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Younger adults, mostly in their 20s or below</li> <li>• Likely students, in low paid work or unemployed</li> <li>• Active travel and public transport are popular</li> <li>• May car share occasionally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of services</li> <li>• Duration and delays</li> <li>• Lack of space for pushchairs</li> <li>• Health concerns</li> <li>• Poor weather</li> <li>• Cycling used for leisure activity</li> </ul>

## 4. Build community relationships



Developing strong, positive relationships between councils, residents and community groups is important – without these, effective community engagement is more difficult. A good first step for councils is to ensure that transport operator feedback and comment channels are monitored, and responses given.

The LGAs [New Conversations toolkit](#) includes a section on [building stronger communities](#), and this [LGA blog post](#) identifies some important points for meaningful relationships. The public participation charity Involve has developed [resources](#) that provide guidance on how to improve community cohesion.

Strong community relationships will lead to a better understanding of who communities are, the challenges they face, and how to address them. In turn, this can inform infrastructure development, ensure services addresses barriers, create a sense of empowerment and recognition, and build confidence in low carbon travel options. Continuous engagement to explain the decision making processes and responds to issues will help communities feel confident that their opinions will be heard.

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### Case study: Giving communities influence in Manchester

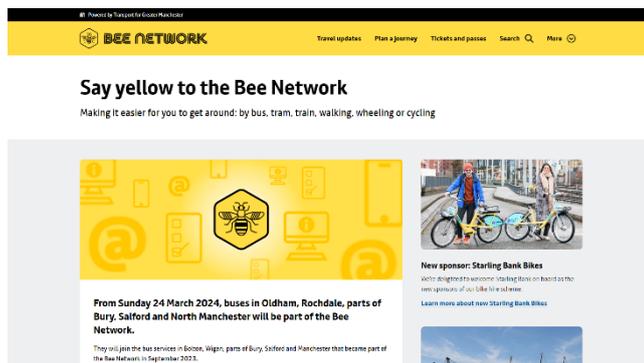


Image from <https://tfgm.com/the-bee-network> accessed 13 March 2024

*The [Bee Network](#) is Transport for Greater Manchester's (TfGM) vision of an integrated public transport and active travel transport network across the city. When developing the network, TfGM wanted to ensure that the design met the needs of local residents. To do that, residents were engaged from the initial design phases using online maps and resources, coupled with in-person Neighbourhood Network Planning sessions to ensure scheme development was community led.*

*When the first version of the network plan was published for comment, 98% of feedback was supportive.*

*The engagement process is ongoing, and Greater Manchester are using community-led design to ensure that transport system improvements meet the needs of all people in a neighbourhood.*

*Transport for Greater Manchester have used the learning from the Bee Network to produce a consultation guide. The first recommendation is to ensure that initial engagement opportunities enable the community to discuss solutions, rather than being told what they are.*

## Use a variety of processes and techniques



The techniques and methods used to engage communities will change as the project develops and relationships deepen. Some will allow more in-depth engagement with fewer stakeholders, while others will allow councils to gather a broad range of views from more stakeholders.

The main engagement processes are shown below, with example techniques. The charity Involve maintains a [directory](#) of engagement techniques.

Engagement process	Example techniques	Delivery channels	Level of engagement
<b>Information sharing</b>	Newsletters, posters, webpages, webinars, social media	Physical & digital	Inform
<b>Questionnaires</b>	Community appraisal, citizen panel, opinion polls, surveys	Physical & digital	Consult
<b>Information gathering</b>	Petitions, consultations, 'pop up' events, dialogues, world cafes	In person & online	Consult & Involve
<b>Facilitated workshops</b>	User panels, advisory groups, dialogues, visioning workshops	In person & online	Involve, Collaborate, & Empower
<b>Participatory discussion</b>	Fishbowl conversation, citizens assembly, town meetings,	In person & online	Consult, Involve & Collaborate
<b>Facilitated discussion</b>	Focus groups, citizens jury, participatory planning	In person	Collaborate, Empower
<b>Collective decision making</b>	Participatory budgeting, citizen summits, planning for real	In person	Collaborate, Empower

Digital and online engagement techniques have the potential to reach a wider audience, including groups who find it more challenging to attend events. There are a range of dedicated engagement platforms and questionnaire software that councils can use as part of this approach.

Traditional techniques are useful for less structured discussions and gathering a broad range of information. They may also attract different audiences who are not as engaged digitally. Councils should look to attend existing events or meetings where possible, rather than setting up their own. In many cases, engagement will be more effective when councils go to where people already are.

Using an approach that combines multiple engagement techniques will lead to more effective, higher quality engagement with a wider range of people. Engaging through multiple channels strengthens relationships, brings people together and builds positivity, particularly when creative or arts-based techniques are used.

Some considerations that apply to multiple engagement techniques include undertaking engagement at different times of day, and ensuring that materials, or events are offered in alternative formats and languages.

## Work with partner organisations



One way of building trust and good relationships with communities is to establish networks of trusted partners with recognised community reputations. These partners can be local people, businesses, or community groups.

These stakeholders can provide useful evidence, data, and insight to help with planning and delivering sustainable transport. This can include community organisations set up to offer a low carbon transport service. Collaborative Mobility UK (CoMo UK) has produced guidance aimed for [community car clubs](#), [bike share](#) and [local authorities](#) that includes information on engagement, along with suggestions of some ways to engage different groups.

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### Case study: Mobilising the community in Southall

*In 2018, Southall residents were shown to have the highest levels of chronic preventable health conditions, and the lowest levels of physical activity in Ealing, but is a desirable location for people looking to settle in the borough. The council wanted to use the positives of living in Southall to increase use of active travel.*

*The [Let's Ride Southall](#) project combines Sport England and council funding to create 4 local cycling hubs and 2500 free bikes. Taking a community approach has allowed one of the hubs to be located next to a large faith centre.*

*Working with the community through the Social Movement, and providing free bikes, is removing barriers to cycling for residents. This includes access to bikes and having someone to cycle with, as well as destinations.*

*The Social Movement is also helping to address social taboos to cycling in some communities, and all cycle mechanics and organised cycle leads are trained residents. Trained residents are run a monthly cycle festival, delivering bike maintenance, activities, and talks.*

*The project has also benefitted from [funding](#) to improve a stretch of canal towpath into a 'wellbeing way'. Bikes are GPS tracked, allowing the Highways team to track where residents are cycling, and target highway interventions to further improve cycling conditions.*

*The council has already seen increased cycling rates on roads, and the project has generated interest in wider infrastructure change to further support cycling. The project was recognised in the [2021 Modeshift Awards](#) as one of the Best Sustainable Travel Initiatives.*

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## 5. Work with the community



Co-development of engagement plans with representatives of the community will help identify the most effective ways to engage with target groups. Working with the community can allow access to a range of engagement opportunities that are otherwise closed to councils.

### Consider the timing of engagement



Engaging stakeholders early can increase support for a project. Doing so gives communities an opportunity to lead and influence decisions and build trust. Once started, engagement should continue during planning and implementation, and into monitoring and evaluation phases.

Strategies should acknowledge that [travel behaviours change](#) across an individual's lifetime, in addition to being influenced by emotions and social factors. These changes often correspond to important life events such as moving house, having children and changes in employment, referred to as "moments of change".

Moments of change reflect changing travel needs as well as opportunities for making lifestyle and transport behaviour decisions. An awareness of how and when travel behaviours change is an important part of project design and will ensure that initiatives can grow and adapt over time.

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### Case study: Planning for active travel in new developments

*Around Your Way* is an initiative by South Gloucestershire Council in association with TravelWest, to encourage residents of new housing developments to choose active and sustainable travel options. It targets individuals moving into new properties as they establish new travel patterns. Support offered to new residents includes:

- **Discover Guides** with information on local walking, cycling routes and public transport facilities complimented with free information leaflets and maps.
- **On-site travel services and events**, such as cycle servicing days, adult cycle training and sustainable travel events.
- **Free active/ sustainable travel offers** including cycle loans, bus 'taster' tickets, and personalised travel planning.
- **A Smarter Travel Voucher Scheme** allows residents to buy eligible items to financially support their choice of sustainable travel.
- **Resident travel surveys and automatic traffic counters**, monitor resident travel patterns and evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative.

## Develop messages that resonate with the community



Influences on transport habits vary between groups, demographics, and experiences of the transport system. For engagement to be effective, messages need to reflect the local situation and present the problem and solution from different perspectives.

Council officers or consultants working on behalf of the council may complete the majority of engagement but working with recognisable figures, such as councillors, will generate interest and trust.

Charities, campaign groups and community organisations have greater knowledge and experience of engagement. Working with these groups, allowing them to lead where possible can help foster trust, facilitate deeper connections, and increase awareness among less engaged groups.

Local Government Association (LGA) research on best practice in [climate change communications](#) identifies eight tips for developing climate change messaging:

- **bring people into the debate** – whether virtually or in person, this can stimulate and inspire ideas
- **start small** – achieving net zero is a challenge. Make small changes first, and celebrate success
- **find trusted voices** – partnering with known, trusted community figures can widen your reach
- **demonstrate commitment** – make sure messages are embedded within council documents
- **start in-house** – show leadership by making changes within the council first
- **celebrate progress** – if communities are already acting, use your voice to share the good news
- **lean on the experts** – academic research can add credibility. How can local universities help?
- **embrace new channels** – use different methods to engage target audiences

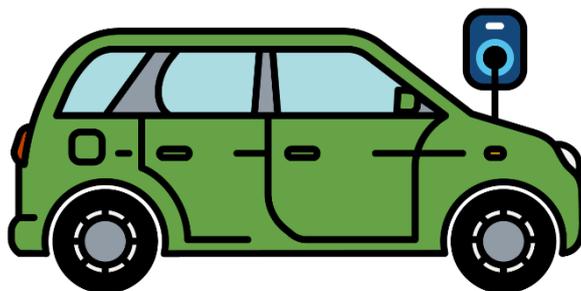
[Sustrans](#) suggest five steps to design effective messages for behaviour change:

1. Identify which audience to focus on first.
2. Identify broad topics/ barriers that need to be addressed.
3. Identify potential solutions and use these as the starting point for messaging.
4. Review messages and identify the most compelling.
5. Share the list with colleagues and contacts to select preferred message(s).

# Further guidance

There are a range of organisations who provide advice, support, and guidance on effective community engagement:

- As part of their Britain Talks Climate toolkit, [Climate Outreach](#) identifies seven segments. The seven segments provide an evidence based understanding of the British public. Their website contains information on the segments, including identifying effective engagement practice and messaging for all segments.
- [Sustrans](#), the sustainable transport charity are widely recognised as leaders in improving sustainable transport and have a wide range of support and case studies available to support organisations in delivering more sustainable, community engagement on low carbon transport and travel projects.
- [Community Rail Network](#), part of the Sustainable Transport Alliance has produced a range of resources on expanding access to railways, and how to engage different groups on travelling more sustainably.
- The LGA is supporting councils to better engage communities using [Community Action](#) to involve and empower communities to design and deliver services. Their website contains a range of resources and tools to support councils.



This report was created by the local government support programme.

For more information, visit: [energysavingtrust.org.uk/service/local-government-support-programme](https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/service/local-government-support-programme)  
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