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**Consultation: Community Benefits for Electricity Transmission Network Infrastructure**

Suffolk County Council (SCC) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this consultation on Community Benefits for Electricity, Transmission Network Infrastructure, the following is SCC's response.

Suffolk is a key location for the delivery of Net Zero projects, it has shallow seas offshore that are ideal for fixed foundation wind turbines, it is well located for interconnectors, and it has also attracted a proposal for the largest onshore solar development in the UK. In addition, it will, subject to the construction of Sizewell C and the life extension of Sizewell B, be the leading operational nuclear cluster in the UK. Therefore, both current and future energy developments, and the transmission infrastructure required to support them, have a significant impact on our communities.

SCC strongly supports the principle of providing community benefits for electricity network infrastructure. The Council recognises that local communities that are hosting infrastructure are vital actors within the planning system<sup>1</sup> and the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regime. Community benefits begin to appreciate the host community's involvement; however, effective community engagement is essential.

Therefore, the Council welcomes the statement written in the consultation, that:

*"[there is a] need to bring communities along in order to achieve net zero targets [...] recognising the vital role of communities that host network infrastructure in supporting national objectives [...] to ensure communities feel that they are positively benefitting".*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/imported/letter-to-kwasi-kwarteng-from-scc-final-280322-redacted.pdf>

Additionally, however, it is very important to recognise that to deliver the transmission infrastructure necessary to support decarbonization and net zero targets, community benefits are a necessity, but they are not sufficient.

Widespread acceptance of the need for change to mitigate and adapt to climate change is well established. However, widespread understanding of the spatial extent, magnitude, scale, and speed of change required, has not been established.

It is also essential to ensure that the outcomes of these very substantial changes are fair and equitable, the consultation makes important progress on this issue. However, it is equally essential to ensure that communities can properly participate in the process of change, rather than just engage with it in a superficial way.

Fair and equitable outcomes, which include community benefits, will only be accepted and supported if the process by which they are arrived at is genuinely participatory, creating the opportunity for a productive dialogue between project promoters and communities and offers, within a predetermined range of parameters, the possibility of change.

Participatory approaches to placemaking are a well-established practice in urban redevelopment in the UK and in rural development. Project promoters should, given the magnitude, extent, and speed of change that is urgently required, apply these practices appropriately in the development of net zero and climate adaptive infrastructure projects.

This approach in combination with community benefits should be part of the package to foster the social licence for change that is essential to build the infrastructure required, to both reach the UK's Net Zero targets and adapt to the impacts of a changing climate (Appendix B).

Our principal concerns with this consultation are as follows:

- Community benefits for local communities hosting infrastructure projects that are determined to be in the national need **should be mandatory** (see questions 1 and 3).
- Whilst SCC appreciates that the Government is considering community benefits for network transmission infrastructure, **benefits should be guaranteed for communities hosting all types of infrastructure including large scale generation technologies such as solar schemes, new nuclear, and the onshore impacts of offshore wind** (see question 2).
- The guidance should be prescriptive, clear, and robust and should establish core principles of community benefits, including **a binding tariff on developers for the level of funding per type of infrastructure so communities have certainty in the process** (questions 5, 8, and 9).
- Community **engagement on community benefits should occur earlier** in the process, be ongoing and effective, **and capture a range of voices from within the host community, to ensure fair representation** (see questions 1, 4, and 6).
- If the guidance is to be published in 2023, it should be agile and reviewed at regular intervals, particularly in the first 36 months of its implementation, to ensure that the framework is performing. Furthermore, the guidance reviews should be utilised to **revisit other community benefits opportunities that have been omitted from this consultation, such as the alleviation of energy poverty, electricity bill discounts, and community ownership** (see questions 5 and 6).

- Work should be ongoing to **create community capacity** to respond to NSIPs **so that town and parish councils can engage effectively by means of ‘without prejudice’ positions** (see question 1).
- **Community benefits are necessary but not sufficient** to achieve community support for climate adaptative infrastructure, **project promoters should engage host communities in participatory approaches to placemaking** and community benefits. This ensures fair and equitable outcomes (see Appendix B).
- The operation and purpose of **direct payments** will need to be carefully considered. Adverse impacts on the occupier of a property will be experienced by both current occupiers and their successors in title, on that basis a one-off payment is not a reasonable approach. However, direct payments to address the loss of asset value could reasonably be made on a one-off basis, to current occupiers.

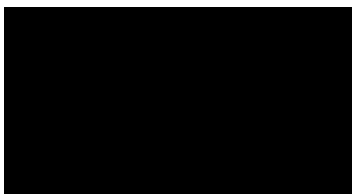
Finally, SCC endorses and supports the April 2023 report<sup>2</sup> by the National Infrastructure Commission (**NIC**), particularly its views on benefiting communities. Foremost that; *“the government should set out a national framework for compulsory community benefit which provides a menu of possible benefits to communities, while retaining the flexibility for local communities to indicate which benefits best they prefer.”* The Council further supports the approaches taken by EirGrid<sup>3</sup> on community benefits in Ireland.

Officers of the Council are, given the experience of Suffolk in hosting energy infrastructure, ready to engage with the further development of this evolving policy.

Detailed responses to the consultation questions are appended to this letter (Appendix A).

In summary, the Council believes that this consultation is a step towards a fair and equitable future; however, more must be done to bring host communities along and ensure that they are genuine participants in shaping their local area in collaboration with project promoters of nationally significant infrastructure.

With kind regards,



Richard Rout

Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment and  
Deputy Leader of Suffolk County Council

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<sup>2</sup> <https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads/NIC-Planning-Study-Final-Report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/209130-EirGrid-Community-Benefit-Policy-A4-Report-final.pdf>

## Appendix A – SCC’s Response to the Consultation Questions

# Suffolk County Council’s Response to the Community Benefits for Electricity Transmission Network Infrastructure Consultation Questions

## Government Aims and Principles

**Q.1. What are your views on how community support for electricity transmission network can be improved? This includes any electricity transmission network infrastructure developed by Transmission Operators and developers within scope of these proposals. We would welcome supporting evidence if available.**

Foremost, SCC strongly believes that community benefits for communities hosting nationally significant infrastructure projects should be mandatory. However, as community benefits fall outside of the planning balance and are non-material in considering the consent of a planning application, as established in *R (Wright) v Forest of Dean District Council* 2019,<sup>4</sup> it should be recognised that community benefits are not mitigation or compensation. Thus, the mitigation hierarchy should remain for consequential and significant detrimental adverse impacts.

SCC’s preference would be for a mandatory approach to community benefits, supported by prescriptive guidance that could be regularly reviewed and flexible for local communities to indicate their preferences for their local benefits. Further benefits to this approach would avoid the negative optics surrounding project promoters voluntarily offering direct community benefits to residents located in the immediate proximity of the proposed infrastructure.

A mandatory approach ensures that benefits are consistent and guaranteed for host communities, however, we believe that this must (and can) be in tandem with flexibility. This approach ensures that communities have certainty in the NSIP process as aspired to in the NSIP Action Plan,<sup>5</sup> knowing that their contributions and representations throughout the application and examination process will result in a community benefit provision tailored to their neighbourhood and local needs.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKSC/2019/53.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-nsip-reforms-action-plan/nationally-significant-infrastructure-action-plan-for-reforms-to-the-planning-process>

The mandatory framework could follow current good practice community benefits policies such as that by EirGrid<sup>6</sup> and establish minimum inflation-adjustable tariffs for the level of funding per type of infrastructure. Whilst guidance could focus on setting our criteria for which additional funding could be drawn upon when local circumstances are unique, or the host communities are hosting significant cumulative impacts.

Community benefits should be offered in tandem with community cooperation with the promoter on aspects of detailed design post-consent to ensure collaborative placemaking is achieved.

Community engagement on benefits should occur early, be ongoing, transparent, and effective, and ensures that it captures a diverse range of voices representing the community. This should be alongside creating capacity in communities, enabling town and parish councils to respond effectively to NSIPs, and educating town and parish councils on the NSIPs process. SCC, as an NSIP Centre of Excellence, is undertaking work with the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (**SALC**) to provide additional guidance for town and parish councils on the NSIP process.

Finally, improved communication from the Government on the spatial extent, magnitude, scale, and speed of the change required to reach net zero environmental ambitions is essential. The scale of the transition will be transformative, in altering the sense of place and experience of the local landscape, and this should become a priority for Government, including the promotion of participatory placemaking as a potential forward outlook towards a collaborative solution.

## **Projects in Scope to Receive Community Benefits**

**Q.2. Do you agree with the proposed types of infrastructure and projects we would include in these proposals? Please explain why.**

SCC welcomes that transmission infrastructure projects are being assessed for community benefits; however, we view this consultation as an early opportunity to develop the core principles of community benefits and encourage that these are expanded to include broader NSIPs, including generation infrastructure.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/209130-EirGrid-Community-Benefit-Policy-A4-Report-final.pdf>

The Council supports the statement that “*any projects that have not yet commenced construction [when the guidance has been published] should be within scope [to receive community benefits]*”. We encourage that the guidance is clear and comprehensive, defining key terms. SCC would be further supportive of the principle that projects that have already commenced construction being included in the scope, as these host communities should receive benefits for hosting national infrastructure. However, SCC recognises that, in some cases, this will not be achievable where projects have received their final investment decisions.

## Government Guidance

**Q.3. What are your views on government's preferred approach of a voluntary benefit scheme underpinned by government guidance (covering both wider and direct community benefits)? Please explain why and provide any supporting evidence if available.**

SCC does not support voluntary community benefits, instead, we strongly favour compulsory community benefits. The Council is concerned that voluntary direct community benefits may have significant negative optics. This could also result in a negative externality whereby individuals in the scope of the area of potential direct benefits may not feel empowered to contribute without prejudice representations, in fear of losing these voluntary benefits. SCC does not find an issue with voluntary wider community benefits but does believe that green infrastructure should be an expected provision of community benefit schemes and thus an overarching mandatory approach would be preferable.

Thus, Suffolk County Council encourages that community benefits should be mandatory and that the calculation of the value of the benefit should be set at the national level and should include criteria for additional funding to be awarded based on unique local considerations and circumstances.

Where community benefits are provided on a project-by-project basis, this generally neglects to appreciate the cumulative impacts felt by the host community. This is especially noticeable where national infrastructure is required to be in close proximity to other national infrastructure and thus clustered nearby or surrounding a community. The Council, therefore, suggests that coordination of community benefits in a given region would be a preferable approach. Additionally, where possible, projects should provide a level of funding that acknowledges, respects, and understands that future projects may or will be located nearby its proposed infrastructure.

**Q.4. What are your views on the information we have proposed to include within government guidance? This includes identifying eligible communities, consultation and engagement, governance and delivery and funding.**

SCC welcomes all the information proposed to be included in government guidance but further encourages that the community benefits strands approach, as adopted in EirGrid's Community Benefit Policy,<sup>7</sup> is considered.

Regarding the EirGrid Community Benefit Policy, SCC would like to highlight its vital components that the Council believes should be translated into national policy in England, Scotland, and Wales, such as:

- explicitly requiring set calculations for assessing the value;
- when (in terms of project phases) community benefit is distributed;
- the use of local community forums to ensure effective community engagement; and
- the three community benefit streams (sustainability, community, and biodiversity) which make evident what community benefits can deliver.

In terms of additional information to the proposed inclusions, SCC would like to draw attention to work already completed by BEIS in December 2021 from the experiences of Community Engagement and Benefits from Onshore Wind Developments.<sup>8</sup> In particular, principles including early and ongoing engagement with the community and reaching the whole community would be beneficial to carry forward.

Neither current best practices nor proposals include the requirement for community benefits to be monitored. SCC considers that guidance on the monitoring and reporting of the distribution of community benefits would be valued. Regular reporting would ensure that community benefits are being delivered on the ground and appropriately funding community wishes.

Concerning the identification of eligible communities, SCC considers that a “zone of visual influence” approach may be appropriate, particularly for direct community benefits. As this approach especially recognises those whose experience of their sense of place and their community will be most significantly affected by the visual intrusion of national infrastructure into their immediate landscape.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/209130-EirGrid-Community-Benefit-Policy-A4-Report-final.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1040627/community-engagement-and-benefits-from-onshore-wind.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1040627/community-engagement-and-benefits-from-onshore-wind.pdf)



**Q.5. Do you agree with the government's proposals to focus on direct and wider community benefits, choosing not to pursue options such as community ownership and electricity bill discounts?**

SCC agrees with the approach regarding wider community benefits, as these should form part of all community benefits, especially where they support the national transition to net zero. SCC is especially supportive of wider community benefits, where these fund community projects such as the introduction of (or considerable subsidies for) solar panels on the roofs of the host community. Thus, achieving long-term indirect energy price reduction rather than a one-off non-renewable benefit achieved by direct community benefits.

Regarding the focus on direct community benefits and omission of community ownership and electricity bill discounts (as known as fuel or energy poverty reduction), the Council's assessment of alternative options will be outlined below.

As community benefits are proposed to be funded by energy bill payers nationally via Ofgem, SCC would like to highlight that there exists some potentially questionable optics surrounding direct payments. It is inevitable that beneficiaries will include socially and economically affluent residents, with the benefits being financed through all bill payers including those in energy poverty, which is likely to be perceived as unjust. Thus, any community benefit approach must carefully consider how the eligible community is defined.

Furthermore, the operation and purpose of direct payments will need to be carefully considered. Adverse impacts on the occupier of a property will be experienced by both current occupiers and their successors in title, on that basis a one-off payment is not a reasonable approach. However, direct payments to address loss of asset value could reasonably be made on a one-off basis to current occupiers. Therefore, a scheme of direct payments would have to deal with both those issues.

Concerning energy poverty reduction (or electricity bill discounts), unit costs are likely to fall in the medium term from their current highs, however, electricity demand will continue to rise because of changes in usage. Hence, whilst there was 108GW of installed capacity on the GB National Grid in 2018, according to National Grid Electricity Transmission, there is anticipated to be nearly 300GW of installed capacity on the GB National Grid by 2050. In addition, the costs of the electricity system transition will be loaded onto consumer bills via Ofgem, as well as from multiple calls on consumers to fund Regulated Asset Base projects, and levies to support the transition of industrial users from Natural Gas to Hydrogen. Therefore, energy costs will likely be a higher proportion of household spending for all than they have been historically, particularly for lower-income households. SCC would hence suggest there is little chance of abundant cheap energy until after 2050, therefore, community benefits focusing on energy poverty meets those needs and is likely to be important politically.



On community ownership, SCC draws attention to the Infrastructure Act 2015 section 38,<sup>9</sup> which gives the Secretary of State the power to make regulations for a community electricity right where the voluntary approach is considered not to be successful.<sup>10</sup> Community ownership is a valuable tool in creating the host community's buy-in and interest in a project being developed in their locality, where participatory placemaking is an integral feature of the project, and should be further considered for community benefits for electricity transmission network infrastructure.

Another potential approach is one whereby community benefit is offered by voucher-based schemes. This approach would allow sufficient flexibility for the small number of homes that are off-grid to benefit, as vouchers could be used to buy other fuels such as bottled gas or other solid/liquid fuels. Furthermore, a sufficiently flexible and well-designed voucher scheme might allow the vouchers to be spent on energy-related home improvements, both insulation and shutters externally for heat resilience.

If Government intends to deliver the new guidance at pace, then SCC considers that the current provision of a blended approach of direct and wider community benefits is acceptable, if made mandatory. However, the Council advises that there should be opportunities taken to revisit these other viable options at a later date.

**Q.6. How do you think guidance could be developed most effectively? How should different stakeholders be involved?**

The guidance should be agile, able to respond to updates upon feedback, and be reviewed at regular intervals (at least in the first 36 months of its implementation), to determine its effectiveness and whether it should be adapted to be more prescriptive.

The Government should consider the establishment of workshops to capture a diverse range of voices that represent local communities, in particular, communities that are hosting (have done or are due to be) critical national infrastructure. There must be considerable efforts made to avoid any one demographic of a population dominating the discussion on the effective forms of community engagement, governance, and distribution of community benefits to ensure fair and equitable benefits.

**Q.7. How do you think the effectiveness of this approach should be evaluated? Please explain why and provide any supporting evidence.**

No comment.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/7/notes/division/4/6/1>

<sup>10</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/363626/briefing\\_for\\_peers\\_community\\_electricity\\_right.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/363626/briefing_for_peers_community_electricity_right.pdf)

## Level of Funding

### **Q.8. Do you have a preferred approach to how the level of funding should be calculated? Why is this your preferred approach?**

The Council highlights its experience that due to the current voluntary framework, the level of funding and the remit of its allocation has significantly varied. This has led to inconsistencies and disproportionately low community benefits funding offered to host communities. Thus, SCC would endorse a more regulated calculation on the level of funding.

In terms of transmission infrastructure, SCC would prefer that the level of funding is calculated at a set value per type of infrastructure. For example, in regard to transmission lines, via value per kilometre of overhead line with separate value cost for underground cabling. Other transmission infrastructures, including transformer stations and international interconnectors, should have varying set values according to the variances in those technologies. Further, SCC contends that value by percentage of the project cost would likely result in undesirable externalities such as disincentivising projects that incorporate additional undergrounding to avoid sensitive landscapes (such as AONBs in Suffolk) in their proposals as this would inadvertently and improperly also demand an increased community benefit. The Council suggests that EirGrid's policy provides a strong example in this regard.

In terms of nationally significant infrastructure other than transmission, outside the scope of projects included in this consultation, SCC reserves its position and encourages a later consultation occurs to assess these views.

### **Q.9. What level of funding do you believe is appropriate? Why do you believe this? Could you please provide any evidence or data as to how you have come to this calculation.**

SCC further encourages the Government to consider EirGrid's funding calculations when establishing a methodology for assessing the value of community benefits for transmission infrastructure.

## Next Steps

### **Q.10. Is there anything further we should consider as part of next steps?**

SCC welcomes the proposed next steps, especially that guidance is expected to be issued in 2023 and the intention to apply the guidance across Great Britain as this will ensure that communities have certainty in the NSIPs process as aspired to in the NSIP Action Plan.

To further reiterate, SCC would like to see community benefits become mandatory. Therefore, the Council advises a further next step should be to identify suitable mechanisms to make community benefits compulsory and work with National Grid and Ofgem to develop and design a detailed scheme using EirGrid's current practice as a starting point.

## **Analytical Annex Questions**

**Q.11. Do you agree with the rationale for intervention and the market failures we have identified? Are there any points we have missed?**

SCC agrees with the rationale for intervention and supports the contribution that *"communities that host network infrastructure are therefore critical support in delivering cheaper, cleaner, secure energy"* and that *"in the absence of government intervention, these external benefits are unlikely to be considered"*.

**Q.12. Do you agree with the impacts that have been identified? If not, explain why with supporting evidence.**

No comment.

**Q.13. Do you think there are other impacts that have not been identified? If yes, what other impacts are there that have not been included? Please provide supporting evidence.**

No comment.

**Q.14. Please provide any data and evidence to support a detailed assessment of each of the impacts.**

No comment.

**Q.15. Please provide any data and evidence on whether this policy is likely to reduce delays to transmission network build and how long by.**

Community benefits are one part of the puzzle to fostering greater community acceptance of the transformative scale of the infrastructure that is required to achieve the net zero transition. To reduce delays post-consent, considerable attention and thought must be paid to enabling participatory placemaking and community capacity to respond to NSIPs. The Council defers to developers and promoters regarding the reduction of delays in real terms.

**Q.16. Are there any groups you expect would be uniquely impacted by these proposals, such as small and micro businesses or people from protected characteristics? If yes, which groups do you expect would be uniquely impacted? Please provide supporting evidence.**

The tourism industry is uniquely impacted by the NSIP regime, however, due to the nature of the varying demand on the industry and the qualitative aspects of impacts these are frequently challenging to quantify. To ensure that community benefits are fair and equitable, regarding tourism impacts, SCC suggests local tourism businesses (and associated organisations, such as AONB) are provided with the opportunities to contribute and influence decisions in distribution.

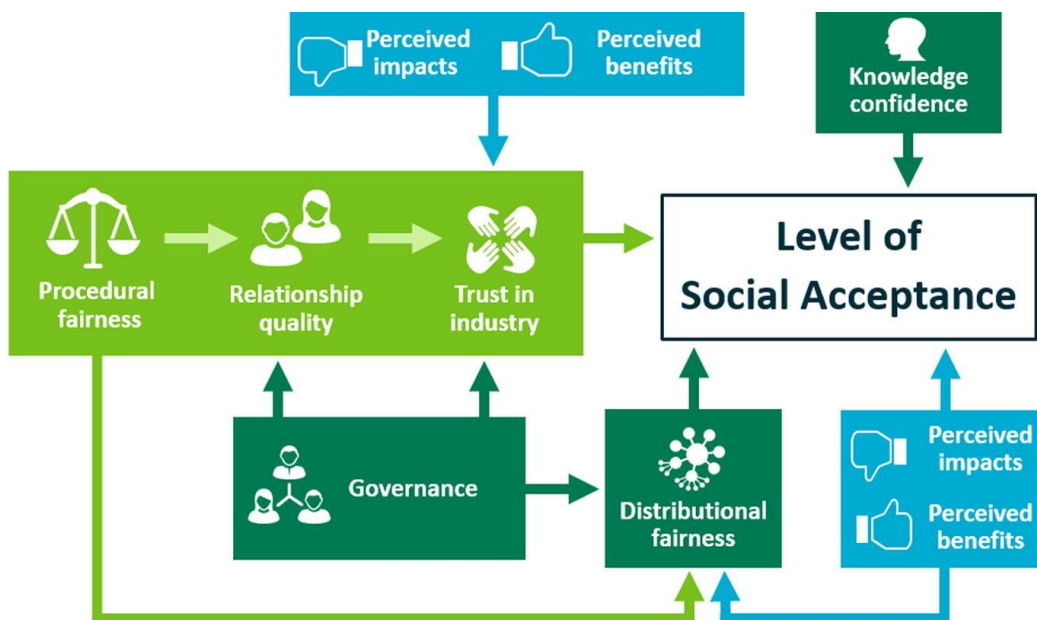
## Appendix B – Social Licence and Participatory Placemaking

# Improving Community Engagement and Support

### Social Licence

Social Licence is the degree of acceptance of a corporate entity's practices and operating procedures by the community. It is not static and reflects the evolving nature of the relationships of industries, regulators, and the state, with their communities.

Walton and McCrea<sup>11</sup> (2020) produced a model of social licence based on research into the Australian onshore gas sector. It is notable that the study identified benefit sharing, impact mitigation, procedural fairness, and governance as key areas which could be used to increase trust and confidence in a project.



A statistical model explaining social acceptance, or lack thereof, of CSG development

Figure 1 – Walton and McCrea (2020) model of social licence

What this model, and the paper, indicates is that distributional fairness, which the community benefits consultation is attempting to address, is only part of the puzzle of social licence for change and the development of new infrastructure.

<sup>11</sup> Understanding social licence to operate for onshore gas development: How the underlying drivers fit together  
Applied Energy Dec 2020 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S030626192031237X?via%3Dihub>

These issues are developed more fully and applied to transmission infrastructure, by the Australian Energy Grid Alliance in their best practice guidance [Acquiring Social Licence for Electricity Transmission](#) (August 2022).

Finally, it is notable that the Australian Energy Market Operator has set up the *Advisory Council on Social Licence*<sup>12</sup> “to better understand broader community sentiment, execution challenges and possible opportunities presented by the construction of new energy infrastructure.”

## Participatory Placemaking

In addition to distributional fairness, transparent governance, and perceived benefits, what Walton and McCrea call procedural fairness and relationship quality, can be significantly improved, using Participatory Placemaking. Participatory Placemaking is an established approach for urban regeneration and rural development.

The intention of this approach, using participatory placemaking to develop energy and climate adaptive major infrastructure, as outlined by Dr Claire Haggett<sup>13</sup>, moves from an engagement model of solely information provision and feedback to, in addition, within defined parameters, a deliberative approach<sup>14</sup>. This approach to engagement “*necessitates a shift in emphasis from competitive interest bargaining to collaborative consensus building*”. Such changes in process are important, as this means that to a much greater extent than is the case at present, changes are done with, rather than done to, local communities.

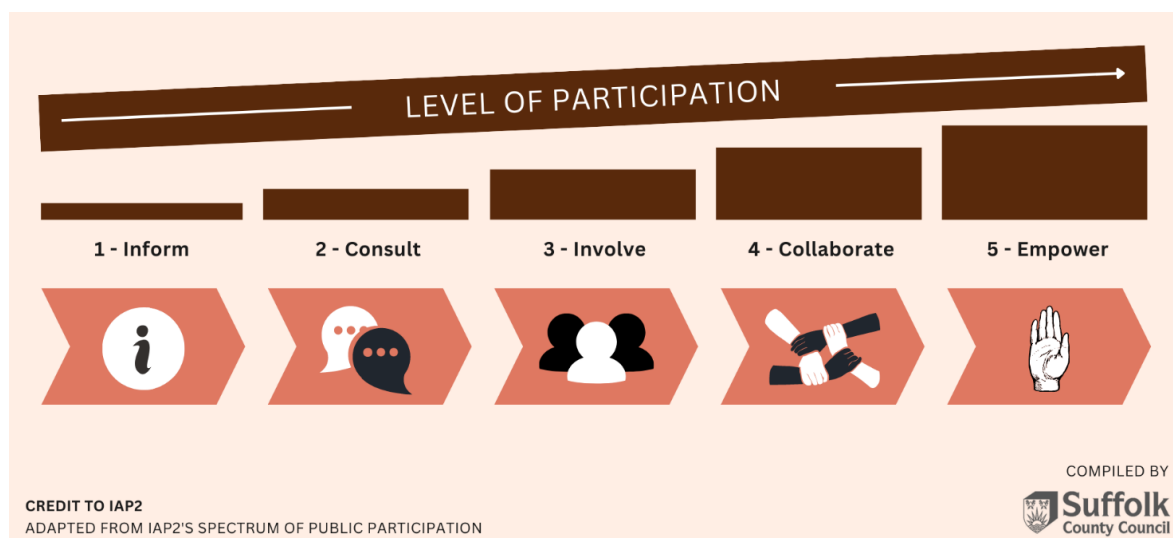


Figure 2 – Level of participation achieved from each stage of participatory placemaking

<sup>12</sup> <https://aemo.com.au/consultations/industry-forums-and-working-groups/list-of-industry-forums-and-working-groups/social-licence-advisory-council> and <https://aemo.com.au/newsroom/news-updates/community-voice-speaks-volumes-at-inaugural-advisory-council-meeting>

<sup>13</sup> Chapter 23 of Public Engagement in Planning for Renewable Energy from *Planning for Climate Change 2009* <https://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/~sallen/jayne/Haggett%20Planning%20and%20Climate%20Change%20chapter%20final%20proofs.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> IAP2 spectrum of public participation [https://iap2canada.ca/Resources/Documents/0702-Foundations-Spectrum-MW-rev2%20\(1\).pdf](https://iap2canada.ca/Resources/Documents/0702-Foundations-Spectrum-MW-rev2%20(1).pdf)

A suggested approach for NSIP projects is as follows:

1. At the initial round of public engagement, such as the initial flyer to relevant households, or any press releases should, set out that, in addition to the traditional exhibition events, drop-ins, and webinars, the project will, in collaboration with town and parish councils in the locality of the project, be seeking to create a panel of local people. Do not at this stage outline the function and scope of that panel, just state that further information will follow in due course.
2. Identify the relevant parishes for the project, and depending on the number of parishes, write to them asking the parish/town council to nominate two people, who are either on the parish/town council or have been nominated by the council, to be part of a community project panel.
3. The initial purpose of the panel should be to establish a functional group of engaged individuals. It is likely most or all of the participants will initially be of the view that the project should not be happening or should be happening elsewhere.\* Therefore, the initial meeting of the group will need to set out the rules of engagement, that is the purpose of the panel is to put questions to the project promoter which will inform their thinking about the project and improve their engagement with the wider community.
4. Subsequently, the role of the panel will be to provide feedback on proposals that are emerging and which it is fit to share in the public domain, in addition, where there are multiple design options or multiple potential outcomes, these options or outcomes will be explained to the panel, interrogated by the panel, and the panel will provide feedback to the project promoter.
5. Overall, the purpose of the panel is to work with the promoter to engage with emerging details of how the project will be built, designed, and mitigated. This will ensure that the panel can participate actively in place making, regarding those aspects of the development around which there is flexibility. Discussion of the need for, or alternatives to the project are not for the panel but for other forums.
6. Clearly, prior to determination of the Development Consent Order and appointment of lead contractors, design outcomes will remain provisional. Therefore, development of the detailed designs used for the Discharge of Requirements will need to be developed in consultation with the panel before submission to the discharging Local Authority.
7. It is anticipated that Local members (Councillors) will be part of the panel throughout in addition to parish representatives. Furthermore, relevant Local Authority Officers will also be present to observe proceedings and to support participants in their consideration of issues to assist the project promoter in the facilitation of effective discussions.

*\* A neutral chairman for meetings of the panel is likely to be appropriate.*