

Review of the Principles of Community Engagement

Energy Developments Meeting, 23 September 2026

At the 2026 annual public meeting of the Energy Projects Partnership, attendees took part in group work looking at the East Lammermuir Principles of Community Engagement.

The Principles of Community Engagement were prepared in 2024 to demonstrate that the signatories are working with the best intentions and are committed to engaging with the community at every stage of their developments.

[Check out the Principles here.](#)

Groupwork structure

There were 5 facilitated groups, each listening to community members' insights about:

- What is working well?
- What could work better?

Each group focussed on one of the 5 Principles:

1. Working Collaboratively
2. Sharing Information
3. Listening to Concerns
4. Responding to Feedback
5. Creating a Positive Legacy

Participants were encouraged to circulate between groups, in practice most people went to 2 groups each, following a half way reminder gong to circulate.

Who was in the room?

Community members – 10 (including 1 from West Barns and 1 from Dunbar and East Linton Area Partnership)

Energy projects represented:

- Berwick Bank offshore windfarm

- Branxton Substation
- EGL1
- Crystal Rig windfarms
- Aikengall windfarms
- Branxton BESS
- Newlands Hill Wind Energy Hub

East Lothian Council – Keith Dingwall, Head of Development and Councillor Lyn Jardine

Support – Jo Demer, ELCC Administrator and Sue Guy, LPP Delivery Officer

Group facilitators:

1. Beth Landon, Energy Projects Partnership Manager
2. Rachel Searle, Foundation Scotland
3. Kirsty Ryder, SP Energy networks
4. Chris Bruce , East Lammermuir Community Council
5. Gary Donlin, SSE Renewables

Key findings

What is working well?

Attendees' comments about what is working well (over all 5 Principles) can be grouped under 3 main themes:

1. Community Engagement activities
 - a. Most effective when key energy project representatives and knowledgeable people from the community are brought together in person to address a particular issue (e.g. hedgerow removal or cyclist access)
 - b. The Community Traffic and Travel Forum (CTTF) and Energy Developments meetings like this event (with group work) were flagged as an effective means for local residents to engage with energy projects and vice versa.

- c. We are seeing engagements at a human level, where residents feel listened to, e.g. taking the time to meet in person, building up trust over time by addressing complaints.
- 2. Communications
 - a. The weekly email Energy Projects news bulletins and quarterly newsletters are welcome and effective means for communication.
 - b. Collating all updates in one place and having someone to coordinate this is appreciated.
 - c. Reporting portal (although early days)
- 3. Minimising construction impacts

The following initiatives were mentioned as helpful:

- a. Dashcams in vehicles
- b. SPEN litter pick around the Innerwick A1 junction.
- c. Recording of contractor vehicle speeds on public roads
- d. Sharing of haul roads
- e. Focus on local access

There were fewest comments from group 5 “creating a positive legacy” with no mention of the work underway to deliver on the 4 ambitions taken from the Local Place Plan, perhaps indicating that better communication is needed on the great work already happening (check out the ELCC website under the [Local place Plan section](#)).

What could work better?

There were about twice as many comments on this than on “what is working well?”, indicating there is still a lot of room for improvement.

Attendees’ comments about what is working well (over all 5 Principles) can be grouped under 4 main themes:

- 1. Community Engagement activities
 - a. Earlier and sustained (during construction) engagement is needed
 - b. Demonstrable actions following engagement should be fed back to the community, this will build trust (e.g. highlight achievements of CTTF such as the horse laybys for Branxton Substation project)

- c. Some developers are absent, especially smaller developers and those selling on projects
- d. Better design of community engagement events is needed, e.g. holding meetings during daylight

2. Communications

- a. Earlier notice of construction impacts, e.g road closures
- b. Consideration should be given to avoid digital exclusion - phone number contacts for each project, delivery of newsletters to all households each quarter (currently once a year, with the other 3 available in hard copy on request)
- c. Better information about cancelled or stalled energy projects
- d. Simplified and clearer communications about road closures
- e. Wider information sharing, e.g. to neighbouring community councils
- f. Help to understand planning and construction terminology
- g. More information available online, e.g. FAQs and org charts for developers / transmission owners

3. Minimising construction impacts

- a. Better collaboration between energy projects, e.g. to minimise length of time local roads are closed, share haul roads and minimise access issues (e.g. for cyclists and pedestrians)
- b. A “we can if...” attitude is needed to minimise impacts
- c. Clearer road closure and diversion signage
- d. On the ground monitoring of issues and enforcement, e.g. littering and aggressive driving, and better resourcing for ELC Roads Department
- e. Use of park and rides to reduce site traffic
- f. Vehicle identifiers for all contractor vehicles

4. Sharing learning

- a. A “code of conduct” was recommended, setting out best practice and to set a right culture for contractors and subcontractors, should be shared with “new” developers and published on the joint website
- b. Developer-only meetings (bi-annually?) to share lessons learned

5. Energy planning / cumulative impacts
 - a. Better planning for energy projects is needed both nationally and in areas impacted by multiple developments ([NESO](#) is an absent stakeholder)
 - b. Earlier engagement with planning applications is needed, this is a “golden opportunity” to influence design
 - c. Better spatial planning to minimise cumulative impacts is needed

Group 5 which focussed on “creative legacy” recorded further insights on the following 2 themes:

1. Local Place Plan delivery
 - a. Better showcasing of positive outcomes and progress is needed
 - b. More action needed on shared transport and travel solutions for the community (e.g. taxis and A1 crossing)
 - c. Need to think more strategically and ambitiously (“outside the box”)
 - d. Better information needed on accessing community benefit funding and how funding is being spent
 - e. Better collaboration with ELC on strategic projects
2. Protecting the landscape
 - a. Better protection of the existing landscape and heritage and more meaningful re-landscaping is needed
 - b. Consideration should be given to landscape change impacts on house prices

Recommendations for the Energy Projects Partnership

- Build on the success of in person engagements where community members can meaningfully influence energy projects, e.g. through the Community Traffic and Travel Forum.
- Trial in person meetings at different times, e.g. daytime to reach those who prefer not to go out in the evenings.
- Request funding to post the quarterly newsletter to all East Lammermuir households more frequently than once a year (preferably 4 times).

- Improve joint communications about energy projects, this work is already underway via a new ELCC website which is under development, which will streamline the Energy projects weekly email bulletins.
- Develop and publish a “ways of working in East Lammermuir” document, including:
 - a code of conduct for contractors;
 - a list of recommended planning conditions relevant to most projects
 - a round up of the partnership initiatives developers / transmission owners are expected to engage with (e.g. reporting portal, joint communications, contributions to the partnership budget etc);
 - examples of best practice for community engagement (early and continued engagement, sharing of contact phone number for project, text alerts etc) - how to implement the Principles in practice.
- Continue to advocate for better resourcing for ELC Roads / transport planning.
- Accelerate progress on the lessons learned process to share learning between developers / transmission owners.
- Continue to advocate for NESO to meet with the local community and listen to their views on the cumulative impacts and to share the implications of strategic energy planning at a local level with the community.
- Support the sharing of the progress on legacy, e.g. the good work underway to coordinate delivery of the 4 ambitions from the Local Place Plan by Sue Guy and the delivery partners, e.g via the newsletter, presentations at partnership events etc.
- Develop more strategic "outside the box" thinking as a partnership and identify ways partners can support delivery of the vision of East Lammermuir being a better place as a result of the energy developments, with the Local Place Plan as the blueprint for this community-led vision.

Next steps

1. This report will be shared with all energy developers to inform better implementation of the Principles of Community Engagement by signatories.
2. This report will be shared with the community and East Lothian Council (ELC) to demonstrate listening and share learning which could be implemented by ELC.
3. The recommendations in the report will be presented to the Energy Projects Partnership Steering group for consideration and application.
4. Co-ordination of the implementation of partnership initiatives will be undertaken by Beth Landon, Energy projects Partnership Manager. How much can be achieved will be dependent on collaboration of partners and contributions to the partnership budget.