

Participation Requests Reporting Template 2024/25 for Public Service Authorities

Section 32 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires Public Service Authorities to produce an annual report on Participation Request activity and publish this no later than 30 June each year. This template has been created to gather Participation Request data for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. Information provided will help inform policy and practice at local and national level as the data will be collated and shared by the Scottish Government's Community Empowerment Team. However, it is for each Public Service Authority to make their own annual report publicly available by 30 June each year, whether using this template or not.

Please provide information in the sections below and email the completed template by 30 June 2025 or as soon as possible thereafter to community.empowerment@gov.scot.

Section One – Public Service Authority Information

Organisation: Scottish Borders Council (SBC)

Completed by: Erin Coltman

Role: Participation Officer

Email: erin.coltman@scotborders.gov.uk

Telephone: 07977 642053

Date of completion: 17 July 2025

Are you the Participation Request Lead Contact for the organisation? (Y/N): Y

If not please provide the name, job title and email address for the lead contact for any queries: N/A

Section 2: Participation Request Data for 2024/25

Please complete following overview table:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Outstanding applications received prior to 2024/25 and still to be determined at 31 March 2025	Applications received prior to 2024/25 and decided on in 2024/25	Applications received prior to 2024/25 and accepted in 2024/25	Applications received prior to 2024/25 and refused in 2024/25	Total new applications received in 2024/25	Number of applications received in 2024/25 which were decided on in 2024/25	Number of applications received in 2024/25 which were accepted in 2024/25	Number of applications received in 2024/25 which were refused in 2024/25	Number of applications received in 2024/25 which are yet to be decided on
0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0

2.1 Where you were unable to accept a Participation Request, how did you address the community group's needs/ support them?

No. We received one Participation Request which we accepted, validated, and decided on.

2.2 Please provide details of participatory activities with community groups you have agreed/ undertaken during 2024/25. This can include Participation Requests and also any informal arrangements you have agreed that doesn't involve using Participation Request legislation that has led to improved local outcomes:

See additional document.

2.3 The recent Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 -Part 3 Participation Requests Findings Report which was published on 31 March 2025 showed that many Public Service Authorities believe that Participation Requests should only be used when informal engagement has failed and therefore do not proactively promote them.

In the report some Public Service Authorities highlighted alternative community engagement processes used which avoids the need for a Participation Request. Please provide information on your local community engagement strategies and your approaches to working collaboratively with your communities:

Our refreshed Community Engagement Strategy, approved in 2024 and updated in 2025, sets out a clear and evolving framework for how we engage with communities. It is structured around three core principles: putting the customer at the heart of everything we do, embedding engagement across all services, and ensuring continuous improvement through feedback and learning. The strategy is published in a web-based format to allow for ongoing updates and responsiveness to community needs and good practice.

This strategic approach is supported by a practical Community Engagement Toolkit, launched in 2025, which provides officers with guidance, templates, and case studies to ensure consistent and meaningful engagement across the region. The toolkit reinforces the importance of two-way dialogue, transparency, and inclusivity.

We also work closely with our partners through the Community Planning Partnership to ensure a joined-up approach to engagement. This includes shared commitments to reduce consultation fatigue, act on community feedback, and support community-led visioning. Our engagement is not limited to formal consultations, it includes participatory budgeting, co-designed workshops, and locality-based conversations that shape service delivery and investment priorities.

Youth engagement is a particular focus, with the YELL (Youth Engagement, Leadership and Learning) Strategy aligning with the UNCRC and the Children and Young People's Planning Partnership (CYPPP). This strategy ensures that young people have meaningful opportunities to influence decisions that affect them, and it is embedded in our wider engagement framework.

In practice, our approach has led to tangible outcomes. For example, the development of Local Place Plans across both Borderlands and non-Borderlands communities has been driven by extensive community engagement. These plans will influence the Local Development Plan and are shaping regeneration priorities. Similarly, the transition of the Neighbourhood Support Fund to Borders Community Action (our TSI) reflects our commitment to community-led funding models, with the Council continuing to provide financial support while empowering communities to administer the fund independently.

While we support the use of Participation Requests where appropriate, our preference is to build strong, proactive relationships with communities that make formal requests unnecessary. Our strategy, tools, and practice reflect a culture of collaboration, responsiveness, and shared ownership of local outcomes.

2.4 We are looking to gather Participation Request case study examples with a particular focus on the outcome improvement process. Please include a link to any examples or provide information here:

Case Study: Cockburnspath and Cove Community Council

Date Submitted: 18 November 2024

Date Agreed: 19 December 2024

Background

Cockburnspath and Cove Community Council submitted a Participation Request to formalise collaboration between their long-standing Caretaker Scheme and Scottish Borders Council (SBC) services. The Caretaker Scheme, which has operated for over 20 years, plays a vital role in maintaining local green spaces, footpaths (including parts of the Southern Upland Way), fences, and minor infrastructure such as benches. The request aimed to improve coordination, reduce duplication, and ensure the sustainability of the scheme amid financial pressures.

Outcome Improvement Process

The request was validated and agreed within a month of submission. The outcome improvement process focused on enhancing communication and joint working between SBC and the Community Council. While no formal protocol was created, a meeting was held to discuss expectations and working arrangements, followed by email communication outlining the shared commitment to maintain regular and effective contact. Since then, regular and direct communication has been maintained between SBC officers and the Community Council to coordinate planned works and respond to local issues.

A contact list was also prepared to give the Caretaker and Community Council direct access to relevant SBC officers. This included named contacts across departments such as Parks & Environment, Active Travel, Outdoor Access, and Community Engagement, along with guidance on when to escalate issues directly versus using online reporting tools. A joint site visit was also arranged to identify overlapping responsibilities and explore opportunities for collaboration.

The Community Council submitted a detailed summary of the Caretaker's duties, which has been used to map responsibilities and identify areas where SBC services can complement the scheme. This has led to improved mutual understanding and more efficient use of resources.

Transparency and Sharing

The Participation Request and supporting documents were published on the SBC website and shared with the Berwickshire Area Partnership.

Completed by: Erin Coltman

Role: Participation Officer

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Date of completion: 17 July 2025

Please email the completed template to community.empowerment@gov.scot

If you have any queries please contact Malcolm Cowie, Participation Request Policy Manager at Malcolm.cowie@gov.scot

Community Empowerment Team, Scottish Government

2.2 Please provide details of participatory activities with community groups you have agreed/ undertaken during 2024/25. This can include Participation Requests and also any informal arrangements you have agreed that doesn't involve using Participation Request legislation that has led to improved local outcomes:

Formal Participation Request: Cockburnspath and Cove Community Council

The only formal Participation Request received and validated in 2024/25 was from Cockburnspath and Cove Community Council (CCCC). The request was formally agreed by SBC on 19 December 2024. The request sought to improve communication and reduce duplication between SBC services and the Community Council's long-standing Caretaker Scheme. The scheme supports estate maintenance and local infrastructure upkeep.

Following the agreement of the Participation Request submitted by Cockburnspath and Cove Community Council, several actions have been progressed to support improved collaboration between the Council and the Community Council's Caretaker Scheme.

Firstly, a meeting was held between SBC officers and representatives of the Community Council to discuss how communication could be improved. This was followed by a confirmation email outlining the shared commitment to maintain regular and effective contact. Since then, SBC officers have been in consistent communication with the Community Council to coordinate planned works and respond to local concerns. While no formal communications protocol was produced, this ongoing dialogue has served the same purpose—ensuring timely and effective communication, preventing duplication of effort, and supporting joint working on estate maintenance.

A contact list was also prepared to give the Caretaker and Community Council direct access to relevant SBC officers. This included named contacts across departments such as Parks & Environment, Active Travel, Outdoor Access, and Community Engagement, along with guidance on when to escalate issues directly versus using online reporting tools.

A joint site visit (village walkaround) was arranged. This allowed SBC officers and Community Council representatives to identify overlapping responsibilities, explore opportunities for joint working, and build a shared understanding of local needs.

In support of these efforts, the Community Council submitted a detailed summary of the Caretaker's duties. These include grass cutting and maintenance of the village playing field, upkeep of public footpaths (including sections of the Southern Upland Way), minor infrastructure repairs such as benches, and the use of a community-owned lawn tractor and secure storage. This information has been used to map current responsibilities and identify where SBC services can complement or support the Caretaker's work.

Informal Arrangements

In addition to formal Participation Requests, Scottish Borders Council has continued to support a wide range of informal participatory arrangements with community groups throughout 2024/25. These activities have contributed meaningfully to improved local outcomes and reflect the Council's commitment to community empowerment and collaborative working.

Place Making

A key area of informal participatory activity during 2024/25 has been the development and registration of Local Place Plans (LPPs) across the Scottish Borders. While the Borderlands towns of Galashiels, Hawick, Eyemouth and Jedburgh have each progressed LPPs as part of their wider regeneration programmes, several other communities outwith the Borderlands initiative, such as Duns, Smailholm, West Linton, and Selkirk, have also been supported to develop their own plans. In total, four Local Place Plans were formally registered in 2024/25, with others at various stages of preparation. These plans have been shaped through extensive community engagement and will help to influence the emerging Local Development Plan.

To continue to support this work, the Council has recently made available up to £40,000 per community through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, enabling access to consultancy support via the Place Making Support Framework in 2025/26. This funding will help communities articulate their aspirations and develop proposals for the use and development of local land and buildings.

Locality Plans

The Community Planning Partnership (CPP) has also made significant progress in developing new Locality Plans for Burnfoot, Bannerfield, and Langlee. These plans are being created to replace the five original locality plans and provide a more targeted approach to reducing inequality.

In Burnfoot, stage one engagement has been completed, with key themes emerging around anti-social behaviour, lack of activities for young people, and maintenance of public spaces. Further engagement has taken place through events such as the Burnfoot Carnival and Easter activities, with input gathered from children and families to shape priorities. A service provider survey was also conducted, and a working group is being established to oversee the development of the plan and ensure partner involvement.

In Bannerfield, engagement is ongoing. The community survey was redrafted following local feedback and launched in June 2025. Public Health and CLD officers are working alongside the Communities and Partnerships Team to engage residents, and a community reference group is being formed to ensure local ownership of the plan. Creative engagement activities, such as a "Bannerfield Past, Present & Future" exhibition, are being used to attract participation and gather views.

The approach reflects a commitment to place-based planning and collaborative working with communities to address local priorities.

Community Engagement

The Council also launched a new Community Engagement Toolkit in February 2025, designed to support officers and partners in delivering inclusive and effective engagement. This toolkit complements the Community Engagement Strategy and provides practical guidance, templates, and case studies to embed participatory practice across services

Youth participation has been strengthened through the introduction of the YELL (Youth Engagement, Leadership and Learning) Strategy, which aligns with the Children and Young

People's Planning Partnership and the UNCRC. The strategy promotes meaningful involvement of young people in decision-making and service design.

Community Learning & Development Strategic Partnership Plan

The Scottish Borders Community Learning and Development (CLD) Strategic Partnership Plan 2024–25 provides a strong foundation for informal participation by embedding community voice and collaboration at the heart of service planning and delivery. The plan, developed by a multi-agency partnership, sets out eight shared priorities and is underpinned by a commitment to co-design, continuous engagement, and targeted support for those most at risk of inequality. Engagement with learners, community representatives and young people has been strengthened over the past year, with examples including the Nicotine Prevention Programme, CPP Locality Plans, and the Local Employability Partnership.

The Partnership is now preparing to extend the plan into a full three-year strategy (2024-27), using insights from community consultations and practitioner feedback to shape future priorities. These include increasing access to accredited learning, expanding youth activity provision, and supporting six high-risk family groups identified in the local Child Poverty Action Plan.

Community Funding

In terms of funding mechanisms, the Neighbourhood Support Fund is now administered by our Third Sector Interface, Borders Community Action (BCA), with financial support provided by Scottish Borders Council. Previously managed directly by the Council, the fund now operates independently under BCA's stewardship, allowing voluntary and community groups to deliver locally driven projects that respond to community priorities. Alongside this, the Community Led Local Development (CLLD) fund has supported a range of participatory environmental and place-based initiatives, including climate literacy sessions, conservation volunteering, and community workshops.

Together, these informal arrangements demonstrate the Council's ongoing commitment to working in partnership with communities to shape services and improve outcomes, even where formal Participation Request legislation is not used.

Active Travel and Outdoor Access

The Active Travel and Outdoor Access Team has supported several informal participatory initiatives during 2024/25. A small grant scheme is administered each year to Community Councils and Path Groups to support local path maintenance, with £18,359 awarded to 38 applicants in 2024/25. The Coldingham Bay Management Group, which includes community stakeholders and elected members, continued to maintain and promote the beach and successfully supported the Keep Scotland Beautiful Beach Award for 2024 and 2025. The group also launched a pilot study for two new beach hut plots to enhance community use, involving local business Snorkel Wild and CIC Wee Wildlings.

The E-bikes Accessibility Project, delivered with SEStran funding, worked with existing community hubs in five locations - Teri Bikes in Hawick, Ebikes4Borderers in Tweedbank, Kelso Men's Shed, Sea the Change in Eyemouth, and Stow Cycle Hub, with additional support from the SBC Sports Development Team Disability Officer. The project enabled the purchase of accessible bikes and covered rental costs to allow free self-referral access until June 2025.

The initiative was shortlisted for the UCI Cycling for All and Sustainability Awards, and an officer attended the ECU conference in Copenhagen alongside Council Leader Euan Jardine and Deputy Leader Scott Hamilton.

In addition, SBC supported Just Cycle and Sea the Change to deliver the Access to Bikes programme, which provided fully refurbished bikes and accessories to adults on a self-referral basis. It is estimated that over 200 bikes were distributed to users in 2024/25. The Community Cycling Fund also supported a range of community-led cycling initiatives, including the Hike and Bike Hub's Spring into Summer project, Sea the Change's Summer of Cycling programme, Gowaan Kids, the FNY Collective, and the opening events for the Stow Pump Track.