

# sp=eed<sup>®</sup>

► Successful Planning =  
Effective Engagement & Delivery

A framework to support  
better engagement in  
planning and placemaking

March 2026



Planning  
Aid Scotland



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# Foreword

**SP=EED was developed by Planning Aid Scotland between 2008 and 2009 to help people carry out effective and inclusive engagement in planning, placemaking and related areas.**

We believe high-quality engagement should be celebrated and encouraged as a key component of successful planning and placemaking, and in creating greater public participation.

SP=EED is a free resource specifically designed to address the opportunities and challenges that may be presented by planning and place-based engagement. With an ever increasing desire from the public to be involved in shaping their places, it provides practical guidance on how to realise successful and inclusive engagement.

The *Planning (Scotland) Act 2019* aims to achieve a collaborative and inclusive planning system. Early and effective engagement in Local Development Plan preparation will be key to achieving this, and the Act sets out new requirements for planning authorities to engage

with defined seldom heard groups. For national and major developments, a requirement for two pre-application consultation events has been introduced.

Local Place Plans were also established by the 2019 Act. To be effective, they will need to be grounded in effective, proportionate and inclusive engagement. Planning Aid Scotland has facilitated the delivery of a number of Local Place Plans, and has provided advice, training and capacity building programmes to help communities do it themselves.

Mediation was written into the 2019 Act as a means to achieving collaboration over conflict in planning, and an associated Scottish Government circular was published in 2021.

The *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015* places a duty on community planning



## Cherie Morgan

Chief Executive  
Planning Aid Scotland  
March 2026

partnerships to engage with communities in the process of developing Local Outcomes Improvement Plans and Locality Plans, with a focus on reducing inequality.

Since 2014, Planning Aid Scotland has delivered **SP=EED Verification** – our community engagement skills development programme – to mixed groups and on an organisational basis. This two-stage process seeks to deliver practitioners who are confident and enthusiastic in delivering engagement.

I hope you enjoy using this tool as a means to undertaking successful community engagement.

# Introduction

SP=EED is a framework to support better engagement in planning and placemaking, devised and produced by Planning Aid Scotland. It is targeted at all stakeholders in Scotland's planning system and is designed to help design, deliver and assess engagement processes.

## What is SP=EED?

**By drawing on good practice and Planning Aid Scotland's research, experience of engagement and independent expertise, SP=EED sets out a framework which anyone can use. It is referenced in the Scottish Government's *Planning Advice Note 3/2010: Community Engagement*.**

The SP=EED principles of effective engagement are also applicable outwith the Scottish context.

The SP=EED approach aims to bring forward practitioners who are confident, enthusiastic and creative in the delivery of engagement.

## When can SP=EED be used?

SP=EED can be used to guide the engagement process for proposals led by planning authorities and by developers, and for community-led plans or proposals. It can also assist community groups and members of the public in suggesting to planning authorities or developers how they would like to be engaged. The level and type of engagement should be designed on a case-by-case basis, ideally in collaboration with those who will participate.

## Can SP=EED be used outwith planning?

While SP=EED is designed specifically for engagement in planning and placemaking, it is equally applicable to community planning processes, energy consents, traffic regulation orders and any other place-based scenario where effective community engagement is desirable.

## What is the aim of SP=EED?

SP=EED aims to enhance the overall quality of community engagement in Scotland, contributing to a planning system with better outcomes and greater efficiency. It also aims to spread and share good practice across the board, and, where appropriate, achieve co-production of plans and proposals. Effective engagement and public involvement in the design process can lead to better proposals which progress more smoothly through the planning process.

## What is effective engagement?

There is no single formula for achieving effective engagement, so SP=EED does not take a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, it sets out **three levels of engagement** to suit different scenarios and provides guidance. It aims to instil confidence and enthusiasm to allow positive engagement processes to be designed, carried out and assessed.

The level and type of engagement should be designed on a case-by-case basis, where possible, in collaboration with those who will participate. In some cases, the provision of basic information may suffice; in others, members of the public and other stakeholders will play a key role in the design process of new plans and proposals.

Planning and associated processes can be complicated and emotive, with their legal nature adding a further layer of complexity. Timescales in delivering development can be lengthy, so meaningful engagement needs to be planned to create realistic stakeholder expectations and to retain their involvement throughout the process.

## Can SP=EED be used to guide online engagement processes?

The principles of SP=EED apply equally to online and face-to-face engagement. The future of engagement is likely to include a blended approach, using both face-to-face and online engagement.

## What is a Local Place Plan and how can Planning Aid Scotland help?

The *Planning (Scotland) Act 2019* introduced a new right for communities to prepare plans for their own local area – these are called Local Place Plans. Local Place Plans aim to give communities a stronger voice in setting out a vision and proposals for development or use of land for the future of their place. It is expected that any Local Place Plan will be based on effective engagement, and SP=EED will help to achieve this. The Planning Aid Scotland [Guide to Local Place Plans](#) provides further information.



# Why use SP=EED?

## What engagement is required in planning?

The Scottish Government's aim for planning is for it to be inclusive and efficient. The *Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006* and the more recent *Planning (Scotland) Act 2019* both aim to reflect this.

The 2019 Planning Act sets requirements for planning authorities to engage with specific seldom heard groups in preparing Local Development Plans. Scottish Government guidance invites planning authorities to take an innovative, thoughtful and creative approach to Local Development Plan engagement. Planning authorities are also asked to set out Participation Statements within their Development Plan Schemes.

Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) is mandatory for national and major developments. Public events must be held to statutory requirements and a PAC report must be submitted with the associated planning application detailing engagement undertaken and its impact.

However, effective engagement is appropriate and beneficial for any development proposal, regardless of its scale or whether it is led by the

community, the council or the private sector.

## How does SP=EED relate to existing guidance?

Unlike most guidance on engagement, SP=EED is designed specifically for those involved in the planning and placemaking sector. It recognises the inherent complexities of undertaking engagement in this context, based on Planning Aid Scotland's experience of helping people to engage with planning and placemaking. SP=EED also complements the more general [National Standards for Community Engagement](#).

Due to the engagement requirements set out by Scotland's planning system, practical guidance on effective engagement is now more important than ever. The Scottish Government's *Planning Advice Note 3/2010 Community Engagement* mentions SP=EED as a means of achieving meaningful engagement. It also recognises the important role of communities and community groups in the planning system and decision-making process. The principles of SP=EED are also equally relevant outwith the planning system.

*"Due to the engagement requirements set out by Scotland's planning system, practical guidance on effective engagement is now more important than ever."*

## Why is engagement in planning so important?

Planning impacts on everyone, so it follows that members of the public and community groups, including seldom heard groups, should be given the opportunity to be involved.

Effective engagement – whether carried out in-person or online – can lead to better development proposals, taking on board points raised by participants. People who have been actively involved in the design process or engaged with effectively may have less cause to object at planning application stage and/or accept that a development may be in the public interest. This can lead to proposals moving through the planning process more efficiently.

Scotland's planning system is undergoing a period of transition to achieve better engagement and increased public trust, alongside greater quality and certainty in the delivery of development. SP=EED will help design, deliver and assess effective engagement to achieve this win-win outcome.



# Who can use SP=EED?

SP=EED is an essential resource for anyone designing, carrying out and assessing an engagement process, and can also help individuals or communities decide how they would like to be engaged.

## Planning Authorities

- Discussing your approach to engagement
- Writing an engagement strategy
- Local Development Plan engagement
- Development Plan Schemes and Participation Statements
- Design and Development Briefs
- Engaging on Open Space Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments
- Advising applicants about engagement
- Assessing Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) reports

## Councils

- Discussing your approach to engagement
- Writing an engagement strategy
- Local Outcomes Improvement Plan engagement
- Locality Plan engagement
- Co-ordinating engagement across different plans
- Engagement projects for active travel, transport, architecture and regeneration

## Community Groups




- Discussing your approach to engagement
- Engaging with your local community
- Writing an engagement strategy
- Community Action Plans
- Local Place Plans
- Community-led proposals
- Discussing how you would like to be engaged

## Consultants and Developers

- Discussing your approach to engagement
- Writing engagement strategies
- Designing PAC engagement processes
- Structuring and informing PAC reports
- Guiding engagement on Development Briefs and Masterplans
- Guiding engagement on Energy Consents
- Guiding engagement on marine planning and other relevant procedures

# Levels of Engagement

SP=EED differs from other guidance on engagement in that it is aimed specifically at planning and placemaking contexts and sets out three pragmatic levels of engagement to aim for.

 <p><b>Level 1</b> Informing</p>	<p><b>Level 1</b> is the most appropriate level to aim for where there is limited opportunity to influence what happens.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ An essential building block for engagement.</li><li>▪ A one-way process.</li><li>▪ A valuable end in itself and the most appropriate level to aim for in certain situations where the public has limited influence on final proposals.</li><li>▪ An essential step in achieving Levels 2 and 3.</li></ul>
 <p><b>Level 2</b> Consulting</p>	<p><b>Level 2</b> is perhaps the level of engagement practised most commonly and should be achievable in many scenarios where options are being explored and there is an opportunity to influence outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Incorporates and builds on Level 1.</li><li>▪ An interactive and iterative process – listening, and being responsive to issues raised.</li><li>▪ An appropriate level in many situations where the public can influence proposals.</li></ul>
 <p><b>Level 3</b> Partnership</p>	<p><b>Level 3</b> is the most resource-intensive level of engagement and can be accomplished in community-led proposals, or other proposals where members of the public are involved in the design and development process e.g. community-led plans or proposals, or where a developer is seeking to work very closely with communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Incorporates Levels 1 and 2, but goes well beyond.</li><li>▪ The most resource-intensive level of engagement.</li><li>▪ Where members of the public are involved in the design and development process, such as community-led plans.</li><li>▪ Involves in-depth collaboration with partners, and should include potential for their input into the design of proposals and the engagement process, plus a co-production approach with shared ownership of outcomes.</li><li>▪ May take place over an extended period of time, or be a shorter, more intensive process.</li></ul>

*Note: An engagement process might achieve different levels with regard to different criteria.*

# The SP=EED Criteria

SP=EED sets out 8 criteria for effective engagement.

1 Transparency and Integrity

2 Co-ordination

3 Information

4 Appropriateness

5 Responsiveness

6 Inclusiveness

7 Monitoring and Evaluating

8 Learning and Sharing

## How to use this guide

Each of the criteria is dealt with on a separate page, outlining what to aim for at each level and how to achieve this.

The **What to aim for** statements should be regarded as universal, and applicable to any engagement scenario.




The **How can you achieve it?** section provides guidance on how to meet the criteria, but SP=EED recognises that these are not the only ways in which the aims can be met.

It is equally appropriate and valuable to devise your own engagement approaches and techniques to meet the **What to aim for** statements set out in the 8 SP=EED criteria.

## Tips on using SP=EED to design effective engagement

- Think about and plan engagement well before the process begins
- Help participants understand the objectives and potential impacts of the process – manage public expectation as and when required
- Identify suitable approaches and methods for your engagement strategy
- Take a project-management approach to your engagement and have a dedicated person or team
- Collaborate directly where possible with key stakeholders, including the local community, to plan and deliver your engagement strategy
- Evaluate and learn as you go along and after
- Be creative and ambitious

# Criteria 1: Transparency and Integrity

	What to aim for	How can you achieve it?
 <p><b>Level 1</b> Informing</p>	<p>The purpose of the engagement is clear and people can find out about it easily.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a clear statement about the integrity of the engagement process.</li> <li>• Explain clearly the purpose of the engagement process.</li> <li>• Be clear about potential timescales of the engagement process and delivery of development.</li> <li>• Establish whether there is a legacy of trust or distrust from previous engagement – research previous engagement and consultation processes.</li> <li>• Advertise any engagement process or event prominently e.g. leaflets, posters, websites, local press and radio, social media.</li> <li>• Attract passers-by to events by having banners and posters outside venues.</li> <li>• Explain how further information can be accessed.</li> <li>• Explain the limits of the planning system (i.e. matters material to use and development of land).</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Level 2</b> Consulting</p>	<p><b>Level 1+</b> Rights to participate are clearly explained and opportunities to express opinions are publicised.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make clear which aspects of plans or proposals can and cannot be influenced via the engagement process.</li> <li>• Explain why any aspects of plans or proposals are non-negotiable.</li> <li>• Encourage balanced consideration of the pros and cons of plans and proposals.</li> <li>• Ensure statements and any assumptions in engagement materials are referenced.</li> <li>• Where appropriate, use professional planners to carry out engagement working under the RTPI Code of Conduct – make stakeholders aware of this.</li> <li>• Appoint dedicated note takers for group discussion events.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Level 3</b> Partnership</p>	<p><b>Level 1 and Level 2+</b> Dialogue will take place with partners about how they will be involved in the engagement process and how their input will be used.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify all potential partners early and explain to them, and other stakeholders, the benefits of a partnership approach.</li> <li>• Explain which aspects of the actual engagement process are negotiable.</li> <li>• Discuss how input from the engagement process will be used.</li> <li>• Discuss and agree options for involving stakeholders in the design of proposals.</li> <li>• Keep a formal record of decisions and allow partners access to this.</li> </ul>

# Criteria 2: Co-ordination

	What to aim for	How can you achieve it?
 <p><b>Level 1</b> Informing</p>	<p>The timetable for the engagement process will be published and relevant relationships explained.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Set out the engagement strategy well in advance, identifying how to target key stakeholders.</li> <li>▪ Allow appropriate time for the engagement process.</li> <li>▪ Establish whether other engagement/consultation exercises are on-going.</li> <li>▪ Be clear about, and provide explanation of, the roles of all stakeholders involved.</li> <li>▪ Allow a realistic amount of time for those carrying out the consultation.</li> <li>▪ Be flexible and have contingencies for any delays or unexpected events.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Level 2</b> Consulting</p>	<p><b>Level 1+</b> The timetable for the engagement process will include adequate periods for meetings, public events and discussion with stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Take account of holiday periods and local or big events.</li> <li>▪ Decide when and how stakeholders' input will be sought and which methods should be used.</li> <li>▪ Plan times and locations of events to reach the widest range of stakeholders.</li> <li>▪ Where appropriate, be prepared to amend timescales.</li> <li>▪ Invite key stakeholders to meetings/events.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Level 3</b> Partnership</p>	<p><b>Level 1 and Level 2+</b> The timetable for the engagement process will include opportunities for partners to develop their own ideas; partners will be involved in discussing how to co-ordinate actions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tap into resources from the local community: enthusiasm, knowledge, volunteers and networks of contacts.</li> <li>▪ Consider setting up a steering group representing the local community and interested parties.</li> <li>▪ Plan ahead to allow partners to input into timescales; allocate time and resources for them to develop their own ideas and proposals.</li> <li>▪ Consult those with experience of a partnership approach for guidance e.g. on timescales, levels of resources required, techniques to use.</li> <li>▪ Liaise with key agencies/statutory consultees about the partnership approach and its timetable, and take into account any impact of their policies or projects.</li> </ul>




# Criteria 3: Information

	What to aim for	How can you achieve it?
 <p><b>Level 1</b> Informing</p>	<p>Information will be relevant, accurate and comprehensible to the target audience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the relevant issues clearly and succinctly.</li> <li>If possible, present information visually; avoid too much text.</li> <li>Use a range of methods to provide information e.g. social media, leaflets, websites, posters.</li> <li>Identify at the outset gaps in information available and how you may be able to address this.</li> <li>Explain national and regional plans/issues within the local context.</li> <li>Provide summaries of the role and content of key documents e.g. NPF4, Local Development Plans, Planning Advice Notes, and explain how to access full versions.</li> <li>Invite people to sign up for updates e.g. by email or newsletter.</li> <li>Reference all sources of information.</li> <li>Consider holding an event to attract and gauge public interest in plans or proposals.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Level 2</b> Consulting</p>	<p><b>Level 1+</b> Information will be communicated and shared, aiming to invite feedback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make every reasonable effort to satisfy requests for new information.</li> <li>Present information in a way which will invite comment and debate.</li> <li>Flag up any areas of uncertainty; state when and how these may be resolved; and provide opportunities for discussion of these areas.</li> <li>Provide suitable means for responses and comments to be made.</li> <li>Collate comments and suggestions – feed them back into the process so that information is up-to-date.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Level 3</b> Partnership</p>	<p><b>Level 1 and Level 2+</b> Identification, collection and dissemination of relevant new information by partners is encouraged.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse data gathered to identify key themes and priorities.</li> <li>Create a dialogue with all partners from an early stage to collate knowledge and information.</li> <li>Start the information gathering process as early as possible for maximum efficiency.</li> <li>Discuss with partners the best means of disseminating information.</li> <li>Seek professional advice on information gathering techniques e.g. designing questionnaires and other surveys.</li> </ul>




# Criteria 4: Appropriateness

	What to aim for	How can you achieve it?
 <b>Level 1</b> Informing	Information will be presented to suit its intended audience and can be accessed by all stakeholders at each stage of the process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Consider the best means of publicising the engagement process e.g. public notice boards, libraries, community centres, local press, websites, social media.</li><li>▪ Use plain English and avoid planning-related jargon.</li><li>▪ Be aware that the target audience will not be planning professionals.</li><li>▪ Explain maps, drawings and diagrams in clear and simple terms.</li><li>▪ For public events, use venues which are easy to find and accessible, and times that allow all stakeholders to attend.</li></ul>
 <b>Level 2</b> Consulting	<b>Level 1+</b> Engagement processes to fit the situation will be used, with opportunities for discussion and for questions to be raised and answered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ensure that meetings, exhibitions and workshops are held at times and locations to suit different areas and groups within the community.</li><li>▪ Allow responses to be submitted by various means (letter, telephone, email, social media, survey) as well as in person at consultation events or via online surveys.</li><li>▪ Arrange for relevant professional staff to be on hand to answer questions at all times, or detail when they will be there.</li><li>▪ Use models and visualisations of proposals.</li><li>▪ Where appropriate, offer workshops and themed focus groups as well as exhibitions.</li></ul>
 <b>Level 3</b> Partnership	<b>Level 1 and Level 2+</b> A collaborative approach to working with partners on proposals, and regular review of the engagement process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Steering groups, meetings and forums will be open to all, and minutes will be made available publicly after these and any other open meetings.</li><li>▪ Consider engaging independent professionals/consultants to explore possible solutions, e.g. architects, transport consultants etc.</li><li>▪ Consider mediation in appropriate situations – when there are divided opinions but common aims.</li></ul>



# Criteria 5: Responsiveness

	What to aim for	How can you achieve it?
 <p><b>Level 1</b> Informing</p>	Relevant information will be provided at every stage of the process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure that contact details for enquiries/responses are given on all materials.</li><li>• Deal with enquiries promptly.</li><li>• Enable access to relevant documents online and place copies of relevant documentation at public places e.g. libraries, post offices, community centres, council offices.</li><li>• Publicise any proposed changes to plans or proposals.</li></ul>
 <p><b>Level 2</b> Consulting</p>	<b>Level 1+</b> Findings from the engagement process will be analysed, disseminated and potentially incorporated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide a representative to record and answer questions at events.</li><li>• Provide respondents with a written response as appropriate.</li><li>• Offer further workshops or discussion groups to hear people's views or in response to feedback received.</li><li>• Inform stakeholders if, how and why the proposal has been amended as a result of consultation.</li><li>• If significant changes to a proposal are introduced, consider holding additional consultation events.</li></ul>
 <p><b>Level 3</b> Partnership</p>	<b>Level 1 and Level 2+</b> Partners will be offered the opportunity to present and discuss their own ideas and receive feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be ready to consider suggestions for modifying the engagement process.</li><li>• Be prepared to give feedback on ideas and new matters raised by stakeholders.</li><li>• Consider commissioning professional expertise e.g. independent facilitators and experts to make best use of interactive methods for developing proposals and making decisions.</li></ul>




# Criteria 6: Inclusiveness

	What to aim for	How can you achieve it?
 <p><b>Level 1</b> Informing</p>	<p>Relevant representative groups/organisations will be identified and information will be designed and disseminated to reach them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a contacts database and keep it up-to-date.</li> <li>Use formal and informal networks to make the contacts database as representative as possible.</li> <li>Identify seldom heard groups and consider how they tend to access information – e.g. via local newspapers, groups, venues, libraries etc. and social media.</li> <li>Record data on factors relevant to inclusiveness and representativeness e.g. age, gender, residence, tenure etc.</li> <li>Think creatively about venues appropriate to the type of proposal and all groups you want to reach, including seldom heard groups.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Level 2</b> Consulting</p>	<p><b>Level 1+</b> An emphasis will be placed on allowing the voices of seldom heard groups and those most likely to be affected to be heard.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target publicity at all groups likely to be positively or negatively affected by the proposal.</li> <li>Target seldom heard and potentially under-represented groups such as young people, ethnic minorities including Gypsy/Travellers, women with young children, Disabled people and elderly people.</li> <li>Seek advice from organisations specialising in promoting inclusiveness: Equalities Officers, Youth Engagement Officers, Access Panels, etc.</li> <li>Build links with local primary and secondary schools, colleges, youth organisations.</li> <li>Consider how to target those directly affected e.g. door knocking and informal events.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Level 3</b> Partnership</p>	<p><b>Level 1 and Level 2+</b> Assistance and advice will be made available to seldom heard groups to enable them to become partners in the process; overall, a representative range of stakeholders will be involved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan an outreach programme to identify and listen to the needs of specific groups.</li> <li>Go beyond statutory requirements for engagement.</li> <li>Consider using Equalities Impact Assessments at the start of the process and review regularly.</li> <li>Consider using liaison officers to work directly with specific groups.</li> <li>Consider using professionally designed and conducted surveys to ensure that the views of the population as a whole are known.</li> <li>Where possible, compare the profile of stakeholders involved throughout the whole engagement process to that of areas as a whole.</li> </ul>

# Criteria 7: Monitoring and Evaluating

	What to aim for	How can you achieve it?
 <b>Level 1</b> Informing	Distribution of information and feedback received on the engagement process will be analysed after the process is completed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Record and monitor the distribution of information at the end of the process.</li><li>▪ Record the number and type of any events that take place.</li><li>▪ Record and consider the demographics of those who attended.</li><li>▪ Consider ways to improve future exercises based on the above and feedback received about the engagement process.</li></ul>
 <b>Level 2</b> Consulting	<b>Level 1+</b> Monitoring and evaluation of the engagement process will take place on an on-going basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Monitor the satisfaction of stakeholders at different stages of the process using appropriate techniques.</li><li>▪ Keep a record of responses and other contributions to the engagement process, and assess the value, impact and outcome of contributions.</li><li>▪ Encourage qualitative responses as to how the engagement process could be improved.</li><li>▪ Reflect on the overall quality of the engagement undertaken.</li></ul>
 <b>Level 3</b> Partnership	<b>Level 1 and Level 2+</b> Monitoring and evaluation processes will be devised in collaboration with stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ask partners at the outset about their thoughts on how best to evaluate satisfaction with the process.</li><li>▪ Be ready to modify approaches to monitoring and evaluating as required on an on-going basis.</li><li>▪ Analyse findings as you go along, aiming to embed the idea of monitoring and evaluation into every stage.</li></ul>

# Criteria 8: Learning and Sharing

	What to aim for	How can you achieve it?
 <b>Level 1</b> Informing	Lessons from the engagement process will be identified and lead to on-going improvements in quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Identify action points from what has been learned.</li><li>▪ Build lessons learned into future engagement processes.</li><li>▪ Ensure all those within the organisation leading the engagement process are informed about outcomes and lessons learned.</li></ul>
 <b>Level 2</b> Consulting	<b>Level 1+</b> Lessons from the engagement process will be reviewed and shared with a focus on learning and training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Share and discuss experiences more widely e.g. with other community groups, or organise forum events.</li><li>▪ Make engagement a focus for in-house staff training.</li><li>▪ Actively research other engagement processes and possible new techniques to use.</li><li>▪ Take people who are new to engagement to meet people who have experience of recent or current projects.</li><li>▪ Discuss how to improve future engagement exercises.</li></ul>
 <b>Level 3</b> Partnership	<b>Level 1 and Level 2+</b> The creation of a creative, problem-solving culture where skills and experience are pooled, shared and enhanced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Recognise from the outset that active participation can be a very rich way of learning and seek ways to capitalise on this.</li><li>▪ Audit individuals' skills and share via formal or informal training sessions.</li><li>▪ Share information about the engagement process, and findings from all partners, with all involved stakeholders.</li><li>▪ Offer opportunities for members of the public as well as professionals to receive training.</li></ul>

# SP=EED Verification

This two-part programme verifies an individual's competence in using the SP=EED approach to engagement. It is particularly relevant for planners and those who engage with planning and placemaking.

## There are two stages to SP=EED Verification

### Part 1: Community Engagement Skills Training

- Attend our interactive workshop on community engagement and how to use the SP=EED framework. This will develop your skills, knowledge and confidence as a community engagement practitioner.

### Part 2: Putting SP=EED into practice

- After attending the above training, you will prepare a written reflective-learning submission based on an engagement process in which you applied SP=EED principles. You will be supported by a mentoring approach from a dedicated Planning Aid Scotland staff member.
- Your submission will be verified by an independent planning and engagement professional and by Planning Aid Scotland.

## Key benefits

- Develops a greater understanding of SP=EED and its practical application.
- Fosters a deeper understanding of the skills required for effective engagement, including interpersonal and "softer" skills.
- Encourages the use of effective and creative engagement tools to suit different scenarios.
- Have your approach to engagement verified by independent planning and engagement professionals.

## What happens next?

- Planning Aid Scotland will provide verification that you are qualified in using the SP=EED approach when planning, delivering and assessing engagement.
- You will have a deeper understanding of the skills required for effective engagement and greater confidence in delivery.



*"Gaining SP=EED Verification has been really useful to enhancing the quality of my community engagement work with communities on planning issues. The training provided lots of fresh ideas and a good explanation of the SP=EED process. The materials provided were very comprehensive and invaluable to completing my project."*

*"Very relevant to my profession in private sector planning - highlighted the SP=EED principles we currently adopt and additional ideas to incorporate into our strategies."*

## SP=EED Verification for your organisation

SP=EED Verification can also be commissioned on an organisational basis as in-house training and skills development. If you are interested, please contact us to discuss.

For more information on SP=EED Verification, please visit our website: [www.pas.org.uk](http://www.pas.org.uk)

# Glossary

The Planning Aid Scotland [website](#) has a series of planning information sheets, providing further information. The Scottish Government's *Local Development Planning Guidance* (May 2023) and *Planning Circular 3/2022: Development Management*, provide further information on engagement requirements.

- **Access Panels:** Voluntary bodies set up to promote the rights of people with any form of disability.
- **Community Planning:** An approach to service delivery that helps local public services work together with local communities to plan and deliver better services and improve people's lives. It is delivered by Community Planning Partnerships which facilitate collaboration between relevant organisations.
- **Design/Development Brief:** A document which sets out broad or detailed proposals for development of a specific site or area.
- **Applicant/Developer:** An individual or organisation submitting a planning application or other type of application.
- **Development:** The carrying out of building, mining, engineering or other operations in, on, over or under the land or the making of any material change of use in the use of any buildings or land (as defined by the planning acts). Development, so defined, requires planning permission.
- **Development Plan:** A generic term used in planning legislation and under the 2019 Planning Act defined as *National Planning Framework 4* plus the relevant Local Development Plan. Planning applications are required by planning legislation to be assessed in terms of the development plan as well as other material considerations.
- **Development Plan Scheme:** A document required to be published annually by planning authorities outlining a timetable for preparing the Local Development Plan, and including a Participation Statement outlining how they will undertake consultation.
- **Equalities Impact Assessment:** An assessment which considers how a policy or plan may impact on different sectors of the population.
- **Facilitator:** A person, who has a neutral stance on matters being discussed, appointed to guide a meeting or discussion group.
- **Local Development Plan (LDP):** A statutory document required to be prepared, after engagement and formal consultation processes, by all planning authorities in Scotland and setting out proposals for future uses of land in their area, and planning policies.
- **Local Outcomes Improvement Plan:** A plan that must be produced by a Community Planning Partnership for the whole council area, and which sets out key local outcomes which it will prioritise for improvement.
- **Local Place Plan (LPP):** A new type of community-led plan established by the *Planning (Scotland) Act 2019* which sets out a vision for the future and proposals for development or use of land in defined local areas. See Planning Aid Scotland's [Guide to Local Place Plans](#) for more detail.

- **Locality Plan:** A plan that can be produced by a Community Planning Partnership covering smaller areas, usually identified as those that can benefit most from potential improvements.
- **Major/National Developments:** Planning proposals are divided into three categories: 'national', 'major' and 'local'. National developments are set out in the National Planning Framework. Major developments e.g. 50 houses or more, are defined in the Scottish Government's *Planning Circular 5/2009: Hierarchy of Developments*. National and major developments have statutory consultation requirements.
- **Masterplan:** A document, usually comprising a schematic plan, 3-dimensional images, and text, which illustrates and explains how it is intended to develop a site.
- **Mediation:** An impartial form of dispute resolution, which allows different parties to come together and share understandings and resolve conflict. Participation is voluntary and agreed outcomes are not legally binding. The Scottish Government has published *Planning Circular 2/2021: Guidance on the Promotion and Use of Mediation in the Scottish Planning System*.
- **National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4):** *National Planning Framework 4* is the national spatial strategy for Scotland. It sets out spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments and national planning policy.
- **Open Space Strategy:** A document required to be prepared by planning authorities setting out a strategic framework of policies and proposals as to the development, maintenance and use of green infrastructure in their area.
- **Planning Advice Note (PAN):** Documents produced by the Scottish Government providing advice on good practice and other relevant planning information.
- **Planning Application:** An application to a planning authority seeking planning permission for development.
- **Planning Authority:** The body which is responsible for carrying out planning in any area – the Council or National Park Authority.
- **Play Sufficiency Assessment:** an assessment process of play opportunities for children that must be undertaken by planning authorities as part of the Local Development Plan preparation process.
- **Pre-Application Consultation (PAC):** A process required to be undertaken by applicants for national or major developments prior to the submission of a planning application, to enable local communities to be better informed about larger development proposals and have an opportunity to express views to the developer before a planning application is submitted. Delivery of two public events is required and a Pre-Application Consultation Report detailing engagement undertaken and its impact must be submitted with the associated planning application.
- **Public Event:** An event, required to be held by prospective applicants for national or major development proposals as part of the Pre-Application Consultation process, where members of the public can make comments.
- **RTPI (Royal Town Planning Institute):** The UK's leading planning body for spatial, sustainable, integrative and inclusive planning.
- **Steering Group:** A group of interested and relevant stakeholders appointed to guide and lead a project.
- **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA):** A process designed to measure the likely environmental impacts (both positive and negative) of a 'Scottish public plan, programme or strategy' (PPS).
- **Supplementary Guidance:** Documents produced by planning authorities to provide additional detailed guidance on certain topics, policies or proposals which are set out in Local Development Plans.

## With thanks

Planning Aid Scotland reiterates its thanks to the original steering group which was made up of public, private and voluntary sector organisations and guided the delivery of the first edition of SP=EED (2008).

We remain indebted to Professor Cliff Hague who guided the original project.

*"The creation of SP=EED was triggered by the passing of the 2006 Planning Act which promised better public engagement in Scotland's planning system. Our aim was to recognise that good practices existed and to help steer others in that direction. We sought to provide practical guidance by defining different levels of engagement, key criteria and concise advice on how to do it. The SP=EED training provided by Planning Aid Scotland shows its value. One Planning Act later, the need for SP=EED is even greater. I hope that this new edition will help make our planning system more inclusive and innovative."*

**Professor Cliff Hague**  
**Planning Aid Scotland Patron**

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