

Participation Requests Reporting Template 2022/23 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 2022 to 31 March 2023. 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 2023 to community.empowerment@gov.scot .

Section One – Public Service Authority Information

Organisation: Scottish Borders Council

Completed by: Clare Malster Role: Participation Officer

Email: cmalster@scotborders.gov.uk Telephone: 01835 826626

Date of completion: 21/06/23

Are you the Participation Request Lead Contact for the organisation: Yes

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

Section 2: Participation Request Data for 2022/23

Please complete following overview table:

Total new applications received in 2022/23	Total applications received prior to 1 April 2022 which were still to be determined at 31 March 2023	Number of accepted applications in 2022/23	Number of applications agreed in 2022/23	Number of applications refused in 2022/23
1	0	1	1	0
<p>Where you were unable to accept a participation request, was an alternative process put in place to discuss the group's issue and work with them or support offered to help them consider how to address their identified need? Please provide details:</p> <p>n/a</p>				

2.1 Please provide details of Participation Requests received using the legislation and outwith the legislation in the reporting year which resulted in changes to public services provided by or on behalf of your public service authority and tell us about those changes. Please also include details of requests received prior to 2022/23, which resulted in changes to the way of working being implemented in 2022/23.

Name of Community Participation Body	Was the Participation Request successful? (Y/N)	Previous way of working	Way of working following changes	What difference did those changes make for the users of the service? Did they improve service user experiences or outcomes?	Details of any participation requests considered outwith the formal process e.g. agreements reached that resulted in changes to services.
Scottish Borders Community Councils' Network (SBCCN)	Y	There was no direct community representation on the community Planning Partnership (CPP) Strategic Board. Instead partners conveyed community opinion and feedback, in particular this was through the Third Sector Interface.	SBCCN was given a seat on the Strategic Board as a full, non-statutory, member. This has resulted in community councils being able to voice their opinion on matters that are brought to the Board for discussion/approval.	The CPP does not provide a service. There have been four meetings since the participation request was agreed. Since the appointment of SBCCN to the Board the importance of community involvement has been highlighted keeping it at the forefront of discussions including the refresh of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.	

2.2 Please use this space to provide any further comments relating to the above data, such as:

- **describing the outcome improvement process (whether or not it resulted from a formal participation request)**
- **how the community participation body was involved in designing the outcome improvement process**
- **how the community participation body participated in the outcome improvement process including taking part in decisions and delivering actions**
- **details of any wider benefits, such as improved community engagement and ongoing participation.**

The community participation body was very clear in the participation request what it expected the outcome improvement process to be: membership of the Strategic Board. The Strategic Board and Scottish Borders Council (the Board is a committee of the Council) were happy to agree that membership of the Board was the outcome improvement process.

A representative from SBCCN has attended the four meetings that have taken place since the request was agreed. The rep has played an active part in discussions relating to community involvement and has been part of all decision making that has taken place.

The involvement of SBCCN at the decision making level of Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership has provided a community voice at the highest level of community planning.

Section Three – Partnership Working & Promotion of Participation Requests

3.1a Please provide details of any engagement with support organisations such as local Third Sector Interfaces and public sector Community Learning and Development staff or national organisations such as the Scottish Community Development Centre.

For example has any new practices to support Participation Requests been developed from working with other bodies, or any learning gained?

Scottish Borders Council continue to work closely with the Third Sector Interface in the Borders, and has supported them through the restructuring process they undertook last year. During 2022/23 the TSI and SBC continued to work closely to support community bodies across the Borders. This has included working together to support community bodies exploring potential asset transfer requests.

The TSI (now Borders Community Action) and SBC have been working closely to ensure that funding and services are reaching the correct people during the Cost of Living Crisis. SBC recognises that the Third Sector has a wider reach and sees them as a natural partner in such work.

Close working with the Third Sector does not stop with the TSI. As a local authority we have excellent working relationships with the third sector across a wide range of interests including health, care and young people.

Similarly the Communities & Partnerships Team within the council has worked closely with the CLD service to support communities to develop and undertake initiatives in their area.

3.1b Please tell us about any challenges you have had in accessing support.

We have not faced any challenges accessing support, rather the opposite. In the Borders there is a very positive view of partnership working with the needs of communities central in the ways that we all work together.

3.2 Please provide details of action taken to promote the use of Participation Requests or support Community Participation Bodies in making a Participation Request.

For example this could include: Support before making a request, such as to determine whether a participation request is the most appropriate route; Support to make the request such as assist groups to complete forms, or identify appropriate outcomes; and/or Support to take part effectively in outcome improvement processes (whether or not they resulted from a formal participation request).

SBC has, and does, support community participation bodies throughout the participation request process. We feel that the reason for so few participation requests is because we are proactive about working with community groups. We react positively to any conversations about community involvement in the work of the council recognising the skills and knowledge that community involvement brings.

Updates on participation requests are a standing item on the agendas of our five, locality based, area partnerships. Participation requests are also promoted through monthly meeting with community based partners

Our positive approach to working with communities through our locality based Community Engagement Officers, who have been in post for approximately 18 months, has been central to identifying ways in which we can work together for the benefit of everyone involved.

3.3 Please let us know what actions you have been taking to ensure that your processes are inclusive.

For example, this could include accessible information and other support, which enable wider use of participation requests by all population groups including those with protected characteristics. We are particularly interested in any ways you have targeted those with protected characteristics to raise awareness of the PR process or support request submissions.

While we have not targeted any groups regarding participation requests per se we are proactive in targeting groups representing those with protected characteristics. This builds good relationships with these groups and to enables us to identify how and where they would like to become involved in our work – negating the need for a participation request.

3.4 Please outline any plans you have to continue involving local people and local groups in outcome improvement processes as a result of your Participation Request policies (and also outwith formal participation requests).

Eyemouth Community Council continues to cut grass freeing up council staff time to undertake additional cuts in other areas within the town.

SBCCN membership of the CPP Strategic Board will be an ongoing outcome improvement process.

3.5 Please provide details about any work undertaken to consider wider reviews of participation practice, and any such methods used to engage with communities.

We are continually exploring ways in which we can work better with our communities. A big piece of this work is asking the communities themselves.

Section Four – Additional Information

4.1 Please use this space to provide any further feedback not covered in the above sections.

For example, we are interested in your reflections about what has gone well and what has gone less well in relation to Participation Requests over the past year?

Our experience of working with communities both as part of and out with the participation request process has been a very positive one.

Is there any aspect of the process that you intend to adapt or change in the year ahead?

No

Have you identified any needs for guidance or support that would support the process?

Opportunities to discuss the process and experience of it with other public sector bodies would be appreciated.

If you have developed any case study material or published new information about Participation Requests please share links to those with us here.

Any other information:

Section Five – Community Empowerment Act Review

The following questions relate to the Scottish Government review of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. We would value your feedback as a public service authority concerned with part 3 (participation requests) of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. Please note, any comments provided here would be anonymised, and would only be used in the context of the review.

5.1 Has the legislation made it easier or more difficult to work with communities to improve services? Please provide some comments on your experiences as a public service authority engaging with this legislation.

We don't think it has made much difference. As a small local authority we recognise the need to work closely with everyone to ensure that our communities thrive.

5.2 Where can things be further improved, and what needs to change?

We do not believe that an appeals process is necessary as the Act is clear that all requests should be agreed unless there is good reason for them not to be.

5.3 Are you aware of what support is available to you e.g. [Scottish Government advice and resources](#), [SCDC's Participation Request pack](#), Social Studies PR Toolbox, when engaging with this legislation, and how you can access this? Is there any support you think you would benefit from when engaging with this legislation. Please provide comments where possible.

Yes

5.4 What would you like to see now, to further empower Scotland's communities?

That question should be posed to communities direct.

Completed by: Clare Malster

Role: Participation Officer

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Tel: 01835 826626

Date of completion: 21/06/23

Please email the completed template by 30 June 2023 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