

SIX-MONTH ENGAGEMENT PLAN

This paper sets out a six-month engagement plan which will coincide with the launch of the consultation document.

It aims to build on the engagement being undertaken via the OECD, the Regional Investment for Wales Steering Group and the four sub groups.

Background

The engagement strategy was agreed by the RIWSG in May this year, and sets out the objectives for engagement, key channels and target audiences.

Since then, and as part of the sub group work, a few volunteers from the National Framework and Implementation sub groups held a meeting with the Head of Partnership Working to help inform future ways of working in the area of engagement, particularly with citizens.

A number of issues were raised during this meeting, some of which have already been noted as objectives in the agreed Engagement strategy. The key points raised were:

- The value of engaging with steering / focus groups before the consultation to help ensure messages are clear and fit for purpose;
- Prior to engagement the importance of ensuring messages are clear, consistent, understandable and meaningful; and that they are tailored to each level (national, regional, local, as well as sectoral / group type);
- Due to time constraints, for some groups communication focusing on the key principles rather than co-production / consultation may be more beneficial;
- Citizen engagement must not be a one-off policy exercise; citizens need to be kept informed and listened to during the implementation / prioritisation of investments;
- The importance of providing feedback on the actions taken as result of the engagement;
- An agreed timeline would be useful so that groups / citizens can visualise the journey;
- The need for joined up messages / a narrative, communication and engagement on how the various policies and funding (City Deals, Regional Economic Frameworks) will work together;
- Group members represent their peers and provide feedback on developments; it is vital that they collate the views and keep their sectors/groups/citizens informed.

This paper provides details about the mechanisms and milestones over the next six months for engaging audiences. It recognises that no single channel is the answer, and that effective communication and engagement to support greater collaboration

and openness requires planning across all channels with the involvement of partners.

Plans for the launch of the consultation document

A press notice and media interviews will be arranged to promote the launch of the consultation document together with the use of WG digital and social media platforms as these provide wider engagement opportunities, particularly with people (e.g. disabled people) who may have views on the subject matter but are unable to travel or are time poor.

The consultation will be published online, with the option to submit feedback. However, the use of digital/online is an enabler for coordination rather than the direct engagement channel. During the consultation period we therefore plan to hold a consultation event in each region, in addition to arranging a series of focus groups or seminars to target audiences who are not as informed as key stakeholders.

The consultation events planned in each of the regions will comprise Ministerial speech (where possible), strategic messages, explanation of the consultation proposals, followed by thematic workshops to gain feedback. We are also exploring opportunities through our consultation events to join up the work being led by other WG departments, especially the development of Regional Economic Frameworks (see 'joining up' section below).

During the consultation period, we will also attend events arranged by other organisations, for example, the WCVA and WLGA, to discuss proposals and gain feedback from specific sectors (local govt, third sector etc).

Two versions of the consultation document will be published bilingually comprising of a standard policy version and an easy read version. The purpose of the easy read version is to give people access to information who have difficulty doing so from documents produced in a standard format, and will translate information into simple words and pictures. They are also useful for people who only wish to understand the basic facts about a subject matter and not get too immersed in the technical details if these points are not of interest or not relevant to them. A limited number of printed copies of these documents will be made available at consultation events and other focus groups being led by Welsh Government.

Key Stakeholders

The RIWSG and sub groups will continue to meet over the next six months with the next meeting scheduled for 5 Feb (Cardiff). This will enable members to have further opportunity to provide feedback and advice on a more developed draft of the consultation document that is due to be issued to Cabinet at the end of February (see table below).

It is unlikely that the RIWSG will be asked to meet during the 12-week consultation period (March–June), given the number of events and focus groups underway.

Rather, RIWSG members will be encouraged to attend the consultation events, where possible.

The sub groups may well be asked to meet to consider further issues, but the need to meet monthly (as has been the case between August and December 2019), over the consultation period will be reviewed by the secretariats.

Political audiences

Welsh Ministers will be seeking early meetings with any new UK Government to reaffirm our positions for replacement funding in full and for the Welsh Government to retain the autonomy on how to spend it.

An Oral Statement has been scheduled for Plenary on 14 January. This will provide an opportunity to reaffirm Welsh Government positions and Assembly support on replacement funding, and report on the progress being made with stakeholders to develop a new framework.

A Cabinet Paper on the proposed consultation document will be issued on 24 February (date tbc) and subject to Cabinet agreement of the document, the 12-week formal public consultation period will be launched in early March.

During the consultation period, we will arrange Ministerial attendance at Assembly Committees to discuss the consultation proposals and gain feedback. The main Committees are likely to be the External Affairs and Additional Legislations Committee and the Finance Committee, as in 2018 they undertook inquiries and produced reports on the future of funding.

We will also be engaging with Ministerial groups, such as the European Advisory Group, on our proposals.

Business

CBI Wales, FSB Wales, the Development Bank for Wales and other private sector partners are represented on the RIWSG and sub groups, and have been engaged in the development work so far.

With the help of these national private sector representatives and others, (e.g. Commerce Cymru) we will arrange some focused business seminars to discuss our consultation proposals and gain feedback. These will be in addition to the consultation events we are planning for each region, to which the business community will also be invited.

We will also utilise the local authority Regional Engagement Teams to facilitate discussions with business through their established networks.

Citizens and Communities

We want to engage citizens and communities better, and we recognise that a formal consultation and supporting regional events will not meet the needs of everyone (i.e. the citizen).

To help widen our engagement to more than national and/or regional stakeholders, we are looking to contract a specialist firm to undertake a number of citizen focus groups across Wales. To complement these, we will also explore the use of local government community cohesion officers who have direct links with citizens locally. For example, there is a good coverage in the South East region where this type of informal setting can be utilised. We will also explore opportunities with partners such as the WCVA who have grass roots networks with communities and citizens.

As part of all of our citizen engagement approaches, care will be taken to ensure messages are clear, understandable and meaningful to the community / citizen.

Young people

Similar to the work we will be carrying out on citizen engagement, we will be looking to contract a suitable organisation to facilitate some young people focus groups across Wales.

We are also exploring options to include an item on the future of regional investment at a meeting of the Youth Parliament next year.

We will maximise WG digital and social media platforms to also engage with young people.

People with protected characteristics

Reaching people with protected characteristics (e.g. BME, disabled) who often are seldom heard and may have limited access to government is a particular challenge.

Face-to-face engagement is considered to be the best way to encourage more open conversations from such groups, and delivering this in a strategic and co-ordinated way could be achieved via trusted organisations and/or community and local groups.

Over the coming weeks we will be discussing with trusted intermediaries options for arranging such face-to-face engagement.

Joining up with other developments

We want to rationalise our engagement on the future of regional investment.

Listening to stakeholder feedback, a key preference is to reduce government requests for multiple, one-off responses to specific issues from the same groups. The future of regional investment provides an opportunity to join up on cross cutting

policies and stage wider conversations, especially in relation to ESNR's development of Regional Economic Frameworks.

These two areas of work are likely to benefit from integrated planning as our stakeholders are very similar. ESNR is planning to issue participation documents early next year for comment and feedback. We are therefore currently discussing timings and priorities so that REFs engagement can be coordinated with our consultation events and other engagement measures.

We will also continue to explore engagement linkages with other parts of Government, including developments around the Local Government and Elections Wales Bill.

KEY MILESTONES AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Timescale	Stakeholders	Political (& press/media)	Citizens	Business, Young People, and people with protected characteristics
December 2019 – February 2020 (pre-consultation launch)	• 17 Dec: RIWSG meets to consider consultation draft outline • Sub Groups continue to meet to give feedback on draft consultation document • 30 January: meeting of cross-govt steering group (internal) • 5 Feb: RIWSG meeting to consider updated draft consultation document	• 14 January: Oral Statement (tbc) • 24 Feb: Cabinet Committee to consider draft consultation document (tbc) • Ministerial attendance at Assembly Committees (dates tbc) • Discussion at Ministerial Groups (e.g. European Advisory Group)	• Exploring opportunities with experienced / specialist organisations to undertake citizen focus groups • Discussions with Community Cohesion Officers around citizen engagement opportunities	• Youth Parliament agenda (tbc) • Discussions with trusted intermediaries around opportunities to hold face-to-face engagement with people with protected characteristics • Exploring opportunities with experienced / specialist organisations to undertake young people focus groups

March – June	• WG led consultation events held in each region (linking with REF engagement) • Stakeholders arrange own sectoral / focus events, with WG attendance to explain proposals • Sub groups continue to meet, where appropriate	• Online consultation launch in early March (press/media; written statement, stakeholder event etc) • Ministerial attendance at Assembly Committees (dates tbc) • Discussion at Ministerial Groups (e.g. European Advisory Group)	• Contractor to undertake citizen engagement work • Community Cohesion Officers undertake citizen engagement	• Hold business seminars (with support from CBI, FSB, Dvpt Bank for Wales, RETs etc) • Specialist organisation to hold focus groups with young people • Trusted intermediaries to hold focus groups with people with protected characteristics
June – August	• RIWSG and sub groups meet to consider consultation and focus group feedback	• Ministerial consideration of consultation and focus group feedback • Feedback report published after independent analysis of consultation and focus group feedback	• Feedback and next steps shared	• Feedback and next steps shared

		• Ministerial Written Statement (tbc)		
Autumn / Winter	• RIWSG and sub groups meet to consider latest framework before consideration by Cabinet • OECD Seminar	• Updated framework approved by Cabinet • Oral or Written Statement (tbc)	• Developments and next steps shared	• Developments and next steps shared