

Scottish Government - Effective community engagement in local development planning guidance: consultation

Sent by E-mail to: communityengagementguidance@gov.scot

(Link to consultation page: <https://consult.gov.scot/planning-architecture/effective-community-engagement-ldp/>)

7th Sept 2023

To whom it may concern,

Effective community engagement in local development planning guidance consultation

The Scottish Grocers' Federation (SGF) is the leading trade association for the Scottish Convenience store sector. There are 5,098 convenience stores in Scotland, which includes all the major symbol groups, co-ops, and convenience multiples in Scotland ([Scottish Local Shop Report 2022](#) (SLSR 2022)).

SGF promotes responsible community retailing and works with key stakeholders to encourage a greater understanding of the contribution convenience retailers make to Scotland's communities. In total, convenience stores provide around **49,000 jobs in Scotland** (SLSR 2022).

Convenience stores trade across all locations in Scotland, providing a core grocery offer and expanding range of services in response to changing consumer demands close to where people live. **The valued services provided by local shops include bill payment services (78%), cashback (70%), and branches of the Post Office network (27%) (SLSR 2022).**

Over the past year, the UK convenience sector contributed over £9.7bn in GVA and over £9bn in taxes (SLSR 2022). **Modern convenience stores are community assets and now more than ever have an increasingly important role in their local communities.** As local economic multipliers, they are also important employers of local staff, with that money often put back into the local community and helping to strengthen local economies.

Consultation

SGF welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation and agrees with the objective of improving community engagement with local planning and development. SGF broadly agrees with the aim of improving planning outcomes for communities, including vulnerable and minority groups, and welcomes the modernisation of planning guidance. We mark in particular examples such as the recent Scottish Government 'Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods - planning guidance' as an important step in the right direction for improving planning outcomes.

SGF agrees that the purpose and scope of the guidance as set out in the consultation document is clear and notes, in particular, the concerns raised in Section 1, paragraph 26 of the Consultation Draft.

SGF believes it may be helpful to further explore the impact of the factors set out in Section 1, paragraph 26 on the communities and individuals that have had a negative experience of engagement with the planning process.

The primary objective of planning should always be to improve the wellbeing and quality of life within in the community. SGF also believes it is important to highlight the specific importance of enabling a thriving local economy, local employment and access to highly valued services and amenities, for both individuals and the community as a whole.

While we recognise that this guidance is not primarily for business and does not result in additional requirements on businesses, we note that any potential changes to planning guidance may have an indirect impact on local retail and small businesses. As noted in 9.17 of the relevant impact assessment.

For example, our research shows that customers hold particular value some of the services offered in their convenience store such as access to cash, post office facilities and click & collect. SGF's Scottish Local Shop Report 2022 (SLSR 2022) also highlights through consumer polling shows that convenience stores are ranked first at 47% as having the most positive impact on the local area.

SGF strongly believes that communities, and therefore planners, must prioritise some aspects of development first and foremost. In particular, access to key local services and a vibrant local economy.

While we recognise and support the definitions of inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower, as set out. SGF is of the view that the success of the guidance will be largely determined by meaningful uptake, and how these ideas are put into practice by planning authorities.

SGF strongly agrees with a collaborative approach to local development and planning requirements. Despite being vital for their communities, many convenience retailers are experiencing a very challenging economic environment. Issues such as energy costs, cost-of-living, stubbornly high food inflation, especially for staple items, are having an impact on both business and household budgets.

Some of these challenges could be mitigated through more robust support and engagement with government and local authorities. A collaborative approach to local investment, development and planning will not only benefit local businesses but local communities and the local economy as well.

Overall, SGF recognises the potential benefits of improved community engagement and welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. We agree that this guidance will somewhat advance equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, and foster good community relations, in particular for people with protected characteristics.

In addition, we are broadly content with the proposals as set out. Including the use of 'Levels of engagement' and 'Stage by Stage Engagement'.

SGF hope the Scottish Government will find the information provided in this response useful.

Yours sincerely,

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SGF

Scottish Grocers' Federation

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Promoting Responsible Community Retailing Since 1918
to ensure a sustainable and prosperous convenience industry in Scotland



- SGF gives permission to the Scottish Government to publish its consultation response in full (name and organisation included) and to share this response internally as required.
- SGF is also content to be contacted again in the future, in relation to this consultation exercise.

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Find us on



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