

# COMMUNICATIONS GUIDANCE

---

Community Broadband Scotland

## COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

### INTRODUCTION

The best way to drum up support for your broadband project is by practicing effective communication with the wider community – after all, the people who make up your community will be your customers and ultimately, their continued support will be vital to the success of your network.

Communication is not something to consider as an afterthought. Instead, it should be incorporated into every stage you go through to ensure the community is constantly kept up-to-date with the latest news and updates about your project. Here are a few things you should be considering when keeping your community informed.

### AT WHAT STAGES SHOULD I BE COMMUNICATING WITH MY COMMUNITY?

From start to finish, your project will complete a series of milestones and at these points, you should consider making sure your community knows. These milestones are:

- Scoping
- State Aid Consultation
- Tendering
- Funding
- Installation
- Completion

If your community is kept well-informed, they are more likely to remain engaged with the project. As with the nature of these kinds of projects, there can be challenges. If your project suffers from major delays or problems, it's a good idea to keep your community informed of the implications of these so you can effectively manage expectations. Whether the project is going well or not, the most important thing you can do is communicate regularly with your community.

### HOW CAN I COMMUNICATE WITH MY COMMUNITY?

There a variety of methods you can use to keep your community informed including:

- **Community meetings** – The best way to communicate with a large number of people at the one time and give people in the community a platform to raise concerns or suggestions
- **Letters/leaflets/posters** – Sending important updates or letters through potential customers will help keep it in mind
- **Social Media** – Social Media is a powerful tool that will allow you to post updates as and when you need them. Social Media is particularly useful for keeping the momentum going e.g. posting a picture of a mast being installed etc.
- **Website** – One of the best ways to communicate with your community is by creating a website for your project. Not only does it provide the best platform for news stories, it's a great way to store information about the project which your community can access for reference.

Whilst we recognise that using online methods may not be the most accessible forms of communication for your community, in our experience most people can access basic internet services and therefore, it is still useful to maintain an online presence.

## COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

### INTRODUCTION

Starting a community broadband project is no mean feat and there will be lots of people interested in how your network develops. Bridging the digital divide is big news and therefore, it is important to consider how you will communicate to other stakeholders such as the media, local authorities etc. Reaching a wide range of people on a regular basis is a good way to ensure that you have lots of ambassadors who will continue to support your community broadband project.

Community connectivity can be a very emotive subject for people, often arousing strong emotions. Therefore, it is doubly important to keep people informed as much as possible.

As with communities, it is important to include communications in all parts of the planning and strategy of your project. It is particularly useful if you have someone within your group who has PR/Communications skills although CBS can also offer help and advice.

### WHAT MILESTONES DO I NEED TO COMMUNICATE?

From initial enquiry to getting customers connected, your CBS-funded project is a story that will interest a variety of different stakeholders. Specifically, there are a few milestones you should consider promoting including:

- Initial Scoping
- State Aid Consultation
- Tendering
- Funding
- Build of Network
- Connecting Customers
- Ongoing Milestones

This list is by no means exhaustive. With each of these milestones, CBS will also tend to perform their own press so if you have any other stories you want to share, let us know.

You may find it useful to draw up a communications strategy, listing all of the project's milestones, the different types of promotion you want to use and the stakeholders you wish to aim.

### HOW CAN CBS HELP?

CBS has a communications and marketing manager who is responsible for all press and media matters. They can help you fine tune your plans for your community broadband project and will directly liaise with you when your community is ready to release the next story. Please contact our Communications and Marketing manager, Amy Peters ([amy.peters@hient.co.uk](mailto:amy.peters@hient.co.uk)) if you have any queries.

It is important to co-ordinate all news releases and communications with CBS directly. Good practice would be to run any potential news releases or messages through CBS before publishing them and vice versa, we also aim to make sure a community is happy with a news release before we publish them. This is to ensure that both parties are delivering the same message and that there are no discrepancies.

Releasing information that has not been vetted by CBS could open up your community to unnecessary reputational risk. In the first instance, if you are unsure about what messages you want to send out either speak to your CBS advisor or contact our Communications and Marketing manager Amy Peters.