

# Wales Consultation and Engagement



Well-informed approaches to consultation and engagement are important for securing community support for development. The Covid-19 lockdown presents challenges, but also drives us to consider how best to mobilise those who want to proactively shape their communities. As the pre-eminent planning and development consultancy, we align our carefully-crafted approach to engagement with the planning strategy.

## Lockdown challenges

- Encouraging communities to respond to engagement
- Ability to hold face-to-face meetings
- Erection of site notices
- Making draft applications available from public locations
- Stakeholder resources to respond to consultation

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## Getting ahead

The construction sector will be a key driver for the recovery of the Welsh economy. There needs to be minimal interruption to the securing of planning permission to facilitate a quick uplift in activity once the lockdown ends. For major developments, ensuring the legal requirements of pre-application consultation have been met is critical to submitting a valid application.

Until the regulations are changed, the Welsh Government has advised Local Planning Authorities that the statutory pre-application consultation requirements cannot be fulfilled. Lichfields has been encouraging the Welsh Government to make changes to the regulations for appropriate temporary provisions and to ensure clarity for applicants and local communities. The Welsh Government has confirmed that it is considering amendments to legislation and in the meantime it encourages developers to reach out to local communities using online services. Where the option of delaying consultation until after the current emergency is not available Welsh Government requires that all pre-application publicity and consultation should be undertaken online. We are hopeful that the Welsh Government will make the necessary changes.

## How can Lichfields assist?

Our Smarter Engagement approach is targeted and effective by offering a clear strategy tailored to the requirements of the local planning authority. It also provides flexibility to respond to the changing context that we're likely to face over the coming months.

Whilst lockdown and social isolation continues, our teams can help you by:

- Updating the strategy for engagement to align seamlessly with the planning strategy;
- Helping you to understand the likely issues of concern for the community and identifying how and when will be best to engage;
- Co-ordinating (and hosting) online meetings with stakeholders and community representatives;
- Taking time to hold planned telephone calls with individuals creating opportunities for more informed feedback;
- Monitoring (and if necessary, responding to) the social media activity of community groups;
- Creating high quality websites with interactive maps, videos and animations; and,
- Preparing clear messages through excellent graphics and infographic capabilities;
- Providing advice on whether your project would be reasonably considered as one where the option to delay pre-application consultation until after the current emergency is not available.

