

# **The States of Alderney**

## **DRAFT Communications and Engagement Framework**

### **1 Introduction**

#### **1.1 Purpose of this Communications and Engagement Framework**

This Framework provides a means of ensuring a coherent and consistent approach to communications and engagement for the States of Alderney. It sets out definitions of the terms used to describe different types, styles and methods of communication and engagement, in order to provide clarity and promote common understanding. The Framework takes into account legal requirements for engagement e.g. notices of application for planning permission.

Community engagement and communications are complex areas of activity for governments. There is often confusion about when and how to engage with the community and the extent to which the community can influence different types of decisions. This confusion can lead to misunderstandings on the part of communities about the level of communication and engagement they can reasonably expect and on the part of governments about the right methods and timing of engagement activities.

The States of Alderney is a very small government, with very limited civil service resources, so it's important that this Framework recognizes those realities. However, a strong Framework will help to make the best use of limited resources, both to engage as effectively as possible but also to empower the community to make the best use of its capacity and talents, for the benefit of the island as a whole.

#### **1.2 Context**

The States of Alderney operates within a system of governance known as 'representative democracy'<sup>1</sup>. Ten States Members are elected for four year terms, usually having made promises to the electorate in election campaigns. The electorate has an opportunity every two years to elect half of the cohort of States Members. However, a great deal can change within a four year term. The issues of the day, rather than the political promises made in the election four years previously may be more prominent in the minds of the electorate when they come to make their judgment.

States Members gain knowledge and understanding throughout their term of office, on the basis of which they may, quite reasonably, change the views they held at the time they were elected. They cannot constantly communicate and engage with everyone on the island. Some people find it easier to make their voices heard than

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<sup>1</sup> Parry, G., Moyser, M. and Day, N. (1992) *Political participation and democracy in Britain*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

others. Young people under 18, recent arrivals and second home owners are not able to vote, yet all have a legitimate interest in the decisions made by the States. So the role of an elected States Member is as much about listening to the many different (and sometimes hard to hear) voices in the community as it is about fulfilling promises made at the time of election. That is why ‘participative democracy’<sup>2</sup>, through communication and engagement plays such an important and useful role in supporting the effectiveness of representative democracy.

The communication and engagement needs of politicians and the government overlap to a large extent. For example, where a Committee decides to make a major policy change which must be disseminated to the public, a media release might be prepared by Civil Servants and the Chairman of the Committee might be interviewed by the media. However, politicians also enjoy a right to be able to speak out about issues of the day when they may not be acting as a ‘spokesperson’ for government. Taking care to differentiate between these two roles helps to avoid public confusion.

This framework is intended to guide the way that government communications and engagement takes place.

### **1.3 Purpose of communications and engagement**

- To disseminate information to the public
- To support both representative and participative democracy, ensuring that the community’s views can inform decision-making
- To build trust between the States and the community and across the community
- To improve community engagement in, and understanding of, the States strategic options and decisions

### **1.4 Principles**

#### **The States will:**

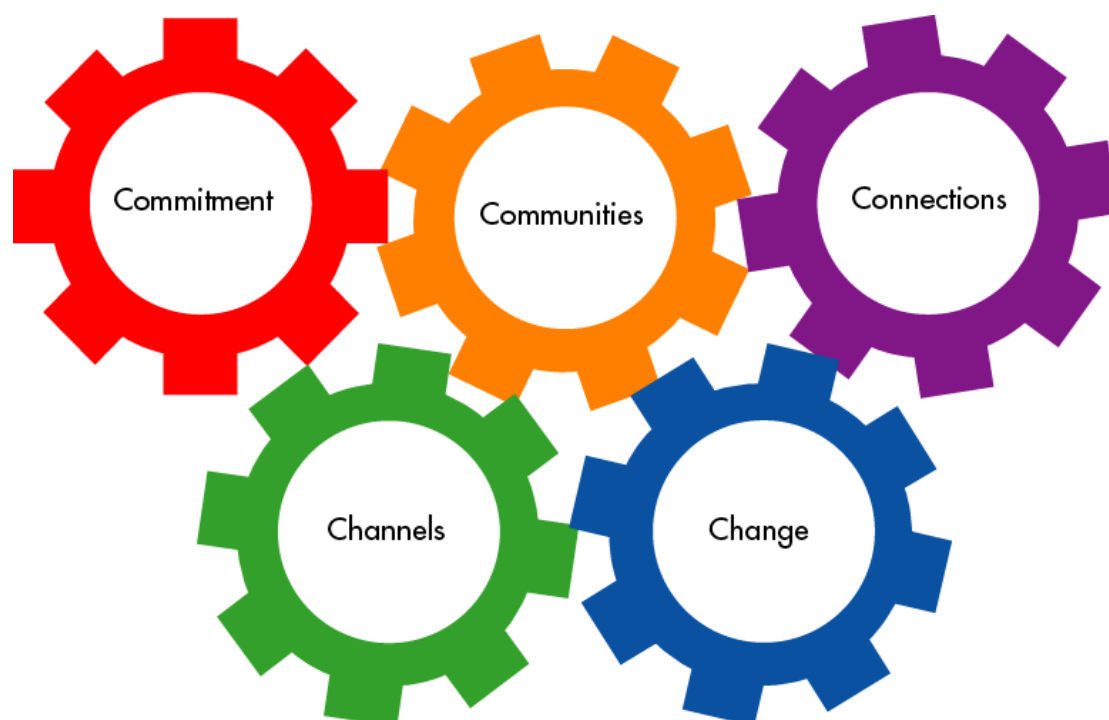
- be as open and transparent as possible in its communications and engagement.
- use the right method of engagement, with the right people, at the right time.
- ensure engagement is structured, timely and based on accurate information.
- take account of the views of islanders and other stakeholder groups in its decision making and service delivery.

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<sup>2</sup> Parker, S., (2015) *Taking power back: Putting people in charge of politics* Policy Press: Bristol

## 2 Understanding engagement

### 2.1 Success factors



**Figure 1: Success factors for engagement**

Governments' performance on engagement varies widely and success is influenced by the following factors<sup>3</sup>:

**Commitment** by States Members and civil servants is needed, to ensure that they model the behaviour that underpins effective engagement. This behaviour includes active leadership to ensure there is a coherent, corporate and consistent approach to engagement. It also requires States Members and civil servants to lead by example.

The island is made up of a number of different, overlapping **Communities** e.g. children and young people, families, business people and older people as well as second home

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<sup>3</sup>Audit Commission (2004) *Connecting with users and Citizens* <http://archive.audit-commission.gov.uk/auditcommission/subwebs/publications/studies/studyPDF/2907.pdf>

owners. These different parts of the community have very varied needs, views and interests so the States need to be able to engage in an equitable and inclusive way, as well as being open and honest about what can be achieved. The States needs to be able to demonstrate that it has good understanding of those diverse and changing needs, based on robust, easily accessible data. It is important to be able to demonstrate that decisions are based on accurate knowledge and evidence, gained through effective engagement and other sources of evidence and not on pre-conceptions, historical data, or the extent to which different parts of the community express their opinions most vociferously.

Communications and engagement requires the States to make **Connections** with the community. Each of the Connections described below, has a particular purpose.

It is important for the States, both Members and civil servants, to be clear about the purpose of engagement and to match the method used (the **Channel**) to that purpose and the needs of the people involved.

The **Channels** used to engage with people should be chosen because of their appropriateness to the needs of the people to be communicated with, rather than for the convenience of the States. Channels include meetings, surveys, the States website, social media, local press and radio as well as face-to-face communication. **Communities, connections and channels** need to be aligned to ensure that communications and engagement are reaching the right people, in the right way, about the right things, at the right time.

**Change** is the key test of whether engagement is effective. If the States engage widely and then change nothing, or make public commitments to engage and then make decisions without doing so, or listen to only a narrow range of views, trust will be undermined and the community will soon disengage. This will be costly, both in terms of wasted resources and damaged reputations and relationships.

### 3 Good practice

#### 3.1 Decide if the States need to communicate and engage about this issue?

- Does the issue have, or have the potential to have, a significant impact on island communities?
- Is there a high level of public interest in the issue?
- Does the issue have significant resource implications?
- Will engagement help to involve the community, or some sections of the community, in improving the welfare and prosperity of the island?



Yes

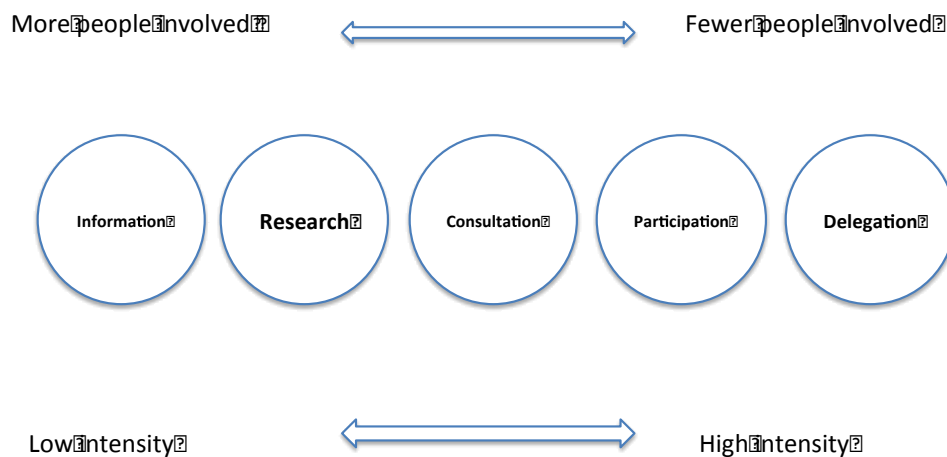
- Is the issue confidential, e.g. relating to commercial relationships, States employees or identifiable individuals?
- Is the issue at an early stage of consideration and requires more research before considering public information and engagement?
- Does the issue relate to operational management issues, delegated to the civil service?

➡ • No

### 3.2 Be clear about the purpose of engagement

Specify the objectives of the engagement and communication exercise and think about those objectives when identifying the communities you wish to engage with.

### 3.3 Make the right connection



**Figure 2: Connections**

It is important to identify the right **Connection**, depending on the purpose of the communication and engagement. Is the States trying to:

- Tell people something (Informing)
- Find out more information from people (Researching)
- Asking people for their views (Consultation)
- Asking people to help decide something (Participation)
- Asking some people to take a decision on its behalf (Delegation)

- **Information**

Good quality, accurate and timely **Information** provides an invaluable foundation to all the other potential connections and will be disseminated via the appropriate channel. Information includes formal notices, information about services and about opportunities to be heard and to contribute to the work of the States and the well-being of the island. The method of dissemination of information will be chosen on the basis of evidence about the effectiveness of that methods in reaching the group or groups to be engaged with.

- **Research**

**Research** will be undertaken, as and when necessary, to gather data about the needs and views of the different communities on the island. Research will be designed to ensure that it is rigorous and that the data gathered can be analysed to provide useful evidence to States Members, the civil service and the wider community on the needs and views of the community, to support better decision making.

- **Consultation**

**Consultation** will be undertaken, when appropriate, to provide opportunities for people to be involved in making choices about strategic priorities or services. Consultation will be underpinned by clear information about the choices available and for example, the use of cost/benefit analyses of the different options available.

- **Participation**

Opportunities will be provided for **Participation** and collaboration by members of the community in specific projects to support the work of the States, such as the design and improvement of public services. This will enable the States to make good use of the capacity, enthusiasm and expertise within the community.

- **Delegation**

**Delegation** of power and resources by the government, to groups of people, for example community trusts, may be undertaken, when appropriate and within agreed parameters. Like Participation, Delegation provides opportunities for the community to use their skills and knowledge to contribute to the wellbeing and prosperity of the island. However, any delegated powers and resources will need to be transferred in such a way as to comply with The Government of Alderney Law (2004), as amended.

## Legislative and executive functions

1. All legislative functions which may be exercised within Alderney are exercisable –
  - (a) by the States of Alderney constituted in accordance with Part III, or
  - (b) in the case of a function conferred by or under an enactment or resolution, by the committee of the States or other body on which, or by the person on whom, the function is conferred.

### 3.4 Support for engagement

Each activity is likely to involve different numbers of people, ranging from most of the population and many visitors, in the case of Information, to relatively small groups in the case of **Participation and Delegation**. The other key variable is the level of intensity of the engagement. For example, receiving information about changes to services requires very little input on the part of those who receive those messages. Becoming actively involved, as a member of a committee or a volunteer requires those involved to give of their time and energy. This means that the States will need to provide support to members of the community who become involved in Participation and Delegation, for example, giving technical advice or supporting good governance.

## 4 Planning engagement and communication

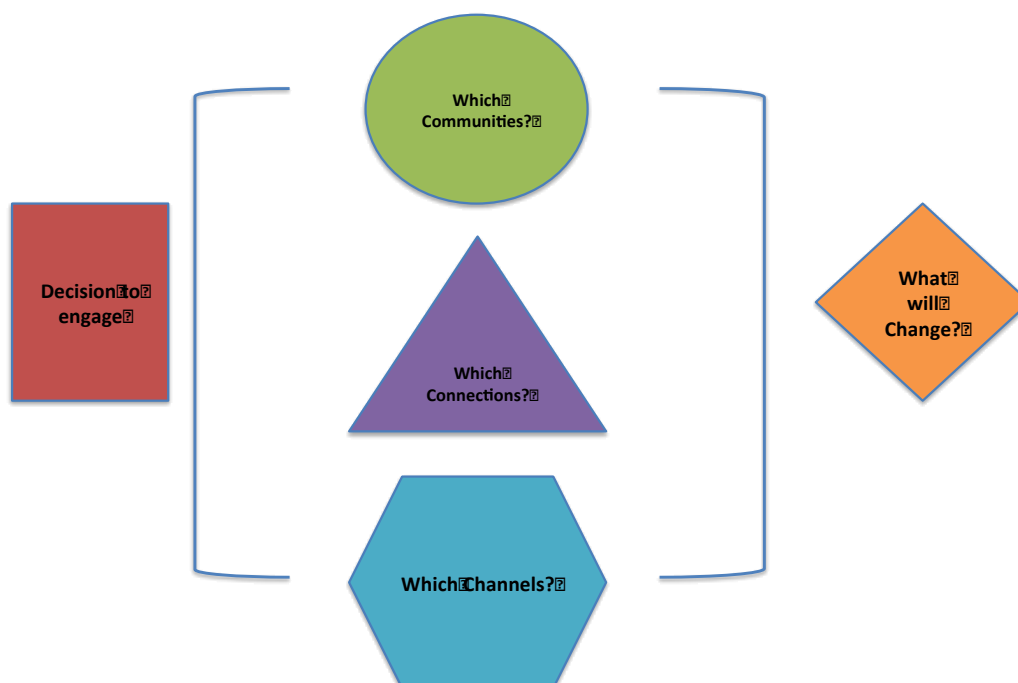


Figure 4: Designing communication and engagement

#### **4.1 Identify issues for engagement**

These might be general day to day issues such as information to the public about roadworks or an issue which is more likely to affect a specific group of people such as a planning application which might impact on near neighbours. Or it may be a policy which the States is developing and is seeking the views of the public about.

#### **4.2 Identify communities with whom the States needs to engage**

Ask who is interested and/or has an interest. It's important to look beyond the obvious, for example, many decisions impact on the future prospects of young people even though they might not be affected in the short term. Be aware that some voices in the community are not easily heard and specific step may need to be taken to engage with those voices.

#### **4.3 Identify the right connection**

Choose the Connections based on the needs of the communities. Do you want to inform people, gather data or engage about strategic choices? Think about what works for them and how their contribution through engagement will add value. Engagement about complex or contentious issues may require the States to use a number of different Connections. Most engagement activity will include disseminating information about the issue and engagement opportunities. It may be necessary to undertake research about the current situation and the views and needs of different communities. The knowledge gained will then be used to inform the formulation of potential choices. Consultation may then be undertaken in stages, engaging with different groups in different ways and then analyzing responses to identify the option or options which have the greatest support and are likely to have the greatest positive impact in relation to the resources required.

#### **4.4 Identify the right channels**

What methods and styles of engagement suit the communities you wish to engage with? Where do people go to for information? Are they willing and able to come to meetings or would they prefer to engage via social media or one-to-one discussions? Do some people prefer to be communicated with via letters? Is a regular newsletter the right approach? Can the States website be used? Can press and radio coverage be used? Should advertising be considered?

The answers to these questions will vary, depending on the topic of the engagement, the complexity of the issue and the number of people likely to have an interest. It is good practice to use a number of different channels to ensure engagement is as inclusive as possible.



## 4.5 Working with the Media

The Media performs a variety of functions which can support communications and engagement. On-island press and radio provide ways in which communications directly with the public can be enhanced. By providing accurate information through media releases and interviews, the States and local media should work cooperatively together to improve communications, engagement and understanding of key issues. Improving the content, quality and speed of media releases is a key priority.

Nevertheless, the media is independent of the States and will also generate its own stories which may not present information in the way the States would choose. Being held to account by an independent media is part of a well-functioning democracy and whilst government should work positively and cooperatively with the local media, the relationship should not be so close as to cast doubt on the independence of either government or the media.

It should also be recognised that there is an inherent tension between the media's need to publish and broadcast 'news' and the obligations of government in relation to some matters which require confidentiality. It is also important to recognise that thinking space is required in government where new ideas can be exchanged before a matter is discussed in public.

One way in which Media relationships should be enhanced is to ensure that the outcomes of each Committee meeting are reviewed after each meeting and a decision is taken about preparing Media Releases in respect of items that have been under discussion. This is a responsibility which should be undertaken by the Chair of each Committee with the assistance of the civil service. Whilst individual States Members will be approached directly for comment about specific issues from time to time, it is important that specific communications about items of States business are published or released by the Committee Chair in the first instance.

The Media (particularly broadcast media) is particularly important in emergency situations where urgent advice may need to be conveyed to the public. Strong relationships and protocols should be maintained for this purpose.

Whilst there is an expectation that local media and the States should work cooperatively where there is a public interest in disseminating the business of government, from time to time it will be appropriate to consider whether to use advertising to get specific messages across. To some extent, the boundaries of what is covered as part of a media release and what is advertising reflect what has become custom and practice. Decisions about advertising follow on from considerations about community and connections and are, other than in exceptional cases<sup>4</sup>, operational decisions.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, the major public consultation on the Land Use Plan may included a strategic decision on which channels to use.

Off-island Media (primarily Guernsey, Jersey and the UK) also fulfill a different role, including impacting on the reputation of Alderney and the States of Alderney as well as informing the local community. Therefore, different considerations need to be given to communications and engagement issues which involve a wider reach.

#### **4.6 Identify how change will be measured**

What will success look like? How will you evaluate both the methods of engagement and the overall outcomes? How will you feed back to participants about the impact that their involvement has helped to achieve.

### **5 Using the Framework**

**5.1** The issues set out in this framework can be used as a simple checklist for straightforward engagement purposes (eg. Informing the public about an issue). For more complex engagement processes, a communications and engagement plan should be prepared and a table with examples of how the framework applies to different examples of communication and engagement is included as Appendix A.

### **6 Conclusions**

- 6.1 The formal role of Committee Chairmen in acting as spokesperson for a Committee and agreeing press releases should be formally recognized.
- 6.2 The purpose and principles set out in Paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4 of this report should be endorsed as the guiding principles of communications and engagement policy
- 6.3 The Framework for Engagement set out in Section 4 of the Report should be adopted as the policy guidance for future communications and engagement work.

## Appendix A

### Examples of applying the Framework for Communication and Engagement

Issue	Community	Connection	Channel	Change
Statutory Notices (Planning, elections, Insurance, Company Law)	It is a legal requirement to inform interested persons	Interested persons are generally aware of the statutory obligation to publish in the Alderney Gazette	Alderney Official Gazette, Noticeboards	Primary outcome is to ensure that relevant persons are informed as required by Law
Public Notices (Public information, Social Security, Taxation)	It is desirable to inform a section of the community or the whole community	Identify whether this is for the general public or targeted at a specific group	Alderney Official Gazette, Noticeboards plus consider whether to advertise in local media or to write directly to people	Primary outcome is to inform specific groups of people or the population generally
Committee decisions – items considered at Committee meetings which States Members wish to disseminate	Decide whether it is desirable to inform a section of the community or the whole community	For decisions that have been taken – inform. For decisions that are being considered – consult.	SoA website, Media Release, social media, organisations and networks as appropriate	Outcome is to inform or to engage appropriate people and organisations in consultation
Introduction of new laws or policies	There are likely to be specific affected groups or individuals as well as general public interest	Analysis required of organisations and individuals that might have a specific interest as well as general public engagement	Media Release, direct communication with target groups, public meetings and workshops	Outcome is to inform and get input from those most affected and from the public