

Appendix D - Summary of Communications and Engagement Activity

The communication and engagement activities focused on a robust communications strategy over an 8-week period, emphasising both digital and in-person engagement to ensure broad participation.

A dedicated consultation and communications working group was established with representation from all three of the Upper Tier Local Authorities. The working group's purpose was to deliver a successful consultation over December and January, and maximise the participation rate through a range of communications and engagement activity.

The overarching objective of the initiative was to inform businesses and the public, fostering active involvement in shaping the future of Lancashire. This was achieved through encouraging participation in the consultation process, whether through paper or digital forms, aiming to ensure a comprehensive understanding of diverse perspectives. The primary goal was to enable all those with an interest in the Proposal to engage and have their voices heard. To achieve this, the primary focus was on driving traffic to the dedicated consultation website, utilising various channels and networks for effective communication and engagement to gather valuable insights and feedback.

Steps were also taken to cater for those who had difficulty accessing the online questionnaire and content. Paper copies of the questionnaire and draft proposal were available in all Lancashire libraries. The dedicated website informed that alternative language versions, braille versions and large print versions were all available on request. The libraries and customer access centres were also briefed that these alternative versions were available.

Events and drop-in sessions were strategically organised across all districts, emphasising inclusivity and accessibility. The geographical reach ensured that at least one physical event occurred in each district, fostering a widespread presence.

Diverse engagement methods were employed to cater to different preferences and schedules (detailed below). These methods were chosen to accommodate various communication styles and facilitate broad community participation. This included taking steps to make the consultation accessible to groups with protected characteristics. For example, a BSL interpretation of the explainer video was commissioned.

The rationale behind this approach was to showcase the availability of the consultation process in multiple accessible forms, underlining the commitment to inclusivity. By incorporating a range of engagement methods and ensuring a diverse geographic presence, the communication strategy aimed to gather a rich tapestry of opinions and feedback, promoting a well-informed and representative consultation process for the Lancashire Devolution proposal.

Channels Utilised:

- **Dedicated website:** A standalone website (www.lancashiredevolution.co.uk) was created to house the proposal, consultation, devolution explanation, Q&As, latest news, newsletter subscription.
- **Video:** An explainer video with subtitles was created to give an overview of the devolution proposal. A BSL interpretation of this video was commissioned.
- **Media releases:** Issued to provide updates and key information to the public.
- **Social media activity:** Active presence across a range of social platforms, including Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram and LinkedIn. Social media posts included video content and reminders on the consultation deadline.
- **Newsletters:** Periodic newsletters distributed to a targeted audience for comprehensive updates and to encourage uptake in the consultation. The newsletter is specific to devolution in Lancashire, and will remain in place following the consultation.
- **Dedicated email address:** A central email address (Devolution@lancashire.gov.uk) was created to provide a single point of contact for any queries.
- **Advertising assets:** Adverts were included on digital screens in town centres and on road sides in Blackburn, where Blackburn with Darwen Council-owned digital assets were available.
- **Regional coverage:** Featured on regional television, radio, and other news and media outlets to maximise visibility.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Utilised email communication, in-person meetings, and specific event communications for targeted outreach.
- **Public and private sector networks:** Expanded our message's impact by utilising existing public and private sector communication channels, leveraging newsletters, social media, and other platforms to engage a broader audience. Utilising existing networks, including the LEP network, Marketing Lancashire's network, Boost network, Creative Lancashire, the Chambers of Commerce and the Parish Councils, enabled a larger audience to be reached.
- **Internal communications:** Toolkit developed to ensure that internal teams were well-informed to maintain consistency. The toolkit was shared with key Lancashire organisations / employers, and they were encouraged to share the information within their own staff networks.

Events Overview:

- **Engagement reach:** Successfully engaged with over 1,500 individuals.
- **Event quantity:** Participated in a total of 53 events across Lancashire, catering to both business and the public.
- **Geographical inclusivity:** Promoted representation by holding at least one event in each district, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity and providing the groups identified in the EIA as having protected characteristics with an opportunity to have their voices heard.
- **Sectoral coverage:** Some events targeted key sectors impacted by the draft proposal, including Economic Development, Skills, and Transport Geography.

Diverse Engagement Methods:

- **Breakfast events:** Early morning sessions to cater to different schedules, and for those who couldn't attend daytime or evening events.
- **Roundtable discussions:** Both in-person and virtual discussions for diverse participation.
- **Presentations:** Informative sessions to convey key details and facilitate understanding. Presenters at the various sessions included Leaders of the three Upper Tier Local Authorities, as well as Senior Officers involved in developing the draft proposal.
- **Q&A sessions:** Provided a platform for direct interaction and clarification of queries.
- **Library drop-ins:** Informal evening sessions for those seeking information in a relaxed environment. Each session was attended by a local councillor and an officer, who were on hand to answer queries and collate feedback from the sessions.
- **Meeting agendas:** Integrated consultation topics into existing meetings for increased visibility.
- **Conferences:** Participated in larger conferences to reach a wider audience.
- **Utilising existing platforms:** Leveraged Business Chamber events and business networks to amplify messaging and encourage the business community to provide their organisational response to the consultation.

Highlight Performance Figures:

- **Media Coverage:** Coverage by regional television, radio and other news outlets resulted in more than 100 related media reports.
- **Event Engagement:** Engaged with 1,500+ individuals through 53 events across Lancashire, encompassing both in-person and online formats, catering to both business and the general public.
- **Website Views:** 16,825 unique visits to the devolution consultation website.
- **Social Media:** Our best performing social media channels were Facebook, reaching over 167,000 views and 3,627 clicks to the website, and LinkedIn with over 134,000 views and 3,625 clicks to the website.

The detailed engagement methods sought to ensure that the consultation process was inclusive and accessible to various preferences and needs. The broad spectrum of events facilitated meaningful discussions, and the geographical inclusivity promoted representation from all districts, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the communication and engagement strategy. The impressive engagement numbers underscore the success of the approach in fostering a comprehensive and inclusive consultation process.