



Purpose-driven Delivery

A guide to improve major project delivery through social value techniques

Jacobs

 **MAJOR PROJECTS
ASSOCIATION**

SOCIAL VALUE FORUM

Executive summary

Infrastructure is the backbone of every country; providing connectivity, shaping places and delivering vital services to its citizens. At its core, infrastructure delivers undeniable value to society. However, budgetary constraints, competing political agendas and conflicting local and national priorities can often result in society feeling overlooked in the decision-making and delivery processes of major infrastructure projects.

Speaking with professionals who work across major project delivery in a variety of roles, our research revealed that projects often feel “inflicted” on communities rather than being integrated into their regional and national ecosystems. This is leading to the rise of the so-called “NIMBYism” (Not in My Back Yard) and criticism regarding the rising cost of major infrastructure programmes, which continues to hinder growth and equitable access to quality infrastructure in the UK. There remains an inherent tension within major infrastructure delivery. While infrastructure projects aim to serve the needs of the nation, in doing so they often have profound impacts on local communities. While in some instances the national interest must be served and the price of the few may be deemed something we must bear; without a clearly articulated rationale for this decision and without carefully selected options and mitigation strategies; this adverse impact on the few can be detrimental to the project, with costs soaring and reputations irreparably damaged.

So how do we overcome these challenges to unlock significant economic, environmental and social benefits and ensure these benefits are equitably distributed across society?

The answer is simple: we must place people at the heart of infrastructure delivery and bring everyone on the journey with us, united by a common purpose. Infrastructure investments are often driven by societal needs.

The idea of placing “purpose” at the heart of business operations has seen significant traction in recent years. Increased awareness of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability being critical to business operations is nothing new. However, placing these considerations at the heart of an organisation’s decision-making above financial considerations is changing how businesses connect with their staff and respond to their customers.



By conveying a cohesive purpose, companies can drive collective action to respond to customer and societal needs. It can support attraction and retention of high-quality talent and enhance customer loyalty.¹ Purpose-driven companies often demonstrate better long-term performance as their sustainable practices can lead to more stable and predictable returns.² Moreover, as environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors become increasingly pivotal in investment decisions, purpose-driven companies can excel in ESG criteria, thereby attracting more private investment.

Major infrastructure delivery can benefit greatly from this approach. “Purpose-driven delivery” involves understanding the society our project serves, effectively communicating their value to stakeholders and actively listening while empathising and responding to the communities affected throughout the delivery process. Like purpose-driven organisations, this approach enhances project delivery, aids in making sound investment decisions and mitigates critical risks during execution.

This concept isn’t new. The techniques and case studies are derived from established industry practices, tested on major projects in the UK. These methods are employed daily by social value and sustainability practitioners, yet many still limit “social value” to a mere question in public sector procurement. At the [Major Projects Social Value Forum](#), with members holding decades of experience in social value across many of the UK’s most notable major projects, we recognise the potential of social value in achieving improved outcomes on major projects. It helps projects develop a clear “purpose” that resonates with communities, funders, staff and suppliers, uniting them behind a common mission and creating a cohesive approach that permeates every stage of the project lifecycle.

Our research (including surveys and interviews) has confirmed that social value has been crucial in delivering project outcomes far beyond procurement. It has helped reduce risks, attract financing, foster a united culture and maximise the value delivered for every pound spent.

This document serves as guidance, offering inspiration and lessons learned from over 40 organisations and 20 projects involved in the research. It demonstrates how social value techniques can benefit both society and projects. We aim to equip leaders, designers, commercial experts and all teams working on major projects with the tools and methodologies to adopt a “purpose-driven” approach to delivery across every project lifecycle stage. By doing so, projects will remain focused on the people they serve, creating a tangible golden thread that runs through every facet of the project and fostering a culture that prioritises doing things right for the benefit of all.



- 1 E. Melloul et al., [Purpose-driven Brands Can Reshape the Consumer Goods Industry if They Can Scale ...](#), Bain & Company, 2022.
- 2 Blueprint for Business, [How can investors identify purpose-driven companies?](#), 2018.

Authors and contributors

This guide was developed by the Major Projects Social Value Forum, a member-led forum supported by the Major Projects Association, which is a collective of passionate people dedicated to enhancing social value delivery on major projects both now and into the future.

The forum was established to deliver regular events and opportunities to collaborate, with the aim of bringing together major projects from across the UK to achieve the following:

- Improve social value performance through shared learning across industries, sectors and organisations.
- Drive efficiencies and outcomes through collaboration.
- Increase skills and knowledge in social value, including training and development.
- Maintain consistency in sharing social value approaches and benchmarking of performance.
- Deliver thought leadership in social value to improve outcomes for all.

Further details on the forums and Steering Group Members can be found [here](#).

Authors



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Other partners and contributors

In addition to the above, a series of partners were involved in the research, including:



Introduction

Since the introduction of the [Public Services \(Social Value\) Act](#) in the UK in 2012, there has been ongoing debate about how to define, deliver and measure social value. Despite significant growth in social value-related careers and the development of numerous tools, methodologies and literature, a clear and unified definition remains elusive. The Act, along with the more recent [Public Procurement Notice 06/20](#), tend to limit social value to procurement, which restricts the potential for projects to achieve transformative outcomes that benefit both society and project delivery.

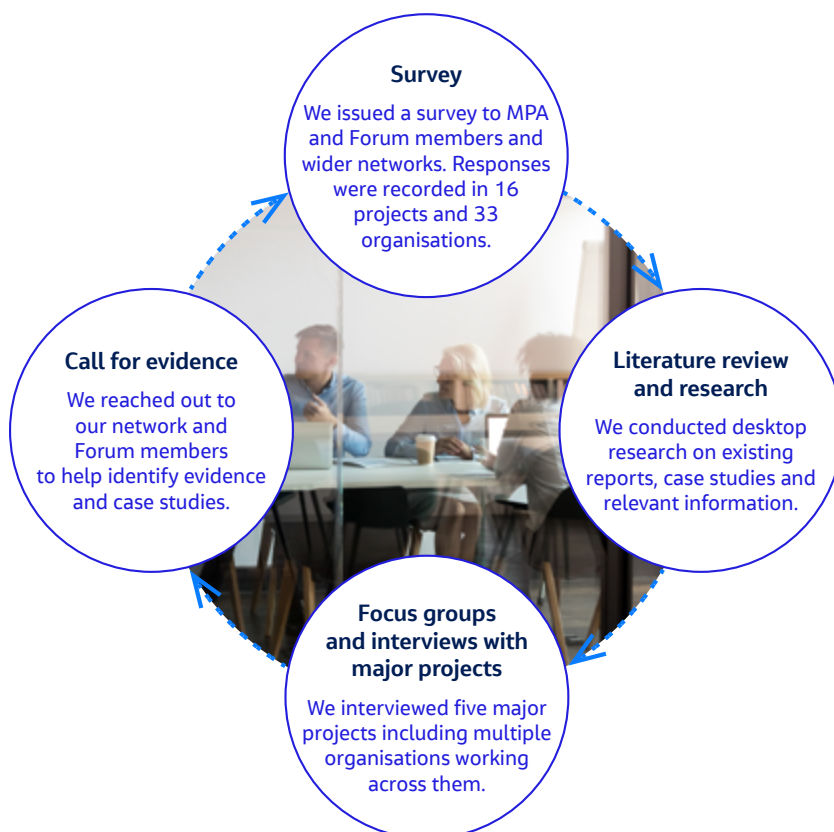
The Major Project Social Value Forum, with members who possess decades of experience across various UK sectors, understands this challenge well. Our members' experiences highlight the lack of a unified definition and how it has led to a fragmented industry of passionate individuals who struggle to approach and justify social value effectively.

This document aims not to add another definition of social value, but to offer practical guidance and inspiration on how social value techniques—methods that help us understand and respond to societal needs—can deliver dual benefits for both projects and communities, based on our research. While much of our research and case studies has centred around major infrastructure projects, we also draw in applicable learning from other projects for the advancement of major projects.

This document is intended for social value professionals, project managers, designers, clients and suppliers. It emphasises that social value should not be seen as an “add-on activity” to procurement but should be integrated into every aspect of delivery. We hope this document helps projects develop and harness a clearly articulated “purpose” for their value to society, that resonates with all stakeholders and uses a “golden thread” to unite people, processes and operations with a singular focus on outcomes for society.

Methodology

To create this guide, we conducted research involving major projects, infrastructure client organisations and a range of supply chain partners in the construction and built environment sectors. We employed various techniques to gather their insights, lessons learned and best practice examples, which have been incorporated into this document. These techniques included:



Key findings

Despite the differences in nature, location, phase of the projects and organisations involved, several common themes and learnings emerged from the research that are crucial to consider moving forward.

1

Social value as a key component to project success: Social value is essential for delivering successful projects and business operations. Over 75% of the surveyed projects and organisations viewed social value as critical to their success with more than 65% focusing their purpose on social, economic, and environmental benefits. This was consistently reflected in our interviews and discussions with a wider range of people involved in major project delivery, from clients and sponsors to supply chain partners and commercial leads to designers, where we identified dual benefits from a strategic approach to social value. These benefits include validating investment decisions, reducing costly delays through improved advocacy, addressing skills shortages and enhancing standards to future-proof projects against evolving legislation, policy and societal expectations.

2

Importance of early strategic thinking: All interviewed project representatives emphasised that when done well, social value can provide a clear focus for its mission and offer a compelling narrative to stakeholders on the justification for investment. It can serve as the golden thread that strategically aligns every facet of your team and supply chain, uniting them with a common purpose. Conversely, treating social value as a mere box-ticking exercise in procurement can inflate costs and lead to fragmented, tokenistic activities that frustrate rather than benefit communities. Early consideration of societal purpose and its reflection in what to build, how to build and how to operate is crucial to establishing this golden thread and delivering enhanced value to society that reflect its driving purpose for society.

3

Flexibility in definitions: The organisations and projects interviewed and surveyed, had slightly different definitions and focuses for social value. This variation makes sense given the diverse communities and purposes each project and organisation serve. While a single definition for social value is not always necessary, a clear understanding of its principles, how it supports project delivery and how it can be achieved without significantly increasing costs is essential.

4

Collaboration is key: Feedback from the projects interviewed showed that where projects were able to collaborate, either with their communities or other projects or across organisations within a project, the better the outcomes. What is more, when done well, this collaboration supported key risk areas for organisations and projects, such as skills challenges in support of both regional and project outcomes.

5

Importance of clear legislation and policy: Social value practitioners and projects often navigate a complex environment of national and local policies and legislation. Our research shows that while a significant percentage of those surveyed were aware of the [Public Procurement \(Social Value\) Act 2012](#) and Public Procurement Notice 06/20, fewer were aware of other influencing legislation and policy. Our engagement with projects and clients indicated that clear legislation on community benefits and social value, beyond procurement applications, leads to a more consistent and considered approach to social value, community benefits and engagement.

6

Early placement of the right skills for social value: All projects interviewed stated that early consideration of social value is key. Having suitably qualified and experienced people to support this is crucial, and for some projects the lack of experienced people in social value is a blocker to innovation and advancing outcomes.

7

Robust assurance and validation of meaningful outcomes: Concerns around “greenwashing” and “social value washing” are on the rise. With the increased use of social value tools to monetise benefits, questions are being raised about the validity of these large monetary values. With the rise of social media and the concept of a “social license to operate” for companies and projects, it is crucial to move from tokenistic social value to delivering meaningful benefits that support societal needs in a transparent and robustly assured manner.



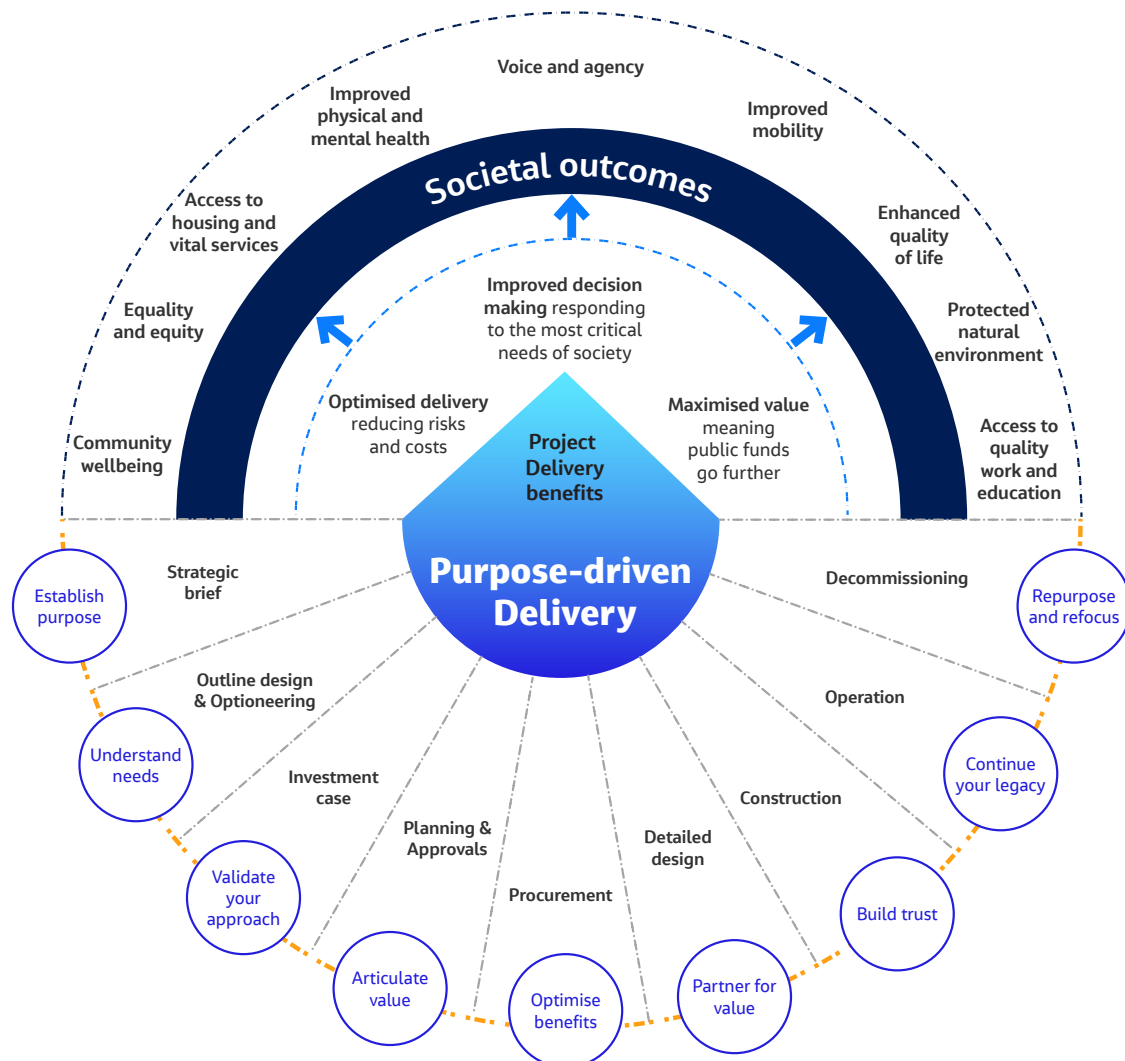
A framework for purpose-driven delivery

Our research demonstrates that prioritising people when planning and implementing major projects not only benefits society but also enhances project delivery by mitigating risks, reducing costs and boosting reputation.

To support this approach, we have distilled our findings into a nine-stage framework that aligns with the key lifecycle stages of major projects, promoting a “purpose-driven” approach to delivery. In the context of major projects, “purpose” encompasses several key aspects. It involves having absolute clarity on the problem your project aims to solve and the desired outcome. It also means developing the best solution to achieve this outcome, while ensuring that this is done ethically and with sensitivity to those adversely affected by the project. This purpose-driven approach establishes core values that guide delivery, supported by data and intelligence gathered through the techniques outlined in this document.

The framework is described through a series of case studies and example ideas designed to assist you in establishing a project’s purpose, validating that with the needs of society, and then how to harness this approach to drive a mission-led culture across delivery with the project’s value clearly articulated for all stakeholders from the offset.

This purpose sets in motion a “golden thread” that supports strategic outcomes, enhancing value and project delivery and reducing critical risks relating to project delivery.



Critical success factors: Front loading and challenging “business as usual”

To fully harness purpose-driven delivery, it’s crucial to challenge existing practices. Decisions at each life cycle stage should drive the project’s purpose and increase societal value. This approach isn’t about increasing costs but strategically investing time and effort to achieve better outcomes for both the project and society.

Our research also confirms the importance of “front loading projects”, a critical factor for success identified by the Infrastructure Projects Authority.³ Deploying the right skills and capabilities early to interpret and embed a project’s purpose is essential. Without this, projects risk losing sight of their goals, wasting time and money, and failing to deliver value to stakeholders.



3 N. Smallwood, [Setting up for success: The Importance of Front-End Loading – Infrastructure and Projects Authority](#), GOV.UK, 2020.

1. ESTABLISH YOUR PURPOSE

STRATEGIC BRIEF STAGE

In 2024, [The National Audit Office \(NAO\)](#) produced a report titled “Delivering value from government investment in major projects”.⁴ One of the key findings of this report was that UK Government departments “spend too little time and effort establishing what value they expect a project to deliver”.⁵

Without a clear “purpose”, we risk investing time and resources into unnecessary projects that fail to deliver societal value. Too often, projects rush to solutions with minimal community engagement, focusing on “outputs” like journey time improvements or increased capacity, rather than listening to citizens and involving them in defining the problem.

The risk

A poorly defined purpose or strategic brief that doesn’t reflect stakeholder needs can lead to ill-informed decisions, resulting in lost advocacy and increased costs. This can undermine a project’s ability to demonstrate its value to stakeholders, including funders, consenting bodies and communities throughout its lifecycle.

A purpose-driven approach

The first lesson identified by the NAO is to “start with the difference you want to make and the value you want to produce, rather than the project you want to do”. At this stage it is essential you understand the value you want to deliver, to establish your purpose. This involves considering societal needs and the problem the project is hoping to solve. Practical social value approaches include the following:

- **Big data analytics:** Use data to understand people including trends in behaviours, values and choices. Supplemented with additional research and engagement to counteract bias in data, this will help you understand the needs of tomorrow – not just today.
- **Community visioning:** Listen to the community’s needs, challenges and innovations without presenting predefined ideas.
- **Theory of change:** Use community insights to define your core purpose and desired change, updating it as the project progresses.
- **Establishing a purpose-driven culture:** Even at these earliest stages, develop values that align with your purpose to guide decision-making, governance structures and unify efforts.

These steps are not lengthy or costly but provide significant value by linking each project stage to your purpose.

4 G. Davies, [Lessons learned: Delivering value from government investment in major projects](#), National Audit Office, 2024.

5 House of Commons, Committee of Public Accounts, [Delivering value from government investment in major projects](#), Thirty-Second Report of Session 2023–24, 2024.

Case Study: Tideway

The Thames Tideway Tunnel, a 25km “super sewer” beneath the River Thames in London, is constructed and owned by Tideway (Bazalgette Tunnel Limited). This multi-billion-pound project aims to modernise the outdated Victorian sewerage system and prevent millions of tonnes of untreated sewage from entering the river annually, a problem worsened by London’s growing population.

The nearly decade-long construction spans 23 sites across London and is privately financed. About three million pensioners indirectly invest in Tideway through UK pension funds managed by its investors, with costs recovered over time from Thames Water customer bills. Communicating the project’s social purpose from the outset was therefore crucial.

Creating a purpose-driven culture

Tideway’s purpose was shaped through public consultation with over 300,000 people. Feedback revealed a sense of disconnection between Londoners and the river, leading to the vision statement: “Reconnecting London with the River Thames.”

This vision extends beyond infrastructure and core environmental benefits, highlighting the potential for significant wider environmental, social and economic gains for the capital.

Benefits of this approach

Improved advocacy and enhanced reputation are key benefits that the Tideway team attributes to their focus on legacy and purpose. Early community engagement to establish the ‘reconnection’ ambition was communicated through the Development Consent Order process, fostering a culture among delivery partners that Tideway’s mission was about more than just constructing an asset.

Economic and environmental legacy: Tideway’s investment in skills, such as the Thames Skills Academy, has revitalised the Thames as a ‘working river’, addressing long-standing skills gaps. The ‘more by river’ strategy, which committed to transporting at least 90% of excavated material by barge, resulted in significant benefits: 103 boatmasters trained, 5.7 million tonnes of material moved by river and over 660,000 HGV journeys avoided, saving about 24,000 tonnes of CO₂e.

Improvements in additional value delivered to society: Tideway measured the social value it delivered over and above its minimum consent obligations and demonstrated a return on investment of £1.72 for every £1 spent, supporting over 1,000 workless people into employment, sustaining 151 apprenticeships and reducing construction carbon by nearly 220,000 tonnes of CO₂e (28% below the original estimate).⁶

A positive impact on communities, places and spaces: By expanding its purpose beyond environmental benefits, Tideway has positively impacted communities through long-term partnerships with community organisations, public art, improved public spaces and leveraging supply chain support to achieve broader legacy goals.

6 Tideway, [Social Impact and Value Assessment of Tideway’s Legacy Programme](#), Technical Report by State of Life.

Further findings

A well-defined purpose that integrates broader social and environmental factors can unlock alternative financing opportunities. For instance, Tideway has successfully raised £1.8 billion through green bonds as part of a Sustainable Finance Framework – securing significant finance by highlighting the project's green credentials and its commitment to wider social value.

With the growing emphasis on ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) criteria, private investors are increasingly seeking transparency in project management and the handling of environmental and social performance risks. Early engagements and activities, such as materiality assessments, can provide valuable insights to manage these risks effectively in later stages, thereby supporting alternative financing options.



2. UNDERSTAND NEEDS

OUTLINE DESIGN & OPTIONEERING

When establishing our strategic brief and project drivers, we often prioritise nationally significant challenges or the “needs of the many”. However, this can sometimes result in overlooking the needs of the few, including local communities directly impacted and those most disadvantaged in society.

At these early stages, public consultation can be challenging without raising expectations about a project that may not materialise. Consequently, many projects delay engagement until the planning stage, which is often too late to make meaningful changes to options.

The risk

Delaying meaningful engagement and collaboration with stakeholders in the early stages of a project risks developing options that do not adequately address society’s needs. This can lead to poorly informed designs, increased costs due to rework and a lack of trust and advocacy for the project in later stages.

In a society where not every voice is heard equally, we must proactively understand the needs of the few and how infrastructure can address systemic inequalities. Access to infrastructure is essential for unlocking social mobility, regeneration and improving the quality of life for those most in need. Failing to understand this early risks missing opportunities to address these challenges and potentially exacerbating existing inequalities.

A purpose-driven approach

To achieve a project’s purpose and desired outcomes, we need a deeper understanding of needs to identify the best options. While we’ve established a purpose and vision in the initial brief, we now aim to pinpoint “non-negotiables” and priorities for both national and local stakeholders.

Social value not only helps us understand needs but also provides methodologies for assessing options beyond cost and output. This supports informed decision-making, improves outcomes and validates our choices. Techniques can include the following:

- **Local Needs Analysis and Demographic Research:** Build a deeper understanding of the specific characteristics of the local areas impacted, as well as challenges and opportunities that can feed into optioneering.
- **Vulnerability Assessment:** Deepen your understanding of the root causes of vulnerability to discover more cost-effective and less intensive solutions before making significant investments.

- **Inclusive Engagement:** Develop key criteria for the scheme through comprehensive engagement, ensuring that voices often overlooked by traditional methods are heard. This process should inform the option appraisal, thereby supporting the scheme's duties under the Equalities Act.
- **Purpose-driven Option Selection Criteria:** Evaluate options based on social, economic and environmental outcomes, not just cost and outputs, placing high value on critical outcomes such as quality of life and wellbeing impacts.

Case Study: The City of Edinburgh Council

With rich heritage, beautiful green spaces and a focus on creating an entrepreneurial economy, Edinburgh holds an abundance of vibrancy and growth potential. However, like many cities, it faces challenges around climate change, inequality and poverty.

As the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) embarked on an ambitious strategy to create a “city that is fair, pioneering, welcoming and thriving – a city that belongs to all of us, and where we all belong”,⁷ Jacobs supported the City in the creation of its City Centre Transformation (CCT) strategy, a bold ten-year plan to transform the streets and public spaces of the city centre.

A citizen-led approach

The CCT prioritises people, placemaking and sustainable travel in decision-making, focusing on the health, wellbeing and quality of life improvements that could result from such changes.

The City initiated a broad conversation with local stakeholders about its future vision. In early 2018, CEC formed a cross-party political planning group with stakeholders from various sectors, including housing, transport, planning and economy to determine the City's goals.

A major consultation launched in September 2018 to explore high-level transformation proposals revealed a strong desire and need for radical change to create a vibrant Capital and positively impact the economy, environment and community. This consultation was supported by numerous partner organisations and funded by the Scottish Government through Sustrans, Scotland's Community Links programme.

Jacobs continues to support CEC with the City Mobility Plan, City Centre Transformation and tram extension projects. This includes developing a Streetspace Allocation Framework to guide decisions on space allocation for different transport and place functions across all streets. By engaging with stakeholders early to understand their needs and aspirations, the City has developed a shared ambition with its citizens that allows the Council to consider options for meaningful transformation to take place. It ensures that the wellbeing and quality of life for everyone living, working and visiting the city remains central to its future decisions.

⁷ The City of Edinburgh Council, [City Plan 2030 – Proposed plan](#), 2021.

Benefits of this approach

Integrated strategy: The City recognised that this was no longer a project about improving public realm or the transport strategy in isolation. It demanded a much more cohesive and holistic approach to deliver the radical change needed. This included strategies for development and an integrated City Mobility Plan which proposed citywide transport policy and actions for how people move in and around the city – focused on delivering a cleaner, safer, inclusive and accessible transport system, as well as a healthier, thriving and fairer capital city. With support from Jacobs, CEC are implementing the City Mobility Plan through a series of sustainable street delivery projects and expansion of its tram network.

Focused investment and innovation: Based on this engagement, a planned multi-million-pound investment to improve community, economic and cultural life is at the heart of the redevelopment proposals. Delivering a city centre that works for everyone, with attractive, liveable public spaces, easy and sustainable active travel and a focus on people's overall health, wellbeing and happiness.

Environmental and social outcomes: Edinburgh has now implemented a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality. It is also exploring pedestrian-friendly zones and "Open Streets Edinburgh" trials, which test community and travel behaviours by closing roads to motorised transport during set hours monthly. These trials have led to permanent street improvements, ensuring public understanding and support.

The importance of honesty and openness

Our research showed that being transparent with communities and stakeholders about what options were considered and why some were dismissed helps communicate your rationale and fosters good relations.

3. VALIDATE YOUR APPROACH

INVESTMENT CASE

At a time when public resources are finite and decisions must be made on how best to address public needs, it is crucial that major projects understand their impacts in full and make informed decisions.

At the heart of investment decision-making for infrastructure in the UK lies one of the most crucial social value tools available to us – [The HM Treasury Green Book](#). Since the 1970s this guidance has provided a consistent methodology for evaluating benefits to society and allows us to understand these benefits in comparison to the costs (benefit-cost ratio).

Recent updates to this guidance in 2020 and 2021, have seen new innovative techniques to quantify wellbeing, net zero and place-based impacts aimed at providing us with a more holistic understanding of the impacts our infrastructure may have on society. However, full application of the varied techniques and methodologies available in the Green Book is not yet common practice across all projects. By not fully understanding impacts, opportunities may be missed to maximise benefits and validate investment decision.

The risk

A lack of understanding of a project's total value can lead to the case for investment failing to articulate value or decisions being made without a full understanding of the potential impact of the project. This can lead to the project not acquiring the required level of investment and increased costs later in the programme.

A purpose-driven approach

One of the key fundamental steps in placing people at the heart of major project delivery, is that the value (i.e. the outcome of the purpose you are driving) created is greater than the cost. Deploying social value techniques at this stage simply helps you deepen understanding of the value the project hopes to create and make informed decisions based on a thorough understanding of cost versus benefit. Techniques can include the following:

- **Wellbeing and Quality of Life Analysis:** Go beyond traditional economic appraisals to assess a project's impact on people's overall wellbeing considering factors like health, happiness and life satisfaction, providing a more comprehensive view of how interventions affect quality of life. Use innovative HM Treasury Green Book aligned methodologies such as WELLBY (Wellbeing-adjusted Life Year).
- **Distributional Impact Assessments:** Assess an investment or project's effect on the income and wellbeing of different groups within a population. This can help ensure equitable distribution of benefits.
- **Capitals Approach or Materiality Assessment:** Understand the project's dependency and impact on financial, manufactured, natural, social, human and intellectual capital to understand risk and develop a robust management approach.

Case Study: Transpennine Route Upgrade

The Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) is a major multi-billion-pound programme of railway improvements which will bring better journeys to passengers travelling across the Pennines between Manchester, Huddersfield, Leeds and York. Social value lies at the heart of this programme, delivering an electrified route, improved stations and capacity along with more frequent, reliable and faster connections between some of the key cities in the north of England to drive growth and prosperity.

Developing the investment case has been complex, with many changes over the past decade. Initially focused on outputs like journey time improvements, in the last five years the programme has adopted a holistic view of societal benefits. This shift has increased advocacy, which led to an approved business case for the first funding phase in 2023.

Holistic assessment of benefits

By applying social value techniques, TRU went above and beyond what has been used in other Department for Transport (DfT) business cases to understand and validate the benefits of TRU including the following:

Wellbeing analysis: Wellbeing is a key indicator of the value people place on an intervention. Understanding wellbeing helps make informed decisions that deliver value beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Working with Simetrica-Jacobs, the DfT and Network Rail provided an HM Treasury Green Book compliant assessment of the programme's potential wellbeing impacts, including financial proxies. TRU identified it could contribute an additional £4.9 billion in wellbeing value to the North of England over 30 years, beyond traditional WebTAG (Web-based Transport Analysis Guidance) economic analysis. This was the first wellbeing analysis used to support a DfT programme business case.

Distributional impact analysis: TRU aimed to deliver economic growth, supporting the Government's Levelling Up agenda and inclusive growth. Jacobs helped deliver a Distributional Impact Analysis to understand the benefits distribution across communities along the route. Results showed benefits would be equitably experienced across key regions, further validating the business case.

Understanding short- and long-term impact: While the benefits of a faster, more reliable and greener route were clear in the economic case, TRU recognised potential negative impacts during delivery. Partnering with Jacobs, TRU used Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) and Network Rail's Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT) to calculate up to £4.28 billion in social value during construction through the TRU Enterprise Sustainable Development Strategy – [Our Guiding Compass](#). This includes local employment, spending, investment in skills and education and carbon reduction. These insights were used to create strategies to mitigate negative impacts and enhance benefits.

Benefits of this approach

Better understanding of the benefits to support the investment case: £4.9 billion in additional wellbeing benefits were identified through improved connectivity, job satisfaction, neighbourhood satisfaction due to tourism and reduced noise, new access to better active travel, reduced air pollution and a shift from car travel to more environmentally friendly options. Using a wellbeing analysis allowed the project to better understand and quantify these benefits, supporting the business case.

Improved confidence that TRU would manage impacts and drive benefits throughout construction: The project modelled impacts over a series of options to inform the business case and, importantly, used this information to inform investment decisions and management strategies, contract requirements, design standards and targets. This helped TRU not only convey the benefits in the economic case but also provide a compelling narrative for the long-term benefits in the strategic case, and how short- and long-term disbenefits would be managed in the management case.

HM Treasury Green Book Guidance

It is important we utilise the HM Treasury Green Book to its fullest extent to validate and influence decision-making. However, to do so we must apply robust methodologies aligned with the guidance.



4. ARTICULATE VALUE

PLANNING & APPROVALS

The UK planning system aims to ensure that development happens in the right place at the right time, benefiting both communities and the economy while protecting the natural environment. However, it has long faced criticism for being overly complex, bureaucratic and under-resourced.

Since 2012, consenting times have risen by 65% and the rate of judicial review has spiked to 58% from a long-term average of 10%.⁸

In the 2024 King's Speech, Labour introduced the [Planning and Infrastructure Bill](#), a significant legislative move to accelerate infrastructure development. The proposals aim to simplify the consenting process, reform decision-making and unlock opportunities for development and nature recovery. While change may be welcomed, it is crucial that reforms do not silence community voices but instead provide more transparent and fair decision-making processes.

The risk

The rising time taken to gain consent for major projects and the number of major projects challenged through the judicial review process leads to increased costs, delays and even halting of essential infrastructure projects.

A purpose-driven approach

When a project serving the greater good for society has adverse effects on some individuals, it is crucial to provide a well-articulated narrative explaining the necessity of the project. The purpose a project is designed to respond to should not be achieved at any costs and it is important stakeholders understand this, and the wider value that will be delivered by the scheme. Social value techniques help articulate both short- and long-term benefits, identify potential negative impacts and implement necessary remediations. By collaborating with communities, rather than dictating to them, we can understand their views, explain the project's drivers and present a comprehensive picture of its value. This approach enhances advocacy and mitigates risks. Key techniques include the following:

- **Impact Assessment:** Evaluate short- and long-term impacts using tools like Environmental Impact Assessments and Equality Impact Assessments. Consider innovative methods to assess health, wellbeing and socio-economic impacts.
- **Engagement Beyond Consultation:** Move beyond mandated consultation required through planning to establish ongoing engagement with inclusive, two-way dialogue platforms.

8 [National Infrastructure Commission, *Delivering net zero, climate resilience and growth – Improving nationally significant infrastructure planning*, 2023.](#)

- **Assessing Benefits and Conveying Value:** Identify and model benefits, including monetisation, and develop narratives that resonate with different stakeholder drivers.
- **Implementation Planning:** Combine purpose, desired outcomes, risk and impact information into a clearly articulated plan that assures stakeholders of your ability to deliver your social, economic and environmental promises to protect their interests. This should not be buried in planning documentation but provided in a succinct and accessible way.

Case Study: Ebbsfleet Garden City

Established in 2015, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) aims to accelerate the delivery of up to 15,000 homes and create a 21st century Garden City in North Kent. Sponsored by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, EDC serves as the planning authority and landowner for key sites within the Urban Development Area. The Corporation addresses the historically slow development in the area, which was previously used for industrial chalk quarrying.

A framework for place-based value

Since its inception, EDC has focused on creating a high-quality living environment that meets the needs of its residents. This includes providing affordable housing, fostering safer and healthier communities and enhancing the natural environment.

To achieve this, EDC adopted the “Garden City Principles”, a holistic framework that balances social, economic and environmental needs. These principles have been significantly adapted to reflect the specific needs of the Ebbsfleet community and align with best practices in urban development.

A significant part of EDC’s approach involves engaging the community in the planning process. Through the “What’s Growing in Your Garden City” visioning exercise, community members co-designed a masterplan that reflects their needs and desires. This collaborative approach ensures that the development is rooted in the aspirations of its future citizens. EDC also created an Implementation Framework to guide developers and partners in aligning their proposals with the community’s vision and the masterplan.

EDC’s “place-based” approach captures, records and reports on the positive impacts created across Ebbsfleet Garden City and the surrounding boroughs of Dartford and Gravesham. Since 2015, EDC has engaged thousands of residents through various initiatives, ensuring that community input is central to the design and experiential process. The latest Resident Satisfaction Survey gathered over 2,000 responses, highlighting the importance of putting people and the community at the heart of the development.

Alongside public engagement, the Corporation captures social value across Ebbsfleet and through three core themes of Economy, Community and Environment. This is measured through the National TOMs (Themes, Outcomes and Measures) and the Social Value Portal. This place-based measurement includes not only the Corporation’s own activity and direct investment, but that of procured suppliers and the many housebuilders who are not contracted directly to the Corporation.

Benefits of this approach

Enhanced regeneration & design: EDC's clear, people-centred vision and implementation framework ensure that communities, funders and partners understand their roles in regeneration. This integrated approach maximises benefits, placing people's needs at the heart of development. Each district has its own unique sense of place, building on the area's industrial legacy to create well-designed, well-served neighbourhoods for residents and businesses to thrive.

Improved advocacy and efficient delivery: Engaging and listening to communities has reduced approval risks and clarified development parameters for developers. Over 4,000 high-quality homes have been built at a faster pace than anywhere else in the UK, maintaining quality and sustainability.

Increased value to society: EDC's commitment to Inclusive Growth has generated over £30 million in social value for the community. In 2023/24, housebuilders created £7.8 million in social value through local workforce initiatives, apprenticeships and work experience. EDC's direct investments added another £3.6 million, supporting local initiatives, events, cultural activities, education, upskilling and employment opportunities in Dartford and Gravesham.

The importance of robust methodologies

Understanding and communicating your value is key but ensuring you can stand behind your figures to avoid accusations of "social value washing" is equally important. Deploying robust methodologies for assessing impact and benefits and using external parties to verify is best practice.

5. OPTIMISE BENEFITS

PROCUREMENT

UK legislation and policy require public bodies to consider social, economic and environmental impacts during procurement, often asking suppliers to generate additional societal benefits beyond their core scope. This expectation extends to major projects, making social value in procurement a norm within public investment.

Despite the Social Value Act being in place for over a decade, research by Social Enterprise UK in 2024 reveals that social value application is not yet standard across the public sector. A third of local authorities lack a social value policy and 55% either never apply it or provide no information on its application.⁹ Publicly funded projects not directly covered by the Act may follow a similar trend.

Moreover, major projects interviewed for our research expressed concerns about the application of social value in procurement. They noted that social value is often applied incorrectly, with unsuitable “copy and paste” questions, misalignment with project purposes and poor management of commitments beyond procurement. This leads to claims of “tokenistic social value”, inflated costs and barriers for diverse businesses, including small/micro-organisations, social enterprises and charities, which inherently deliver social value but struggle to meet prescriptive procurement requirements.

With the National Infrastructure and Construction Pipeline forecasting £164 billion in investment next year, procurement must ensure every pound spent maximises societal benefits. Stakeholders, including communities and funders, expect and demand localised benefits from these substantial expenditures.

The risk

When effectively managed, procurement can deliver transformative outcomes and additional societal benefits. Failure to do this can lead to a loss in confidence, reduced advocacy and missed opportunities to deliver value.

A purpose-driven approach

Building on previous stages, the project should now have a clear understanding of its core purpose and desired outcomes, considering both societal needs and the needs of the communities directly impacted by the works. Procurement approaches should leverage this understanding to optimise additional benefits in line with this purpose. Too often social value questions and requirements are a “bolt on” rather than a well-considered articulation of your purpose and how you expect suppliers to support you in achieving this purpose, regardless of size or nature.

⁹ Social Enterprise UK, [The State of Social Value in Public Sector Spending](#), 2024.

Technique includes:

- **Market engagement:** Communicate your purpose and desired outcomes to prospective diverse suppliers early on. Understand how they can support your goals and what support they will need during and after procurement. This may also include consideration how you reduce barriers to SME's, including through proportionate targets setting. Additionally, explore how they can generate social value throughout their wider supply chain.
- **An inclusive procurement strategy:** Proactively engage and support diverse suppliers to create equitable opportunities. Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprises (VCSEs) invest billions in social and environmental missions, creating social value through jobs, skills and innovations that support the UK economy. However, they cannot compete with larger organisations with dedicated social value teams. Consider how to break down barriers to engage these organisations effectively.¹⁰
- **Clear specifications and requirements:** Develop clear specifications and minimum requirements for social value to mitigate risks related to employment practices, environmental harm and community engagement. This approach raises the bar and integrates social value into standard business practices.
- **Tailored, outcome-focused questions:** Use outcome-focused, weighted questions in procurement processes rather than overly prescriptive tender questions. Align questions with your purpose and tailor to the different opportunities each scope yields (informed by market engagement). Focus on the quality of benefits delivered, not just quantity. Ensure all commitments are included in contracts and managed effectively.
- **Risk-based requirements:** Assessing risks to the programme including ethical labour practices or skill gaps and aligning procurement requirements and questions to help tackle these.

Case Study: Sellafield PPP

Sellafield hosts the UK's largest and most complex nuclear facility, holding the world's largest inventory of untreated nuclear waste, making it of strategic national importance. To deliver up to £7 billion in critical infrastructure, Sellafield Ltd launched the Programme and Project Partners (PPP) model in 2019, aimed at regenerating the site with sustainable, lower-carbon infrastructure. This partnership includes KBR, Jacobs, Morgan Sindall and Altrad Babcock, working together with Sellafield Ltd as one team. The 20-year contract model was deliberately designed to stimulate local growth and long-term social impact.

Optimising SME spend through procurement

With more than 70% of PPP work delivered through the supply chain, the partnership has a cohesive strategy in place to leverage social value across its supply chain, with a clear focus on advancing opportunities for Small Medium-sized Enterprises (SME). This includes implementation of a 'multi-project' procurement model, meaning that companies are working across a portfolio or projects and are given a level of security of future pipeline opportunities and work share.

¹⁰ Social Enterprise UK, [Our latest research shows social enterprise is mission critical to fixing the UK economy](#), 2023.

In addition, Sellafield PPP established the Swimming with the Big Fish SME Matchmaker Service alongside Solomons Europe as part of a wider strategy to ensure the supply chain was inclusive of SMEs.

The Matchmaker Assessment Service involves SME's completing a questionnaire providing details of their capabilities and capacities. Solomons then work with the larger organisations to help secure longer-term contracts for the SME's which in turn enables them to invest in growth and wider commitments to deliver local benefits, based on the security of the contract. Social Impact Toolkit

To align suppliers with PPP's social impact goals, a publicly available Social Impact Toolkit was created. This toolkit clarifies priorities and supports all businesses, including SMEs, in understanding social value and impact. It outlines the why, how, what and where of social impact within PPP, providing a consistent framework for the supply chain.

The Toolkit is a live document, evolving as PPP progresses and matures. It is accessible online, supports businesses of all sizes in tendering for procurements, opening opportunities for a diverse supply chain and providing a legacy of learning for future public procurement.

Outcomes of this approach

Increased opportunities for smaller organisations: This approach has created a more inclusive environment for SMEs to win long term work which has increased SME participation in the supply chain to 52%.

Supported supply chain: More than 120 SMEs have gone through the Matchmaker Assessment process. Most of the supply chain has used the toolkit to understand PPP's requirements and share information with their own networks.

Alignment with priorities: The toolkit aligns with the PPP Sustainability Strategy and Sellafield Ltd's SIx (Social Impact Multiplied) Strategy, aiding suppliers in understanding and meeting PPP's goals. It ensures early agreement on social impact deliverables and a common language among partners.

Increasing local impact: By working collaboratively through a shared ambition to drive and deliver positive local impact, the supply chain has maximised support of community initiatives such as Chapter One Reading Programme, which has seen 300 volunteers from across the supply chain step up to support primary school-age children in West Cumbria, foster reading confidence and enjoyment. What is more, through the 45 SME's on long term frameworks with PPP, they have collectively committed to 350 jobs, 150 Apprentices and £6m of investment in West Cumbria.

Social value in procurement top tips

- Don't be tempted to "copy and paste" social value questions – it may save time, but it won't deliver value!
- Market engagement is key to understanding the opportunities and challenges for social value in procurement.
- Consider the difference you want to make and how it aligns with your purpose.
- Have competent people to develop and score social value responses.
- Hold suppliers to account for commitments they make.

6. PARTNER FOR VALUE

DETAILED DESIGN

Once planning consent and funding are secured, projects often risk disengaging with their communities.

Cost challenges can lead to compromises in the detailed design of assets, which may have significant impacts when the asset is in use. While costs will always influence project decisions, they should not be the sole factor. According to the NAO report, “Delivering value from government investment in major projects,” decisions should be based on value, not just cost. Since value is subjective, it is essential to involve those who will experience the impacts in the decision-making process – your communities.

The risk

By not maintaining relationships with communities, projects risk losing focus on their purpose, and the needs of their stakeholders. This can lead to ill informed decisions being made that hinder the future benefits of the scheme. This can in turn impact your reputation and the overall value delivered.

A purpose-drive approach

Ongoing engagement with your communities and stakeholders can enhance design quality and mitigate risks associated with poor decision-making. While ongoing community engagement may seem labour-intensive, it will deliver high value including reducing critical risks related to poor design decisions that can lead to additional costs later. Forming partnerships with community groups, charities, and other such groups, that align with your purpose and priorities will be mutually beneficial. It will help your organisation continue to understand the needs of your citizens, and respond to these effectively in design and delivery, while also proving benefit to the groups who will be given voice and agency to shape their community.

You can use techniques such as:

- **Co-design:** Involving end-users and stakeholders in the design process ensures that the operational asset meets the actual needs of UK communities and aligns with the project's purpose.
- **Human-centred design:** As in the initial design phase, decisions should prioritise value over cost. By placing citizens' needs at the heart of decision-making and considering the long-term impact on quality of life and well-being, design improvements can be achieved.
- **Forming mutually beneficial partnerships:** By aligning project needs with community interests, you can create mutually beneficial partnerships. This approach not only involves communities but also supports both the project and the groups involved in various ways.

Case Study: Ebbsfleet Youth Design Council

Ebbsfleet Development Corporation has prioritised a comprehensive co-design approach, working closely with local communities to ensure their needs are central to the scheme's designs. This collaborative effort has been instrumental during the planning phase, providing developers with clear aims and implementation strategies. However, the Corporation's commitment to community collaboration extends far beyond the planning process.

A mutually beneficial partnership

This Must Be the Place is a creative programme founded in partnership with young people aged 16-25 to co-lead a variety of activities, working with artists and a diverse range of partners. This initiative not only supports the design of Ebbsfleet Garden City but also offers young talents a platform to develop and gain essential skills. Participants engage with architects, designers, philosophers and policymakers, conducting research that informs new and experimental art commissions and residencies. These projects are embedded in the city and community, connecting the histories and potential future of the social, political, geographical and civic landscapes they inhabit.

Benefits of this approach

Improved design and community relations: Well-designed, thoughtful, and inspiring places have been developed. The project's innovative approaches to empower communities and involve them directly in long-term decision-making about their living spaces, have fostered a deep sense of pride and trust. This has resulted in a mutually beneficial partnership between the communities and developers.

Outcomes for young people: This Must Be the Place has been recognised for its support of young people, winning the Community Engagement Award as part of the Thornton Education Trusts "Inspire Future Generations Awards" in 2023. It has provided skills and tangible opportunities for the young people involved, supporting future talent to become cultural and civic leaders.¹¹

Building trusted partnerships

Partnerships thrive on trust. To cultivate this trust, it's essential to establish clear terms for the partnership. Consider the following:

- **Purpose:** Define the relationship's purpose.
- **Common Goals:** Identify shared objectives.
- **Communication:** Determine how you will communicate.
- **Expectations:** Clarify what each party expects.
- **Decision-Making:** Explain how input will influence decisions.

Without these clear parameters, you risk unmet expectations and a breakdown in trust.

¹¹ Cement Fields, [This Must Be the Place](#).

7. BUILD TRUST

CONSTRUCTION

During the construction phase of a project, we often begin to see tangible societal impacts, both positive and negative. Social value is seen as common place in this stage, often linked to the commitments made in procurement or driven by planning conditions.

However, “tokenistic social value”, delivering short term benefits to communities with little regard to local needs, in an attempt to “off set” or detract from negative impacts is unfortunately also commonplace. This is, as attested by several projects interviewed, leading to a mistrust of “social value” and the projects themselves.

What is more, many projects we engaged in our research noted that while monetising social value can be useful in communicating value, it has its drawbacks. Confusion and concerns around large financial values that seem to differ depending on the tool and a lack of clarity on what this all means for communities is again feeding into this distrust of major projects and their social value approaches. Feedback from communities has illustrated to many of the projects interviewed that the monetised values are not always the most important message for the communities they serve.

The risk

With allegations of “social washing” and “green washing” becoming a concern for organisations, and social media serving as a powerful tool for those objecting to a project or a company’s conduct, it is imperative that major projects validate their claims of community benefits. They must carefully manage their negative and positive impacts in a robust and transparent manner to avoid significant reputational challenges that can in turn impact delivery and increase costs.

A purpose-driven approach

Navigating the various tools, frameworks and methods for measuring and delivering social value can be overwhelming for projects. This confusion often leads to missing the core goal of the project: benefiting the citizens we serve. Remaining focused on your purpose, aligning your supply chain and teams around this, and upholding the values that underpin your purpose will help build trust with your communities and stakeholders.

Consider these methodologies:

- **Local needs analysis:** Standardised approaches can be ineffective if misapplied, as each community is unique. Developing needs-led approaches that benefit those most disadvantaged, including those most impacted by the project, fosters good relations. Projects spanning decades must adapt to changing needs, so continuous feedback and reflections are crucial.
- **Purpose-aligned initiatives:** Create targets, programmes and activities that align with your core purpose and desired outcomes to build a cohesive narrative around your project’s value.

- **Benchmarking:** Understand what excellence looks like in your focus areas and strive to meet or exceed these standards.
- **Measurement:** Measuring the change that has occurred as a result of your project to help improve performance and understand the impact you have made.
- **Outcome validation:** Provide robust, evidence-based information on the value delivered during construction using both quantitative and qualitative assessments, such as case studies, to build community trust.
- **United culture:** Social value initiatives can unite everyone involved in the project, from construction workers to the Project Director, around a common purpose.
- **Effective communication:** Manage communication around negative impacts carefully to avoid “social washing” and ensure stakeholders feel heard and respected.

Case Study: Transpennine Route Upgrade

The Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) is a significant railway infrastructure project aimed at enhancing the rail connection between Manchester and York via Huddersfield and Leeds. This upgrade will deliver faster, greener and more reliable journeys across northern England.

One of the primary challenges of TRU is managing the necessary infrastructure upgrades while minimising disruption to passengers and freight over the coming years. The Manchester to Leeds and York railway line is heavily trafficked, with a substantial number of daily passengers. According to the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), the overall rail network in Great Britain recorded 1.61 billion journeys in the latest year. Additionally, construction activities, environmental impacts, and compulsory land purchases could significantly affect people’s lives if not properly managed.

Beyond delivering a railway asset

TRU aims to go beyond upgrading the railway by uniting delivery partners, train operators and the wider supply chain to leave a lasting legacy in the North of England. They achieve this through various social value techniques:

Minimum standards for suppliers: TRU sets high social value standards with contractual requirements for supply chain partners, focusing on local skills, employment, community benefits and environmental protection.

Community Impact Assessment: This tool evaluates potential impacts based on demographics, stakeholder views and cumulative construction effects, with mitigation strategies like the acoustic curtain at Leeds Station to reduce noise.

Targeted benefits: Uses local needs analysis to develop social value targets and delivery approaches, mapping local deprivation and high disruption areas to focus community benefit projects.

Community empowerment: Establishes a community fund for local groups, schools and charities within 5 miles of the route to apply for funding to improve local spaces and services.

Enterprise-wide commitment: Develops Network Rail’s first enterprise-wide sustainability strategy, involving all stakeholders to deliver legacy benefits beyond construction. This strategy involves commitments from construction partners, train operators, freight operators, the Department for Transport, Network Rail regional organisations and maintenance teams to deliver legacy benefits beyond construction.

Benefits of this approach

Improved outcomes for society: Between April 2019 and July 2024, the TRU social impact programme had already generated over £1 billion in social value.¹² However, as testified by the project team when interviewed, these monetary values are not the messages that resonate with communities. It is the rich stories behind it, including the 280 apprentices being employed, 51,700+ young people engagements, 18,300+ days of work experience and 13,000+ hours of volunteering, that have mattered to people effected by the project.

Shared culture: Having engaged Alliance partners to deliver a range of support from design to delivery, TRU has worked collaboratively to realise social value outputs. This has led to £492 million being spent to date with local businesses and £258 million with Small to Medium Enterprises. This supports the wider aspiration of 8,000 jobs to be created and safeguarded, with 60% targeted at local employment (within 25 miles of the route) and 20% of new roles to be from disadvantaged groups.

Evidenced impact: The rich data set that TRU has collected on what social value has been delivered, as well as where and when, has allowed the project to develop localised value narratives that are assured and validated by a social value specialist. This has meant that at any time, a local authority can understand the benefits delivered to their citizens, and the project is able to continuously improve by targeting intervention in areas of most need.

Improved project delivery: The cohesive and considered approach to impacts on people has helped tackle key skills gaps, improve advocacy for the project and deliver a united culture across the programme that cares about people and the planet.

Social value tools

There is an array of social value tools on the market that help monetise your value to society. Before embarking on procuring these tools consider:

- What is the difference you would like to make for society?
- Do any of the tools help measure this?
- Do you understand how the financial proxies have been calculated?
- How will you robustly evidence and assure outcomes claimed?

Best practice guidance on measurement and the principle of social value is available, including through Social Value UK.

12 Calculated using the Rail Social Value Tool

8. CONTINUE YOUR LEGACY OPERATION

The current state of play

As is perfectly summarised in the NAO Report “value is largely defined by those who benefit from a project and is ultimately delivered by those who operate and use the asset once it is built”.¹³

Once a project is complete, it becomes an integral part of the community, and this is when the benefits truly materialise. However, it is crucial to maintain our focus on the core purpose, striving to maximise benefits and sustain the legacy initiated in the earlier phases.

The transition of community relationships and the continuation of social value efforts from the project’s early stages are not common practices. As projects enter this new phase, the drive to justify the project or mitigate negative impacts often diminishes, leaving communities feeling abandoned by their once-engaged partner.

The risk

Failing to carefully manage the transition from construction to operation, while continuing to pursue your social purpose, can create tension with the communities that are vital for your project’s success. This oversight not only risks losing their support but also misses chances to collaborate on reducing operational risks.

Purpose-driven approach

To ensure your project’s envisioned purpose is achieved, it is essential to consider early on how the needs of those impacted by the asset will be met during its operational phase. This proactive approach not only guarantees the initial goals are fulfilled but also creates opportunities for additional benefits, making the asset a vital part of the local community for generations.

Here are some social value techniques to consider:

- **Early consideration of legacy:** Our research highlights that legacy doesn’t just happen; it needs to be planned from the earliest stages of the programme. Consider how your asset will be operated and what will be its ongoing impact on people and the planet from the project’s inception.
- **Continued engagement:** Maintain ongoing engagement with your communities. Revisit and revise the purpose of your engagement in line with your renewed priorities, following a similar process to stage 6.

13 G. Davies, [Lessons learned: Delivering value from government investment in major projects](#), National Audit Office, 2024.

- **Revisit your social value approach:** Social value efforts should not cease. Continue relationships with a revised emphasis aligned with your operational priorities. Reflect on what worked in earlier phases and identify areas for improvement.
- **Communicate change:** Changes in personnel, frequency of engagement and relationships with partners are likely. Manage these changes carefully through effective communication to avoid disappointment.

Case Study: Tideway

While most of Tideway's hard infrastructure is below ground in the form of the 25 km long tunnel, the project team identified early that there was also an opportunity to deliver a significant above-ground legacy by creating new riverside spaces along the Thames, in the same way as the development of the original Victorian sewer system led to many of London's Embankments.

Going beyond engineering to create new community assets

Tideway, as a purpose-driven organisation, sought to go beyond delivery of a sewer to "reconnect London with the Thames", giving the capital's residents and visitors new opportunities to engage with the iconic river.

Tideway used this vision as the thread running through its legacy plan, which included the creation of three acres of new Thames riverside space. The new areas are needed to cover the engineering solution, where the intercepted sewage drops down a shaft into the tunnel rather than spilling into the river.

Tideway has invested in seven high-quality public riverside spaces, from Putney in West London to Wapping in East London. The spaces include permanent artworks in bronze, stone and other materials, which will far outlive the lifespan of the project, including a new marker for the start line of the University Boat Race. The spaces have been designed with the community in mind, with a key focus on improving accessibility and improving the quality of the experience of being next to the river. The Tideway project is also opening up sections of the Thames Path currently closed to the public and making improvements to the existing route where possible.

The benefits of this approach

Enhanced public spaces that support purpose: By actively involving the community in the design process, Tideway has created new public areas that draw inspiration from the local heritage and history. This approach has helped to connect residents and visitors more closely with the River Thames, enhancing the overall aesthetic and usability of these spaces. The result is more inclusive and functional areas. For example, two of the spaces will be “floodable” at high tide, giving Londoners the first opportunity of its kind to literally dip their toes into a cleaner River Thames.

Sustainable development: Tideway’s approach aligns with sustainable development principles, ensuring that the project not only meets environmental standards but also contributes positively to social and economic outcomes. By integrating sustainable practices into the legacy and public realm aspects of the project, Tideway has ensured that the benefits extend beyond the immediate environmental impact. This includes promoting economic growth through job creation and supporting the river economy and supporting social well-being by providing spaces that foster community interaction and engagement.

Legacy and long-term benefits: Investments in public realm and community projects have long-term benefits, such as improved public health, increased social cohesion and enhanced local pride.¹⁴

Case Study 2: Ebbsfleet Garden City Trust, Community Interest Company

With a network of parks and open spaces planned, alongside 11 community buildings and 6.5 acres of community gardens and allotments envisioned for Ebbsfleet, the Corporation has had to consider the ongoing operations and maintenance approach of the project to ensure that the regeneration of the area meets the needs of the whole community, now and into the future.

The Ebbsfleet Garden City Trust (EGCT) has been established as a Community Interest Company (CiC) dedicated to ensuring the long-term stewardship and legacy of Ebbsfleet Garden City.

Early consideration of legacy

In line with their vision and commitments to delivering “modern liveability with quality design, sustainable connections, nature, greenery, health and wellbeing”,¹⁵ the Corporation has considered their legacy beyond the main construction activity early on in their scheme. The Trust focuses on maintaining and enhancing the quality of life for all residents by managing community assets and supporting local initiatives. It oversees the management of parks, community buildings, and other public spaces, ensuring they remain vibrant and well-maintained.

Additionally, EGCT provides small grants to local groups for community activities via their Community Fund initiative, fostering a sense of community and encouraging local engagement. Committed to sustainable practices, the Trust ensures that Ebbsfleet responds to and is resilient for future generations.¹⁶

¹⁴ Tideway, [Social Impact and Value Assessment of Tideway’s Legacy Programme](#), Technical Report by State of Life.

¹⁵ Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, [Ebbsfleet Garden City – Homepage](#).

¹⁶ Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, [Ebbsfleet Garden City Trust – Homepage](#).

Benefits of this approach

Drive purpose in operation: The Trust will continue to champion the Ebbsfleet Garden City vision, using buildings, assets, and resources to enable local residents and businesses to create inclusive and sustainable neighbourhoods by promoting good health and well-being, leisure, arts and culture, quality lifelong learning, high environmental standards and innovation in business.

Enhanced community focus: As a not-for-profit charitable trust, the organisation can prioritise the needs and interests of the community, ensuring that resources are directed towards initiatives that benefit residents.

Long-term stewardship: The Trust can provide consistent and dedicated management of community assets, such as parks and public spaces, ensuring they are well-maintained and continue to serve the community effectively.

Access to funding: Charitable trusts can access a wider range of funding sources, including grants and donations, which can be used to support community projects and initiatives.

Sustainability: The Trust can implement sustainable practices more effectively, ensuring that the Garden City remains environmentally friendly and resilient for future generations.

Considering legacy beyond the direct asset

Delivering your project likely had a broader impact on people's lives and the natural environment, beyond the asset's immediate footprint. This could include creating community partnerships, biodiversity offset areas or new employment routes. It's crucial to plan for the ongoing operation and maintenance of these initiatives, ensuring they are handed over to others so their benefits can continue to deliver a positive legacy.

9. REPURPOSE AND REFOCUS

STRATEGIC BRIEF STAGE

Decommissioning projects, whether they involve offshore oil platforms, wind farms or nuclear power plants, can have profound impacts on communities. These infrastructures often serve as cornerstone employers and vital sources of local spending with generations of families deeply invested in their operations.

For example, the decommissioning of coal mines in the UK during the 1970s and 1980s led to significant job losses, economic decline and population decreases that still affect some communities today. Recognising that decommissioning is sometimes necessary, it is crucial to manage its effects on society, the economy and the environment carefully. If not managed properly, the aftereffects can be catastrophic for communities for generations to come.

While the Public Services (Social Value) Act doesn't currently mention asset disposal, the [Energy Act 2023](#) does place a legal duty on the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) to have regard to the impact it has on the communities living near its sites. Our research revealed that this legislation is driving a considered approach to social impact and delivering value to the communities affected by NDA's work. This reiterates the importance of good clear legislation to advance outcomes to society.

The risk

By not managing the effects of decommissioning on society we risk creating greater dependency on the state, increased pressure on public funding and significant impacts on the quality of people's lives.

A purpose-driven approach

To safeguard people and support communities during and after decommissioning, it is essential to develop long-term strategies in collaboration with residents that refocus priorities and the purpose the asset may have once had. There are excellent examples of projects that successfully transition labour and skills, repurpose sites and attract new investment streams to drive regeneration and growth. Key techniques include:

- **Assessment of potential:** Developing a deep understanding, in partnership with stakeholders, of the site's potential and how repurposing it can be a catalyst for wider regeneration and growth.
- **A managed transition:** Working with communities to transition from reliance on your project for employment and growth to focusing on other areas. This includes considering transferable skills and sector experience.

- **Support for those most in need:** Providing additional support tailored to the needs of those disproportionately affected by the change, including older generations or low-skilled workers.
- **Partnership working:** Collaborating with local authorities, charities, community groups and businesses to plan and enact the change, pooling resources to maximise benefits.

Case Study: Industrial Solutions Hub

Sellafield, as the world's first nuclear power station built in 1947, is an integral part of West Cumbria communities. As an employer and key economic player, cultivating a vast supply chain in the locality, its decommissioning has the potential to have a significant impact on people's lives in the surrounding area.

From reliance to resilience

The Industrial Solutions Hub (iSH) in West Cumbria, UK, is an initiative aimed at fostering collaboration, innovation and economic growth. Its purpose is to build on the region's nuclear heritage, created around the Sellafield Nuclear site, and expand technical capabilities to develop a regional industrial cluster. It capitalises on existing knowledge and capabilities developed around the Sellafield site, which is now in decommissioning, and moves the region from reliance to resilience. It supports local businesses in building the required knowledge and capabilities to achieve viable, exportable businesses that will not only benefit the region but raise the visibility of the region's capability across the UK and internationally.

In partnership with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, Sellafield Ltd and Cumberland Council, iSH focuses on building on and expanding the local areas' expertise in advanced technology, manufacturing, robotics and Artificial Intelligence.

The iSH Enterprise Campus will provide a space for businesses to collaborate and innovate, providing workshop and office facilities at a newly developed site in Cleator Moor. The hub will bring together industry, SMEs, academia, national bodies, research and development facilities and community stakeholders to solve global industry challenges and create long-lasting social and economic benefits for the region and wider industry. The Hub, the two multi-unit buildings intended to house progressive businesses on the site, has been funded by a successful application to Levelling Up Funding from government. It aims to increase capability and help create jobs and opportunities for people living in the area, benefiting communities and the West Cumbrian economy as a whole.

Benefits delivered

Economic growth and resilience: iSH is expected to create hundreds of new jobs and generate an additional £40 million per year for local businesses. It aims to protect the community and region from potentially negative impacts of decommissioning and promote new opportunities to bring the community together and regeneration and growth.

Wider regeneration: This initiative also aims to be a catalyst for wider regeneration and placemaking, having already unlocked further government funding as part of the £22.5 million Cleator Moor Town Deal, which creates an enterprising, revitalised, healthy, connected town, with good quality jobs, access to sporting facilities and an integrated, sustainable travel network.¹⁷

¹⁷ iSH (Industrial Solutions Hub), [iSH Enterprise Campus](#).

The importance of legislation

Our research indicates that areas with enhanced legislation for social impact and social value demonstrate a greater commitment to effective management. The 2023 Energy Act mandates the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) to support activities that benefit the social and economic life of local communities. It requires both buyers and suppliers to publish key performance indicators on social value commitments within contracts, ensuring transparency and accountability.

These measures are significantly enhancing the social, economic and environmental well-being of communities across the UK.



Strategic Brief

Establish your purpose using:

- Big data analytics
- Theory of Change
- Purpose-driven culture



Outline Design & Optioneering

Understand needs using:

- Vulnerability Assessment
- Inclusive engagement
- Purpose-driven option selection criteria



Planning & Approvals

Articulate value using:

- Impact Assessments
- Engagement Beyond Consultation
- Assessing Benefits and Conveying Value
- Implementation Planning



Investment Case

Validate your approach using:

- Wellbeing and Quality of Life Analysis
- Distributional Impact Assessments
- Capitals Approach or Materiality Assessment



Procurement

Optimise benefits using:

- Market engagement
- Inclusive procurement strategy
- Clear specifications and requirements
- Tailored, outcome-focused questions
- Risk-based requirements



Detailed Design

Partner for value using:

- Co-design techniques
- Human-centred design approach
- Forming mutually beneficial partnerships



Operation

Continue your legacy using:

- Early consideration of legacy
- Continued engagement
- Communicate change



Construction

Build trust using:

- Local Needs Analysis
- Purpose-aligned initiatives
- Benchmarking
- Measurement
- Outcome validation
- Purpose-driven culture
- Effective communication



Decommissioning

Repurpose and refocus using:

- Assessment of potential
- A managed transition
- Support for those most in need
- Partnership working



The future of social value

The UK Government's mission-led strategy aims to set ambitious, long-term goals in areas such as economic growth, clean energy, crime reduction, equal opportunities and NHS improvements. These missions should be bolstered by major infrastructure projects and a purpose-driven approach that delivers value and equity for all citizens.

Research indicates that current legislation on social value is heavily focused on procurement, which many believe limits its broader application. [The Social Value 2032 Roadmap](#), spearheaded by Social Enterprise UK (SEUK), advocates for collective action to unlock billions in green investment, generate substantial funds for reinvestment in critical infrastructure, create thousands of jobs and support the UK Government's mission through a renewed focus on social value.¹⁸ This requires changes in policy, culture, measurement and implementation.

With the rise of ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) criteria, along with procurement and planning reforms, it is evident that collective action is needed to provide clear guidelines on how organisations and projects should manage their economic, social and environmental impacts for the betterment of society.

We would hope a focus on purpose, and the research produced in the document goes some way to support projects in how they can apply social value to improve delivery and outcomes for all.

Purpose-led approach supporting a legacy of benefits

One final example of how early consideration of purpose pays dividends in project delivery: the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Central to the bid for the London 2012 Games was the lasting economic, social and environmental legacy the project would deliver. At its core, the project's purpose focused on regeneration and benefits to east London, over and above the benefits to sport and tourism. This early identification and understanding of purpose supported the project to make necessary decisions around organisational structure to best deliver these strategic outcomes. Informed design and long-term planning for the scheme resulted in:

- **A design that supports long-term benefits:** The focus on legacy was evident in the design of the venues including the broader Olympic Park (now Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park) and integrated planning of the infrastructure which is supported by transport links in east London. This has allowed the Olympic venues to continue to generate economic benefits. For example, the Olympic Stadium hosted the 2017 IAAF World Championships, creating an economic impact of £79 million for London.
- **Regeneration and growth beyond sport:** The Games' media centre, now known as Here East, hosts various businesses and university campuses. This site continues to support local businesses, skills, education and the natural environment today.
- **Improved advocacy:** The bid was strongly backed by the government and the Greater London Authority.

¹⁸ Social Enterprise UK, [The Social Value 2032 Roadmap](#).

