

OpenConsult: Public Engagement Platform

Summary of Service

CiviQ's OpenConsult is a cloud-based public engagement platform. Its key focus is on supporting policy and planning consultations. OpenConsult makes it easy to:

- present complex information in a way that's easy to engage with
- capture spatial feedback with respondents' comments
- support planning consultations e.g. Local Plan Updates
- publish responses
- process and report on responses
- support cross-learning and connections in your community around policy
- feedback on how input was considered
- alert your community members to new engagements in their area of interest

OpenConsult is suitable for organisations with a range of engagement needs, from simple survey engagements to complex policy making and planning consultations.

Key features of the platform include:

- A range of engagements types
- Unique referencing of responses, observations and files
- Response categorisation, summarisation and reporting. An AI option is available.
- System of notifications and confirmation emails
- Moderation workflow
- Input of email/posted submissions
- Publication of responses
- Interactive mapping and integration with ArcGIS Online

Support:

Time to onboard: One week

Support hours: 9-5pm Mon-Friday excl. holidays

Training: Two online workshops provided at onboarding. Self-learning portal to learn at your own pace, a knowledge-base and check-in meetings.

Data Location: AWS UK

Integrations: ArcGIS Online integration, MS Connector to pull data backend MS systems, API

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Service Description

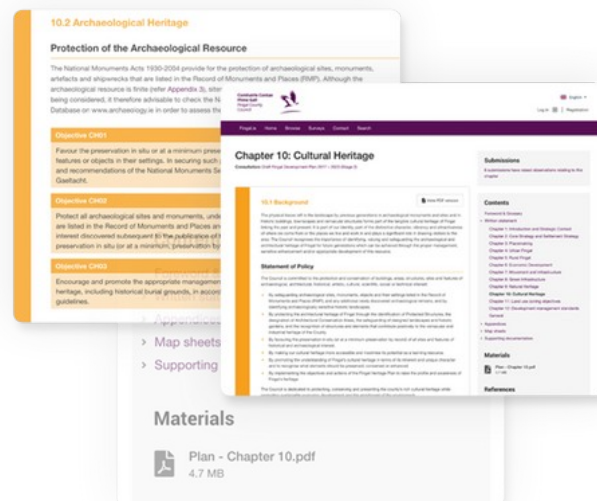
Key features

A range of engagement types

The consultation portal enables the publication of a range of consultation types, including:

- Standard consultations using themes/questions
- Surveys
- Interactive document engagements
- Visual slide-based engagement forum

Fig. 1: Example of interactive document type engagement



Engagements can be public or set to private where engagement is done with a target groups of stakeholders or staff for example. To support open collaboration, engagements may optionally be configured to enable citizens to continue editing their responses until the closing date.

OpenConsult also supports the ability to receive online application forms and to support voting processes.

Accessible

OpenConsult is optimised for mobile device accessibility. Users can make online submissions via desktop or mobile devices.

OpenConsult complies with level WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility standards.

Easy to use forms

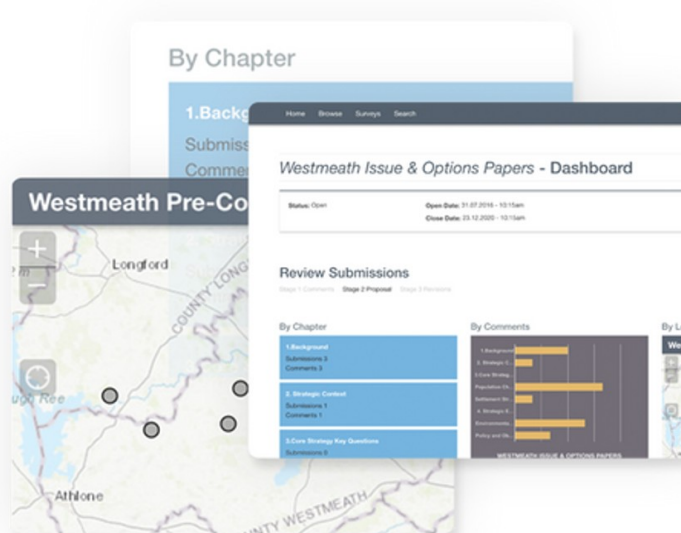
A range of easy-to-use submission forms enable citizens to respond with text and map-based information to different types of consultations.

The response form has a number of configurable features, which helps administrators adapt the form to the engagement requirements. OpenConsult also includes a workflow for consultation administrators to manually input submissions received by email or post.

Reporting dashboard

A dashboard provides charts and statistics on responses received by question/theme/chapter as well as a summary map of all areas of interest drawn on responses. The dashboard can also be published for your community, providing an overview of activity on the engagement.

Fig. 2 Consultation dashboard showing number of comments per chapter



Publishing responses

Where responses are published, they can be searched by the public and downloaded as excel or pdf files. This open data approach supports easy knowledge sharing and collaboration while the consultation period is open.

Data sharing & query

All consultation data can be queried across a range of variables, include consultation, theme, chapter of consultation document and more. This feature can also be made available to citizens, supporting knowledge sharing, capacity building and richer responses to consultations.

Engagement Alerts

Individuals and organisations can subscribe for alerts on engagements in their category of interest or locality. The user will receive an alert when an engagement in their chosen area of interest is published. This enabled your community and stakeholders to be informed early.

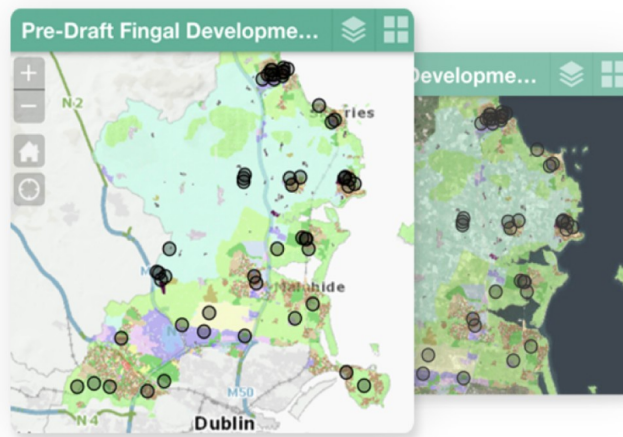
Response Management

All responses are assigned a unique ID. The moderation process for consultation responses, stores a revision history of redacted responses. The visibility of submissions to different stakeholders is fully controlled by the moderation team.

Map based submissions

OpenConsult supports Open Layers maps and has a two-way integration with ESRI ArcGIS Online. Any maps can be imported for display on response forms. Users can make comments and draw on the interactive map you have provided or imported from your mapping system.

Fig 3: Summary map on dashboard highlighting areas drawn on responses



Messaging

A messaging service enables consultation owners to contact groups of users of the portal.

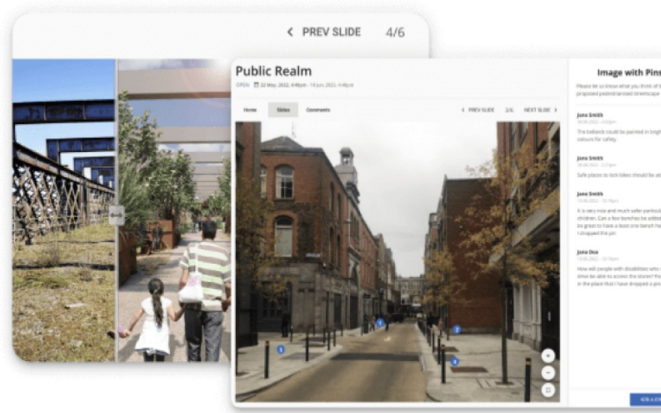
Integration

OpenConsult provides a private API and an MS Connector for pulling data to backend systems.

User Engagement

Respondents can register and maintain their own account on the platform. Users can view, comment on and privately support others' submissions. A record of all of their engagements is maintained on their profile. Respondents can also subscribe to content and to other users, receiving alerts when submissions are updated.

Fig 4. Example of commenting on visual elements – NoteDrop engagement type



All subscription plans include:

- Range of consultation types including questionnaires Consultation Dashboard
- Appointments management feature
- Publication of submissions option
- Submissions summarisation and reporting
- Unique referencing of submissions, observations and files
- Comprehensive system of notifications and confirmation emails
- Moderation workflow
- Input of email/posted submissions
- Private / invited stakeholder consultation
- GDPR consent management and compliance
- User messaging
- User submission and account management pages
- Capability for translation to other languages
- Integration with ArcGIS Online
- Internal & Stakeholder specific consultations
- Consultation alerts subscription
- Multi-Factor Authentication
- API for backend system integration and MS Connector
- SSO
- MS Connector
- Option of add-on AI module for processing responses to planning/policy consultations

Technical Service Summary

Data hosting, service performance and security

Hosting

OpenConsult is hosted with Amazon Web Services (AWS) Cloud providing a cloud-based single-tenant service that is accessible 24/7/365 with an uptime rate of 99.8%. New features and updates are rolled out automatically.

Service Performance & Scalability

The platform has high availability and effective load balancing that ensures consistent performance, throughput, minimisation of response times and increased reliability through redundancy.

Security

OpenConsult is delivered on secure Amazon Web Services (AWS) architecture. Each customer has a separate standalone consultation portal provisioned on its own individual cloud server.

Platform and infrastructure security

- Servers use automated firmware and operating system patching.
- The number of services exposed to the internet is minimised to reduce attack surface.
- The platform is continuously patched and upgraded to protect against known vulnerabilities and exploits.

Encryption and secure communications

- Customer data is encrypted at rest.
- Registration and login are protected using TLS for data in transit.

Access controls

- OpenConsult supports Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) and Single Sign-On (SSO) options.

Full details of CiviQ's comprehensive suite of security measures and policies are available on request.

Data protection

OpenConsult is compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

The platform includes GDPR consent management and compliance capabilities.

Backups and restore

- A full server backup is taken daily and stored for 7 days.
- A backup of the application database is taken every 6 hours
- Backups can be stored on the server or transferred to another location
- In the event of a server disaster, the VPS can be cloned and restored from a good backup, and the database restored from the most recent good backup (where configured).

Off-boarding, data export, and deletion

- An off-boarding process enables data extraction by the customer (response and user data).
- Following extraction and provision to the client, data will be deleted. Data will be fully removed once backups expire in full after 30 days.

Service Levels

Service availability

- OpenConsult is accessible 24/7/365 with an uptime rate of 99.8% availability.
- The platform is designed for high availability with load balancing to maintain consistent performance and reliability through redundancy.

Support channels and hours

- Support options include: a ticket-based support desk, Knowledge Hub, and phone support.
- Standard support hours are Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm

Incident severity classification

Incidents are categorised as Priority 1–4:

- **P1** – Outage of critical services to the organisation
- **P2** – Partial outage of critical service-focused
- **P3** – Low impact on business operations
- **P4** – Impact to 1 or 2 end-users

Time to resolve (targets)

- P1 (critical outage): ≤ 4 hours
- P2 (high priority): ≤ 8 hours
- P3 (normal): ≤ 2 business days
- P4 (low): ≤ 4 business days

Contact

To explore how OpenConsult may support your organisation's needs, please contact us at the details below.

CiviQ

Digital Office Centre, Maynooth Business Campus, Straffan Road, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland
e: info@civiq.eu | hello@civiq.co.uk | tel: +44 33 3303 0914
w: civiq.co.uk