

Approaches to community consultation and engagement

There are a variety of well recognised approaches to community consultation and engagement. Some lend themselves to more than one purpose. Others will be more suitable for particular needs, including:

- initial consultation with the community (i.e. giving people a say, and getting people involved *before* you start planning a project)
- on-going engagement
- keeping people informed and up to date with activities and achievements

These are some examples of methods for consulting and engaging with your community.

- Local media campaign – newspapers, TV, radio
- Leaflets, flyers, posters
- Exhibitions / interactive displays (e.g. at a street stall or local event)
- Website
- Newsletters, email updates
- Surveys or questionnaires by post / door to door / online
- Competitions e.g. for project ideas / designs
- Theatre, games, story telling, poetry
- Seminar / conference / workshop
- Public meetings
- Community auditing and profiling e.g. photo surveys / travel routes
- Customer Comment Cards (e.g. ‘I wish this was’ – Candy Chang)
- Focus Groups / User Panels (e.g. tenant forum)
- Open Space meeting (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open-space_meeting)
- Open House Event (e.g. Bristol Green Doors)
- Scenario planning / community visioning (e.g. ‘Future Search’)
- Community led planning / neighbourhood planning (check whether there is already a Parish Plan or if there is a neighbourhood plan already underway in your area)
- Maps and models (e.g. Planning for Real / [Plan LoCaL model](#))

Open consultation

CSE strongly recommends approaches to consultation at the start of your project that are open and that genuinely take account of people’s needs and priorities, not the ‘Decide-Announce-Defend’ model that is sometimes adopted by default. However, you may also need to use some ‘informing’ approaches just to get messages out about the consultation itself, and to let people know how things are developing as the project moves forward.

<p>Decide – Announce – Defend (i.e. make a fixed plan behind closed doors, tell a few people about it, stick with it rigidly)</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>Open consultation process (i.e. make it easy for people to get involved, encourage input and ideas, ensure there is flexibility to work these into plans)</p>

Resources to help plan your activities

CSE videos and resources

PlanLoCaL is a suite of resources from CSE including films, a resource pack and this website which aims to support communities and groups that are planning for low carbon living. Here are some of the resources most relevant to community consultation and engagement:

Videos:

- Three short videos on consulting the community – these are an excellent starting point www.planlocal.org.uk/videos/submenus/submenu-consulting.html

Downloads on running events:

- Introduction to facilitation skills and group management www.planlocal.org.uk/downloads/view/planning-promoting-and-facilitating-events/28
- Guidance on promoting your events www.planlocal.org.uk/downloads/view/planning-promoting-and-facilitating-events/29
- Practical guidance on setting up events www.planlocal.org.uk/downloads/view/planning-promoting-and-facilitating-events/30
- Example poster www.planlocal.org.uk/downloads/view/further-resources/82

“What Matters To You”

- More information relating low carbon themes to local concerns and priorities: www.planlocal.org.uk/pages/what-matters-to-you

Fife Community Consultation handbook

Fife Council has produced an excellent resource outlining a wide range of consultation and engagement activities, including examples of where and how they have been used. It's here: http://admin.1fife.org.uk/uploadfiles/publications/c64_ConsultationHandbook_complete.pdf

Other examples

Here are some more web based examples of approaches to community engagement.

- www.communityplanning.net
- www.nps.gov/nero/rctatoolbox/gatinfo_focus.htm
- www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=7816307

Neighbourhood plans

- To find out if there is already a parish plan for your area, start with the Rural Community Council: www.acre.org.uk/about-rcan Your local authority may also have played a part and may even keep copies of local plans on their website. Alternatively contact the Planning Policy Team or Communities Team to find out.
- For market towns, contact Action for Market Towns (AMT) who completed a lot of Town Action Plans (the town version of the parish plan) under the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTI) – <http://towns.org.uk>