

re: sourcebook

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re: discover

Planning for your community

a Sourcebook

Introduction

"Experience shows that success depends on communities themselves having the power and taking responsibility to make things better. A new approach is long overdue. It has to be comprehensive, long-term and founded on what works."

Tony Blair, Prime Minister,
Bringing Britain together; a national strategy
for neighbourhood renewal, 1998

Acknowledgements

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- The New Opportunities Fund publication 'Working in partnership: A sourcebook'. This was researched and written for the New Opportunities Fund by SQW Ltd, a management consultancy specialising in economic development and regeneration (www.sqw.co.uk)
- The Centre for Community Enterprise in Canada and their publication 'Strategic Planning for

the Community Economic Development Practitioner'.

This was researched and written by Mike Lewis and Frank Green and further information can be found by contacting Don McNair (mcnair@cedworks.com, www.cedworks.com)

The illustrations were devised and drawn by Brick (brick@ntlworld.com) who retains the copyright of these illustrations and can only be reproduced with his permission.

The layout and design of the Sourcebook was created by Lorie Karlin, Graphic Designer (loriekarlin@beeb.net)

In addition, I would like to thank the other organisations and individuals who commented on the Sourcebook during its preparation.

The table reproduced on P49 is a version of one in the New Opportunities publication 'Working in Partnership: a sourcebook'

Every effort has been made to ensure that the references and credits in the Sourcebook are correct. The Sourcebook is a working document and will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Suggested corrections and/or amendments can be submitted to Alan Caldwell Associates.

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Contents

Chapter 1: ABOUT THE SOURCEBOOK	1
--	----------

Chapter 2: ABOUT THE PLAN	5
Challenge 1: How do we decide whether or not to Plan?	13
Challenge 2: Whom should we talk to before making a decision?	15
Self Evaluation Checklist	17

Chapter 3: ABOUT THE MARKET & COASTAL TOWNS INITIATIVE FOR THE SOUTH WEST	19
--	-----------

Chapter 4: GETTING READY TO PLAN	27
Section 4.1: Establishing a Steering Group	27
Challenge 1: Agreeing what the Steering Group should do?	31
Challenge 2: Who should be involved and how do we attract the right people?	32
Challenge 3: Defining roles and responsibilities.	35
Challenge 4: Establishing an appropriate structure.	36
Challenge 5: Building your skills and knowledge.	39
Self Evaluation Checklist	42
Section 4.2: Involving the wider community and your partners	43
Challenge 1: Community involvement - getting started.	47
Challenge 2: How to involve your local communities.	48
Challenge 3: Involving the groups that are hard to reach.	53
Challenge 4: How to involve your partner agencies.	55
Self Evaluation Checklist	58 ►

Introduction

Chapter 5: PREPARING YOUR PLAN	59
Section 5.1: Preparing your vision	65
Challenge 1: Who should be involved and how do we involve them?	69
Challenge 2: How do we create our vision?	70
Challenge 3: How do we assess the obstacles to achieving our vision?	72
Self Evaluation Checklist	75
Section 5.2: Understanding the current situation	77
Challenge 1: How do we decide what information to collect?	81
Challenge 2: How do we organise ourselves to collect and analyse this information?	83
Challenge 3: How should we present this information?	84
Self Evaluation Checklist	88
Section 5.3: Choosing the right strategy	89
Challenge 1: How do we identify the themes for our strategies?	95
Challenge 2: How do we set the goals for our strategies?	96
Challenge 3: How do we then choose the right strategies?	98
Self Evaluation Checklist	101
Section 5.4: Identifying & prioritising projects	103
Challenge 1: How do we identify projects?	109
Challenge 2: How do we prioritise projects?	111
Challenge 3: How should we involve the wider community?	112
Self Evaluation Checklist	115
Section 5.5: Monitoring & evaluating your plan	117
Challenge 1: How do we develop and use our indicators?	120
Self Evaluation Checklist	123

Chapter 6: ORGANISING YOUR COMMUNITY	125
Section 6.1: Developing your local organisation	125
Challenge 1: How do we develop our roles and responsibilities for the longer term?	128
Challenge 2: How do we define the mission of our organisation?	129
Challenge 3: How do we choose a structure for our organisation?	131
Challenge 4: How do we gain the skills to run our organisation?	134
Challenge 5: How do we involve the wider community in this work?	135
Self Evaluation checklist	138
Section 6.2: The people in your organisation	139
Challenge 1: How do we identify the skills, experience and resources that are available in our community?	143
Challenge 2: What can we use a Community Agent for and how do we find and appoint them?	147
Challenge 3: How do we find and appoint consultancy help?	150
Challenge 4: Appointing Project Staff.	152
Self Evaluation checklist	155

Chapter 7: MAKING YOUR PLAN HAPPEN	157
Section 7.1: Making your plan operational	157
Challenge 1: How do we set good objectives?	161
Challenge 2: How do we prepare our action plan?	163
Challenge 3: How do we monitor and manage our action plan?	165
Self Evaluation checklist	167
Section 7.2: Securing the resources you need	169
Challenge 1: Establishing your brokering table.	173
Challenge 2: Running your brokering table and keeping it going.	175
Challenge 3: Preparing a fundraising strategy and funding applications.	179
Self Evaluation checklist	182

Chapter 8: SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND ADVICE	183
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Introduction

Jargon Buster

Every attempt has been made to write the sourcebook in a straightforward manner. It is suggested that it is also useful to learn the language and terminology of the regeneration world.

A comprehensive jargon buster can be found at www.renewal.net. An excellent glossary of common terms can also be found in the invaluable publication 'The Community Planning Handbook' by Nick Waites (2000). The meaning of terms used in this publication are:

Accountable body	An organisation with recognised management systems to receive public funds, employ staff, etc.
Audit	A systematic examination of an organisation, project, programme or plan.
Brokering	A way of securing resources and assistance to help communities with their work. Brokering provides 'one door to many doors' by bringing agencies, organisations and businesses together to negotiate resources in response to a Plan.
Business Plan	Sets out all aspects of an organisation's plan and programme of work for a defined time period.
Community agent	A local person employed on a part-time basis to assist their community in the regeneration of the area.
Community based	Actively involving local people and organisations.
Community Planning	The process where a local authority and partner organisations come together to plan, provide and promote the well being of their communities. It promotes the active involvement of communities in the decisions on local services which affect peoples lives including for example health, education, transport, the economy, safety and the environment.
Community Strategic Planning	A best practice process by which a community looks 20-30 years ahead and makes plans for its sustainable future.
Community based Regeneration	Should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Long lasting, sustainable and holistic;● Designed, implemented and managed by the community;● Tackle the causes rather than the symptoms of economic, environmental, cultural and social decline and exclusion.
Consultants	Self employed professional individuals or organisations
Development Trusts	A network of independent, not for profit, community based organisations, which are engaged in the social, economic and environmental regeneration of a defined area or community.

Introduction

Economy	The way a community is organised in order for people to work at different jobs and provide for their needs.
Evaluation	An assessment, after a project or programme has started, of the extent to which objectives have been achieved, how efficiently they have been achieved, and whether there are any lessons to be gained for the future.
Goal	Make clear what you hope to achieve within say 5-10 years.
Health check	A Countryside Agency process to collect information on your community to help you prepare or plan.
Holistic Approach	A view of regeneration that it is more than a sum of its parts. Taking into account economic, environmental, social and cultural issues in a community and how they inter-relate.
Regeneration Initiatives	Like programmes
Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)	New overarching partnerships of stakeholders who will develop ways to involve local people in shaping the future of their neighbourhood in how services are provided.
Monitoring	Regular collection and analysis of input, output and outcome data, along with information concerning the problems being tackled.
Objective	The result a project is intended to achieve within the short term (say two years), for example, to create additional jobs for local people.
Operational Plan	Like a Business Plan partnerships vary greatly in how they are established and resourced and how they operate. There are no defining features for partnerships but they should bring together representatives from different sectors and different communities of interest to agree and work towards common goals. Organisations which bring together representatives of those who have an interest in the local area such as local authorities, health trusts, businesses, voluntary organisations and residents groups.
Programmes	A range of activities, actions and projects grouped together to achieve a particular outcome(s). Common use includes Regeneration Programmes. Usually has funding.
Project officer	A person employed by an organisation to assist them and progress the projects and actions within an agreed plan.
Projects	Individual components or elements of an overall programme, plan or scheme. ➤

Introduction

Regeneration practitioners	Professionals skilled and experienced in regeneration activities.
Regional Development Agencies	These are 9 Government agencies set up in 1999 to co-ordinate regional economic development and regeneration. They aim to enable the English Regions to improve their relative competitiveness and reduce the imbalances that exist within and between regions.
Single Regeneration Budget	A programme that aims to enhance the employment prospects, education and skills of local people and to tackle the needs of communities in the most deprived areas.
Stakeholder:	An individual, organisation, group, agency or business with an interest in the future of their community.
Steering Group	A smaller group providing leadership and direction for an organisation, area or community.
Strategic thinking	The opposite of creating wish lists.
Strategy	A strategy is about choosing the direction you are going to take to achieve your vision.
Sustainable development	Activity that achieves mutually reinforcing economic, social and environmental benefits without compromising the needs of future generations.
Vision	A Vision gives your community direction and an overall philosophy. It builds consensus and provides a shared picture of the future. The Vision generates community energy and commitment to take the actions needed to bring it about.
Workshops	Meetings that are structured for the active involvement of participants.

Chapter 1

About the Sourcebook

This chapter is your introduction to the Sourcebook. It explains what it is, who should use it and how to use it.

Chapter One

Inspirations

Want to involve young people? - 'text' the message

Danny Hughes, a freelance youth worker, had this invaluable piece of advice for all the adults on a local group wanting to involve young people. "Make the subject relevant and forget posters or letters to invite them – send them a 'text message'. Danny has been at the centre of an exciting youth consultation process in Great Torrington in Devon as part of the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTi).

The aim is to put young people in the driving seat, to find out what they want rather than what the adults think they want. The project seeks to find ways of working with the authorities to make these things happen, in a timescale that is meaningful to young people...in other words before they become adults!

Involving the local Development Trust, Local Authorities, Connexions and the Devon Youth Service the project aims to:

- Demonstrate that the arts can be used as an imaginative and effective tool to involve young people (11-17) in their area
- Conduct a needs analysis to assess the genuine needs of young people
- Establish structures such as an interactive forum to actually get young people involved in the regeneration process

To achieve these aims a range of exciting projects have been developed. 'Video Nation' saw a video booth installed at the local school and taken on tour around a number of community events. People could go into the booth and record their thoughts while others carried out street interviews, recording the projects young people wanted to see happen.

A photography project saw young people given disposable cameras so they could record the good and bad aspects of living in Great Torrington. An exhibition of all the work produced by young people was displayed at the community event, which started to bring together the community plan for the future of the area.

The project has worked closely with the MCTi and many of the ideas from young people have now been incorporated into the community plan for the area. The Youth Forum has formed links to the MCTi Steering Group, the town's Development Trust and the local Councils.

Further information: Danny Hughes
mango@dnhughes.freeserve.co.uk

Introduction

This chapter is your introduction to the Sourcebook. It explains how it is structured, what it is, who should use it and how to use it. The sourcebook has been researched and written by Alan Caldwell Associates. The South West of England Regional Development Agency (South West RDA) and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation funded this publication.

- **The South West RDA** was established in April 1999 to drive forward the region's economy. Government sponsored, the Agency is responsible for providing regional strategic leadership in economic development and for co-ordinating national programmes at a regional and local level.
- **The Joseph Rowntree Foundation** is one of the largest independent social policy research and development charities in the UK. It supports a wide programme of research and development projects in housing, social care and social policy.
- **Alan Caldwell Associates** specialises in community planning and regeneration, and works directly with communities and their partners to develop locally based, long term regeneration programmes (www.alancaldwellassociates.co.uk).

We believe that the regeneration of communities should come from within those communities and be shaped by local people. We believe that regeneration should be a sustainable process drawing on all aspects of community life so as to integrate economic, social, environmental and cultural opportunities and potential. We acknowledge that regeneration is a long-term process that cannot be rushed. We understand that effective regeneration requires partnerships to be created between local communities, charities, public agencies and private business, but always with the direct involvement of local people.

We believe that Community Strategic Planning provides a framework for sustainable regeneration, enabling local people to:

- involve all sections of their community in the regeneration of their place;
- prepare a well thought through, long term plan for the future of their community;
- organise their community to form partnerships and help make their plan happen;

and enabling investors and their agency partners to:

- come together to help the community implement the projects and actions in their plan.

We acknowledge that communities are constantly faced with different problems and opportunities. Your community may be threatened by the closure of a major employer, a rise in crime in the town centre or the unwelcome arrival of major incidents such as the outbreak of foot and mouth. There may be the opportunity to take advantage of major new investment in the local college or a new affordable housing development.

Regeneration has never happened in an orderly fashion. By taking a strategic approach to your future and by organising your community you will be in a better position to take advantage of opportunities and deal with problems as they arise.

The framework and this Sourcebook are designed to help you reach this position of strength.

Chapter One

What is the Sourcebook?

This Sourcebook has been developed to encourage communities and their partners to plan effectively for their future. The Sourcebook:

- is a practical source of ideas and suggestions, it is **not** a step by step guide;
- is designed to help you to think through issues, it is **not** intended to offer ready made answers or solutions;
- is a framework for action, it is **not** a prescriptive approach;
- is a starting point, it is **not** an end in itself.

The Sourcebook is only one tool to help you in your work. You are likely to need to work alongside regeneration practitioners, take advantage of training opportunities and learn from the experience of others.

The Sourcebook points you to other organisations, web sites and publications that you may find helpful. It is also available at www.southwesttowns.net and www.alancaldwellassociates.co.uk

We hope you find it useful.

Who should use this Sourcebook?

The Sourcebook has been prepared primarily to support those involved in the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative for the South West (LINK TO CHAPTER 3). It is intended to be of relevance to others involved in regenerating their town and rural communities.

First and foremost the Sourcebook is written for the community leaders involved in this work. You may already be involved in the Steering Group or local organisation leading the work, or simply be considering whether or not to get involved.

It is also intended to offer guidance to those working with the Steering Group or local organisations. This includes the Local Authority Officers and agency staff, project staff, consultants, volunteers and local people employed and trained as community agents.

We trust the Sourcebook will also be of wider relevance and interest to agencies looking to design community based regeneration initiatives and to Local Authorities charged with developing and delivering statutory Community Planning.

Community based regeneration is a demanding process. To be successful it challenges everyone involved to think differently. Local communities must take responsibility for their future and show the commitment to become credible partners. Agency partners must learn to work in partnership with local people. As one community said at a recent conference *"If regeneration was a game of football we would want our agencies to act as coaches helping us to win matches. We wouldn't want them to be the referee or even worse the goalkeeper!"*

Community Strategic Planning offers a supportive framework for successful regeneration. This Sourcebook is designed to help you in this work at whatever stage your community happens to be.

Chapter 1

About the Sourcebook

About this Sourcebook

This Sourcebook builds on the lessons from past regeneration initiatives, national and international examples and the practical experience in the South West. It draws on established good practice, academic research, new research and the knowledge of leading organisations in the field of regeneration.

The new research undertaken for this Sourcebook involves case studies providing real illustrations of individual communities planning their future. These case studies highlight the lessons learned from the problems and difficulties they have encountered. They draw on both good and bad experiences.

The Sourcebook illustrates each stage a community will encounter in preparing and implementing a Community Strategic Plan. Within each stage we identify the main issues a community must address. For each of the main issues the Sourcebook makes clear:

- The advantages and opportunities;
- The realities of planning for your future;
- The things that can go wrong;
- What works in practice.

Remember, the Sourcebook is not intended to be prescriptive. It offers a framework to undertake your planning.

The aim of the Sourcebook is to provide you with a range of suggestions, advice and options to help you.

The Sourcebook alone cannot provide all the answers. It can act as a point of reference offering ideas and advice on how to proceed. Each chapter offers advice about other publications and sources of information that may help you. You are likely to need to take advantage of training and additional support from skilled regeneration practitioners and other professionals as your plan-making progresses. The Sourcebook will guide you on the circumstances where you might need such help and how best to appoint and manage this resource.

Finally, this is not an academic report or study – it is intended as a guide for those of you who are actively involved in securing a brighter future for your community.

How to use the Sourcebook

The Sourcebook is designed to be a working document and you are encouraged to dip in and out, focusing on the stages that interest you. It is published in loose-leaf format and on the web to enable additions to be easily made. On receiving a Sourcebook you will be encouraged to become a registered user to ensure you receive additional or revised sections.

The Sourcebook is divided into chapters that broadly represent a stage in the Community Strategic Planning process. Several chapters are sub-divided into sections covering particularly important parts of each stage.

Each chapter or section is structured in the same way as follows:

- **The Principles:** setting out why this stage is important and what it is for.
- **The Practice:** exploring what this stage actually is, what is involved and who is involved.
- **The Big Issue:** highlighting the central issue of this stage.
- **The Wicked Issues:** alerting you to the things that can go wrong, how you might avoid them and how you might deal with them if they happen to you.

Chapter One

- **Key Challenges:** for each stage a series of Key Challenges have been identified. These are not exhaustive and not all communities will experience them in the same way. They are the most common challenges local communities will face and usually relate to important decisions you will have to take as you plan.

For each challenge the main issues you will have to address are explained with advice that others have found useful.

- **Case study:** examples where appropriate to illustrate the important issues.
- **Guidance, Skills and Contacts:** guiding you on:
 - The **tools** that are available to assist you with this stage and where you can find them;
 - The **skills** you will require to undertake this stage;
 - Where you can find **useful information**, publications, organisations and individuals that will assist you with this stage.

The Sourcebook does not pretend to offer a comprehensive listing of tools, information and contacts. The listings given in each section serve to highlight a few of these interesting tools and sources of information. A comprehensive list is available through a number of organisations (see Chapter 8 – Sources of Information and Advice). References given in sections are web based and for full contact details see Chapter 8.

- **Self Evaluation Checklist:** At the end of each chapter and section you will find a checklist of questions to help you review your work. The checklist can be amended and developed to suit your circumstances. It can be completed by an individual or as an exercise for your Steering Group. You may also find it useful to complete it with your partners, especially those who have funded you to undertake certain stages of the work.

- **Links:** Where it will be useful for you to refer to another part of the Sourcebook a reference is included in the body of the text (LINK CHAPTER X, SECTION X).
- **Illustrations:** Illustrations are included to 'lighten' the document and emphasise important points.
- **Inspirations:** Throughout the sourcebook you will find short case studies of inspirational projects, organisations and programmes from across the UK.

Please remember...

The Sourcebook is a working document. It is intended to review and update the Sourcebook as it is tested by communities and their partners. If you have comments, suggestions, case studies or contributions to make please contact Alan Caldwell (alan@alancaldwellassociates.co.uk)

The Sourcebook sets out each stage of your planning process. Regeneration will never happen in such a logical way. The case studies are intended to illustrate important issues and root the Sourcebook in every day examples of communities like yours. In their own way these communities have taken a strategic approach and are planning for their future. Things never go smoothly but each would say this approach is helping them to find their way. Dip in and out of the Sourcebook and use it to stimulate thinking and action in your community. We hope you find it useful.

Chapter 2

About the plan

This chapter is for those within a community who are considering forming a Steering Group to prepare a Plan for the future. It will explain what is involved and what the likely benefits will be for your community and your partners. It will help you weigh up the risks and provide advice, guidance and suggestions on how to decide whether or not it is for you. The Key Challenges covered in this chapter include:

- Challenge 1: How do we decide whether or not to Plan?
- Challenge 2: Whom should we talk to before making a decision?
- Self Evaluation checklist

Chapter Two

Inspirations

Getting around?

Excessive traffic or poor public transport is always among the priorities in community consultations at town and parish level. Solving these problems is essential if people in rural areas are to benefit from improvements to the services and facilities in market towns. As with all difficult issues it usually takes a range of approaches to begin to solve the problem.

- Aylsham partnership in the South East has used a Dial-A-Ride scheme to enable people to reach their town. With the help of a published timetable and service information, people can organise trips to the town for shopping, health services, etc. or to visit family and friends. The Dial-A-Ride approach is extremely flexible and it means that those most dependent on public transport gain most from the service. Once established, it is planned to increase the service to support evening entertainment including both youth clubs and leisure events.
- Bus-Cycle provides a novel way to enable more people to use a regular bus service. By providing facilities to transport bicycles, people off route can cycle to the nearest bus stop and either lock up their bike or load it onto the special trailer behind the bus and complete their journey on two wheels. This also helps the case to create new cycle routes and upgrade existing ones.
- In Langport in Somerset a Parish Transport Grant from the Countryside Agency has helped to establish a taxibus service for the surrounding villages. The scheme is simple and flexible and provides a weekly taxibus service taking villagers to the Friday Farmers Market. People simply ring or e-mail the local

co-ordinator by Thursday evening who then compiles the list of journeys and e-mails the local taxi company. The timing of the service, between 9.30am and 2.30pm, co-incides with the downtime of the taxi company when their vehicles are not normally doing school or business runs.

- The combination of local knowledge and imagination in Tring achieved both an improvement in car parking and new housing for people with special needs. A planning application had been submitted to develop housing on a site used informally for car parking. The Town Council felt the loss of parking would have adverse effects on the town's economy and put forward an alternative scheme. In exchange for a derelict piece of council owned land, the homes could be built in a more appropriate location and the Town Council could take ownership of the car park land. The refurbished site is an example of how a market town community through vision, commitment, communication and determination can influence proposals for its town.

Further information:

www.countryside.gov.uk/vitalvillages

The Principles

"Experience shows that success depends on communities themselves having the power and taking responsibility to make things better. A new approach is long overdue. It has to be comprehensive, long-term and founded on what works."

Tony Blair, Prime Minister, Bringing Britain together; a national strategy for neighbourhood renewal, 1998

What is Community Strategic Planning?

Community Strategic Planning is a process by which a community looks 20-30 years ahead and makes plans for its sustainable future. It will help you to:

- get ready to plan;
- identify a clear vision for your future;
- bring together information on your area;
- identify the main goals you need to achieve and the strategies you will adopt to achieve them;
- identify and prioritise projects;
- organise yourselves and others to make the plan happen;
- monitor and evaluate your work;
- learn from your work as it progresses.

Community Strategic Planning is based on the following principles:

- The regeneration of communities should come from within those communities and be shaped by local people.

- Regeneration should be a sustainable process.
- Sustainable regeneration must draw on all aspects of community life so as to integrate economic, social, environmental and cultural opportunities and potential.
- Regeneration is a long-term process and cannot be rushed.
- Effective regeneration requires partnerships to be created between communities, charities, public agencies and private business, but always led by local people.

Community Strategic Planning was developed in Canada by the Centre for Community Enterprise. It was pioneered in the UK by the Corrom

Trust, a national charity working in the field of community based regeneration. It has been developed through practical work with local communities over 25 years and provides the basis of some of the most successful regeneration programmes in North America and the UK

What good can it do?

Community Strategic Planning assumes that people can affect what happens to them in the future. People and communities, in other words, can make the difference. Community Strategic Planning implies hope.



Chapter Two

Community Strategic Planning is a rigorous process that helps communities to identify clearly what they should be doing to secure a sustainable future. The projects prioritised by a community through this process are well thought through, have widespread community support and contribute to an integrated and sustainable regeneration strategy.

Encouraging this process at a community level therefore not only benefits the community but benefits public, private and charitable support agencies who are concerned about the same issues of value for money, community participation, viability and where things fit into the bigger picture.

What lessons has it learned?

Community Strategic Planning draws on best practice within the region, nationally and internationally to overcome the failures of past regeneration initiatives by

- acknowledging that an increasing number of local communities wish to be actively involved in determining their own future;
- valuing the voluntary time and energy local communities will invest in their future;
- building the skills and experience of local people to sustain the regeneration process;
- moving away from a project by project approach;
- planning for a long-term approach to regeneration by replacing short-term 'initiatives';

- supporting communities by funding and supporting them to undertake this strategic approach;
- ensuring that regeneration is based on the highest quality action and research enabling communities to learn as they go;
- enabling local communities to access tailored, accredited training courses to help them with their work;
- giving local communities and their partners access to professionals experienced in community based regeneration;
- ensuring staff from agency partners are fully trained in community based regeneration;
- encouraging supportive Local Authorities and agencies to think carefully about how they can support communities and become partners in the community led plan for the future.

How will it benefit your community?

Community Strategic Planning will:

- help you take responsibility for your future;
- help to get your community involved;
- stimulate forward thinking and clarify future direction;
- build consensus around priority projects and actions;
- build teamwork and expertise;
- help to identify community leaders;

- help meet others requirements;
- help influence rather than be influenced;
- help get results.

How will it benefit your partners?

Community Strategic Planning:

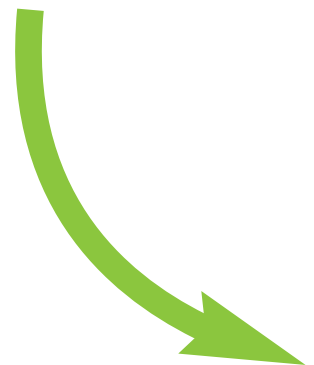
- provides an effective framework for supporting communities;
- is a practical way of delivering the government's policies on sustainable development, community planning and neighbourhood renewal;
- provides a basis for support rooted in sustainable futures rather than a response to crisis;
- identifies projects which have community support and which have the maximum impact;
- helps develop local skills and create organisations to manage projects.

The Practice

What does it involve and how do you do it?

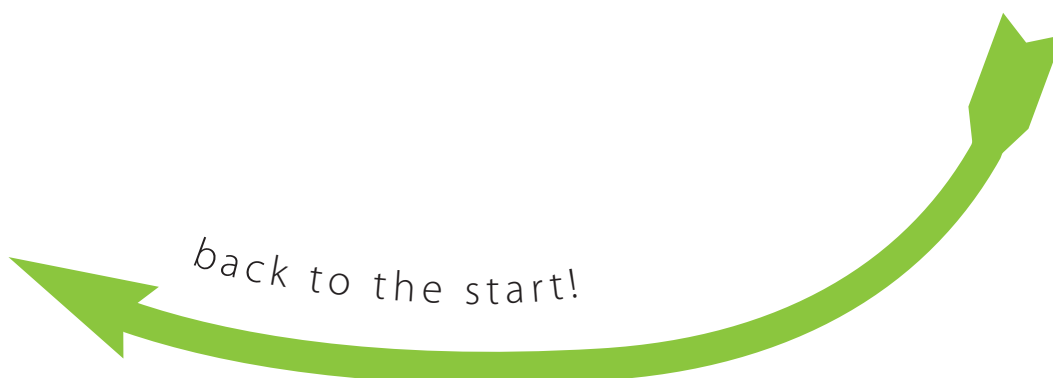
Preparing a Community Strategic Plan..... and Implementing it

Getting ready	Agreeing a vision for the future	Understanding the current situation	Setting strategic goals
Face to face discussions	Visioning workshops	Social and economic audits	Identifying main themes
Stakeholder discussions	Consensus building	Community profiles	Setting goals and adopting strategies
Skills audit	Future planning	Town appraisals	Consensus building
	Planning for real	Research and surveys	Focus groups
	Focus groups	Facilitation	
	Participatory workshops	Research and analysis	



Chapter Two

Implementing the plan	Monitoring and evaluation	Action/Learning
Project development	Annual review events	Training courses
Organisational development: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Legal structures;● Recruitment systems;● Accessing funding;● Running meetings;● Project Management.	Social audits	Exchange visits
Co-ordinating funding	Developing indicators	Personal development
Brokering partnerships and funding	Designing monitoring programmes	Research good practice
	Undertaking evaluation	



Chapter 2

About the plan

How long does it take?

Preparing the plans themselves is not necessarily a lengthy process. They can be put together following a series of community workshops combined with background research and interviews. Depending on your skills, experience and access to professional help the more detailed your planning can become (LINK CHAPTER 5).

Getting ready to plan can be more time consuming. If your community is already well organised and experienced in regeneration you may start planning quickly. It is, however, more common for it to take six to twelve months to get ready. Maybe community leaders have yet to emerge and people have simply not tackled anything like this before. Your community may be fragmented with people organising around certain projects (e.g. a new community centre or skate board park). Local people may have consulted about developments in the past but have never been asked to actively participate in making things happen. It will take time to reach out to your community and build an understanding of this very different way of working (LINK CHAPTER 4, SECTION 4.1).

Developing a local organisation also takes longer. Part of getting ready involves establishing a Steering Group to lead the early stages. As your planning progresses you will begin to debate and develop the best way to organise yourselves to really make things happen. You may, for example, decide you need to create a community owned company to own and control land and buildings. You may want it to be a charity as well to

tap into grant funding. All of this takes time (LINK CHAPTER 6, SECTION 6.1).

What commitment does it take?

The only certainty in Community Strategic Planning is that it requires a long-term commitment from everyone involved. Quality regeneration takes time. All of the lessons from past initiatives point to this. This is no easy ride and no one should fool themselves that this is a quick fix.

What help will you need?

Community Strategic Planning is all about developing the skills and

- **Particular Professions:** you may need, for example, a lawyer to assist with land transactions, an architect to design your new community centre or a structural engineer to lead a feasibility study into the re-use of the old cinema on the high street.
- **Project Officers:** once your plan really starts happening it is likely that you will require project and administrative staff.
- **Community Agents:** local people employed and trained to supplement the volunteer labour in your community.



experience of local people to sustain the regeneration of their community. It helps you to organise yourselves and establish local organisations to make things happen. In addition to the time and energy of local volunteers you are likely to seek help from the following:

- **Regeneration Practitioners:** professional consultants experienced in the practice of community based regeneration.
- **Officers and agency staff:** your partner agencies will have a wealth of experience and skills they may be able to offer.

How does it fit with Local Authority Community Planning?

In the White Paper *Modern Local Government: In touch with the People* the government has given local authorities a central role in working

Chapter Two

case study

COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE SOUTH WEST AND THE UK

The MCTi has encouraged over 50 communities to date to take responsibility for their future. Across the region local people are establishing community led organisations to plan for their future and make projects happen. Before the MCTi, communities such as Great Torrington in Devon had already established a Development Trust to drive the regeneration of their area. Through the MCTi the Langport Development Trust has been established and is already a well-respected partner. Strong links with their Local Authority, the Environment Agency, South West RDA and the Countryside Agency have been forged.

Across the UK this trend towards increased community control is growing. In the Highlands and Islands of Scotland their Enterprise Agency has prioritised 'strengthening communities' as a main theme of their work. In the UK 276 local communities are members of their Development Trust Associations (Jan 04).

with local communities and other bodies to prepare community strategies to improve community well-being. The legislation is not prescriptive and allows Councils to develop their own way of approaching the task while expecting this to be based on a proper assessment of local needs and involving local communities in establishing priorities for action.

There are now exciting examples both nationally and within the South West where Local Authorities have seen the link between the Community Strategic Planning framework and their delivery of statutory Community Planning. (See Guidance at end of chapter). They recognise that this framework enables local communities to become actively involved, assess their needs and contribute to the planning of the area. They are using the framework to embrace their responsibilities and resist the temptation to plan **FOR** the community!

Crucially, where this link has been made it helps the local community to work in close partnership with their Local Authority, a key part of Community Strategic Planning. This helps to give the local work a democratic credibility, linking directly to local councillors and your elected authority ([LINK TO CHALLENGE 2](#)).

The Big Issue

Responsibility and commitment. All too often communities have looked to others to solve their problems. "What are you going to do about the closure of our biggest employer? Why are you not prioritising our area for affordable housing development? Just how much money are you prepared to commit from this new programme?"

Community Strategic Planning acknowledges the role of your partners and urges you to take responsibility for your own future. "Just what can we do to broaden our employment base and make us less reliant on the 'Mitsusuki' factory? Could we buy the land at the old railway yard and work with our housing association to develop homes for our families? If we raise funds from a charitable partner for a new community centre would match funding be available from another partner?"

It encourages you to involve your community, prepare a plan for your future and establish a local organisation showing you are a credible partner.



Chapter 2

About the plan

The key to taking responsibility is commitment. It is considerably easier to shout at a Local Authority than it is to put the time and effort into preparing and implementing your plan. Think long and hard as a community before starting to plan. Remember that politicians come and go, agency priorities change but the community will always face issues about its health and well-being. It's a long, tough road with no shortcuts but the rewards can be very, very high. Remember funding organisations like nothing better than investing in a success story!



The Wicked Issues

Just tell me what to do! Community Strategic Planning requires everyone to think differently. It is not a grant programme to fund projects. It gives you a framework to think through and tackle the issues that face your community. It puts you at the centre of your community's future. There are no hard and fast rules or boxes to tick so you will miss the point if you demand step-by-step instructions.

Behind every successful community there is a group of community leaders. Those people who see the opportunities of this way of working. If you want to make it happen in your community you need to seek out these people and work with them to inspire and inform others (LINK CHAPTER 4).

Trying to rush things. If your community is not ready to undertake this work don't force it. Think seriously about how able and organised your community is to take on a task like this. How experienced are you in the ways of regeneration? How steep is the learning curve going to be?

You should ask really simple questions at the start. Are we used to working as a community? Is it easy to bring our community together? Do we have obvious leaders in our community?

Community Strategic Planning can build the skills and experience of your community but you must take the time to put the basic building blocks in place. If you try and start too soon you are likely to end up with a number of false starts. Find the like minds in your community who are committed to this way of working. Begin to approach

Chapter Two

groups and discuss your ideas. Visit other communities who are further down the road with this work. Do some grassroots work before beginning to plan.

Just seeing money! In the longer term your plan could unlock investment from all sorts of different sources. It is not, however, a quick fix to fund pet projects.

We don't need help. Mention the word consultant to communities and they most probably run a mile. In this work there is a balance to be struck. Community Strategic planning helps build local skills and experience. It encourages you to work in partnership with local agencies. It is, however, likely that you will need good quality, professional assistance to prepare and implement your plan. Community Strategic Planning is a demanding discipline in itself. Projects are likely to

need a technical input. Be prepared to engage professional help to supplement your voluntary time and stimulate your thinking. Most successful examples of Community Strategic Planning have worked closely with a skilled regeneration practitioner. (LINK CHAPTER 6, SECTION 6.2)

Reinventing the wheel. If you ask 10 different people what they mean by the term community planning you will probably get 10 different definitions. Community Strategic Planning has been developed over 25 years of practical experience within communities across the world. It is a tried and tested framework. By all means adapt the framework to suit your community but don't waste valuable time and effort reinventing it.

Don't forget training, networking and best practice. Encourage your community to take advantage of any training opportunities that will equip them for the journey ahead. From basics like running effective meetings to more detailed courses on fund-raising or establishing a community company, training will be a wise investment.

In addition, take advantage of other communities who may have more experience, and learn from them. Over a year after one community had started this work they had yet to make contact with their neighbour 40 miles away who had been doing this work for over 10 years!

Just give us a Project Officer.

Project staff are likely to become an essential ingredient in your work. The cry to fund a Project Officer at the start can ring all sorts of alarm bells with

your partners. Is this community really taking responsibility for their future? Do they have the commitment for the long haul? More importantly, over reliance on a Project Officer is a very dangerous thing. If you invest all the knowledge and experience in one person who then moves on to another job, where will this leave your community? This can be overcome by employing and training local people as Community Agents (LINK CHAPTER 6, SECTION 6.2). They can be a useful resource in the early stages and can work alongside project staff to sustain your work.

Puppets for the Local Authority?

Sometimes Local Authorities and other agencies tend to drive this work in a community. This may be because of a particularly forceful officer or it may fit their current policies to get you working in this way. There is a balance to be struck. Good partnership working is a key to success and agency dominance can lead to problems in the longer term when their priorities shift.

Watch out for early warning signs. Examples include your meetings having more paid people than volunteers or paid officers chairing meetings.



Challenge 1:

How do we decide whether or not to Plan?

You may be considering getting involved in this work for a number of different reasons. For example:

- You are a leading light in the community and are encouraging your community to get involved;
- You are a community activist and are approached to get involved and become part of the Steering Group;
- You are part of an existing organisation or agency who is asked to support the work and get involved;
- Your name (or the name of an organisation you are involved with) gets mentioned in an Expression of Interest and you hear about it later;
- You hear about it on the grapevine or from the local press and want to find out more.

Whatever the circumstances it is important that you and any fledgling Steering Group weigh up the risks and benefits at the earliest opportunity. This involves asking yourself a series of questions and discussing these issues as a Group.

Do I have an understanding of what is involved?

Community Strategic Planning requires you to think differently. This chapter has given you an insight into what this actually means. The rest of the Sourcebook can give you an insight into



what lies ahead. Initiatives such as MCTi give local people access to all kinds of help and support to take part. Understand what help is available and be sure you know what you are taking on (as an individual and as a community) before getting involved.

Do I have the time?

Meetings can be frequent and are likely to take up evenings and weekends. Meetings are likely to be only part of your involvement. You may be called upon to help with research and surveys, hold discussions with other partners, attend conferences and events and even help with practical projects. If you have limited time to get involved make this clear from the beginning.

Do I have the commitment to get involved?

If you don't then by not saying so you could be preventing someone from contributing who does.

case study

In one South West town the importance of involving the community at the earliest stage was emphasised by a Local Authority led application. The Expression of Interest submitted was of the highest quality but it quickly became clear that there had actually been very little community input. A motivated local group has slowly been formed although there is a strong feeling that the Local Authority is having difficulty 'letting go' of the work. The MCTi funds have been paid to the Local Authority and the community feel that they play their cards "too close to their chest".

Chapter Two

Do I have the necessary skills and the confidence?

Commitment, enthusiasm and a desire to learn can take you a long way. This is to be encouraged. This work is, however, demanding and will require your community to exhibit a whole range of skills. These will range from running an effective meeting to project development; from organising a community event to preparing a business plan. The greatest skills required are the ability to work as a team and to know when to engage additional help. Remember others are likely to be in the same boat. Be honest and open to training opportunities.

These practical considerations aside, it is worth spending some time thinking about what you personally want out of your involvement. Career advancement, developing a wider network, developing new skills or reinvigorating your working life are all common reasons. If you can express what you want and why you want to get involved you are more likely to make a good decision rather than finding yourself roped into an unwanted situation.

You may find it helpful to carry out a quick skills audit to see what skills and experience are available to your Steering Group (LINK CHAPTER 4, SECTION 4.2). This will help you to make a decision and identify the types of skills and experience you are missing.

Is Community Strategic Planning appropriate for our community?

You should keep in mind that Community Strategic Planning isn't for everyone. It's very demanding and you need to be sure you can spare the time and resources. It's not just an exercise! Don't bother making plans unless you fully intend to carry them out. Your community might not even need a plan. Maybe you are already well organised and able to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. Maybe you are more comfortable continuing to tackle things on a project-by-project basis.

Having considered your individual position there are three main issues you should think through with the other potential members of your Steering Group before deciding to plan:

- **Benefits:** what are the likely benefits going to be? Will these benefits 'add value' to your community's ability to seize opportunities and tackle the issues you face?
- **Costs:** what are the costs likely to be? What is the time commitment? Will there be financial costs and if so how will you fund them?
- **Risks:** will working in this way present new risks? Will it reduce existing risks?

A more detailed set of questions is provided in the checklist at the end of the chapter.

Have I talked to others who are already doing this work?

The simplest, quickest and most effective way to gauge the work ahead is to make contact with other communities who are doing this work. Don't just look for good examples. You can often learn more from communities where things have not gone smoothly. Don't worry if the community is not exactly like yours as the lessons are likely to be just as appropriate.



Challenge 2:

Who should we talk to before making a decision?

If there is an enthusiastic and committed group of individuals who are prepared to establish a Steering Group the next step is to take initial soundings on the idea. The next Chapter goes in to more detail about exactly who should be involved (LINK CHAPTER 4, SECTION 4.1), but for now it is important to talk to:

- **Community organisations:** you should approach other community organisations about the idea. What do they think? Would they be prepared to get involved and if so on what terms? Be particularly careful to talk to groups who are involved in the regeneration of your community, especially ones working on a current project. At this stage it is probably best to talk to groups individually or you could call a small meeting or event to debate the idea on an informal basis.
- **Local employers and businesses:** big companies and entrepreneurs will understand about Community Strategic Planning. It is very similar to the business planning process they will know so well. This can be a key to enthusing them and getting their support. Your local private sector will be used to receiving sponsorship requests for worthy community projects. They are likely to be pleasantly surprised to see you taking a different, strategic approach to your future.

- **Local Government:** it is important to discuss the idea with all levels of your local government. The support of your Town and Parish Councils is desirable. The support of your District and County Councils are also important. In particular you should be asking about the statutory Community Planning in your area. You need to find out what stage it is at and how it is being organised. Will Community Strategic Planning be seen as adding value to this work? Will it be seen as compatible or in competition? Will the Local Authorities support your work and if so what resources might they be able to offer (remember that's not just cash!).



Remember to try and win the support of your local politicians and MP. They have been democratically elected by your community and are important in building your local credibility.

- **Other decision makers:** you should also open discussions with other key agencies operating in your community. This list can be quite daunting and at this stage you should confine discussions to those currently involved in your community. Maybe the local Housing Association is building some houses. Maybe English Heritage is running a Town Scheme to improve the historic part of your town.

If you have decided your community is ready for this work and your Steering Group has a good enough support base you can get ready to plan (LINK CHAPTER 4).

case study

In Bodmin the Community Regeneration Officer and the Town Clerk invited the Parish clerks of the surrounding 6 parishes to a meeting with the chair of the existing Bodmin Town Forum. A presentation on the MCTi was made the Clerks were very enthusiastic about the Initiative. The Clerks then made presentations back to their Parish Councils at which Councillors agreed that they should work together to submit an Expression of Interest.

Bodmin Town Forum agreed that the Expression of Interest could be submitted in their name pending the establishment of a wider group to represent all 7 communities. They also involved a very supportive District Council and canvassed support from the likes of the Chamber of Commerce, the Community College, the local police inspector and a range of local organisations.

Chapter Two

Guidance

What tools can we use?

- Appropriate tools are listed under each section of the Sourcebook. An excellent overview of participatory planning tools can be found at www.communityplanning.net.

What skills will you require?

Particular skills are listed under each section of the Sourcebook. Essential skills for Community Strategic Planning are:

- Administrative skills to organise events and your community;
- Facilitation skills to run meetings and events;
- Community development skills to involve people;
- Negotiating and mediation skills;
- Plan preparation skills;
- Project development skills;
- Research skills;
- Monitoring and evaluation skills;
- The ability to think strategically.

Where can we find the help and information we require?

- Further information on Community Strategic Planning can be found at www.alancaldwellassociates.co.uk
- Further information on lessons from regeneration initiatives can be found at www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings
- Case study experiences from the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative can be found at www.southwesttowns.net
- Further information on best practice in statutory community planning see 'County Beacons' at www.lga.gov.uk/cnn

Self Evaluation Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to help you to identify whether you have considered all the issues that help in deciding whether or not to start planning for your future. It summarises and addresses the challenges and key points identified in this chapter. It could also be considered as a 'checklist of things to do'.

You may wish to photocopy this checklist and use it with your community and agency partners. You can, of course, adapt it to suit your own circumstances. An electronic version of the form is available to download on www.southwesttowns.net

Chapter 2

About the plan

	Comments on significance	Reviewed
Are you ready?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Do you and the Steering Group have an understanding of what is involved?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have the time, commitment, skills and confidence to get involved?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you undertaken a quick skills audit of the Steering Group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Possible Benefits include:		
Involving your wider community in planning their future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving your understanding of the current situation and your ability to plan for the future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing the skills and capabilities of your community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identifying community leaders.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Building consensus around priority projects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking responsibility for the your future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Building partnerships to make things happen.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Securing additional resources for your community and priority projects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Possible Costs (both time and cash) include:		
Attending training courses and networking.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attending meetings and contributing to the plan making process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employing Community Agents, Consultants and other professionals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extensive consultation process involved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Administering the work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expenses (travel, room hire, catering, marketing etc).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sustaining your effort .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

continues on next page >

Chapter Two

	Comments on significance	Reviewed
Possible risks include:		
The enhanced profile (of individuals and the organisation) in the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The level of commitment required may not be fully appreciated at the outset.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your partners may not fully understand their role at the outset.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your partners may fail to deliver as their policies change.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It may pull your community in new and uncharted directions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Who should you talk to?		
Have you taken initial soundings from each of the stakeholder groups?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you taken a decision to proceed?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Chapter 3

About the Market & Coastal Towns Initiative for the South West

This chapter is your introduction to the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative for the South West (MCTi). It explains what it is, why it was developed, who is involved, how it works, what lessons have been learned to date and what the future holds for the MCTi. It is for those taking part in MCTi and those developing and managing regeneration programmes for local communities.

Chapter Three

Inspirations

Model Involvement – Bodmin and Surrounding Area Forum

'Thinking differently' was the theme that really hit home with the community leaders from Bodmin in Cornwall attending their first MCTi conference. It was clear to them that this work was not about short-term wish lists, and they returned home determined to create a visionary plan for the future of their community.

The Forum took this message out into their community, holding open events, talking to local groups and establishing working groups to progress ideas. Almost a year on from their first major community event they appointed their own consultant to help them pull together their Community Strategic Plan.

Their consultant held one to one meetings with key figures in the community to discuss their ideas and win support for the work. Local employers, Local Authority staff, senior officials from the Primary Care Trust, councillors, landowners, tourist providers and the Director of Science from the local college were a few of the individuals approached.

Special events were held to explore ideas. Local employers attended a business lunch where they contributed their thoughts and ideas to the vision for their community. Local tourist providers met to develop the tourism theme and discuss the establishment of a local tourism association. Local Authority staff took part in

workshops to discuss how the emerging plan dovetailed with the statutory community strategy, the Local Development Framework and the work of the Local Strategic Partnership. Major community workshops brought everyone together to develop the draft of their plan.

Research underpinned the work. A local employer examined the possibility of creating a 'cluster' of local businesses to embrace sustainability issues. A retired volunteer with extensive business experience researched the Plymouth Growth Strategy to explore the opportunities and threats of this approach. A local architect looked into the possibilities of using publicly owned sites to create affordable units for living and working while promoting sustainable construction techniques.

The vision for the area is the theme for a 'Super Learning Day' at the local college involving 800 students working alongside those inspired by the MCTi process. It is hoped that residents of the main housing estates will visit a groundbreaking project in Falmouth to learn how local people have improved health and service delivery on a local estate.

If the scale and breadth of involvement is anything to go by, the work in the Bodmin area could well be a national example of community led enterprise in years to come.

Further information: peter@basamcti.fsnet.co.uk

About the Market & Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTi) for the South West

An introduction

The MCTi trusts local communities. It offers them financial help and professional assistance to:

- involve all sections of their community;
- prepare a well thought through, strategic plan for the future of their town and surrounding area;
- organise their community to help make your plan happen.

Having organised themselves and prepared their plan, the agency partners will come together to help make the projects and actions in their plan happen.

Launched in July 2000 this groundbreaking, community based regeneration initiative is being led by the South West of England Regional Development Agency in a regional partnership involving the Countryside Agency, English Heritage, Regional Assembly, Lottery Funds South West, Housing Corporation, South West Network of Rural Community Councils and the Government Office for the South West.

In the first year 9 very different Market and Coastal Towns across the region joined a pilot phase of the initiative. By the end of 2003, 50 towns and their surrounding rural communities across the South West were taking part.

Initially, each was given between £25,000 and £100,000 to develop the skills and experience of their local community to lead the long-term regeneration of their area.

Why was it developed?

Early in 2000 the Government encouraged public agencies to develop regeneration initiatives to tackle the issues being faced by Market Towns and the surrounding rural communities.

There are 200 market towns across the South West, one of the most diverse regions in England.

Their well-being is crucial to the health and vitality of the region. In acknowledging the wide range of issues facing these communities, and the changing role of market towns, the partnership began the development of the MCTi.

Everyone was clear that they wanted an initiative to overcome the failures of past regeneration initiatives (Link Chapter 2) that would:

- **be relevant to their changing role:**

Developments in information technology, changing employment patterns and increased personal mobility now question the very role of market towns as service providers for a rural area. Coastal towns are burdened with ageing infrastructure, a declining tourism market and often remote locations. Continuing difficulties in the fishing industry have also had a major impact on these communities. The role of these places in the 21st century is therefore a key question in building sustainable communities. This is highlighted in the Regional Planning Guidance for the South West.



- **address traditional problems:** There are a wide range of issues facing these communities in the South West. Examples are: a loss of services; decline in agriculture and fishing; lack of affordable housing; private sector housing growth; poor range of employment opportunities; exodus of young people; crime; poor public transport.

case study

Bridport is one of the most talked about examples of community led regeneration to emerge from the MCTi. One of the original 9 pilots, in three short years it has developed into the Bridport Community Initiative (BCI), a Company limited by guarantee with charitable status. It has eight working groups progressing projects included in their Community Strategic Plan and is managed by a Management Committee of Directors.

The working groups are strong, well attended and engaging at the highest of levels. They are currently exploring ways to build an asset base to earn income. Projects range from establishing a youth café to developing innovative ways to provide housing such as 'train and build'. They are currently discussing with their District Council about how they can help deliver statutory Community Planning.

Chapter Three

- **address initiative fatigue:** Community regeneration is not a new idea. Communities face a daunting list of different agencies, initiatives and funding programmes inviting their views and requesting their involvement. The MCTi must seek to co-ordinate the work of agencies in response to the priorities of local communities.
- **be based on 'Best Practice':** Everyone has their own definition of a 'Community Plan'. To some it may be a village appraisal, to others a project by project approach to regeneration. Drawing on a depth of experience from within the region and nationally and internationally, we should now have the confidence to define best practice in this field and put it into practice throughout the region. This will draw upon the experience of:
 - rural and urban areas throughout the South West region;
 - the work of Action for Market Towns;
 - the Community Futures Programme that has been running for over 10 years in Canada;
 - the Community Futures Scotland Programme;
 - the Community Futures England Programme which is currently being developed;
 - the work of the Development Trust Association for England and Wales;
 - The Civic Trust Regeneration Unit and Rural Development Commission's Rural Partnership Programme 1985-95;
 - the Market Town for the 21st Century programme being developed by the Countryside Agency and currently being piloted in the Yorkshire and Humberside Region in partnership with their Regional Development Agency.
- **plug the gaps and add value:** Throughout the region there is a great deal of ongoing work in this area. The new initiative must add value to existing efforts and to the funding programmes available within the region. There are numerous funding programmes to support project outcomes. The new initiative should target resources from the South West Regional Development Agency and others to build the capacity of local communities and their agency partners. In emphasising priority projects the new initiative will be a 'gateway' to funding programmes.
- **broker resources and co-ordinate public agencies:** The new initiative should co-ordinate agency activity and help broker resources for the market and coastal town communities. There is enormous scope for this new initiative to deliver the strategic priorities of agencies at a regional and local level, practising 'joined up government' in response to manageable community priorities.
- **resource communities:** Increasingly local people are asked to play a central role in preparing and implementing plans for their future. Agencies would not consider approaching a task without the resources or skills to deliver this effectively. Communities are no different and in addition to 'best practice' literature, the new initiative should provide them with access to skilled professionals and funding to help them prepare and implement their plans. In enhancing the skills of the local community, it should be recognised that this can also benefit agency partners.
- **have realistic time scales:** It is clear from past experience that regeneration is not a short term process. The new programme should provide resources to communities for at least a 5 year period. The new programme should also seek to target work that is sustainable in the long term.

About the Market & Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTi) for the South West

- **encourage high quality action - research:**

All aspects of the new initiative should be based on the highest quality of research adding to the region's best practice experience and ensuring quality results. The new initiative itself should be the subject of rigorous monitoring and evaluation with the results shared in the South West and nationally.

- **tackle not tinker:** The level of resources allocated to, and levered by the new programme should aim to seriously address the issues facing these communities. The new programme must create a framework where the priorities of both communities and agencies are understood and respected by each partner.

The full report on the development of the MCTi is available at www.southwesttowns.net

How it works?

To take part in the MCTi a community is invited to submit an Expression of Interest. This details the need and potential of their community to take part in the regeneration process. Following a detailed assessment and face to face meetings each community is awarded funds to help them build their skills and abilities to lead the regeneration of their area.

The MCTi is not a challenge process and every community receives some level of resources. These range from access to professional advice and good practice to substantial 'seed corn funding'.

The management and delivery of the MCTi is led by the South West of England Regional Development Agency working with their regional partners.

MCTi What it is and what it is not

The introduction to the MCTi for local communities is published below in full to illustrate the power and potential of this way of working.

MCTi: An Introduction for Communities – What it is and what it is not!

The MCTi requires everyone involved to think differently. It is not a grant programme to fund projects. It is a community led initiative which helps communities organise themselves to prepare and implement a plan for the future of their town and surrounding area. The plan should cover all parts of community life and should look 20 to 30 years ahead, setting out a vision of what your town should be like. To help you the MCTi offers financial help and professional assistance to:

- Involve all sections of your community;
- Prepare a well thought through, strategic plan for the future of your town and surrounding area;
- Organise your community to help make your plan happen.

This is your end of the bargain. Having organised yourselves and prepared your plan, your agency partners will come together to help you make the projects and actions in your plan happen.

Communities need to think differently. You need to stop thinking about projects and pull together a long-term plan for your future. You need to organise yourself into a town partnership that brings together your different interest groups and ideas. You need to build relationships with your partners by involving them in your work. This is not about ticking the right boxes in an application form! It is about meaningful, long term, partnership working.

In summary:

- The MCTi trusts local communities. It is about agencies working to a community led agenda.
- The MCTi involves a partnership of agencies. It is not just the South West of England RDA.
- The MCTi is about a plan that covers all aspects of your community life: social; economic; environmental and cultural.
- The MCTi is simple not complicated. It helps communities to involve local people, plan for the future, organise themselves, implement their plan and learn while you are doing it.
- The MCTi is a new way of working that requires you to think differently. There is now a great deal of guidance and experience out there. Read the material, ask other communities, use the professional help available. Don't be tempted to make it up!

case study

The Wiveliscombe Area Market Town Initiative published their Community Strategic Plan in September 2003. The Plan is an excellent example of how a community led initiative such as MCTi can work hand in hand with the statutory Community Planning process.

The local community set out to ensure they worked closely with their Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). They wanted to ensure there was one process for their place and that they had maximum support from local agencies. They wanted to combine resources and use the existing town forum to progress their Plan.

Challenges have included understanding and co-ordinating the range of regeneration initiatives on offer. They have also found differing priorities among agencies and the fact that their LSP is still evolving particularly time-consuming.

Chapter Three

Exactly what is this new way of working?

The MCTi

- **Is** about the active and meaningful involvement of your community.
- **Is not** led by agency staff or priorities.
- **Is** about building community skills, experience and partnership working.
- **Is not** a grant programme for projects.
- **Is** linked directly to statutory Community Planning.
- **Is not** a challenge process.
- **Is** a long-term vision.
- **Is not** a short-term fix.
- **Is** a strategic approach to your community's future.
- **Is not** a wish lists or well organised wish lists.
- **Is** about brokering funding, practical help and advice.
- **Is not** specific amounts of money for prescribed projects or themes.
- **Is** about rooting the work and skills in your community.
- **Is not** about appointing Project Officers to do it all for you.

How does the MCTi help you to work in this new way?

You should look at MCTi funds as coming in two different 'bags' of money and assistance. The first is seed corn money and assistance. The money that will help your community develop, grow stronger and acquire the skills and experience you will need to achieve your vision. The second is investment money and assistance. This will help you make your carefully thought through plan happen.

What is in the first 'bag' – Seed corn money and assistance?

You can use the first bag to:

- Involve your community (especially those hard to reach groups);
- Prepare your long-term plan;
- Train local people and organisations;
- Get a simple, easy to do project done to build confidence and support;
- Get important projects to a funding ready stage;
- Employ and train local people;
- Learn from and visit other communities and useful organisations

What is in the second 'bag' – Investment money and assistance?

You can only get access to this second bag of money, support and assistance when you have:

- Involved your community;
- Prepared your long term plan;
- Built the local partnership that will help your community make things happen.

You can then:

- Identify the partners you will need to broker the assistance, support and funds you will need to implement your plan;
- Bring the key partners together to discuss your plan, identify other partners you might need and how you can work together.

This will help your community to:

- Make the projects and actions in your plan happen;
- Appoint people to help your local partnership make things happen on the ground.

So what are the MCTi brokering tables we hear about?

The local brokering table is where you will invite supportive agencies and organisations to help you make your plan happen. It will help you open the second investment bag of money, support and assistance to make your plans happen.

Brokering requires everyone to think differently. As you reach the stage of completing your plan your local partnership should call upon training and briefing session to get the brokering process started and inform everyone involved. This will help ensure that the local brokering table provides 'one door to many doors' identifying the support, assistance partners and funding sources you will need to make your plan happen.

The brokering process:

- **Is** about partnership working, building a common understanding of everyone's requirements and unlocking funds.
- **Is not** a single pot of money.
- **Is** about opening up a dialogue with your partners.
- **Is not** about an exchange of cheques.
- **Is** about simplifying the application process.
- **Is not** about a single application form.

About the Market & Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTi) for the South West

- **Is** about establishing an ongoing working relationship.
- **Is not** a single meeting.
- **Is** about involving key organisations.
- **Is not** about every funder being present around the table.
- **Is** about money, advice, support and good practice.
- **Is not** just about money.

In summary

The MCTi is about:

- Trusting you as a community.
- Working in a different way...not just thinking about projects but the future of your community
- Trying different things, looking forward and being bold!

The Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTi) for the South West

An Introduction for Communities 10 Tips to get you started

1. Be prepared to think differently!

MCTi is about long-term plan, partnership building and involving your community. It is not a grant programme for projects.

2. Don't reinvent the MCTi

There is now a great deal of written guidance and practical experience out there - communities, agency staff and consultants. Use it, ask questions and don't be tempted to make it up!

3. Concentrate on involving your community

The long-term process will not be successful if you only involve the usual suspects. Use your 'seed corn' money and assistance to reach all parts of your community

4. Don't waste money on projects at the early stage

The 'seed corn' money and assistance is the key to unlocking the major funds your plan and partnership will need to be successful. If you spend it all on short-term projects you will only achieve a fraction of what is possible

5. Concentrate on making your plan and building your local organisation

The stronger your local partnership, and the more involved your local community are in making the plan, the more successful you will be.

6. Be bold about your vision

Concentrate on your vision. Don't be tempted to make up a simple, catchy slogan. Get help to structure sessions to think through what kind of place you want your community to be twenty years from now. Be bold...!

7. Build good partnership relationships

This is not a grant application programme. It relies on building good relationships with all the people you need to help your organisation and make your plan happen.

8. Get good quality advice

Don't hesitate to bring in good quality advice. If the skills and experience exist in your community use it...but be honest if you don't think they are there, and buy them in! Poor advice (no matter how good the motives) will only shortchange you in the long run.

9. Don't forget about training, networking and learning

The one that's often forgotten in the rush to make projects happen. This could be the most valuable part of building the skills of your community and partnership. Try to involve staff from your agency partners in the same training sessions. Learning together is best!

10. Keep an eye on www.southwesttowns.net

Still in its early stages of development, this is a central source of information and advice for the MCTi

Alan Caldwell, lead consultant to MCTi
Tiverton Conference Sept 2002

Chapter Three

Lessons from the early years

Bristol University and Roger Tym & Partners carried out two separate evaluations on the MCTi and reported in 2002. These are available at www.southwesttowns.net. The School for Policy Studies at the University had been testing their 'Audit of Community Participation' with the original 9 pilot towns. Roger Tym & Partners, a firm of planning and development economists, were commissioned to undertake a complete evaluation of the initiative.

Their observations fell into three categories:

People:

- Community Development is a fundamental part of this initiative. This requires agency staff at a regional and local level to understand, and where appropriate, to gain the necessary skills.

Partnership:

- Communities see the initiative as a South West of England Regional Development Agency initiative. While this reflects the commitment of the Agency as lead partner there is a need to strengthen the partnership nature of the MCTi. Communities often focused on how much was available from the Agency for economic projects.

- The need to clarify exactly what resources are available to communities through the regional partnership to implement their plans. This is about access to information (exactly what is available) and improved co-ordination between different agencies and funding programmes.
- The need to clarify the links between MCTi, the plans being prepared by communities and the Statutory Community Planning process. The growing number of Local Authorities embracing MCTi to help in the delivery of Statutory Community Planning was identified as a positive sign.
- The need to establish and support market town networks across the region. Currently networks of towns exist in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Devon and are being developed in Cornwall and Somerset.

Process:

- The need to improve the actual operation of the MCTi. Both communities and their agency partners wanted better guidance on the steps and workings of the MCTi. This ranged from advice on constitutions for Steering Groups to ensuring that public money could be easily paid to communities.
- The need to acknowledge the time it can take a community to get ready for this work. Community development takes time!
- The need to clarify the process and purpose of the MCTi within Local Authorities. For example, many Local Authorities are encouraging towns to submit an Expression of Interest in an attempt to secure project funding rather than encouraging a long term regeneration process.
- The need to encourage Local Authorities to support communities rather than leading or controlling the work.



About the Market & Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTi) for the South West

- Both evaluations reinforced the principles of the MCTi and the framework of Community Strategic Planning as the basis of the initiative. The biggest issue was the need for communities and agencies to 'THINK DIFFERENTLY'

Achievements to date

The MCTi is a major regeneration initiative. At the beginning of 2004 achievements include:

- 8 regional partners participating;
- 50 towns taking part with 15 on the 'waiting list';
- 12 plans published;
- £2.4 million invested in building the skills and experience of participating communities;
- £26 million invested in projects;
- 1 sub regional network established and 5 being considered;
- A Learning Network established including:
 - A directory of consultants;
 - Briefing and Training Days;
 - Market Own Accredited Learning Programme;
 - Web site;
 - Re:sourcebook publication;
 - Commitment to establish a new partnership organisation for the long –term delivery of MCTi.

The future.

The evaluations have reinforced the role of the MCTi in securing the long-term health and vitality of the South West. A separate partnership organisation with a dedicated staff team and budget, will be established to deliver the MCTi in 2004.

Representatives from participating communities, Market Town networks, local government and the private sector will join the existing regional partners on a new board of management.

The new partnership organisation will ensure there is:

- a strong regional partnership;
- continuity and consistency across the region;
- a specialist team with a single focus to:
 - support the 50 existing towns and those joining the MCTi;
 - develop the learning network;
 - support and develop sub-regional networks;
 - monitor and evaluate MCTi and share the learning.

Updates on progress can be found at www.southwesttowns.net

Chapter Three

Chapter 4

Getting ready to plan

This chapter is for the community leaders and their partners who want to establish a Steering Group to lead the regeneration process locally. It explains how to form a Steering Group and involve your wider community and partners in your work. It will challenge and guide you to build strong foundations for the regeneration of your community and includes:

- Section 4.1: Establishing a Steering Group
- Section 4.2: Involving the wider community and your partners

Chapter Four

Inspirations

Regeneration through Art

Art is more than something in the eye of the beholder – it is an important regeneration tool that can restore civic pride, boost tourism and crucially help to involve hard to reach groups in the regeneration of their community. The main lessons from cultural projects in the UK and internationally is clear. Investment in art and culture is fundamentally about enjoyment but art and sport become far more beneficial if they are linked to the vision and planning of a community's future.

In Chemainus on Vancouver Island in Canada, their sawmill shut down in 1983, but rather than submit to a slow death, town officials commissioned a series of large outdoor murals of local history. This gave the community a certain pride and has been instrumental in a growing tourism sector in the local economy.

Closer to home, Haverhill Town Council in the South East of England took the decision to use entertainment as part of a strategy of improving the quality of life for its residents. Starting with free open air family entertainment, the first event had a band playing from a lorry trailer on the Market Square. There were residents from all parts of the town of all ages and abilities, socialising together. Now that one evening has expanded into a full programme of activities throughout the year. A successful lottery bid contributed to the upgrade of a Victorian public hall into a fully resourced cinema theatre.

With the theatre facility available the Local Councils now support a two week arts festival incorporating live performances, drama, music, readings and dance. The festival now incorporates a mixture of free events, workshops and staged productions. It attracts both local residents and visitors to the area.

In addition to the festival, events take place throughout the year involving all sorts of groups and people in the community. Recently a digital arts project has seen pensioners and eight year olds working on digital Christmas cards, and local bands produce a music video and CD cover. A video produced by local groups was recently included in a national competition for young filmmakers.

From large scale public art projects like the 'Angel of the North' to the local Christmas card project, it is clear that the arts are a key to regeneration.

Further information:

www.artscouncil.org.uk

www.sac.org.uk

www.actionfactory.org.uk

www.soundsense.org.uk

www.lhi.org.uk

www.publicartonline.org.uk

www.art-connections.org.uk

Section 4.1

Establishing a Steering Group

This section will explain the importance of forming a Steering Group and offer guidance on how to ensure it is well organised and has the right people on board. It will help you to think through the issues and provide advice, guidance and suggestions on how to proceed. The key challenges covered in this section include:

- **Challenge 1:** Agreeing what the Steering Group should do?
- **Challenge 2:** Who should be involved and how do we attract the right people?
- **Challenge 3:** Defining roles and responsibilities.
- **Challenge 4:** Establishing an appropriate structure.
- **Challenge 5:** Building your skills and knowledge.
- **Self Evaluation checklist**

Chapter Four

The Principles

Why is it important?

Your Steering Group gives your work focus and direction. It will be the driving force behind the regeneration of your community. It will make your community a credible partner in the regeneration of your place.

It will bring together the dynamic and committed individuals who care about the future of their community. It will be rooted in the community and help to build the partnerships you will need to make things happen. Those involved will build their skills, knowledge and experience of the regeneration process as the work progresses. It is an opportunity for personal development while providing the leadership required by a successful regeneration process.

Your Steering Group will provide the forum that will bring everyone together to agree a Plan for the future and make it happen. It will develop and evolve as the work progresses. Many Steering Groups have become successful Town Development Trusts initiating and managing projects that are making a real difference to the future of their communities.

The Practice

A Steering Group will normally have responsibility for a range of tasks that include:

- **Co-ordination and management of the work at a local level:** your Steering Group should have their finger on the pulse of the work at all times and aim to become an important player in the regeneration process at a local level.
- **Partnership building and community involvement:** making the connections and forming the relationships with the organisations and individuals who will help you make things happen. A central function of the Steering Group is to ensure that every effort is made to involve all sections of your community as the work progresses.
- **Management of volunteers, Community Agents, Project Staff and Consultants:** directing those involved in actually delivering the work for the Steering Group.
- **Establishment and management of working groups:** many Steering Groups find it useful to set up working groups based on important themes, issues and priority projects. This is a powerful way of organising your regeneration effort and enabling individuals to get involved in the work that really interests them.
- **Preparation of the Plan:** ensuring the Plan becomes the heart of your community's regeneration efforts.
- **Establishment of the brokering table** (LINK CHAPTER 7): setting up and leading your local brokering table to secure help, advice and funding for the delivery of your Plan.
- **Management and delivery of projects and actions:** in the short term the Steering Group may lead on simple projects to build confidence or commission feasibility studies.
- **Developing a structure to sustain the work in the longer term:** considering the different options (e.g. Development Trust, Co-operative etc).
- **Delivering contracts:** your Steering Group can be the client for the delivery of contracts from funding organisations. For example, the Steering Group may oversee the delivery of the initial funding for the MCTi to help build local skills and experience while preparing the Plan. You might also issue contracts for the employment of your regeneration practitioner, community agents or other professionals (LINK CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.2).
- **Marketing, communication and promotion:** ensuring everyone involved can be heard and that you can get messages out quickly and efficiently. The Steering Group will lead on the promotion and marketing of your work. Remember you will be seen as the face of the work in your community.

Section 4.1

Establishing a Steering Group

No one will expect you to take on all of this immediately. You will assume these responsibilities as the Group develops. Partners such as your Town Council or Local Authority may manage contracts and act as accountable bodies on your behalf until you have a constitution in place and feel able to take on this role.

It is important to set out this range of responsibilities so individuals can judge whether or not to get involved in the Steering Group.

The Big Issue

Local control of your local initiative. Partnership working is probably the most difficult part of preparing and implementing a plan for the future of your community.

Everything about this work encourages your local community to take control of its future. It encourages grass roots involvement in planning and regeneration. This effort is given direction through the preparation of your Plan for the future. It encourages you to develop an organisation that will make things happen, perhaps even owning and controlling land, buildings and businesses. This will inevitably ruffle feathers and stir things up. Many agencies may see this as their territory. New people will be inspired and the status quo may be threatened.

Every successful example of community led regeneration has built strong partnerships and alliances with those working in their communities. They spend significant, time, energy and resources on making their partnerships work. In building their partnerships they stay true to the principles of community based regeneration, ensuring the people who live and work in their community always control their organisation.

Ensuring your Steering Group is founded on this same principle from the outset will help you to succeed.

The Wicked Issues

Dominated by councillors. It is essential that your Steering Group work closely with the elected councillors and all levels of local government. A productive, supportive and co-operative relationship can be a key to success. Equally, elected members and paid officers must respect the community based nature of this work and ensure they support as opposed to dominate proceedings. Town and Parish Councils can feel very threatened by the arrival on the scene of a Steering Group. Early discussions and inclusion can go a long way to allaying their fears and bringing them on board.

The wrong representative. You may have come to the conclusion that a particular agency or organisation should be invited to join your Steering Group. This may be because they are particularly influential, have certain skills or simply command a great deal of respect in your community. Just remember that the representative they nominate may not reflect these qualities or share your enthusiasm for the task ahead. Where possible identify and brief an individual before approaching their organisation or agency. If they do not become the representative they may be able to ensure a good candidate is put forward.

The Steering Group is too large. Having more than around 12 members of your decision-making committee or board is likely to become unwieldy and can lead to counter productive meetings.

Chapter Four

A poor Chair. The Chair of the board or committee must be skilled and competent. These qualities can be gained through training and/or from past experience. A good Chair can make the difference between productive or infuriating meetings.

Short-term thinkers. People on the board or committee should keep their mind on the long-term aims and objectives and concentrate on strategic issues.

Self interest. The role of a board or committee member is to further the interests of the Steering Group as a whole. They should be working towards the agreed vision and should not pursue a personal agenda or the interests of any organisation or project they are involved with. Involving everyone in thinking through the 'Terms of Reference' should help you to avoid this situation. They also give you a touchstone to remind people of this fact.

Loose cannons. The role of people carrying out work on the ground is to implement the wishes of the board or committee, not pursue their own agenda. This is easier to manage with those who are contracted to carry out certain work (e.g. Community Agents, regeneration practitioners etc) but can be more difficult with Working Groups. It's always a good idea to have a member of your board or committee on each Working Group and to ensure there are regular report backs from each Working Group.

'Corridor decision-making' Avoid making decisions in small Groups away from actual meetings. Important decisions should be made collectively at actual meetings.

Only local people need training.

From experience it is clear that paid officers, project staff and even professionals can also benefit from taking part in training events. It is particularly beneficial if any training, briefing or 'away days' are undertaken together as a team.

Too formal. Most boards and committees proceed by consensus.

Only truly controversial decisions should require a vote. Try not to be too rigid and formal in conducting business.



Section 4.1

Establishing a Steering Group

Challenge 1:

Agreeing what the Steering Group should do

In chapter 3 you will have considered your personal involvement and have begun to identify others to involve in your work. The likelihood is that you will now have a small group of individuals who are willing to establish a Steering Group. They are likely to include interested people from the community, representatives from partner agencies and paid officers.

The early stages will be exciting, interesting and daunting. Everyone will be trying to find their feet, new relationships will be formed and old hands at committees may dominate proceedings. People will be unsure of their ground and the work ahead. It is therefore very important in these early stages to focus on a number of practical challenges:

- Establishing a clear focus for your work;
- Identifying who should be involved;
- Ensuring you get the right people involved;
- Defining roles and responsibilities;
- Developing a workable structure;
- Building your skills and experience as a Group.

Remember it is likely to take time for these challenges to be met. It is not unusual for this to take several months. You may find it helpful to work with an experienced regeneration practitioner who can help you establish your Steering Group. It is essential that from the

outset those involved agree on the focus and purpose of your work.

Agreeing the focus of your work

This will not be set in stone at this stage. Give yourselves time to meet and discuss the challenges ahead. This Sourcebook will help. Consider the conversations and thoughts each of you will have had when deciding whether or not this is the right course of action for your community (LINK CHAPTER 2). You may find it helpful to review the list of responsibilities given earlier in the chapter under **The Practice**. It is likely that any funding you receive as a Group will come with conditions. Find out what these conditions are likely to be. Remember the focus of your work is around the preparation of a Plan to help you organise yourselves and make things happen.

It is useful to draft a simple statement at this stage that summarises the thoughts of the Group. This is likely to be the beginnings of the terms of reference for your Group (LINK TO CHALLENGE 4) and will help everyone pull in the same direction. This simple statement is likely to include:

- overall mission and purpose of the Steering Group;
- the aims and objectives of the Steering Group;
- the area the work of the Steering Group will cover;
- background information on the MCTi

This will help you to attract the right people by clearly setting out a prospectus for the Group. People and partners can see what they are getting involved in and begin to judge whether or not it is right for them.

case study

In Bodmin the Steering Group evolved from a series of public consultation events and meetings. At the first big meeting attended by 60 people we used flip charts to seek views on such topics as the '2020 Vision', 'good and bad things about our current situation', and 'what are the important themes for the future of our area?' Two follow up meetings were held the next month for those who wanted to be involved in working groups and a Steering Group.

The information on the flip charts was then used to help draft a Vision statement and the aims and objectives of the Steering Group.

Chapter Four

case study

In the Tamar Valley, the interim Steering Group employed consultants to help them develop their Group. They undertook a brainstorming session to identify "All those people or organisations that are affected by, or can affect the organisation". When the main stakeholders had been identified the interim Steering Group considered the other skills and experience they might require. From this work a clear description of the desired roles and responsibilities was developed along with specifications of the skills and experience the Steering group required. Adverts were then placed in a local newspaper inviting applications. A rigorous sifting and interview process led to the establishment of the Steering Group.

Challenge 2: Who should be involved and how do we attract the right people?

Your Steering Group is likely to involve:

- **the empowered:** local people.
- **the elected:** local councillors.
- **the employed:** paid officers and staff from partner agencies and organisations.

Remember this is all about regeneration led by your local community. Your Steering Group must reflect this. Your Steering Group should also reflect not only your town but also the surrounding rural communities. It is important to involve your partners but this must not be at the expense of local involvement.

You can involve people in different ways. For example, officers and organisations can have an advisory role as opposed to a formal place on the Steering Group. Others may be happy just to be consulted and kept informed. Some may only want to be involved when you are working on something that is directly relevant to them.

It is often easier at this stage to identify partners and organisations than it is to identify individuals in your community. This raises two crucial issues to bear in mind:

- Asking for representatives from agencies and organisations does not guarantee you will

actually get someone committed to the work ahead;

- It is likely that you will have to rely on community leaders who have already come forward to 'hold the door open' for other local people to become involved as work progresses.

Always keep in mind that this is not a 'closed shop'. At this early stage you simply want to get the Steering Group up and running. In Minehead, the people who came together to put their community forward to take part in MCTi insisted on being known as 'NOT THE STEERING GROUP' until community events had taken place, a constitution agreed and formal elections held.

You may find it helpful to use the following tools to identify and encourage the right people and partners:

Undertake an audit of skills and experience.

You may find it helpful to map the skills, knowledge and experience you feel the Steering Group will need to undertake the tasks ahead. Then repeat the exercise mapping the actual skills, knowledge and experience available to the Group. Examples often include: chairing meetings, communication skills, mediation, objectivity, team player, fundraising, business planning etc.

This will identify the gaps you have to fill. You may find, for example that you are short of administrative, fundraising and legal skills. This will help you 'target' people in your community or approach partners to see if they can help fill these gaps.

This exercise will also help you to judge what skills you might need to buy in through community agents, professionals and regeneration practitioners. An example of such an audit is available ([LINK CHAPTER 6, SECTION 6.2](#)).

Section 4.1

Establishing a Steering Group

Identify stakeholders.

Make a list of the stakeholders who will be involved in the regeneration of your community. You should consider:

- funders and potential funders;
- all levels of local government;
- service providers;
- community and voluntary Groups;
- expert Groups and advisory organisations;
- groups or organisations likely to be affected by the results of your work.

You can then use a tool called the **Power – Interest Matrix**. **Power** relates to how much influence an organisation can bring to the Steering Group to help it achieve its aims and objectives. Influence could be effected through funding, statutory registration or other forms of more informal lobbying or persuasion. **Interest** relates to how much of a stake or concern an organisation or Group may have in the end result of your work.

		INTEREST	
		LOW	HIGH
POWER	LOW	A. Non Partners	B. Those to keep informed
	HIGH	C. Consultees	D. Key decision makers

You should take into account other factors in agreeing who to involve in the Steering Group. Some organisations may have the skills, knowledge and experience that will help you (remember the skills audit above?). Others may feel they should be involved because of who they are.

It is important to realise that not everyone who is interested needs to be a key player in the Steering Group. Equally those who are powerful

or influential do not need to be actively involved in the Steering Group. However, this tool will help you to identify the organisations around and their importance to your work. Talk to them. Find out how they would like to be involved in the regeneration of your community. Some may welcome the opportunity to become an active member of the Steering Group. Others may be happy to be kept informed. Some may offer practical assistance or want to focus on funding practical projects.

This exercise is not just helpful in establishing a successful Steering Group. It will help you to build relationships and to prepare and implement your plan.

Hold a community event (or events).

In Bodmin in Cornwall those who had established the initial Steering Group held a community event to introduce the MCTi to the wider community. They invited key players from the local community (town and surrounding parishes) to attend a community event. They also invited representatives from likely partners. Held in a local golf club they provided dinner for sixty or so people and then structured an evening to include:

- a welcome and introduction from a prominent local politician;
- an introduction to the MCTi to inform people;
- two examples from other communities in the South West to inspire people;
- a participatory session asking those attending to identify key issues facing their community.

As people left they were asked to put their name to particular issues if they were interested in being involved in a working Group. They also asked people to sign-up if they were interested in joining the Steering Group. Nineteen people came forward.

Chapter Four

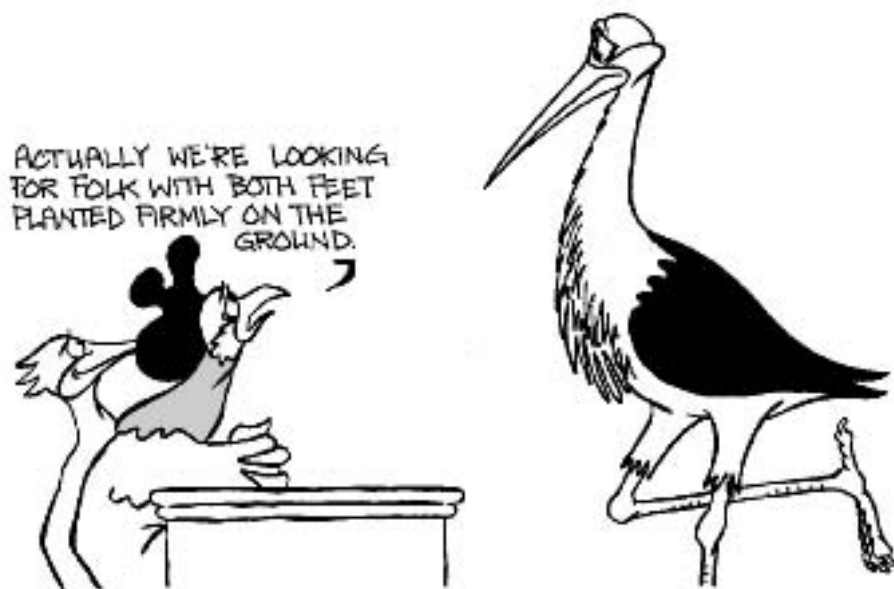
Advertising and interviews.

The Tamar Community Futures project took a more formal approach by establishing an interim Steering Group and then advertising for people to come forward from their community. They advertised in the local press, prepared an information pack and held interviews.

Target Groups and individuals.

Having undertaken a skills audit and identified the stakeholders you may decide to identify individuals and organisations in your community to visit and encourage their involvement. Such a one to one approach can often be very productive.

Reaching the point where you have a good mix of skills, experience and knowledge will take time. Building your credibility with the community and your partners will not come easily. Remember to keep your eye on the long-term aims of your work, one of which is to develop a local organisation that can drive and sustain the regeneration at a local level.



Section 4.1

Establishing a Steering Group

Challenge 3: Defining roles and responsibilities

When the 'NOT THE STEERING GROUP' in Minehead began to gain credibility and became 'THE STEERING GROUP' they turned their attention to their roles and responsibilities. This is a good discipline. While it may be some time before your Steering Group develops into whatever long-term structure you might choose (for example a Development Trust), this will help you develop the discipline and structure your organisation will need. It will also help your Steering Group to function more effectively.

Your Steering Group should consider three types of roles and responsibilities:

- **Decision-making:** this will be the central part of the Group that takes the hard decisions and agrees the direction for the work. The Steering Group will need to appoint a committee or board to assume this role and take on this responsibility. The tasks will include those listed at the start of this section under THE PRACTICE.
- **Management:** these are the people who are actually carrying out work on the ground. This will include volunteers (probably organised into working Groups), Community Agents, hired professionals and your regeneration practitioner. A partner may also have allocated some of their staff time to assisting you. In Gloucestershire, for example, the Countryside Agency appointed 'Healthcheck workers' to assist the communities participating in the MCTi. At later stages you may well appoint Project Staff.
- **Advisory:** In the Tamar Community Futures Project an advisory panel of officers worked alongside their decision-making committee. This included officers from the District Council, the South West RDA, the Countryside Agency, the West Devon Regeneration Company and the Tamar Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



These people are the lungs and legs of the Steering Group. They are the ones who concentrate on the operational tasks, taking their lead and guidance from the board or committee. They implement decisions. As your work progresses tasks often include:

- arranging meetings, booking halls, promoting the events, setting out the rooms and generally ensuring events are well organised;
- undertaking surveys, research work and feasibility studies;
- operating financial records and administrative systems;
- reporting on progress to board or committee meetings;
- progressing practical projects;
- operating the monitoring and evaluation system (LINK CHAPTER 6, SECTION 6.2).

case study

In the Tamar Valley the interim Steering Group worked with their consultants to produce detailed terms of reference for the Group. These outlined the overall purpose of the organisation, the general and specific responsibilities of its members, the resources available and the proposed structure to support the process.

In Langport it took until the second 'wave' of representatives for roles and responsibilities to be seriously considered. Initially, people became involved for a variety of personal and community reasons. There was an element of uncertainty about the job to be done. More formal training and consideration of roles and responsibilities encouraged people to replace those who stood down.

Chapter Four

case study

In Bridport, even although those involved had a great deal of experience in community regeneration through the Single Regeneration Budget, it was decided that they should establish an unincorporated group. There was some discussion as to whether or not they should establish a Development Trust immediately, but it was decided to wait to see how the work developed.

In Bodmin they decided to use an existing structure, the Bodmin Town Forum. This comprised County, District and Town Councillors working together with representatives from the community. This format worked well and they adapted it to include the Chamber of Commerce and representatives from each of the 7 Parishes. They describe themselves as an unincorporated community organisation giving consideration to Development Trust status.

Challenge 4: Establishing an appropriate structure

When you have considered your roles and responsibilities you will need to consider what structure is appropriate for the Steering Group. In CHAPTER 6, SECTION 6.1 we explore some of the alternative legal structures for the longer term. For now, while you are preparing your plan and developing your organisation, it is wise to take a simple approach to organising your Steering Group. This will involve preparing 'Terms of Reference' for your Group.

'Terms of Reference' defines what issues can be covered at meetings and whether the purpose is informative, consultative, decision-making or a combination. Clear 'Terms of Reference' enable a Group to focus on its own remit and not get sidetracked by issues that fall within the mandate of another organisation. It is recommended in the early stages that you establish your Steering Group as an unincorporated partnership. This is a simple constitution to help you get started.

The Tamar Community Futures Project appointed and worked with a regeneration practitioner to develop their Steering Group and their 'Terms of Reference'. They are included as an example below to help you think through the structure of your own Steering Group. Remember don't blindly copy this example! It is only by working through each part of your 'Terms of Reference' that you will develop your Steering Group and ensure it is equipped for the tasks ahead in your area.

'Terms of Reference' of the Tamar Community Futures Project

Purpose

To set up a partnership that represents the main interests of people in the Tamar Community Futures Area.

Aims & Objectives for the new Steering Group

- 1. To ensure progress is made towards delivery of the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) by:-**
 - 1.1 Agreeing targets and deadlines for delivery of actions in the SAP by the 30th April 2001.
 - 1.2 Setting up sub-Groups to focus on specific topic areas such as grant appraisals, environment, youth, etc, as and when appropriate.
 - 1.3 Meeting monthly to monitor and review progress of the SAP.
- 2. To ensure delivery of the Pilot funding contract with SWRDA by:-**
 - 2.1 Taking decisions on applications for funding within the agreed time scales and procedures.
 - 2.2 Setting up appropriate systems of delegation for decision making within acceptable time frames.
- 3. To work towards the long term sustainability of the Tamar Community Futures Programme by:-**
 - 3.1 Working with the Co-ordinator to identify potential funding sources for the post pilot phase, by 30th September 2002.
 - 3.2 Organising research into appropriate structures for the initiative's long-term development.
- 4. To ensure close liaison with the Tavistock Initiative by:-**
 - 4.1 Retaining a seat on the Steering Group for a representative from the Tavistock initiative and encouraging exchange of information between the Initiatives wherever appropriate

Role of a partnership

a partnership must draw its membership widely from the town* and immediate surrounds. Ownership and involvement of the wider community are essential to address issues, which require:

Section 4.1

Establishing a Steering Group

- Detailed local knowledge and skills
- People to make choices about the future they want to experience
- The commitment of businesses and individuals, alongside public agencies to deliver results.

- as per the Market Towns Toolkit – health check handbook, produced by the Countryside Agency.

*in TCF read 'area'.

Ethos

The Steering Group needs to be made up of dynamic and committed individuals who have a useful contribution to make towards achieving the objectives and the Strategic Action Plan for the Initiative.

Constitution / Composition

- The Steering Group will initially be an **unincorporated partnership** Group made up of representatives comprising organisations, key agencies and individuals either operating or living in the area.
- The Steering Group will ideally be made up of representatives from as many different parishes as possible within the designated area. However, the skills complement required on the Group will also need to be taken into account when recruiting members.
- 1 place will be reserved for a **representative of the Tavistock MCTI** to ensure information dissemination between the two Initiatives.
- 1 place will be reserved for an officer of WDBC for such time as they are acting as the Accountable Body for funding for the Initiative.
- There will be a maximum number of 12 and a minimum number of 5 members of the Steering Group.
- The Group will require 5 or 40% of its members present (whichever is the lesser) in order to be deemed quorate and conduct its business.
- The Chairperson and Vice Chair will be elected annually from within the Group. The Chairperson will have a casting vote.
- The Group will also have the powers to support the formation of working Groups to deal with specific areas that fall within their remit, **but will maintain responsibility for decision taking**, based on the recommendations that those working Groups put forward to the full Group.
- All members of the Steering Group will be required to act in the interest of the Initiative as a whole and declare any interests that they may have as individuals, or as an employee of or member of any other organisation / initiative.
- Members will be expected to attend meetings regularly and, in the event of being unable to attend, proffer apologies at all times.
- In the event of regular failure to attend meetings the Steering Group has the power to dismiss a member if good reason has not been provided for absence.
- In the event that a majority of Steering Group members consider that another member is acting from personal interests, rather than for the benefit of the Initiative, that member will be asked to stand down.
- Where an organisation has a seat by right, if the nominated representative of that organisation is considered to be unsuitable, the Steering Group retains the right to ask for a substitute to be nominated by the organisation.
- The Steering Group has the power to co-opt temporary members until the next annual election, so long as the numbers of co-opted members remain fewer than elected members.
- No member will have any line management responsibilities at the time of recruiting the new Steering Group.
- All members will be acting in a voluntary capacity.
- The Steering Group has the power to amend the constitution through a majority vote.
- In the event that a majority of members consider that there is no further business to be conducted as a Group, in its current formation or, for whatever reason, they have the powers to propose and effect its dissolution.

Specific Areas of Responsibility

1. The Steering Group will meet and work to **progress the Aims, Objectives and Strategic Action Plan for the Initiative**, as previously agreed by the Interim Steering Group.
2. The Steering Group will decide which projects go forward to the MCTI's Brokering Table and has the ability to endorse projects seeking funds elsewhere, subject to them fitting the Strategic Action Plan.
3. Working Groups will only have the powers to make recommendations to the full Steering Group.
4. The Steering Group will work with the Co-ordinator to secure funding for the future of the Initiative beyond the Pilot Phase.
5. The Steering Group will implement a review of the Initiative's constitution to ascertain the most appropriate structure to ensure the longer-term sustainability of the Initiative.

For full details see Vision, Aims & Objectives and the Strategic Action Plan.

Resources

1. The Project Co-ordinator(s) will provide support to the Steering Group as in line with their job descriptions.
2. A small budget for 'out of pocket expenses,' which are incurred directly for the benefit of the initiative, will be held by the Accountable Body, for countersigning by the Chairperson and one other member of the Steering Group.
3. All expenses will need to be approved in advance by the Steering Group and claims will need to be signed by the Chairperson before submission for reimbursement.
4. A modest budget will be made available for venues for meetings.

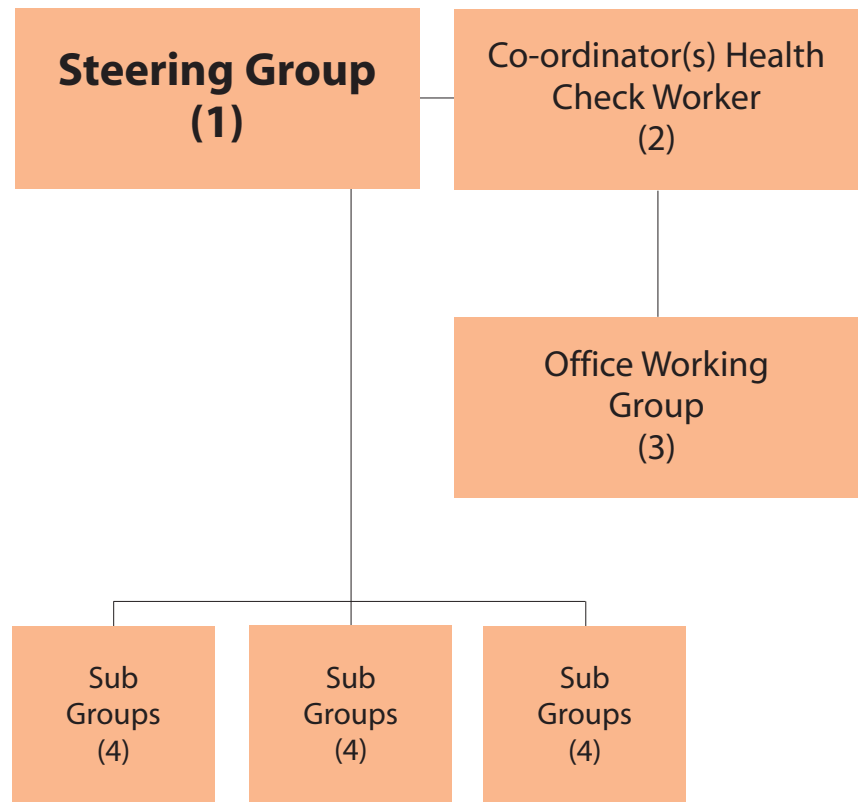
NB: it has subsequently been noted that the suggested quorum is too small and the wording needs to be changed to:

The Group will require 5 or 40% of its members present (whichever is the greater) in order to be deemed quorate and conduct its business.

Chapter Four

Proposed Structure for Tamar Community Futures

1. The Steering Group is responsible for ensuring Strategic Action Plan and SWRDA contract are delivered.
2. Co-ordinator(s) work alongside Steering Group, but Co-ordinator(s) are line-managed by WDBC.
3. An advisory Group at officer level (Officer Working Group) will be established once the Steering Group is in place. It will provide an informal support function to the Co-ordinator and Health Check Workers on an ad-hoc basis. The make up of the Officer Working Group may change in composition according to the need but would typically be made up of officers from:-
 - WDBC
 - Caradon District Council
 - SWRDA
 - Countryside Agency
 - West Devon Regeneration Company
 - Tamar AONB
 - Transport Groups etc.
4. Sub Groups covering specific issues including transport, culture, youth, elderly etc, can meet to drive these specific areas forward. Representation on the sub-Groups by a Steering Group member would be desirable.



Challenge 5: Building your skills and knowledge

Working in a Steering Group is likely to be a new experience for some of those involved. Even for those people who are old hands at committees, getting involved in a new initiative, will mean meeting new people and forming new relationships. Not everyone will have the same experience, or the same level of skills or confidence. One of the central messages of the MCTi and Community Strategic Planning is it needs those involved to 'think differently'! This means it is likely that everyone involved in the Steering Group will be on a steep learning curve.

There are different types of skills and knowledge required to be an effective member of the Steering Group:

- **Interpersonal skills** including: good communication, presentation, negotiation and time management skills.
- **Technical skills** including: knowledge and understanding of financial data, statistical analysis and use of Information and Computer Technology.
- **Content knowledge** including: knowledge of the subject and local area, of local organisations/businesses and of the policy of local and national agencies.

You should not assume that everyone involved has these skills. From experience, no-one should assume that it is those from the community who are the most likely to require

additional training. Training the whole Steering Group together can really help to build your team and develop mutual understanding and respect. This can be achieved by holding briefing sessions, organising away days, visiting other Steering Groups, formal training events and even informal discussions and social events.



casestudy

The Hatherleigh Steering Group in rural Devon decided to visit the Langport Steering group in Somerset to swap experience and stories. They chose Langport because it was a very similar size of town in an agricultural area. One Saturday members of the Steering Group travelled to Langport with their local Development Officer. The Chairman of the Langport Forum organised a tour, highlighted changes that were taking place and explored particular projects.

Everyone involved found it a rewarding experience and many said it renewed their enthusiasm for the task ahead. Indeed, it really inspired one individual who has become a key figure in the Group and others in Hatherleigh who had not attended. The visit has led to an informal twinning arrangement between the two groups.

Chapter Four

Guidance

What tools can we use?

- General guidance on establishing User Groups (including Steering Groups) can be found at www.communityplanning.net

What skills will you require?

Skills required are:

- Administrative skills to organise your Steering Group;
- Negotiating skills to attract members and partners;
- Community development skills to involve people and organisations;
- Facilitation skills to run meetings and events;
- Business planning skills to develop the Group;
- Monitoring and evaluation skills;
- The ability to think strategically.

Where can we find the help and information we require?

- Further information on establishing and running Steering Groups can be found in the Countryside Agency Healthcheck Handbook at www.countryside.gov.uk/markettowns and from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations at www.ncvo-vol.org.uk
- Case study experiences from the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative can be accessed through www.southwesttowns.net
- General advice, support and case studies on establishing Steering Groups can be provided by Action for Market Towns at www.towns.org.uk
- Constitutions at www.ncvo-vol.org.uk
- Guidance on establishing partnerships: see www.renewal.net 'How to' section and 'Working in Partnership: a sourcebook' available from the New Opportunities Fund at www.nof.org.uk

Self Evaluation Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to help you to decide whether you have considered all the issues that help in establishing your Steering Group. It summarises and addresses the many challenges and key points identified in this section. It could also be considered as a 'checklist of things to do'.

You may wish to photocopy this checklist and use it with your community and agency partners. You can, of course, adapt it to suit your own circumstances. An electronic version of the form is available to download on www.southwesttowns.net ➤

Chapter Four

	Comments on significance	Reviewed
Are you ready?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Have you decided whether or not to appoint a regeneration practitioner to help you establish your Steering Group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agreeing what your Steering Group should do.		
Have you agreed the focus for your Steering Group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you prepared a simple statement summarising this?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Who should be involved?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you undertaken the skills audit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you identified the stakeholders in your work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you decided how to attract new members to the Steering Group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Defining roles and responsibilities.		
Are the roles and responsibilities in your Steering Group clearly defined and agreed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have personal roles within the Steering group been clearly defined and agreed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establishing an appropriate structure.		
Have you defined and agreed the overall aims and objectives of the Steering group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you prepared a constitution for the Steering Group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you set out the resources that are available to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you agreed the structure of the Steering Group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Building your skills and knowledge.		
Have you referred to your skills audit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you included the paid officers and other partners in the audit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you agreed the most appropriate way (and programme of events) to build the skills of the Group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 4.2

Involving the wider community and your partners

This section will explain the importance of involving your local community and your partners. It will offer guidance on how to develop a strategy to achieve this. It will help you to think through the issues and provide advice, guidance and suggestions on how to proceed. The key challenges covered in this section include:

- **Challenge 1:** Getting started
- **Challenge 2:** How to involve your community
- **Challenge 3:** Involving the groups that are hard to reach
- **Challenge 4:** How to involve your partner agencies
- **Self Evaluation checklist**

Chapter Four

The Principles

Why is it important?

"Quite simply because it produces better results!"

Joseph Rowntree Foundation
report March 1999

Involving local people and groups is an essential part of planning for your future. Your community has a right to be involved in determining their future and in working together to improve the things that matter to them. Past experience has shown there are many good reasons to get your community involved including:

- **Enlisting local wisdom and building skills and understanding:** local people and groups have a wealth of skills, energy, experience and commitment.
- **Bringing local knowledge and a fresh perspective:** communities know best about local problems and issues. They can often see problems in new ways.
- **Encouraging creativity:** Communities think differently from agencies. They are not constrained by programmes, policies and budgets. They can be creative!
- **Increasing sustainability:** winning the support of your community is a key to the long-term viability your work.
- **Improving the quality of projects and programmes:** projects that carry the support of your community are far more likely to hit the mark, succeed and be looked after in the longer term.



- **Enhancing the credibility of local democracy:** getting people involved can help to build community spirit and revitalise local democracy.
- **Pooling resources:** both financial and human.
- **Winning new resources:** an active community is more likely to attract new money and support.

Community Strategic Planning helps you to involve your community. It gives people a common reason to come together. It helps people carefully consider their plan for the future. It helps them build an organisation to harness their skills and experience. Most importantly, it puts your community firmly in the driving seat.

The Practice

Planning for your future challenges your Steering Group and your partners to get local people and groups involved. There are different levels of involvement and as you plan you should consider which level is most appropriate for the task at hand and the stage you are at. These levels of involvement are referred to as ‘the ladder of participation’. The further up the ladder you move, the more involved your community becomes in actually taking decisions.

of their community or being policy makers and decision takers.

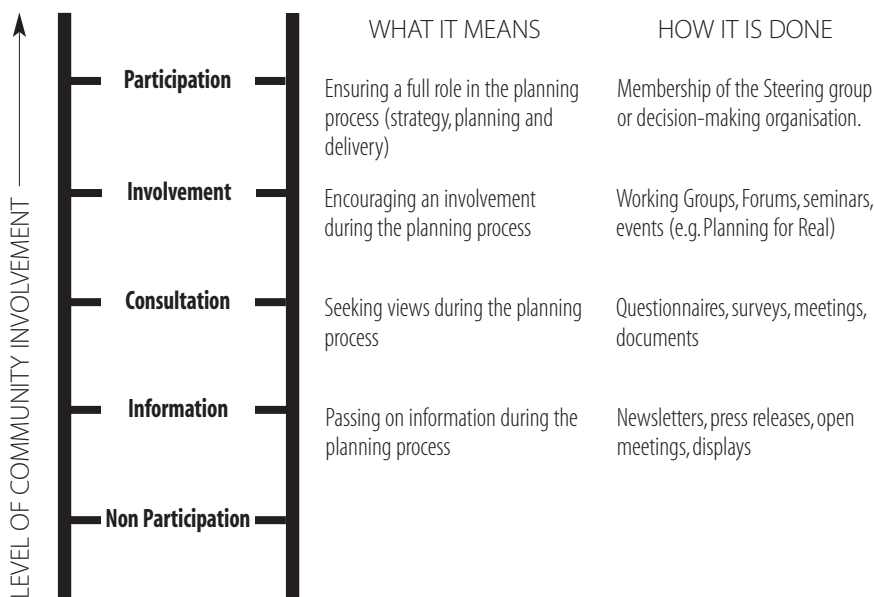
Each rung of the ladder has its place in the planning process but remember your community should be aiming to climb to the ‘top rung’. This is where local communities can say:

- I can work with the people around me to make a difference to our lives;
- I have a full part in taking decisions that affect my life.

The Big Issue

Success without involvement?

Involving your community is at the heart of your work. It is the very life-blood of any community based regeneration initiative. Quite simply it is impossible to succeed without the active involvement of local people, local groups and your partners.



Involving local communities is a complex business. Some communities are already well organised but most are not. It takes time and commitment to develop the skills and experience of your community. People are likely to be used to seeing information and occasionally being consulted. They are unlikely to be used to actually getting involved in the regeneration

Community involvement is very slow and time consuming. It often requires money and professional time to organise events, publish newsletters, undertake surveys and resource working groups etc. Be prepared to allocate serious resources to this work.

Chapter Four

The Wicked Issues

Badly organised events. Every community has their tale of the awful event they were asked to attend. They didn't get enough notice, the room was too small, the room was cold and it clashed with the drama club's annual pantomime. The list goes on but it reinforces the three key lessons that underpin any community event ...PREPARATION, PREPARATION and PREPARATION.

Getting your community outside too late. One community has still not recovered from waiting too long to involve their community in their work. The Steering Group kept delaying community involvement until 'things were clearer'. They felt it would be the same old faces that came along, saying the same old things. By the time they reached a point where they organised a community event, the bones of their plan were already in place. People had got wind of what was happening and saw the Steering Group as a small cliché who were keeping them in the dark. It has taken over a year and a dramatic change in the Steering Group membership to recover the situation. The lesson from this is to involve

people at the earliest stage and prepare well for their involvement (See Challenges).

Ignoring existing local groups, partners and projects. There will always be groups in a community who are pursuing projects or even regeneration initiatives in the area. Local authorities will always have plans for the area. Other agencies may be planning particular projects or programmes. It is essential that you find out who is already involved and on what basis. It's too easy to stand on toes and get your work off on the wrong foot.

One community held their first event to discuss the MCTi and the plan making only weeks after a public meeting run by the Local Authority on the future of the town centre. People were confused about who was doing what and why the Steering Group and the Local Authority were not talking to each other to plan these events.

Focusing on the town or the villages? One community went to tremendous efforts to involve the people living in their main town and only after the plan was taking shape did they begin to consult the

surrounding villages. Attendance at the village meetings was therefore low and those who did attend were sceptical that the Steering Group would take them seriously.

Another Steering Group spent all their time and effort on involving the surrounding villages as "the regeneration of the town was being taken care of by the Single Regeneration Budget". When it came to actually beginning to put together their plan, little was known about the issues in the town and the Steering Group had failed to engage any of the key individuals from the town.



Challenge 1: Community involvement - getting started

It is helpful for the Steering Group to think through a strategy to involve the community at the earliest stage. It is important to consider:

- **Who should be involved?** Defining your community is always an interesting question. Community can be defined by a geographical area or by common interests. In planning for your town and surrounding area it is likely that there will be a whole number of communities within the area that will benefit from your work. Once you have defined your geographic area you should ask other questions. Do we wish to involve those who both live and work in our area? Do we want to focus on particular groups (e.g. young people, ethnic minorities, the unemployed etc)? Do we want to target community groups and local businesses? These questions will help you to build a picture of exactly who you are trying to involve and who you want to target.
- **Why are you involving the community?** Be clear about why you are involving the community and what you expect of people. Do you just want to give them information at this stage to let them know what is happening? Are you looking for them to endorse your course of action? Are you looking to get their views or to actually get them involved in the Steering Group?
- **When should the community be involved?** Experience shows that the earlier you get people involved the better. This

helps to build trust and support for the way forward. Experience also shows that there is no part of the planning process that the community should be excluded from. Of course the Steering Group will have to take hard decisions that couldn't possibly be taken by the whole community. Keeping your work and decisions transparent is incredibly important. As soon as people see the work as being driven by the few, meeting behind closed doors, support and trust will dwindle.

- **How should we involve the community?** Start to plan the different ways you hope to involve people. What is your first contact going to be? What information are you going to give them? Do you need to produce literature in different languages? Is your community equipped and organised to become involved? Are you going to look at imaginative and different ways of involving people rather than conventional public meetings?

At each stage of your work you will need to look at the most appropriate way to involve people. Getting people involved in agreeing a vision for the future is very different, for example, to ensuring your questionnaire gets a good response. The next challenge sets out some different methods to involve your community.

case study

In Bodmin, the Steering Group had an existing database of local organisations built up by the Bodmin Town Forum. This was supplemented by information from the Parish Clerks and from a brainstorming session. This database was the central resource to get in touch with people to get things started. Letters, invitations to meetings, interviews and word of mouth were all used. More recently the newsletter 'Breaking News' is sent to everyone on the database in addition to public distribution.

In Langport they feel that their success has been partly due to involving more people as they have developed. They have brought on board different skills (youth workers, surveyors, lawyers) as the working groups have begun to tackle different projects and issues.

Chapter Four

case study

The Calne Community Partnership in Wiltshire has drawn its membership from a wide community area. Over 60 different organisations, agencies and groups are working together. Their work is very closely linked to the statutory Community Planning process and they see this as really helping to get people involved.

In addition to surveys, meetings et) they developed the "Baton Challenge" to get people involved. A baton was passed around the area in an attempt to raise the profile for the lack of land for leisure and recreation use. Over 4000 people took part involving local schools, leisure centres, care homes and businesses. As the baton was passed they had to add their thoughts and ideas. Local radio, newspapers and regional television covered the event.

The Steering Group then took up the cause to implement the project ideas bolstered by the "Baton Challenge".

Challenge 2: How to involve your local communities

Involving communities takes time, planning and considerable commitment. When you are considering how best to involve your local community you should ask yourself three questions:

- Who are we trying to reach?
- What do we want to get out of the process?
- Which methods are most likely to succeed?

There are a wide range of methods and tools that Steering Groups have used successfully to engage with their communities. Many of these tools can be used to maintain involvement over time. They are summarised in the table that follows. Whatever method is used there are a few 'golden rules' to follow:

- Use comfortable local venues suited to the purpose;
- Overcome the obstacles to involvement such as transport, access and caring responsibilities;
- Make sure information is sent out in good time, is clear and gets to the right audience;
- Use appropriate language in the information and at the meeting. Avoid jargon, and where it is necessary, explain it;
- Arrange meetings for a time of day that suits those who you hope will attend;

- Avoid clashes with other meeting dates;
- Use small meetings rather than large open events or ensure smaller group sessions are included. It allows people to contribute more;
- Use an independent facilitator when appropriate and particularly when conflict is likely.



One crucial rule relates to the transparency of information for your community. As a community organisation you must ensure that everyone has easy access to information. You should develop a policy on this for your Steering Group or local organisation. You should think through how people can access information and, for example, the policy on public access to papers for your Management Committee. Some items may need to remain confidential (e.g. when employing staff) but as a rule you should aim to make your organisation as open and transparent as possible. Your community will quickly become suspicious if they feel you are withholding information.

Tools to initiate and sustain community involvement

TASK: INFORMING THE COMMUNITY	APPROACH: Exhibitions and open public meetings Using visual displays is often the most effective approach. Information about planned activities or opportunities can be explained.
	ISSUES: Can be useful in reaching a broader cross-section of people and is cheap to run. Good way to get people's thoughts and ideas but little opportunity for constructive debate, decision making or getting everyone to listen to the one message at the same time.
	APPROACH: Using leaflets, publications and newsletters
	ISSUES: Good to convey brief information to large numbers of people, but securing feedback is difficult. The timing of distribution needs to be considered (e.g. avoid holiday times).
	APPROACH: Using e mails and websites Growing in importance and a useful way of disseminating information.
	ISSUES: Not everyone has access to a computer but useful as additional way of communicating.
	APPROACH: Attending 'target group' meetings 'Targeted' consultation and information can be achieved by attending meetings of the target groups you are trying to reach. This could be a one-off or a regular slot.
	ISSUES: This can be time consuming and can involve visiting a large number of groups. This is a good way of engaging these groups in discussions but may miss other sections of the community who are not represented by these groups.
	APPROACH: Piggybacking on events This involves using fun-days or fairs or other community events to present information or have a stand where you can meet people and talk to them.
	ISSUES: Can reach people who would not otherwise come to public meetings. There is a limit to the amount and complexity of information that can be conveyed.

Chapter Four

Tools to initiate and sustain community involvement

	<p>APPROACH: Surveys and audits Using questionnaires and formal research methods to interview a sample of local people, local groups or businesses to get more structured information about the area, its problems and people's views. Could be done by regeneration practitioner or through local involvement.</p> <p>ISSUES: Requires a lot of organisation and some knowledge of research, but can be an important way of generating new information. Care must be taken in phrasing questions, so as not to be misleading.</p>
	<p>APPROACH: Workshops Representatives of various interest groups and views are invited to participate in an event to discuss issues in a structured way. Often used by Steering Groups themselves to help think things through and make decisions. Can be a half day, day or weekend event. Requires independent facilitation to be effective so all participants are 'equal'.</p> <p>ISSUES: A very interactive and useful way of exploring issues, debating more complex problems and making decisions. Commonly used. Need to give people time to think about the issues and prepare for it, if possible.</p>
<p>TASK: SEEKING LOCAL VIEWS, CHOOSING PRIORITIES AND MAKING DECISIONS</p>	<p>APPROACH: Planning for Real Events Like a workshop but often based on the use of real models or plans of an area. This very visual and interactive approach has been used particularly to explore new physical development opportunities. Can sometimes take a day or even a weekend.</p> <p>ISSUES: More complex events to organise, and may require assistance. Also time consuming for local people. But often both fun and constructive. Allows local people to explore issues in more depth and with 'experts'.</p>
	<p>APPROACH: Mapping A structured way to identify those who should be involved in the regeneration process.</p> <p>ISSUES: Need to cast your net widely and think not only of community groups but of ethnic minorities, faith communities, agency partners, different age groups etc.</p>

Tools to initiate and sustain community involvement

	<p>APPROACH: Scenario Planning Workshops A structured approach to defining different possible scenarios, choosing between them and planning ahead.</p> <p>ISSUES: A more complex but rewarding tool to use with communities. Would require careful planning. A number of regeneration practitioners specialise in undertaking this and similar exercises (e.g. Future Search).</p>
<p>TASK: DEVELOPING A COMMON VISION</p>	<p>APPROACH: Brainstorm Workshops These are more flexible opportunities to take on a broad range of views and seek consensus on what the key issues in an area or project might be.</p> <p>ISSUES: This is a flexible tool. It relies on using representatives rather than just members of the public, but could still access a wide range of views. Workshops can be a good place to 'float new ideas'.</p> <p>APPROACH: Participative Theatre, music and video Using arts based approach to inspire those involved and those in the audience. Particularly useful to involve young people.</p> <p>ISSUES: There are many groups and regeneration practitioners who are skilled in this area. Needn't be expensive but usually requires time, commitment, money and equipment.</p>
<p>TASK: CONFLICT RESOLUTION</p>	<p>APPROACH: Mediation/external advisors/dialogue Using external advisors or negotiators can help bring opposing sides together. Bringing different sides together regularly to discuss issues, can be an important 'safety valve' for some communities.</p> <p>ISSUES: Some conflict situations are very serious and require expert advice. There are often organisations that can assist. Maintaining ongoing dialogue with groups can be very important. An independent chair for such discussions can help build trust.</p>

Chapter Four

Tools to initiate and sustain community involvement

	<p>APPROACH: Community Forum Can be open to community based, but provides an opportunity for a broad network of community groups and individuals to come together several times year to discuss issues of concern and feed views to the Steering Group/Lead Organisation. Could be used to seek representatives of Steering Group/Lead Organisation.</p> <p>ISSUES: This method can be used with other approaches and is very inclusive. Membership can be large, but often informally organised. Not always representative of local opinion, depending on membership and 'who turns up' to meetings. Can be hard to manage and define a clear mission in practice. There should be a clearly understood relationship with the Steering group or lead organisation. What is the role of the forum? Could be one for an area or different groups for different issues.</p>
<p>TASK:</p>	<p>APPROACH: Direct community elections Direct one-person one-vote elections in an area. Could be used to elect local people onto the Steering Group/Lead Organisation.</p> <p>ISSUES: Offers legitimacy to representatives elected in this way. Defining the area and who can vote requires careful thought. Way of holding those elected to account needs to be considered. Likely to be used when the Steering Group really gets going and when thinking through constitution when considering options for the future (e.g. Development Trust).</p>
<p>LONG TERM ENGAGEMENT</p>	<p>APPROACH: Working Groups, sub committees and consultative groups These are specific groups set up as part of the Steering Group/Lead Organisation to fulfil particular requirements.</p> <p>ISSUES: There are many different ways of using such groups. They usually have clear roles and defined memberships, may be time limited and are quite commonly used.</p>
	<p>APPROACH: Community Chests and projects Another important way to involve communities is as part of the delivery of a programme or project. Steering Groups may have been allocated funds to help build confidence through simple and quick projects.</p> <p>ISSUES: As the Steering group matures and sets up an organisation to sustain the work it may want to consider developing a Community Chest. This is a good way of building support and raising the profile of your work. Remember projects need to be quick and easy!</p>

Table adapted from New Opportunities Fund publication "Working in Partnership: A Sourcebook"

Challenge 3: Involving groups that are hard to reach

Earlier in this chapter we talked about the stakeholders in your work as being:

- **the empowered:** local people.
- **the elected:** local councillors.
- **the employed:** paid officers and staff from partner agencies and organisations.

It is possible to identify a fourth group of stakeholders, **the excluded**. These are the groups who often require more time, effort and thought to involve in your work. If you are truly committed to involving your community it is important to go that extra mile to ensure you involve such groups. Experience shows that your effort will be rewarded.

There are a number of tips to consider when identifying and involving groups that are often excluded.

Disabled Groups

- Work through an existing network: use your local knowledge and your survey work when building an understanding of your community (LINK CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.2) to identify such networks. Involve them directly in planning and organising events. They will know the best way to attract their members and contacts.
- Ensure all venues are disability friendly.
- Meet at a time that suits the group best.



- Be prepared to meet travel costs.
- Hearing loops and signers: ensure you can offer this facility if required.
- Electronic copies of handouts or agendas: these can be easily reproduced in big print.
- Keep the agenda relevant and short.

Young People

- Involve them as equal partners: this is essential. Young people deserve respect and equality. They will have a different approach and this is often refreshing.
- Work through existing agencies and groups: use existing networks and Youth Workers to help you with the process.
- Let them design the process: young people will come up with their own way of getting involved. This may involve video, music, theatre or another imaginative approach.
- Design the consultation event around their needs and issues: again Youth Workers can help but this can be achieved by letting them design the process
- Be prepared for the cost!

In Great Torrington in Devon they have really succeeded in getting their youngsters involved. They got to know about meetings through the text messages they were sent. They designed and constructed a 'drop in' video kiosk to record their thoughts and hopes for the future.

case study

In Hatherleigh in Devon the Steering Group wanted to reach their young people. There were a couple of youth groups in the town but none in the rural area. Developing a questionnaire with the help of the town based groups, they contacted the parents in rural areas to set up a special meeting with the young people.

A special assembly was arranged at the college of all students from the area. Tutor groups from the parishes were established to get students involved. Over 250 students attended and over 150 questionnaires were returned within half an hour! Results were put together in a report highlighting priority projects for the next 12 months.

The priorities were modest and straightforward. A hanging out place that wasn't a youth club, a pool table and benches to sit on! A final tip.....use text messages to communicate!

Chapter Four

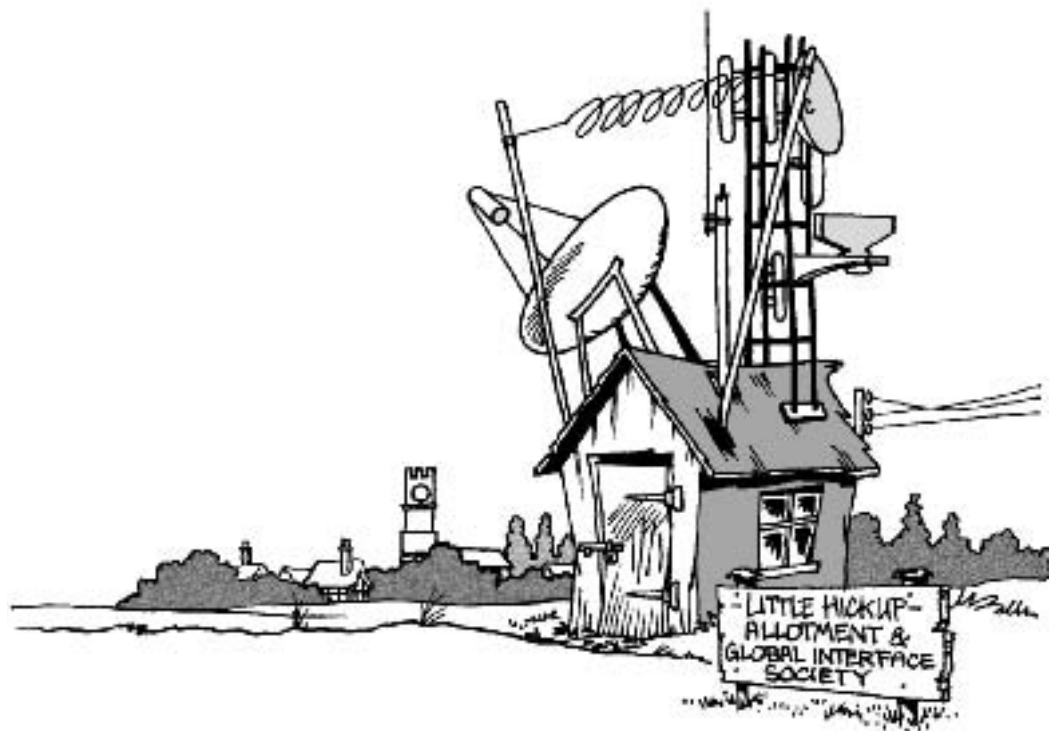
Ethnic Minority Groups & the Long Term Unemployed

- Once again work through existing networks: use your local knowledge and your survey work when building an understanding of your community (LINK CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.2) to identify such networks. Involve them directly in planning and organising events. They will know the best way to attract their members and contacts.
- Meet at a time that suits the group best.
- Be prepared to meet travel costs.
- Keep the agenda relevant and short.
- Ensure publicity material is produced in relevant languages.

Groups in the rural hinterland

- Build on existing initiatives: parishes and villages may well be working on other regeneration initiatives and projects. Find out if they are first, who is leading and see how you can link to this work.
- Understand and work through existing networks: as with other groups do your homework first and work through people and groups already involved in the area. The Village Hall Committee, WI, Playgroup, Sports Clubs, Allotment Society and Community Councils are all good starting points.

Remember villages often feel that the major town gets everything that's going in the way of attention and funding. No matter how unrealistic this feeling may be it is worth keeping in mind when involving these communities.



Challenge 4: How to involve your partner agencies

“Our community are ready to rise to the challenge of playing a central role in the regeneration of our area. We are preparing a strategic plan for our future and are establishing a local organisation to harness the skills of our community. We want to work in partnership with our agencies to help us achieve our vision”

Chairman, Langport Forum

Every community wants the help and support of its local agencies. To achieve this the community must establish constructive working relationships with the people within those agencies. In most cases this will involve both parties taking a different approach to their relationships and the conflict and tensions that often exist.

Community Strategic Planning means that professional staff within agencies have to:

- adapt to a very different **environment**. Preparing and implementing regeneration strategies in a community alongside partners is very different from doing so within the office of, for example, a Local Authority.
- adopt a different set of **beliefs** and **values**. Everyone has to have a belief in participation. This needs to replace the notion of ‘consultation’.
- act and **behave** differently. Facilitation and partnership working needs to replace controlling and dictating.

- react to different **outputs** and **timescales**. Involving the community and building their skills takes time and has a value in its own right. Professional staff and their organisations need to understand that traditional outputs of jobs created, houses built may take time to be delivered.
- commit to different **outcomes**. Community based strategies have to be rooted in the needs of the local area not driven by the targets set by external agencies.

Equally, Community Strategic Planning means that local communities have to take responsibility for their futures and not rely on others within agencies to deliver things for them. From experience it is important for your Steering Group to:

- **be clear about what you want**. Most people are busy and it is important you communicate exactly what you want as clearly as possible.
- **find the right people - this is crucial**. You need to find the person (or people) whose job covers your area and who is senior enough to influence their agency. Do some research, make some calls until you find the right person. Go and see them. Face to face meetings can be very useful. Make your approach informal at first before writing formal letters or inviting them to meetings. Let them know what you want in advance so they can come prepared and don't feel threatened or put in a difficult position. It may take time to find the right person.
- **understand what they want**. Every agency will have their own policies and priorities. Do some research before your initial approach. Are you able to help them achieve what they want? Successful partnerships are based on ‘win-win’ situations.

case study

In Langport the District Council were extremely keen to link statutory Community Planning with the work of the MCTi. They arranged a seminar for councillors and officers to debate how to support communities in their regeneration work.

In Bridport they made a special effort to involve key officers from partner agencies in from the start. The Chief Planner was involved in the early workshops to draft the Plan. Officers were invited to contribute their thoughts and expertise as the work developed.

Officers and Councillors from the Tamar Valley project joined Steering Group members for joint training events such as the day long seminar on the MCTi brokering process (LINK CHAPTER 7) This helped to build the local partnership and good working relationships.

Chapter Four

In building a longer-term relationship it is important to remember that:

- **Trust and respect** are the keys to an effective partnership. If you do not regard yourselves as equal or reliable partners you will have little chance of success. Often the community, voluntary groups and professionals find it very difficult to work together because of unhelpful 'stereotypical' views of each other. Address these obstacles or you are unlikely to succeed.
- **Partnerships are about people** not agencies or organisations. It is the relationships between the hard working and committed individuals in a partnership that make it work. Spend time on developing these relationships and ensure that newcomers are welcomed with open arms. Prepare information packs and offer briefing sessions. This will help with first impressions.
- **Partnerships take time.** Different people have different styles and agencies and organisations can have very different cultures. There will inevitably be friction as a partnership develops its own culture and way of doing business. Don't let difficulties simmer. Confront and address them as they arise.

Many partnerships use some of the tools discussed in the previous section to build their partnerships. They organise social events together, attend away days and, probably most importantly, attend training events together.

Guidance

What tools can we use?

- The wide range of tools and techniques to involve people are introduced in this section.

What skills will you require?

Essential skills for involving your community include:

- Administrative skills to organise events and your community;
- Facilitation skills to run meetings and events;
- Community development skills to involve people;
- Negotiating and mediation skills;
- Communication skills.

Where can we find the help and information we require?

- The Community Planning Handbook at www.communityplanning.net
- Countryside Agency at www.countryside.gov.uk/market-towns
- New Economics Foundation at www.neweconomics.org
- National Council for Voluntary Organisations at www.ncvo-vol.org.uk
- Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation at www.nif.co.uk (Planning for Real).
- Community Development Foundation at www.cdf.org.uk

Self Evaluation Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to help you to identify whether you have considered all the issues that help in consulting your community and your partners. It summarises and addresses the challenges and key points identified in this section. It could also be considered as a 'checklist of things to do'.

You may wish to photocopy this checklist and use it with your community and agency partners. You can, of course, adapt it to suit your own circumstances. An electronic version of the form is available to download on www.southwesttowns.net ►

Chapter Four

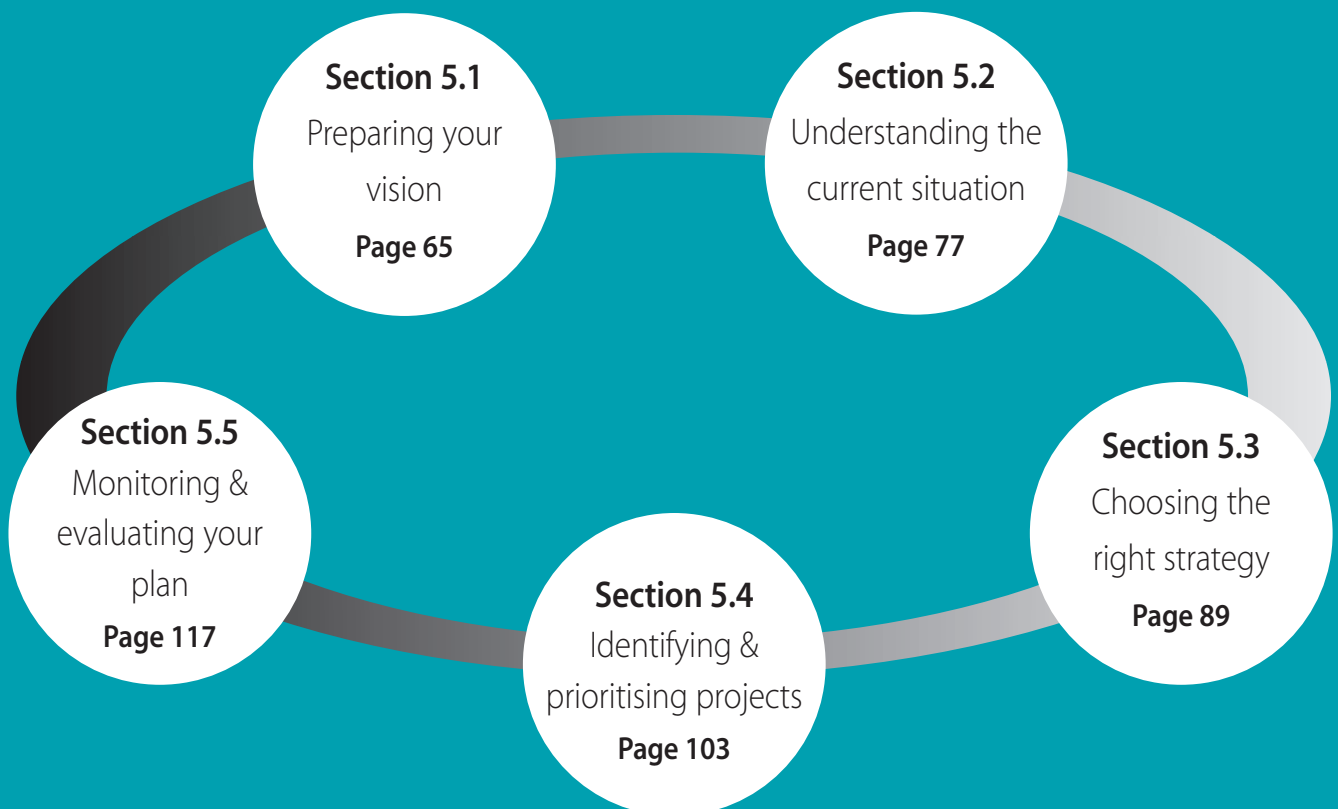
	Comments on significance	Reviewed
Are you ready?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are you all agreed that you are committed to the active involvement of your community and your partners in your work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting started		
Have you decided who you want to involve?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you discussed why you want to involve them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you decided when the community should be involved?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you discussed how to involve the community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How to involve your communities		
Have you read and understood the 'golden rules' of successful involvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you considered the different approaches to involving people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Involving hard to reach groups		
Have you identified the groups that might be hard to reach?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you developed a strategy to involve each of these groups?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How to involve your partners		
Have you identified which partners you want to involve?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you clear about what you want from each partner?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you found the right person or people in the partner agency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you understand their requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you committed to building a long-term relationship?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you identified training needs for all involved?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you planned team building and training events?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Chapter 5

Preparing your plan

This chapter is for the community leaders and their partners who have formed a Steering Group to help prepare your Plan ([LINK TO CHAPTER 3, SECTION 2 - SETTING UP A STEERING GROUP](#)). It explains how to prepare your plan for a sustainable future by challenging and guiding you through the steps you need to take.

The steps in preparing your Plan include:



Chapter Five

Inspirations

Housing your community

Affordable homes and social housing are key issues for market towns and the villages that surround them as more people develop a taste for country living and push up prices. As more communities prepare their own plans for the future this issue is at the heart of the regeneration process. In Cornwall the average income needed to buy a house is £30,000 when the average household income is closer to £15,000. Young people can't get on to the housing ladder and key workers can't afford to invest in the area. As a result the population ages and the local economy suffers. Communities are clear that this problem simply must be solved if they are to have any chance of a sustainable future.

South Hams District Council in highly pressurised Devon is leading on planning initiatives. It insists that every housing development in the area splits into three different types of homes: a third for the rented sector, a third for low cost units and a third for open market sale.

Making land available to communities for affordable housing development is a key to solving the problem. Planning designations can help and in Scotland land reformers are urging a more proactive approach. The Land Reform Act, which gives a legal definition to what a community is, allows them to register an interest in purchasing land should it come on the market. They feel that communities should have the right to compulsory purchase land for

housing around their village. In Norway, if the commune (a parish council) wants a piece of land, they go out to tender and farmers bid against each other to supply it. This gets everyone involved in solving a local problem. In rural Stirling one community prioritised affordable housing in their development plan. The sight of empty houses in the heart of their village (owned by British Rail) had been constant reminders of how little say they had. With funding from the charitable sector and in partnership with their Council and Housing Association, the Trust purchased and refurbished the houses. They went further and designed a local training and employment project around the refurbishment to the benefit of local skills and jobs. Self build housing and rural housing grants are other potential small-scale solutions to this problem.

Further information:

www.housingcorp.gov.uk

www.communityselfbuildagency.org.uk

Preparing your plan a case study to get you started

Preparing your plan is not a one off task. A good plan will be reviewed regularly as you work progresses. Equally, the more experienced and skilled you become the more detailed your plan making can become. This chapter offers guidance for such detailed planning. You may find the description of strategies, goals and objectives too daunting if you do not yet have much experience in this work. The important thing is to start your plan making with a simple framework and build up the level of detail as you become more familiar with the work. Remember, experience shows that communities who work closely with a professional skilled in plan making make the best progress.

The following case study shows how you might make a start through a short series of workshops, a community meeting and supporting research. Further details on each aspect of the case study can be found in the relevant sections of the Re:sourcebook. You can adapt this case study to suit your community. Alan Caldwell Associates designed the workshop approach taken in this case study.



Chapter Five

Marbury: Preparing our Plan

The 15 strong Steering Group in the market town of Marbury decided to hold a series of workshops to start their plan making. Members of the Steering Group include the District Councillor, one of the councillors from a surrounding Parish and a couple of local business people. The majority of the Steering Group are local activists who are interested in the work and concerned about the future of their community. A few people hover at the edges of the Steering Group and attended some meetings. Several different officers from local agencies attended certain meetings.

While the Steering Group had some assistance from their Local Authority's Community Planning staff, they decided to employ a consultant to help them plan and run the workshops. In addition to the extra skills and experience it was felt they needed an 'honest broker' from outside their community to run the workshops and guide the plan making. Together they planned a series of events and activities to help them prepare their initial plan:

Step 1: Workshops involving the Steering Group and the movers and shakers in their community

- **Workshop 1:** Our vision for the future.
- **Workshop 2:** Understanding our current situation.
- **Workshop 3:** Ideas for the main themes and projects.

Step 2: Preparing and promoting an early draft

- Write up the results of the workshops as a report and a simple summary leaflet.
- Distribute leaflet within the community, publish the summary in the local newspaper and talk to local groups, individuals and partners.

Step 3: Community Event

- Hold a major community event to discuss the draft plan and enlist support and volunteers.

Step 4: Publishing the Plan

- Amend and publish the plan to guide your early work.

Step 1: Workshops involving the Steering Group and the movers and shakers in their community



All three of these workshops were planned as 2.5 to 3 hour sessions. The Steering Group decided to do the first on a Friday evening and worked through the Saturday to complete the other two. The Steering Group decided to hold the first workshop on their own and then invite the following people to join them on the Saturday:

- A representative from each of the surrounding Parishes;
- The County Councillor;
- Five officers from important partner agencies;
- Representatives from a range of local groups (e.g. mother's and toddlers, Chamber of Commerce, Youth Forum etc);
- A number of local business people.

Those on the Steering Group made a point of going to see everyone or speaking to them on the telephone before sending out a personal invitation. The invitation included background information on the work, a timetable for the event and guidance on what they hoped to achieve. They held the meetings in the function room of a local hotel where they could easily lay on lunch and refreshments.

Workshop 1:

A Vision for our community!

The consultant chaired the meeting and all members of the Steering Group attended. The evening was structured as follows:

- 7.00pm Introduction by consultant on the purpose and structure of the evening. He explained the importance of thinking differently and not being constrained by the obstacles and difficulties of the present. This was to be about 'blue sky thinking'! A plastic bucket became an extra member of the Steering Group for the night to collect fines each time someone mentioned the difficulties of the present. A few pounds was collected over the evening which helped pay for a round of drinks at the end of the workshop!
- 7.10pm Working in pairs the Steering Group was asked to consider the following questions:

"How will our community look in 20 years if it has developed in a healthy way? If everything develops as we want it to what will life be like for our grandchildren?"

After half an hour considering these questions each pair reported back to the whole room and the consultant pulled out the main points under the following headings:

- The key elements in our future will be?
Examples included:
 - Services to support young and old alike
 - An increased population (but balanced in age groups)
 - Energy self sufficiency
 - A vibrant commercial heart to our town
 - More affordable housing for local people.
- The principles that will guide our work are, for example:
 - Active involvement in our community in all aspects of our future
 - Using local resources wherever possible (people, businesses, organisations, skills)
 - Increased local control over land and resources.

Preparing your plan a case study to get you started

8.00pm Future Scenarios

The consultant was asked to research and present the likely trends and factors that would affect the town of Marbury in the future. He started by outlining just how quickly things change, for example:

- All world trade carried out in 1949 is done in one day today.
- All telephone calls made in 1983 are made in one day today.

He then went on to paint a picture of how life might differ in terms of:

- How people get around;
- How and where people will work?
- Who is likely to be looking to move to an area like Marbury?
- What about the bigger issues like global warming?

8.30pm Considering the future

Working in pairs again the Steering Group considered how they might develop their ideas for their vision in light of what they had heard. Examples of what they came up with included:

- The need to ensure even the most rural parts of their area had the infrastructure and technology to compete in the global market;
- All new buildings and developments should adopt sustainable construction methods;
- Renewable energy should be at the heart of the area's future.

9.15pm Drawing the threads together.

Working as one group with the consultant a position statement was drawn up to summarise the Vision for the future of Marbury. They then agreed how they would present their work to the wider group the following day.

Outcome

The workshop produced a summary of the main elements and principles of the Steering Group's Vision for their area.

Workshop 2: Understanding our current situation

The consultant chaired the meeting again. A written summary and some flip chart sheets on the previous evenings discussions were made available. Just over 40 people attended the meeting and introduced themselves to get things started. Tea and coffee was available throughout the event.

10.00am Welcome and introductions. The consultant gave a short introduction on the background to the work and the purpose of the workshops.

10.10am Presentation by three of the Steering Group members on the discussions the night before.

10.30am Working in groups of 5-8 people around tables the Vision for the future of the area was debated.

10.50am Feedback from each group to develop the Vision for the area.

11.10am Assessing the current situation.

Working over the next hour and a half, the consultant got different groups to work on particular issues to assess the current situation and the obstacles to achieving the vision. This included:

Half of the meeting (3 groups) working to set out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to Marbury and surrounding area. Information was collected under three headings:

- Economy;
- Social and Community;
- Environment.

The other half of the meeting worked on the ingredients required to develop a local economy. This included:

- Finance (e.g. grants, loans, investment opportunities; potential funding sources etc);
- Infrastructure (e.g. roads, rail, bus, telecoms etc);
- Human resources (e.g. people, local groups, local businesses, agency partners etc);
- Research and planning (e.g. access to information, knowledge about information sources, surveys, reports, ability to undertake research etc);

- Promotion, brokering and marketing (e.g. web sites, brochures, regional profile etc);
- Organisational Development (e.g. local groups or organisations to lead the implementation of projects and the plan);

Under each of the headings the groups mapped out "What we have" and then "What we need".

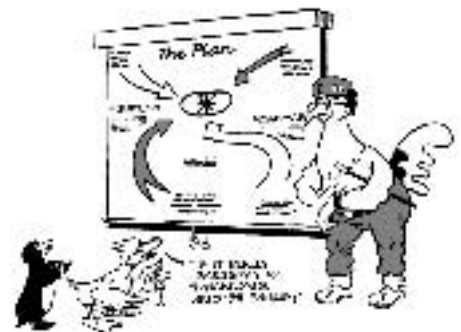
12.30pm Report back on assessing the current situation.

A half hour session where flip chart sheets were posted around the room and each table presented their thoughts on what they had been working on. Comments and changes were made as each table reported back.

1.00pm Lunch

Outcome

A summary of the main aspects of Marbury's current situation and the obstacles to achieving their Vision. Workshop 1 and 2 established where Marbury is now (current situation) and where it wants to get to (vision).



Workshop 3: Ideas for the main themes and projects

Having established where Marbury is now and where it wants to get to, the participants turned their attention to:

- The main themes linking the current situation to the vision.
- Projects and actions under each theme that would help to achieve the vision.
- What strategies can be used to achieve the vision?

Chapter Five

2.00pm Introduction to the afternoon from the consultant

2.05pm Identifying the main themes

Working at tables again, participants were asked to identify the main themes that linked the current situation to the vision. After feeding back to the whole room examples to emerge were:

- Affordable housing
- Local economy
- Transport
- Information Technology
- Sustainable development and renewable energy
- Community facilities
- Tourism

2.35pm The importance of each theme

Dividing the work among the tables, participants were asked to explain in a simple paragraph why this theme was important and what in general terms they wanted to achieve over say the next 5 years (the goal!). Examples included:

- **Affordable Housing:** Without an adequate supply of affordable housing we will be unable to retain our young people and attract key workers to develop our local economy. We want to provide more affordable housing both in the town of Marbury and each of the surrounding Parishes.
- **Transport:** Our local economy, services and social facilities rely on local people being able to move easily throughout our area without having to use their private car. We want to provide an effective and integrated transport system connecting Marbury to Bristol and to the surrounding Parishes.

3.00pm Strategies

Finally, everyone considered what strategies would be most effective in achieving each goal. Firstly the consultant introduced the range of possible strategies that can be used to help develop your area. It was explained that a strategy charts the route between where you are now and where you want to be. It links your current situation to your vision. Your projects will fit your strategy, helping you to achieve your desired vision. Imagine a washing line where one pole is your

current situation and the other is your vision. The strategy is the washing line that connects the two. Your projects are the clothes you hang on the line.



He explained that the chosen strategy would usually involve one, or a mixture of the following:

- **Research and Planning:** usually an essential part of every strategy is the ability to undertake research to help you plan to achieve your goal.
- **Taking a Stake:** investing in land, buildings and enterprise.
- **Training and developing human resources:** concentrating on developing the skills and experience of the people within your groups, businesses, enterprises and community facilities.
- **Influencing others:** seeking to influence the policy, programmes and actions of others.

- **Inward investment:** looking outside your community to attract wealth, enterprises, skills, employment and resources.

- **Loan funding:** giving enterprises in your community access to development funding.

- **Technical Assistance:** providing the technical expertise required by enterprises and organisations in your community.

Allocating a different theme to each table the participants were then asked to consider which strategy (or mixture of strategies) was most likely to achieve the stated goal. They did this by asking the following questions of each possible strategy:

- **How would this help us achieve our goal?** For example would looking to invest in land help us achieve our goal of providing more affordable housing? Would influencing others (e.g. the local housing association) be more appropriate or should you do a bit of both?

- **What strengths and opportunities would this build upon?** For example we know an opportunity is the availability of derelict land? We know that the Housing Association has prioritised our area for investment over the next 5 years.

- **What are the problems and threats this would overcome?** For example, we know there is a chronic shortage of accommodation for young families and as a result they are leaving the community. As a result our education facilities are under threat.

- **What are the long-term implications of this approach?** What will we achieve if we carry it out successfully? For example if we purchase the available land and work in partnership with the Housing Association we will have created say 50 new houses for young families. This will support educational facilities but do we have enough childcare facilities for the young children? Do we have the employment and training opportunities to ensure that these families can not only live but also work in our community if they choose?

Each table then reported back to the whole group who amended each strategy through discussion.

Preparing your plan a case study to get you started



4.00pm Projects and Actions

Working at their tables again, participants were then asked to list the projects and actions for the next five years that they felt would help achieve the goal for each theme. The consultant moved people around on 3 occasions so the projects and actions under each theme were developed by three different sets of people. Examples included:

Theme: Affordable Housing

Without an adequate supply of affordable housing we will be unable to retain our young people and attract key workers to develop our local economy. We want to provide more affordable housing both in the town of Marbury and each of the surrounding Parishes.

Projects and actions (examples):

1. Undertake a survey to establish housing need and current housing stock.
2. Research and promote sustainable construction techniques.
3. Undertake a feasibility study to identify potential housing sites and/or buildings suitable for residential conversion.
4. Purchase and develop the old railway yard for the construction of self-build housing and linked workshop spaces.

Theme: Transport

Our local economy, services and social facilities rely on local people being able to move easily throughout our area without having to use their private car. We want to provide an effective and integrated transport system connecting Marbury to Bristol and to the surrounding Parishes.

Projects and actions (examples):

1. Establish the current picture of all current methods of transportation within the wider area and outwards to Bristol and beyond (i.e. a Transport Study).
2. Promote a car share scheme through the new community web site.
3. Lobby the local bus company to amend timetables to help local and regional connections.
4. Explore the idea of an electric mini bus system connecting the Parishes with Marbury (especially evenings and weekends).

5.00pm Close and next steps.

Outcome

A complete draft plan for Marbury and surrounding parishes.

Step 2: Preparing and promoting an early draft

Following the three workshops the consultant prepared a report detailing the discussions. This was presented and discussed at the next Steering Group meeting and it was agreed to:

- Produce a simple, 4-page leaflet for distribution throughout Marbury and the surrounding parishes.
- Distribute the leaflets to key local organisations, businesses and agency partners for comment.
- Reproduce the summary leaflet in a pullout section of the Marbury News.
- Hold a special meeting with the Marbury Youth Forum to discuss the draft.

- Encourage written responses and direct comments to Steering Group members.
- Promote and run a full community meeting to discuss and develop the draft plan.

Outcome

The promotion of the draft plan throughout the community.

Steps 3 & 4: Community Event and Publishing the Plan

Six weeks after the first workshops a full community event took place in the local school. Over 70 people attended from a wide cross section of the community. The meeting was hosted by the Steering Group and chaired by the consultant. It was structured as follows:

- 6.00pm Steering Group met to be briefed by the consultant and set out the room.
- 7.00pm Introduction to the evening by the consultant.
- 7.10pm Introduction to the Plan – How we prepared the draft plan?

This was a simple introduction given by the chairman of the Steering Group explaining to everyone how they had set about preparing the draft plan. He did not spend time on setting out the plan relying on the fact that those attending would have read the leaflet or newspaper article.

- 7.20pm Discussing the Plan.



Chapter Five

The room was laid out so there were 8 'stations' around the room corresponding to the eight themes of the plan. At each station there was a poster-sized version of the theme and the projects and actions under that theme. Below each poster there was a table with a Steering Group representative ready to help discussions.

The consultant then explained that everyone could visit the three themes that interested them most to give their comments and reactions.

7.30pm First session – Theme 1.



7.50pm Second session – Theme 2.

8.10pm Third session – Theme 3.

8.30pm Staying at the last 'station' everyone was then asked for any other comments they wanted to make in relation to the draft plan (e.g. on the vision, strategies etc).

8.45pm Report back.

The Steering Group member who had been at each 'station' then gave a report back to the whole meeting on the main points of the discussion. New projects were added to the poster at each station.

9.15pm Preferences and Working Groups.

The consultant then explained to everyone that there were three final things to do before the close of the meeting:

1. Everyone was allocated three votes where they could vote for their three most important themes.
2. Everyone was allocated one vote at each 'station' where they could vote for their most important project under each theme.

3. The consultant explained that the Steering Group were going to organise themselves by setting up working groups under each theme. Everyone was encouraged to sign up to the working group that interested them most by putting their name on the sheet available at each station.

The 'voting' and signing up to working groups then took place.

9.30pm Results of voting and next steps

The consultant then announced the results of the voting to inform the meeting and explained that the next steps would be to:

- Finalise the initial plan for the area (both larger report and summary leaflet).
- Circulate the final version through a second leaflet and newspaper coverage.
- Continue working on the plan through the Steering Group and newly formed working groups.

Outcome

The support and involvement of the wider community and agency partners in both the Plan and the Steering Group.



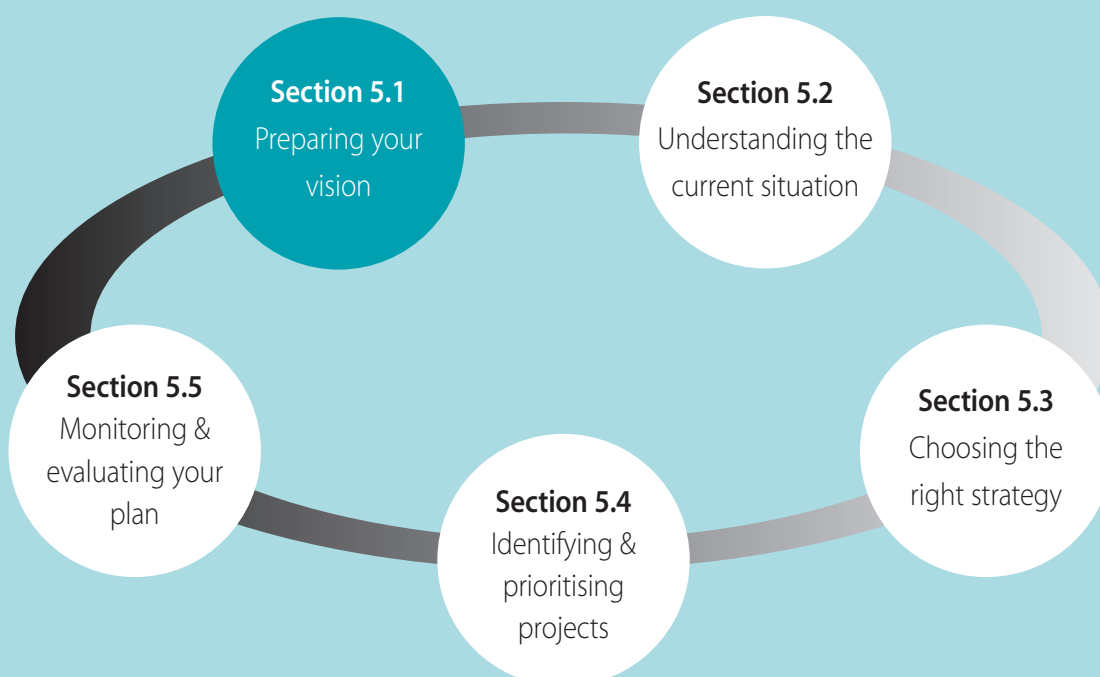
Section 5.1

Preparing your vision

This section will explain what you are trying to achieve in preparing your vision and why it is of such crucial importance. It will help you think through the issues and provide advice, guidance and suggestions on how to proceed.

The Key Challenges covered in this section include:

- **Challenge 1:** Who should be involved and how do we involve them?
- **Challenge 2:** How do we create our vision?
- **Challenge 3:** How do we assess the obstacles to achieving our vision?
- **Self Evaluation checklist**



Chapter Five

The Principles

Why is it important?

“Imagination is the most powerful tool for social change”

Ed Mayo,
New Economics Foundation

The vision gives your community direction and an overall philosophy. It builds consensus and provides a shared picture of the future. The vision generates community energy and commitment to take the actions needed to bring it about.

As a society we tend to look backwards. Even our language shows this. We are ‘post-industrial’ or ‘post modern’, but what are we ‘pre-’? You cannot plan the future by the past. The non-partisan Mitchell report on Northern Ireland commented “If the focus remains on the past, the past will become the future and that is something that no one can desire”.

Change is not easy and the challenge is to build common values, hopes and desires. When made clear, they create the basis for a shared belief in a community’s future. Fundamentally, the vision is a rallying cry; it binds people into a conspiracy to proceed.

How does it bring about change?

“Imagine a rubber band, stretched between your vision and the current situation. When stretched. The rubber band creates tension representing the tension between the future and current reality. What does tension seek? Resolution or release. There are only two possible ways for the

tension to resolve itself: pull reality towards the vision or pull the vision towards reality. Which occurs will depend on whether we hold steady to the vision”

Another way of explaining how it works is to think about how it overcomes the inevitable resistance to any change. Resistance can be overcome by:

- Dissatisfaction with where we are now;
- Visions of where we want to get to;
- The steps we then take to take us from here to there.

Indeed this summarises the plan making process.

The Practice

What is a vision?

A vision explains what local people want their community to be like in the future. It imagines the life of future generations were the community to achieve everything it wanted.

It is not a plan. It is local people’s projection of an image of their community’s future. It should reflect all aspects of community life: economic, social, cultural and environmental. By thinking through a vision it will be possible to identify the values and principles, which will underpin the whole process of preparing the Plan.

The vision will influence everything you do, from thinking about the information you need to collect, to prioritising projects. The vision will be your touchstone.



Section 5.1

Preparing your vision

The Big Issue

"Imagination is more important than knowledge"

Albert Einstein

Thinking differently. Preparing a community vision involves thinking differently. It is a creative, long-term process that challenges everyone involved to leave behind the 'safety' of current issues. Change is a frightening thing, and asking people to imagine the future can prove difficult. This is not how we are taught to think. The advantage is that it can lift people's horizons, inspire and conjure up powerful ideas that can really change the future direction of your community.

The Wicked Issues

The Steering Group is too new. To lead in the preparation of a community vision your Steering Group has to work well. People should be comfortable with each other and share a commitment and enthusiasm for the long haul ahead. Starting to prepare your plan without this common

One community placed a bucket in the centre of the table and whenever someone referred to a 'difficulty' of the here and now they had to place a fine in the bucket. This soon moved people on (and covered the cost of the tea and biscuits)!

The glib statement. Don't be tempted to write a simple, glib vision



purpose can lead to difficulties. If you have come together through working on the issues involved in 'getting ready to plan' (LINK CHAPTER 4) this will help. Try running a 'visioning event' for the Steering Group before going any further. This will help you work together, understand the issues and plan a successful visioning process.

Stuck in the past or the present. You will find that some people find it difficult to make the leap to thinking creatively about the future. They will tend to refer to past circumstances and concentrate on specific projects. Encourage them to think differently.

statement. Many vision statements have very common elements. It is however, the process of bringing your community together to develop a shared vision that is so powerful.

Don't ignore the Local Authority and other partners. The Local Authority and other partners should be encouraged to take part in preparing the community vision. They are a key part of your community. Working together will help build a common understanding and a working relationship. Be equally careful that they contribute not dominate!

Chapter Five

Don't dismiss local groups who don't get involved immediately.

There can be lots of reasons why groups don't get involved. Don't ignore them. Find out why they have missed the events you organise and find different ways to get their views and involve them. Remember preparing a plan is a long-term process, giving lots of opportunities for people to participate.

Sufficient consensus to proceed.

You will never reach unanimous agreement on anything as creative as a vision through something as diverse as a local community. Follow Nelson Mandela's advice and be prepared to judge when you "Have reached sufficient consensus to proceed".



Challenge 1:

Who should be involved and how do we involve them?

How do we decide who to involve?

Deciding who to involve depends on:

- Your values (e.g. wishing to ensure that you involve hard to reach and disadvantaged groups).
- Your resources (involving lots of different groups requires lots of people's time. Meetings cost money for room hire and organisation. For example, do you have enough volunteers? Can you employ a trained facilitator?).
- The geographical area you are preparing your vision for (e.g. your Market Town and the surrounding villages).

If you do decide that you want to involve particular groups you will need to identify the criteria by which to choose. Examples can include:

- People who are affected by what is happening in the area;
- People who affect what happens in the area;
- People with good information about the area.

The Steering Group should carefully plan events having considered all of these issues.

How do we involve people?

There are different ways to involve people in the visioning process. Examples include:

- A Conference. Organising a major community event over a day (or even a weekend) where people receive invitations to take part can be a very effective way to ensure diversity and build a vision. This requires skilled facilitators, who will help build a common understanding of the past and present, develop a shared vision and get people to commit to action. Such an event demands considerable resources in organising and running it successfully.
- A series of Workshops. You may want to run a series of open events on a neighbourhood basis. While these require less resources to organise they do not guarantee the diversity of a 'by invitation event'.
- A workshop based on existing organisations. Although this may involve numerous meetings, they require less effort but there will be less diversity of views.
- Creative events. You may want to use theatre, video, song writing etc to capture the imagination that is the key to generating a powerful vision of the future.



You will probably use a number of different ways to involve people. Young people, for example, are much more likely to take part through music, video and theatre. You may find it helpful to run an event specifically for the Steering Group to kick things off and to get your creative juices flowing!

No matter how you choose to organise things don't forget the tips on how to involve people to get the best result (LINK CHAPTER 3 SECTION X).

case study

In Wiveliscombe community consultation events were given a short recognisable name to get away from the usual jargon. The chairman suggested WAVE – the Wiveliscombe Area Vision Events. This provided a snappy title, which prompted questions because no one knew what it was and it didn't have any negative associations.

Nearly 350 people enjoyed a fun packed event at the first WAVE day held in the summer at the community school. Among the skateboard ramps, bouncy castles, burger stalls and kids competitions, people could contribute their thoughts about the area. There were displays and maps and people could put post-it notes with comments to make their comments known. The success of the day meant two further WAVE days were held.

When combined with discussions within the Steering Group a strong vision statement emerged for the area.

Chapter Five

case study

In Perthshire the two communities of Tyndrum and Crianlarich came together to prepare a plan for their future. Their plan opens with their vision statement:

Our vision for the future is one where both communities work together as Strathfillan – while still respecting their own distinctiveness. We see regeneration making the sustainable use of our local resources, unique location, environment and heritage.

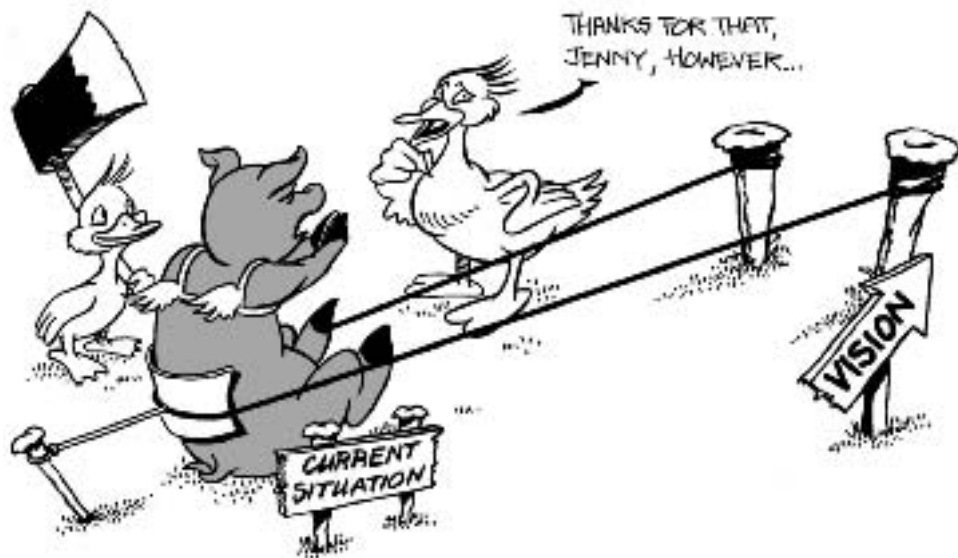
A regenerated Strathfillan will have been brought about through increased local control and influence over local land, resource use and housing in order to create opportunities for locals and visitors alike. This increased control will have been the basis for:

- Creating more affordable homes for local people;
- Increasing leisure and recreational opportunities for visitors and locals and boosting the local economy;
- Improving the natural and physical environment and making the area more attractive.

Over the next ten years we hope to have helped create an attractive, living, working Strathfillan community with an integrated mix of housing, employment, educational, social and community services.

Challenge 2: How do we create our vision?

Visioning should not be done in a back room by agency staff and consultants. The local community should be encouraged to take part and create the vision for their place. This enables the community to get involved in the planning process and to feel that their values and opinions are being expressed and listened to.



Community leaders have an important role to play. Their aspirations offer a useful starting point. They can inspire people with a picture of what the community could become. To build community commitment this picture must at least be received and discussed by the wider community.

More often the vision is developed as a community process. Local people can express in pictures, words and other means the vision to which they aspire. They come to a consensus over conflicting elements and then describe the vision in a way that everyone can understand.

In this process, differences of opinion will arise about the future desired. This is an opportunity to identify the impact different visions will have on people's lives and build consensus. Dealing with differences at this early stage will avoid conflict in the future.

Above all, people must enter the visioning process without feeling constrained. A vision should reflect a desired end state that is consistent with the values and overall priorities of the group or community. Imagination and creativity takes priority.

By undertaking workshops, discussions, theatre or whatever way you chose to get people involved, your Steering Group can then begin to draft and test a statement that summarises the vision.

Section 5.1

Preparing your vision



Considering the past and the present?

As we discussed earlier (remember the elastic band stretched between the current situation and your vision?) if we pay too much attention to our current situation, we risk constraining our vision. It is, however, helpful to look at current trends to create common ground and prepare the way for the vision. Considering questions and identifying the trends is key to this, e.g.:

- How has the way people work changed in the last twenty years?
- What sort of development has taken place and what will this mean for the future?
- What sort of people are moving to your community, what do they do and how do they get about?
- What about 'bigger' issues such as global warming or the technology revolution?

It also worth considering just how fast change happens in a relatively short period of time, e.g.:

- All world trade carried out in 1949...is done in one day today

- All scientific projects in 1960.....are done in one day today
- All telephone calls made in 1983.....are made in one day today
- All the e-mails sent in 1994.....are sent in one day today

Asking the right questions!

Asking people to consider and respond to the following questions will help you to create your vision:

"How will our community look in 20 years if it has developed in a healthy way?"

"If everything develops as we want it to, what will life be like for our grandchildren?"

Chapter Five

case study

In Langport they took great care in identifying the various hurdles and obstacles to their vision. Even at their opening community meeting they spent time assessing the problems and threats facing their community after the groups had debated their vision for the future of the area.

This work was continued and refined all the way through the plan making process and included analysis of:

- Preparatory work on the establishment of the Langport and Somerton Regeneration Project;
- The Langport and Somerton Regeneration Project Research Study;
- The Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme;
- A telephone survey of residents and businesses in 2000;
- A Retail Business Survey in 2001;
- The workshops organised for the local community as part of the MCTI process.

The Langport Forum used this information to assess the difficulties they might face in relation to each of the themes of their Plan. This helped them ensure that their projects would overcome the obstacles to achieving their vision.

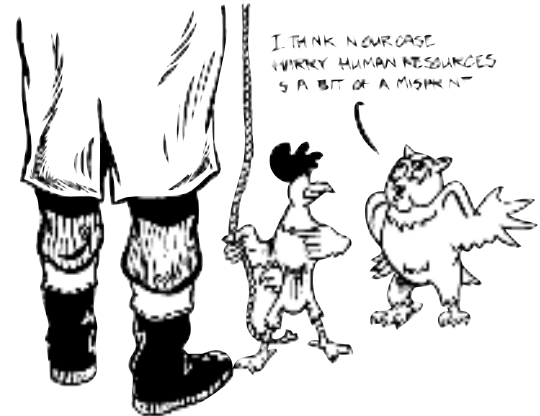
Challenge 3: How do we assess the obstacles to achieving our vision?

Opportunities and Obstacles

Having drawn up your vision, have your Steering Group (with community assistance) identify the obstacles to achieving the vision. This exercise can form an important part of the Conference if you have chosen this as a way of involving people in the preparation of the vision. In shorter workshops it is unlikely that you will have the time and should focus on the creative, visioning process. Start with constraints within your community then identify constraints outside the community (social, economic, environmental and cultural). Before the stage where people move on to understanding the current situation, this helps people face up to reality early on.

It is also helpful to look at the strengths and opportunities both within and outside your community that can help to achieve your vision.

This can be quite demanding. Conflict may arise and it is important to stress that being frank about obstacles and problems is the first step to solving them. Avoiding outstanding issues, overlooking strengths or ignoring weaknesses is only storing up problems for later on in the planning process.



Ingredients for Local Economic Development

It is also important to make an assessment of some of the tools that will help you to realise your vision. Under each of the following headings you should list firstly what you have, then what you need:

- Finance (of all sorts);
- Infrastructure (road, rail, Telecoms etc);
- Human Resources;
- Research and Planning;
- Promotion, Brokering and Marketing;
- Organisational Development – working together.

Section 5.1

Preparing your vision

These exercises also begin to determine the roles to assign to different organisations to help achieve the vision. Most importantly it helps to develop the role of the community organisation that is going to drive this plan locally (LINK TO CHAPTER 6).

Beginning to draft a Vision Statement

No matter how you have chosen to involve people, and in what way, you should now be at a point where you can begin to draft a Vision Statement. The Vision Statement begins to put into words the picture of your community in twenty years time. This will include a powerful statement about where your community will be and the principles that underpin this vision (see case study example).

While everyone who is participating can and should be involved, it is likely to be the responsibility of the Steering Group to 'pull the statement together'.

Guidance

What tools can we use?

There are a range of tools you can call upon to help you prepare a vision

- Community Visions Resource pack developed by the New Economics Foundation.
- Future Search: Is a complete tool developed by Marvin R Weisbord and Sandra Janoff (1995) to help communities prepare a plan based on a long term, sustainable vision.
- Participative Theatre.
- Art Workshop.
- Drawing and Graphic Facilitation.
- Scenario Planning.
- Risk Assessment.

What skills will you require?

- Administrative skills to organise events;
- Facilitation skills to run events;
- Specialist skills (e.g. participative theatre);
- Research skills to identify people, groups and partners and prepare information on current trends that may affect your vision.

Where can we find the help and information we require?

- Details about Community Visions can be found at the New Economics Foundation website www.neweconomics.org
- Details about Future Search can be found at www.futuresearch.net
- Details about the other tools can be found at www.communityplanning.net



Chapter Five

Self Evaluation Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to help you to identify whether you have considered all the issues that help in creating a community vision. It summarises and addresses many of the challenges and key points identified in this section. It could also be considered as a 'checklist of things to do'.

You may wish to photocopy this checklist and use it with your community and agency partners. You can, of course, adapt it to suit your own circumstances. An electronic version of the form is available to download on www.southwesttowns.net

Section 5.1

Preparing your vision

Are you ready?



Comments on significance

Are the Steering Group sufficiently ready and 'together' to take this on?

Have you run your own visioning event?

Have you 'warmed up' your partners to the idea (e.g. Local Authority)?

Have you decided what resources are available to you to undertake the visioning process?

Have you decided what help you require to organise and facilitate your visioning events?

Who should be involved and how do we involve them?

Have you developed clear criteria to help you decide who to involve?

Have you selected the most appropriate type of event to involve people?

Have you chosen the best 'tool(s)' to help make the event(s) a success?

Have you used the tips on how to involve people?

Have you involved all the people and groups you wanted to?

How do we create our vision?

Have you carried out the research into current trends?

Have those involved developed a common understanding of the desired future?

How do we assess the obstacles to achieving our vision?

Have you developed a clear picture of the obstacles you face and the opportunities you need to seize?

Have you developed a clear picture of the tools at your disposal and those you require to help you plan for the future?

Does the Steering Group have a clear vision of the future?

Do the wider community and your partners share your vision?

Chapter Five

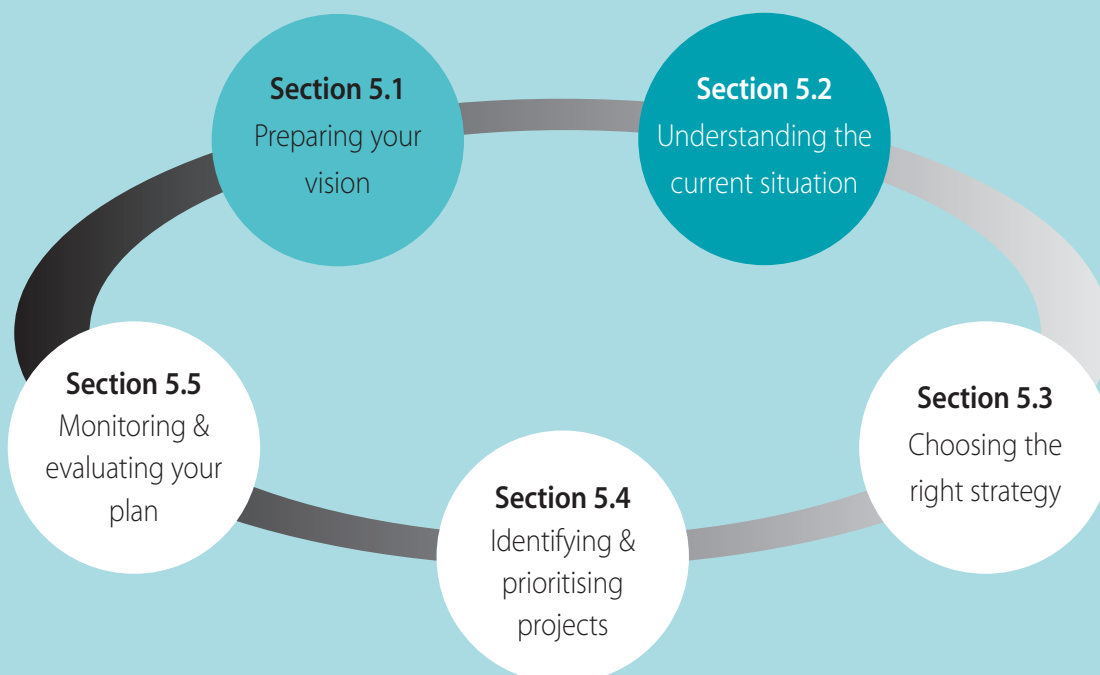
Section 5.2

Understanding the current situation

Having prepared your vision ([LINK TO CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.1](#)), this section will explain why it is of equal importance to understand your current situation. It will provide advice, guidance and practical suggestions on how to build a detailed picture of your community. It will help you identify the external factors that will influence your future. Most importantly, it will help you to use this understanding to plan effectively.

The Key Challenges covered in this section include:

- **Challenge 1:** How do we decide what information to collect?
- **Challenge 2:** How do we organise ourselves to collect and analyse this information?
- **Challenge 3:** How should we present this information?
- **Self Evaluation Checklist**



Chapter Five

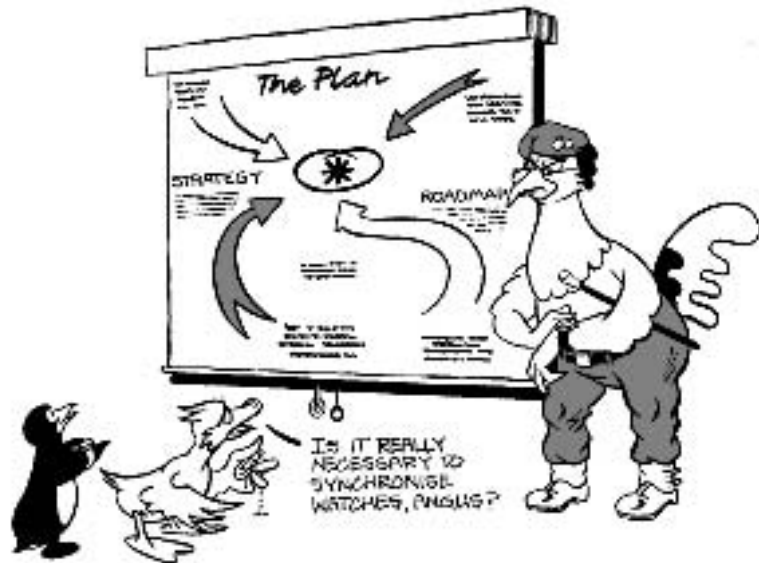
The Principles

Why is it important?

Making a plan is all about making choices and charting a route that will take you from where you are now to where you want to be. Having defined your vision (LINK CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.1) the next step is to understand your current situation. Having good information about the realities of your current situation will:

- build your skills, knowledge and understanding of how your community works;
- judge whether or not a project will really contribute towards the well being of your community;
- support funding applications;
- choose the right strategies to achieve your vision;
- measure your progress towards your vision (LINK SECTION 5.5 - MONITORING THE PROGRESS OF YOUR PARTNERSHIP);
- seize opportunities as they present themselves;
- overcome problems that arise.

The main reason you are collecting the information is to help with the preparation of your plan. How can you expect to plan the route to your vision without first understanding where you are coming from?



The Practice

What is it?

Understanding your current situation is a process that enables you to build a detailed picture of your community and the factors that will influence your future. Is your local economy vulnerable and if so why? Does money that could stay within your local economy leak out? How many people are actually in need of affordable accommodation? What proportion of your community are over retirement age and what are the population trends? How serious an issue is substance abuse or domestic violence in your community? How are changes in your regional economy going to affect your community? What funding programmes are available to your community?

Like the vision, it should reflect all aspects of community life: economic, social, cultural and environmental. While your vision is your touchstone, influencing everything you do, understanding your current situation is the foundation of your work.

What is involved?

Understanding your current situation involves:

- gathering information on your community to understand how it works;
- identifying the factors outside your community that will influence your future;
- identifying major issues, trends and changes;
- identifying gaps in service that should be filled, opportunities to seize and problems to overcome;
- researching, analysing and presenting information.

Having gained an understanding of the current situation the process should continue. You should stay in touch with what's happening as a regular part of your work. This helps you keep an eye on fundamental changes that may influence your plan and the route to your vision. This is essential if your Steering Group is going to be effective.

As your Steering Group matures this will require less data gathering. With experience people can identify key facts and issues more readily than they could before. This will help you make the most of limited resources and will influence all aspects of your planning and decision-making. You won't just be planning strategically, you will be thinking strategically.

Who is involved?

Once again the Steering Group is at the heart of this work. They will be working alongside their working groups, the wider community and their partners (LINK CHALLENGE 2).



The Big Issue

It is your information. The information you collect, research, analyse and present will be one of the most important resources for your work. This information will be owned by your community, tailored to your community for the use of your community. It will help your Steering Group come together, mature and plan effectively. It is not a one-off exercise but a process that will ensure that you are always very clear about where your community currently stands, able to seize opportunities and anticipate problems.

As the touchstone of your work, your vision requires creative, long-term thinking. As the foundation of your work, understanding the current situation is a practical and analytical task. Once again it requires you to think differently.

Wicked Issues

Ticking boxes & project led

A central theme of this Sourcebook is asking people to think differently, planning for your future rather than being driven by short-term projects. If you find yourselves collecting information to justify particular projects you are missing the significance of understanding your current situation. If this is accompanied by a feeling that you are collecting information for the sake of it, and ticking boxes in checklists, the alarm bells should be ringing loud and clear.

No review process

Remember the current situation constantly changes. Keep an eye on changes and be prepared to review your information, undertake new research and monitor changes that may affect your planning.

The irresistible offer!

One community received what seemed like an irresistible offer from the Local Authority to 'help' them collect information. The support of two Community Planning officers was too good an offer to refuse. An excellent report, professionally executed and presented was prepared in the Local Authority office in 'consultation' with the wider community. The trouble was that all the knowledge contained in the report and learning from the process remained with the officers.

Paid support is useful but the Steering Group must be actively involved in

Chapter Five

compiling and analysing the information. (LINK TO CHALLENGE 2)

Can't see the wood for the trees

Steering Groups can often find themselves submerged in reports, computer print outs and census data. This can happen very easily if the Steering Group fails to plan properly and allows it to be led by the checklists of information to be collected. Knowing what you need to collect and why is crucial to guide the information collection. Hold workshops involving the Steering Group and the wider community and use the SWOT planning tool (LINK TO CHALLENGE 1). Creative thinking will make the practical task of collecting and interpreting the information much easier.

Forgot about the bigger picture?

The future of a community is often dramatically altered by decisions taken by government and private corporations operating on a different scale and in a different timeframe from local communities. The policies, priorities and funding programmes of investors from all sectors can have a major impact on the well-being of your community. Knowing what is going on and being well organised is the key to influencing decisions and taking advantage of opportunities.

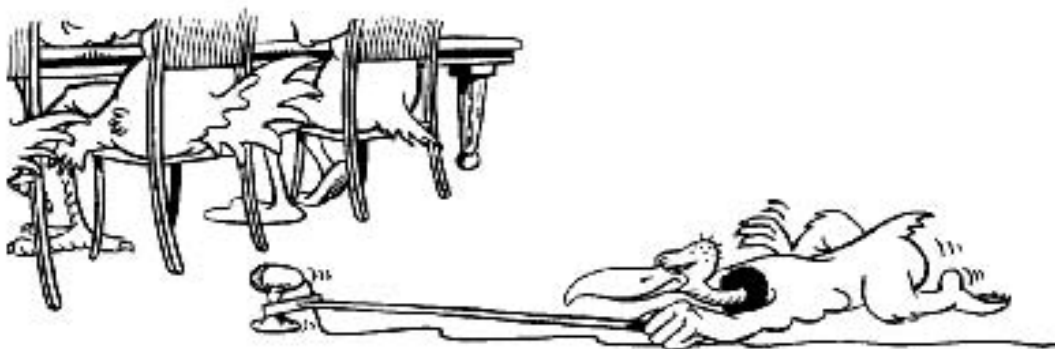
It is very common for crucial decisions affecting the future of an area to be taken without the involvement of local people. This happens for two main reasons. The first is that the local

community is not seen as a 'credible player' in terms of the economic future of an area. The second is that they do not possess the information to alert them to the opportunities or threats that are around them

It is important to map these external factors under each of the main headings (Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental). It is also important to include a fifth heading of 'Political and Organisational'. This will include all levels of government, public sector agencies and private interests in the local and regional economy. Examples of questions you might ask might include:

- Have we pinpointed the important sectors of economic activity locally and regionally? Do we know the trends in each sector and where the decisions are taken?
- Have we identified the main investment priorities of our public sector agencies and how will we find out about new programmes or priorities?

The fact that major investment happens in a particular place is not a happy accident. It is often not a surprise to anyone except the local community. By being prepared, well connected and well organised you will be more able to influence decisions to the benefit of your community. As one experienced community noted, "A community without spies is a community without eyes."



Challenge 1:

How do we decide what information to collect?

Remember, the main reason for collecting information is to help you prepare your plan. This means that you are looking for key facts to build a profile of your community. These might include, for example:

- Location: detailing transport links.
- Population: giving information about total population, proportion of groups such as the elderly and any trends such as young people leaving.
- Housing: details of tenure and the % of the total housing stock and any trends or main issues such as lack of affordable housing.
- Local economy and employment: background on how the economy has changed over the years and the role of particular sectors such as tourism. The number and type of businesses and unemployment figures.
- ...and so on for other themes such as the environment, heritage and culture, transport etc.

This profile of your community may be of use for other reasons (LINK PRINCIPLES EARLIER IN SECTION). If, for example, you want information to support a particular funding application you may need to be a little more detailed and thorough in collecting more information on that particular aspect of your community.

In assembling the profile of your community there are five stages in collecting information to help you understand your current situation.

Deciding what information you require.

In preparing your vision the final Challenge suggested that you undertake an initial assessment of the obstacles to achieving your vision. This will have given you an insight into the strengths and weaknesses of your community and the opportunities and threats lurking in the wider area. This simple analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is often referred to as a SWOT analysis and is a tried and tested planning tool.

The SWOT analysis will have started to highlight important themes (e.g. young people, affordable housing, transport) and key issues (e.g. lack of training opportunities, over-reliance on a single major employer). It will also have highlighted opportunities and gaps in the market and service provision (e.g. specific business markets and the need for improved community transport links). The visioning process will also have thrown up new themes and issues to explore (e.g. recycling, a new economic sector for your community, the potential for bio-diesel as a community business, marketing the town around its arts community etc). The exercise in examining the ingredients for local economic development will have further developed the SWOT analysis (e.g. What financial programmes are available to our community?)

At this stage, through workshops with the Steering Group, you will have developed a preliminary list of the themes and issues you need to research to understand your current situation.

Reviewing your decisions against the principles of your plan and the practicalities of checklists.

You should then ask yourselves the question "If we are preparing a holistic plan for our future, are there any themes or issues we have missed?"

case study

Avoiding collecting information for the sake of it was at the top of the Bodmin and Surrounding Area Forum's (BASA) agenda. They only started collecting information when they had a clear idea of the main themes of their Plan and possible project areas.

While BASA decided to use the Countryside Agencies Health-check sheets, they made sure that they were not just ticking boxes on a checklist of questions. A Community Agent was employed to co-ordinate the information collection working closely with the working groups, Project Officer and the consultant employed to help them prepare their Plan.

The earlier groundwork gave BASA a good idea of what information already existed and the gaps in their understanding. This helped them decide what new surveys were to be carried out. The excellent working relationship with the District Council helped uncover helpful reports and gave them access to databases of figures through Council officers.

Chapter Five

Think about this under the headings of Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental. Remember you want your understanding of the current situation to be as comprehensive as possible. This is an invaluable resource for your work.

You should then look at the checklists that have been developed by public agencies and tested with other communities. The Countryside Agency's Healthcheck process, for example, has comprehensive checklists under the themes of:

- environmental fact finding;
- economic fact finding;
- social & community issues;
- transport and accessibility.

By this stage you should have a comprehensive list of the areas of information you require.

Uncovering what information is already available.

It is essential to uncover exactly what relevant information is available about your community. This will ensure that you use your scarce resources wisely, only undertaking new survey and fact-finding work where it is absolutely necessary.

You will find a wealth of information readily available about almost every topic. It is important to ensure you have a clear picture of what information you require for each theme and issue. This will help you to decide what information and documents will be useful to you.

Your Local Authority and government agencies will be able to give you access to baseline census information and a wide range of data, studies, surveys and reports. Indeed, supportive officers within these organisations are often a good place to start looking.

A discussion within the Steering Group will tap into the experience and knowledge of your community of what studies have been undertaken in the past.

Undertaking surveys, research and information gathering.

By this stage you will have a clear idea of the information you require and what is currently available to you. It will then be possible to decide what new collection work is required. New work may be required to fill gaps where no information is available or because the figures are not exactly relevant to your area or issues you have identified.

This will enable you to direct your precious resources to new surveys and research. You may, for example, find that you need to undertake a local housing survey to get an accurate picture of housing need. You may need a training needs survey among young people or research into the possibility of better IT infrastructure to support business ventures. You may want to explore further the workings of your local economy using tools such as 'Plugging the leaks' ([LINK TO GUIDANCE, SKILLS AND CONTACTS](#)).

Analysing, understanding and reporting on the information.

The final stage is all about the ability to pull out key facts and trends in a way that lets people see the big picture and focuses attention on the strategic issues. Try and see the forest and not just a lot of trees. Individual surveys (for example the housing survey) may be quite detailed to secure the funding required, but it is the key points that are of importance in your plan making.



Challenge 2: How do we organise ourselves to collect and analyse this information?

Remember, understanding your current situation is about building your skills, knowledge and understanding of how your community works. It will help your Steering Group come together, mature and plan effectively. It is therefore essential that you actively participate in the information collection and co-ordinate the work.

Having said this, as a group of volunteers it is important to use your time effectively and utilise whatever help you can. This can include:

- establishing working groups: you may already have considered establishing working groups to explore the themes identified in preparing your vision and undertaking your SWOT. These are often under the general headings (e.g. Economic, Social etc) or more specific (e.g. youth, housing, training etc). Such groups are a very effective way to organise yourselves and contribute to the information gathering (LINK TO CHAPTER 6, SECTION 6.1 – DEVELOPING YOUR LOCAL ORGANISATION). Such groups will often involve one or two Steering Group members and a number of the volunteers in the wider community.
- employing people: if you have the resources this can greatly ease the burden of

information collection. Salaried Development Staff or contracted consultancy assistance can assist. Community Agents (LINK CHAPTER 6, SECTION 6.2 – THE PEOPLE IN YOUR ORGANISATION) are a particularly valuable resource for this task. Please note the warning highlighted under 'Wicked Issues', and don't just pass responsibility for this work to paid people.

- Partner Agencies & Organisations: you may find that staff within agencies such as your Local Authority may be able to access particular information and undertake particular bits of work for you. For example, the local Housing Association may be able to interrogate their databases for particular information about your community.



It is essential that the Steering Group co-ordinates the overall work and takes an active role in interpreting the information and drawing out the key facts and trends. Each working group should have a Steering Group member. Maybe one or two Steering Group members should take overall responsibility for this work. At the end of the day, how can you hope to act strategically without this understanding?

case study

In Helston a Community Agent was the key to collecting information for the Helston MT Forum. The Community Agent made personal contact with all the surrounding Parishes and lots of existing organisations to help collect relevant information while building a stronger community network.

Using the Healthcheck process the Community Agent worked with the Parishes to prepare Parish Profiles. Giving a picture of the history, social profile, employment and census data the Profiles helped to supplement the Healthcheck process. They also included community surveys of the Parishes strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

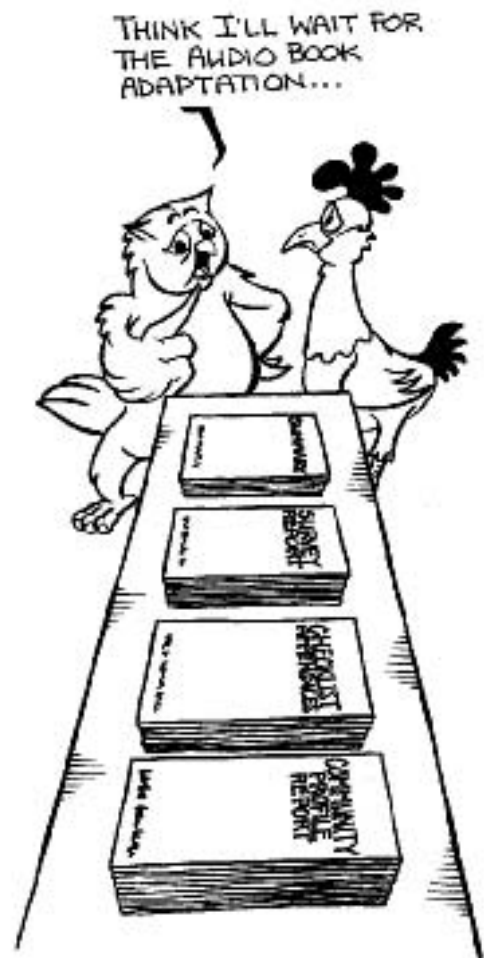
The Profiles were published in Parish magazines and on the community web site.

Chapter Five

Challenge 3: How should we present this information?

Remember, this work may be one of the most valuable resources you have in preparing, implementing and monitoring your plan. It will enable you to think strategically, weed out irrelevant project ideas, support funding applications and provide baseline data to help you measure your progress. Reflecting the multitude of uses it should be presented in a variety of forms:

- The overview or 'snapshot': the summary of the key facts and trends that are influencing your plan.
- The key survey report: the detailed report on a central issue that will be needed to support funding applications.
- The checklists and appendices: the raw material that helped guide your information collection should be well documented to support your decisions.
- The Community Profile Report: the complete resource that will help you, your community and your partners fully understand your current situation. Many communities publish their report, distribute it to every household, business and partner organisations.



Community Profile: Suggested Structure

Section 1.	Definition & Description Of area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A definition of the boundary of the area and a map; ● A brief description of the area including its main features, land uses and settlements; ● A brief history of the area explaining how it has developed and changed over the years.
Section 2.	Statistical Information	<p>Social and economic characteristics and trends including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Population; ● Economy, occupation and workforce; ● Housing and accommodation; ● Other social, economic and environmental characteristics (e.g. land use, ownership, natural resources etc). <p>Services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Education; ● Health; ● Social and welfare; ● Leisure; ● Transport; ● Utilities; ● Retail.
	Qualitative Information	<p>Collected from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviews; ● Focus groups; ● Community events.
Section 3.	Information on Future Developments	This section should include a brief account of any likely future developments, projects or proposal.
Section 4.	Information on Community Capacity	<p>This section should set out the resources, assets and talents available to the Steering Group and wider community and how these are organised (LINK CHAPTER 5 SECTION 1). It should include brief descriptions of the main organisations involved in the sustainable development of your community.</p> <p>This can also include a local skills survey (LINK CHAPTER 6, SECTION 6.2, CHALLENGE 1).</p>

Chapter Five

Guidance, Skills and Contacts

What tools can we use?

There are a range of tools you can call upon to help you to understand your current situation and plan your future.

- Community Profiling to help you build a detailed picture of your community.
- Healthcheck Process devised by the Countryside Agency provides guidance and checklist sheets on collecting information in your community.
- BizFizz is a one-stop shop led by an enterprise coach that fosters business development by mobilising all the local networks and resources your community possesses.
- Plugging the Leaks is a tool, based around a one-day workshop, which leads a community through a process of understanding how their local economy works and facilitates ideas for improving it.
- Local Alchemy is a process of community led economic analysis, visioning and planning which leads to a strategy for long-term economic renewal.
- LM3 is a measuring tool that enables anyone to assess how a particular business or initiative impacts on the local economy, and how to improve that impact.

What skills will you require?

- Administrative skills to organise events;
- Facilitation skills to run events;
- Research and analytical skills to identify people, groups and partners, undertake surveys and prepare information on current trends that may affect your vision;

- Community Development Skills;
- Organisational skills to handle large quantities of information.

Where can we find the help and information we require?

- Details about Plugging the Leaks, Local Alchemy, LM3 and BizFizz can be found at the New Economics Foundation website www.neweconomics.org under tools for economic renewal.
- Details about Community Profiling can be found at www.communityplanning.net
- Details about the Healthcheck can be found at www.countryside.gov.uk/market-towns
- The Countryside Agency also has a Data sources directory and Research directory which can be found at www.countryside.gov.uk/market-towns

Self Help Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to help you to identify whether you have considered all the issues that will help in understanding the current situation. It summarises and addresses many of the challenges and key points identified in this section. It could also be considered as a 'checklist of things to do'.

You may wish to photocopy this checklist and use it with your community and agency partners. You can of course, adapt it to suit your own circumstances. An electronic version of the form is available to download on www.southwesttowns.net ►

Chapter Five

	Comments on significance	Reviewed
Are you ready?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Are the Steering Group sufficiently prepared and ready to take this on?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you prepared your vision (LINK TO CHAPTER 4, SECTION 4.1)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you detailed what resources are available to you to undertake this work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How do we decide what information to collect?		
Have you undertaken your initial SWOT?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you reviewed your initial decisions against the checklists?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you uncovered what information is available to you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you decided what new research is required?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you pulled out the key facts?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you remembered to map the external factors?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How do we organise ourselves to collect and analyse this information?		
Have you decided what is the most effective way to organise yourselves?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you decided what paid people are available to you and how best to use them?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you found friendly staff within partner organisations to help?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How should we present this information?		
Have you prepared a 'snapshot'?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you prepared your report on the key issues?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you completed your checklists of information?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you prepared your overall Community Profile?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

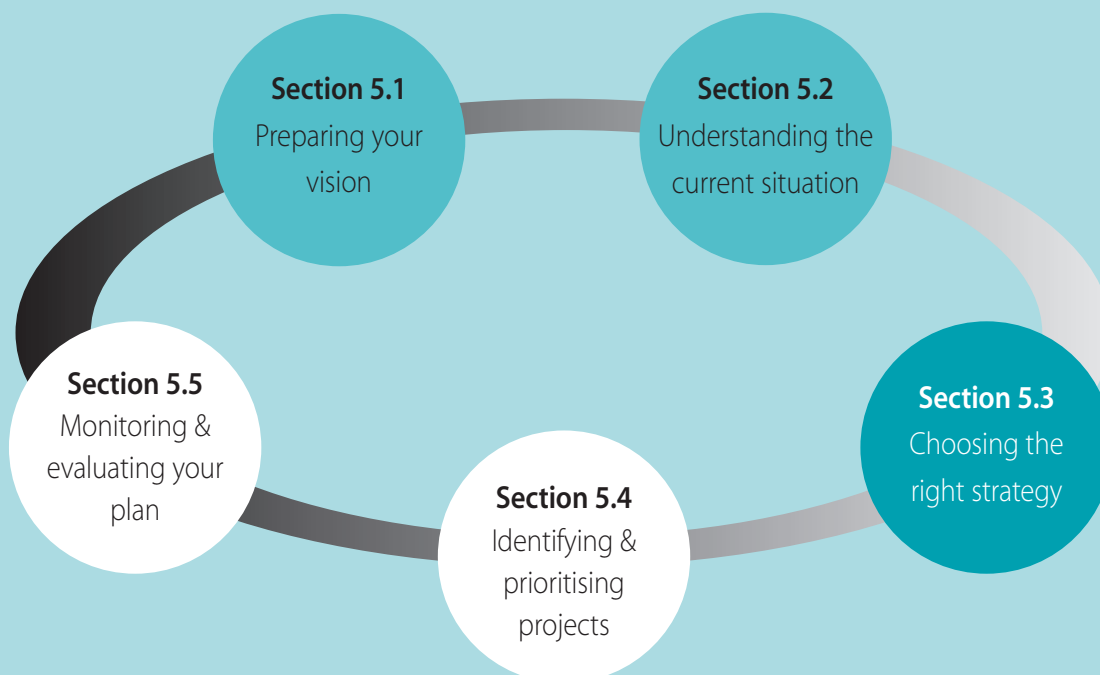
Section 5.3

Choosing the right strategy

Having prepared your vision and understood your current situation (LINK TO CHAPTER 5, SECTIONS 5.1 & 5.2), this section will explain how you can develop the strategies to achieve your vision. It will provide advice, guidance and practical suggestions on how to choose the right strategies. It will help you to understand why they are important and how they can help you decide what role your organisation will play in making things happen.

The Key Challenges covered in this section include:

- **Challenge 1:** How do we identify the themes for our strategies?
- **Challenge 2:** How do we set the goals for our strategies?
- **Challenge 3:** How do we then choose the right strategies?
- **Self Evaluation Checklist**



Chapter Five

The Principles

Why is it important?

“Choosing the right strategy is the key to securing a prosperous and healthy future.”

Gordon Brown,
Chancellor of the Exchequer

Choosing the right strategy is all about taking responsibility for the future of your community. All too often communities just want to know what public agencies are going to do for them. “Will you fund our projects? Will you spend your money here? What are you going to do to solve the chronic shortage of affordable housing? Just how much money do you have and how do we get our hands on it?”

Choosing the right strategy shows a community is ‘growing up’ and beginning to take responsibility for its future. It shows that you are thinking about the courses of action you can take to alleviate some of the problems you face. It shows you understand exactly where you are and where you want to take your community. It shows you are a serious player and partner, one to be respected and resourced to play a major role in your future.

Choosing the right strategy will influence the projects you choose. When a project idea is brought you will be able to judge its value by asking

how it fits with your chosen strategy. “Will it help us achieve our chosen goal and overall vision?”

Finally, choosing the right strategy will help you define the role your organisation will need to play in the longer term and how you will need to organise yourselves. It will identify the things that you just can’t do and therefore the partners you will need to bring on board.



The Practice

What is it?

A strategy charts the route between where you are now and where you want to be. It links your current situation to your vision. Your projects will fit your strategy, helping you to achieve your desired vision. Imagine a washing line where one pole is your current situation and the other is your vision. Your strategy is the washing line that connects the two. Your projects are the clothes you hang on the line.

A strategy needs to be very carefully thought out. It needs to be robust and flexible enough to cope with change and remain in place for some time. It will help you to consider different options and make good quality decisions.

How does it bring about change?

“If you do not understand the difference between vision and strategy you will waste time, effort and cash”

Michael Porter,
Harvard University and advisor
to UK Government

Understanding the difference between visions, strategies, projects, targets, objectives and goals is important. Strategic thinking is about choosing the direction you are going to take to achieve your vision. It is not possible to go in every direction, so choosing the right strategy involves a number of steps and fits into the plan-making process as in the following example:



Vision	<p>Your vision includes the desire to have a 'balanced' population in terms of age groups. You desire a thriving local economy offering employment opportunities to support this 'balanced population'. Equally you want everyone to have access to high quality housing to support those who choose to live in your community.</p> <p>Your main principles and values include achieving your vision on the basis of local ownership and control of your resources. You want development to be sustainable in terms of the materials used in construction, the method of construction and the ongoing management of the project.</p>
Current situation	A chronic shortage of affordable housing especially for young families coupled with a huge demand for such properties.
Themes	Affordable Housing.
Goals	To provide 50 new 2 and 3 bed roomed affordable housing units over the next 5 years.
Strategies	A new community company will be formed to purchase the development land. You will train local labour in the principles and practice of sustainable construction techniques to undertake the construction and establish a community co-operative to manage the properties.
Objectives	<p>To secure x hectares of development land over the next two years.</p> <p>To secure development finance of £x million over the next two years.</p>
Targets	<p>Year 1: Undertake feasibility study to identify potential development site, partners and funding sources.</p> <p>Year 2: Offer training and skills development to 50 local people in the construction industry.</p>
Projects	<p>Project 1: Purchase and develop the old railway yard for the construction of self-build housing and linked workshop spaces.</p> <p>Project 2: Convert the old creamery for a mixture of business units, tourist information centre and flats.</p>

Chapter Five

Who to involve & who should lead?

Once again it is essential that the Steering Group lead this work. You are the ones who have put all the effort into ensuring that you can plan and think strategically. You should use your working groups to develop initial ideas and contribute to the strategy formulation. You should involve the partners you will need to make things happen and who will do the things that you cannot do.

Strategic thinking is a true skill. It does not come naturally to most people or organisations which are much more comfortable dealing with defined, manageable ideas and projects. It is likely that at this stage you will need to enlist the help of a skilled regeneration practitioner, someone who can help you think through the options and who is used to helping communities see the wood not just all the trees. You may need to employ this person or a partner may offer one of their professional staff.

How will we actually do this and how long will it take?

Thinking strategically and understanding how strategy relates to setting goals, objectives, etc is one of the trickiest bits of the plan making. It is also one of the most important! It can all seem a bit daunting and it really is advisable to get help from a skilled regeneration practitioner.

Such a person will be able to help you identify the themes, set the goals and choose the strategy in a short series of workshops. Once you understand how to think strategically you will find it relatively straightforward and quick. Trying to muddle through will inevitably leave you in a mess!

The Big Issue

Thinking strategically. This is the point where you simply must be thinking strategically. This is not about individual projects and actions. This is 'big picture' thinking to carefully plan how you are going to take your community from where you are now to where you want to be. The way your community works is complicated. Individual projects will not influence the future well being of your community. You will need carefully thought-through and resilient strategies for each and every aspect of community life.

with huge vacancy signs at the entrance? No one chose to understand how the economy of those towns worked and how new enterprise could be created.

To think strategically requires a clear understanding of your current situation and your vision. It is only with this knowledge that you will be able to plan and think strategically.



Past regeneration initiatives are littered with examples where huge sums of money have been spent, only to find the same fundamental problems exist 10 years on. This is because they focused on individual projects without taking a strategic view. How many small towns do you know with shiny industrial units on the edge of town

Section 5.3

Choosing the right strategy

Wicked Issues

Being led by your partners

Choosing the right strategy is likely to involve partner organisations. While this is sensible it is extremely important to avoid being led by their policies and priorities. The reference point for setting strategy is your vision and your understanding of the current situation. The priorities of public sector organisations in particular can change very quickly. If you blindly follow their lead you may find your chosen strategy is speedily made redundant by a shift in government policy.

You will already know the plans of your partners and have a good idea of where they fit or conflict with your ideas. Encourage joint thinking and working. Try to influence your partners to change the things you disagree with using your understanding of the current situation and of how they operate as an organisation.

Think things through together while always referring to both the foundation (understanding the current situation) and touchstone (vision) of your work.

Thinking you have to do everything

Often you can lose sight of the fact that you are planning for your community, not your organisation. Strategy should be set to achieve all aspects of your vision not the particular parts that your organisation feels able to do. Strategy should be set because it is a sensible course of action not because any one organisation has the skills to do it.

Don't be constrained by the limitations of your organisation. By all means assess the range of skills and experience open to your partnership, but choose the strategy that you feel is most likely to achieve your goal.

Strategies for Projects?

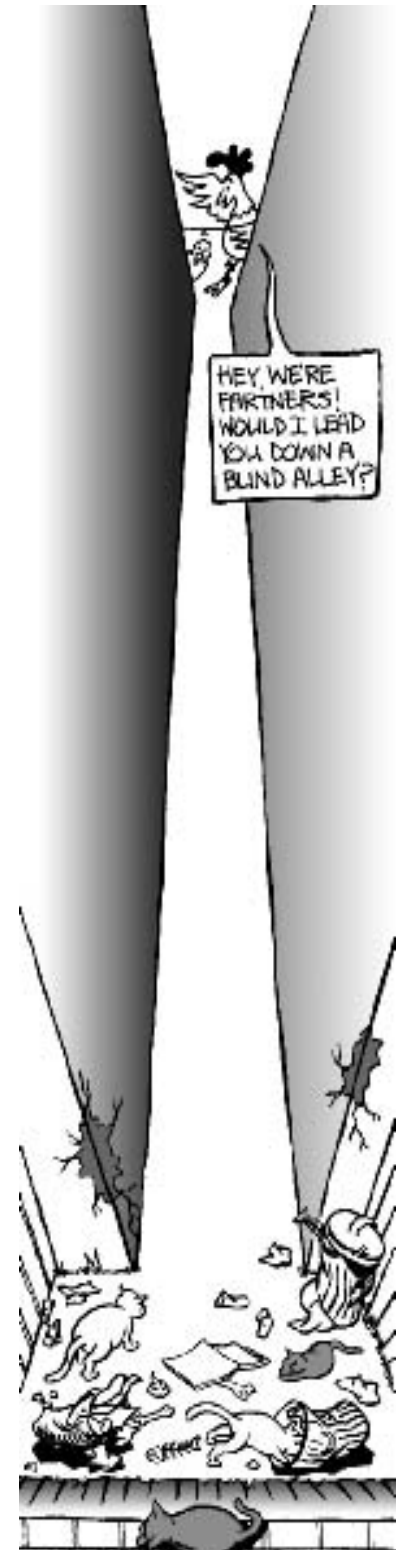
Quite simply, your strategy will help to determine the projects that will help you to achieve your goal and not the other way around.

Haven't really understood your current situation!

If you haven't taken the time to really understand what makes your community tick you will find that your strategies are very general. You will choose themes because they appear obvious. You will find people justifying a certain approach by referring to anecdotal information where people 'are sure' certain facts are true.

It is relatively straightforward to look at plans of other communities and crib what appear to be credible strategies. In this situation you will find people defending this approach by insisting that most plans for communities are very similar. You may also find partners saying that their organisations know for a fact that certain things are true.

All of this means you are not really taking responsibility for your plan and your strategies are likely come unstuck very quickly. Credibility is hard won and very easily lost. Beware of taking shortcuts.



Chapter Five

The Steering Group Membership is still not right.

Planning in this way requires community leaders. It needs people who can think beyond projects and the constraints of their organisation. You need people who want to act not talk. You want people who are prepared to take responsibility for your future and not automatically look to others to deliver.

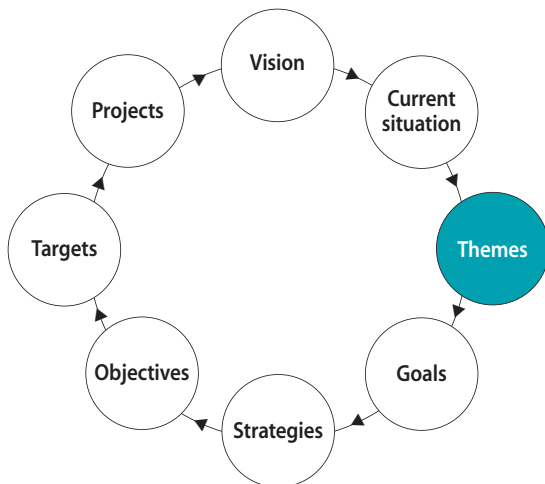
Bringing together a like-minded group of people like this is not easy. If you have really gone to work on preparing your vision and understanding your current situation the chances are you will have begun to 'weed out' those who do not want to share the responsibility. You will probably be moving beyond the 'usual suspects' who nominate themselves for every committee.

If you are still having difficulty getting your Steering Group to think strategically, try involving others who may have been coming forward through the working groups. Seek out those who see the bigger picture in your community. They may not yet have come forward precisely because they think it will be the same old faces talking the same old talk.



Challenge 1:

How do we identify the themes of our strategies?



In the previous section (LINK TO CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.2 – CHALLENGE 1) the Steering Group will have begun to identify the important themes that link your current situation to your desired vision for the future. You may have already begun to structure working groups around these themes to collect and analyse information. Now that you have a detailed understanding of your current situation and your desired vision, the Steering Group can revisit and remind yourself of your list of themes.

The themes you identify will be the areas where you need to concentrate your attention to realise your vision. They will represent priorities for action in your plan. As such, you will be looking to develop a goal and a strategy for each theme. You will be highlighting not only

what you will achieve but also the route you plan to take to ensure you achieve it.

Your strategic themes are likely to fall into three categories:

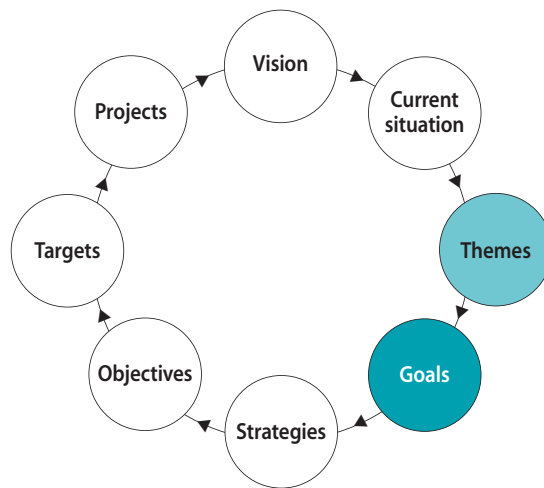
- **Topic themes:** examples may include young people, transport, housing, community facilities etc.
- **Action themes:** examples may include business development, learning and training, promotion and marketing etc.
- **Organisational theme:** This is an essential theme for every plan. It encompasses how the Steering Group, wider community and your partners will organise themselves to put the plan into action (LINK CHAPTER 6, SECTION 6.1).

The Steering Group should identify the initial list of strategic themes, pooling your knowledge with the working groups who may have been active collecting information and developing ideas.

Having developed the initial list it is likely that individual themes will be very closely linked. For example people may feel that business development, tourism and marketing and promotion should be drawn together under the heading of 'the economy'. At this stage, keep the themes separate while mapping where and how you feel they link. In developing your goal and considering the right strategy for each theme these links will come through and themes may naturally come together.

Chapter Five

Challenge 2: How do we set the goals for our strategies?



Before you start

Before you can choose a strategy you have to make sure you have the right goal. Having set out the strategic themes the Steering Group should now consider the strategic goal for each theme. Strategic goals need to look at least 5 if not 10 years into the future. Exactly what do you hope to have achieved in that time? It is helpful if the goals are as specific as possible, setting targets to achieve in the next 5 – 10 years. For example, a goal may be developed to provide affordable housing for young families. The housing study that you undertook while building your understanding of the current situation will have given you an accurate picture of demand, trends and supply. It may therefore be possible to include a target of 50 new houses in your goal.

In setting your goals the Steering Group should involve the partners you will have identified or begun to work with. It will already be clear that no one organisation will be able to achieve the goals you set in the plan. It is therefore sensible to involve your partners, tapping their knowledge and encouraging them to ‘buy into’ the plan. If you do not work together to draft the strategic goals, you should ensure the draft is tested on the likely partners before they are finalised.

Drafting your goals

Considering all the background to each of your themes (in preparing your vision and understanding your current situation) you should draft a simple statement that says what you can realistically achieve.

If you already have working groups established, it is sensible to give this task to the specific working group. The working group can then report back to the Steering Group who should ask the following questions:

- Is the statement clear? Does everyone understand what it means?
- Does it adequately cover the theme?
- Is it both specific and realistic?

Testing the draft

The draft can then be revised and tested with a tougher set of questions:

- Is the goal consistent with your desired vision?
- Can it be achieved by the Steering Group (or the organisation you plan to establish), one of your partners or a partnership working together?
- Does it reflect the facts about your current situation and the external factors that will influence your future (LINK CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.2)?

Section 5.3

Choosing the right strategy

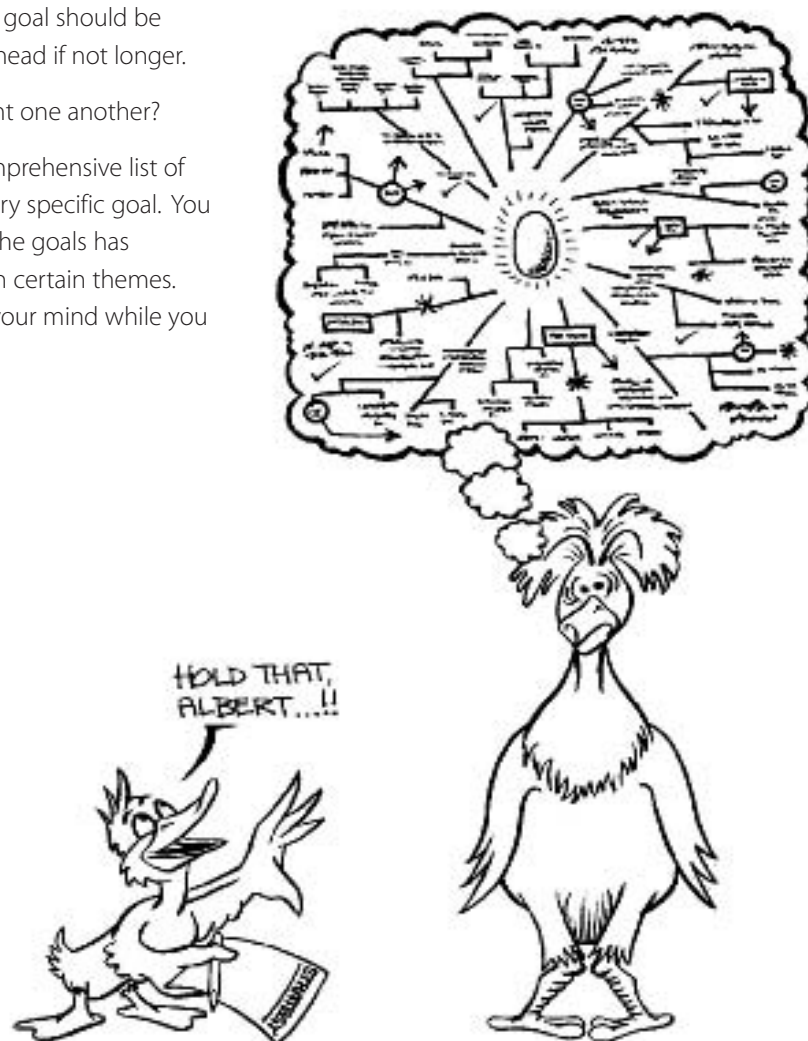
- Does it describe an outcome that can be measured to determine the progress you are making?
- Is it clear what individuals, organisations or activities will be affected by the efforts to achieve this goal?

Finalising the goals

Having worked through all of the goals the Steering Group should ask:

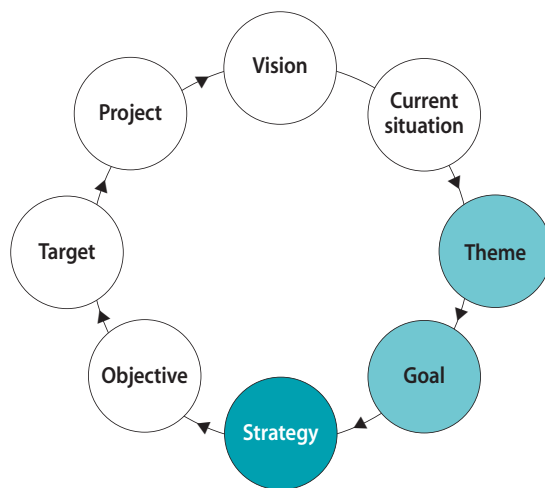
- Has anything been missed? If so a goal statement may need more work.
- Are these all 'strategic goals'? You will need to be careful that they are not actually short-term objectives or even specific projects or actions. Remember your goal should be looking at least 5 years ahead if not longer.
- Do the goals complement one another?

You should now have a comprehensive list of your themes, each with a very specific goal. You may also find that drafting the goals has reinforced the links between certain themes. Hold these connections in your mind while you prepare your strategies.



Chapter Five

Challenge 3: How do we then choose the right strategies?



Now that you are clear about the themes and the goals, you need to decide on the strategy to achieve each goal. What is the most appropriate way to make sure you realise each goal?

Considering your role?

Thinking through the best strategy to achieve each goal will help you decide what long term role you want to play and what will be the most appropriate structure for your organisation (LINK CHAPTER 6, SECTION 6.1). It will, however, be important to think each strategy through with your likely partners.

There is one critical piece of guidance to keep in mind as you choose your strategies. You are preparing this plan and organising yourselves to enable your community to influence more control over your future. For example, jobs and business profits are not necessarily the best

measures of the health of your economy. Far more instructive is the ability of locally controlled organisations to influence business development and make it serve the principles, values and interests of local people.

Your Strategic Options

Your chosen strategy will usually involve one, or a mixture of the following:

- **Research and Planning:** usually an essential part of every strategy is the ability to undertake research to help you plan to achieve your goal.
- **Taking a Stake:** investing in land, buildings and enterprise.
- **Training and developing human resources:** concentrating on developing the skills and experience of the people within your groups, businesses, enterprises and community facilities.
- **Influencing others:** seeking to influence the policy, programmes and actions of others.
- **Inward investment:** looking outside your community to attract wealth, enterprises, skills, employment and resources.
- **Loan funding:** giving enterprises in your community access to development funding.
- **Technical Assistance:** providing the technical expertise required by enterprises and organisations in your community.

Drafting your Strategies

The Steering Group now need to consider each goal under each theme and discuss what mixture of the options above will form the right strategy. Which approach is most likely to realise your goal?

Once again it is likely to be most productive to first approach this task in small working groups

Section 5.3

Choosing the right strategy

relating to the strategic themes. Each group can involve the partners you will have identified for each theme. Each working group can begin to develop a strategy by looking at the strategic options and asking:

- **How would this help us achieve our goal?**

For example would looking to invest in land help us achieve our goal of providing more affordable housing? Would influencing others (e.g. the local Housing Association) be more appropriate or should you do a bit of both?

- **What strengths and opportunities would this build upon?**

For example we know an opportunity is the availability of derelict land? We know that the Housing Association has prioritised our area for investment over the next 5 years.

- **What are the problems and threats this would overcome?**

For example, we know there is a chronic shortage of accommodation for young families and as a result they are leaving the community. As a result our education facilities are under threat.

- **What are the long-term implications of this approach?**

What will we achieve if we carry it out successfully? For example if we purchase the available land and work in partnership with the Housing Association we will have created say 50 new houses for young families. This will ease support educational facilities but do we have enough childcare facilities for the young children? Do we have the employment and training opportunities to ensure that these families can not only live but also work in our community if they choose?

Finalising your strategies

Each working group can then report back to the Steering Group on their chosen strategies and the reasons behind their decisions. The questioning and debate that will follow will help:

- Test the effectiveness and suitability of each proposed strategy;
- Explore and highlight links between different themes and the chosen strategies;
- Enable you to amend and revise strategies in light of the above.

This debate will also help to highlight and clarify the roles you will need organisations to play to implement the strategies. This will help you to decide what role the Steering Group needs to play and what form the organisation should take (LINK CHAPTER 6, SECTION 6.1).

For example, it may be that many of your strategies require a local organisation to invest in land and buildings in order to create workspaces and affordable homes while keeping the money within your community. You have discovered that none of your partners will have any investment cash over the next five years but have access to grants and loans to assist private enterprise. By setting yourselves up as a company limited by guarantee you would be able to take advantage of these loans and grants and achieve your goals.



Chapter Five

Guidance, Skills and Contacts

What tools can we use?

- See tools mentioned in sections 5.1 and 5.2 that can assist with strategic thinking.

What skills will you require?

- Administrative skills to organise events.
- Community development skills to involve people and organisations.
- Facilitation skills to run meetings and events.
- Business planning skills to develop your Plan.
- Strategic thinking.

Where can we find the help and information we require?

- See sources mentioned in sections 5.1 and 5.2 that will assist with strategic thinking.
- For examples from other communities see www.southwesttowns.net
www.countryside.gov.uk/market-towns and
www.towns.net

Self Help Checklist

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Section 5.3

Choosing the right strategy

	Comments on significance	Reviewed
Are you ready?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Are the Steering Group sufficiently prepared and ready to take this on?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the Steering Group understand the differences between vision, goal, strategy etc?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you prepared your vision?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you fully understand your current situation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you partners who will help you set your strategies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you identified and engaged a regeneration practitioner to help you with the work in this section?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do we identify the strategic themes?		
Have you reviewed the themes you identified in understanding the current situation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you prepared an initial list of themes to test?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you mapped the links between the themes on this initial list?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do we set the goals for the strategies?		
Have you drafted a goal for each theme?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you tested each goal against both sets of questions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you finalised each goal against the set questions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you prepared a full list of your themes and goals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you mapped the links between the different themes and goals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do we choose the right strategies?		
Do you fully understand the different strategic options open to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you drafted the strategies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you considered your role in light of the chosen strategies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you considered and tested the role you wish other organisations to play?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you tested and finalised your strategies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Chapter Five

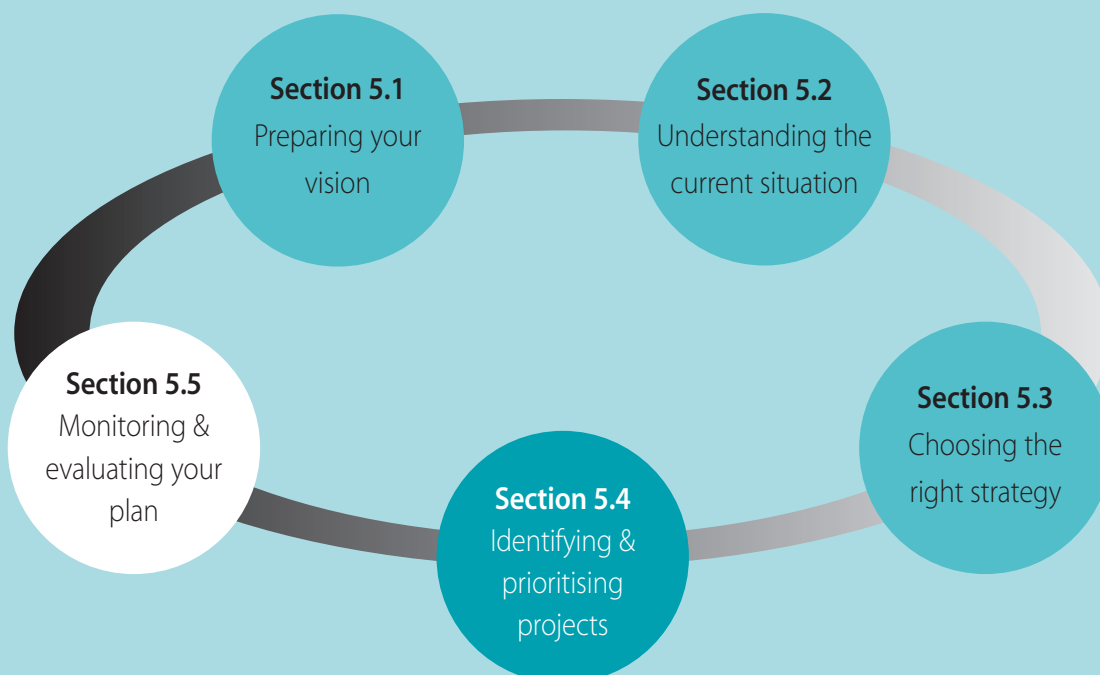
Section 5.4

Identifying & prioritising projects

Your strategies and vision are now in place, developed on your full understanding of your current situation (LINK TO CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.1, 5.2, 5.3). Now is the time to identify and prioritise the projects that will help you to achieve your vision. This section will provide advice, guidance and practical suggestions on how to achieve this and how to involve the wider community in this work.

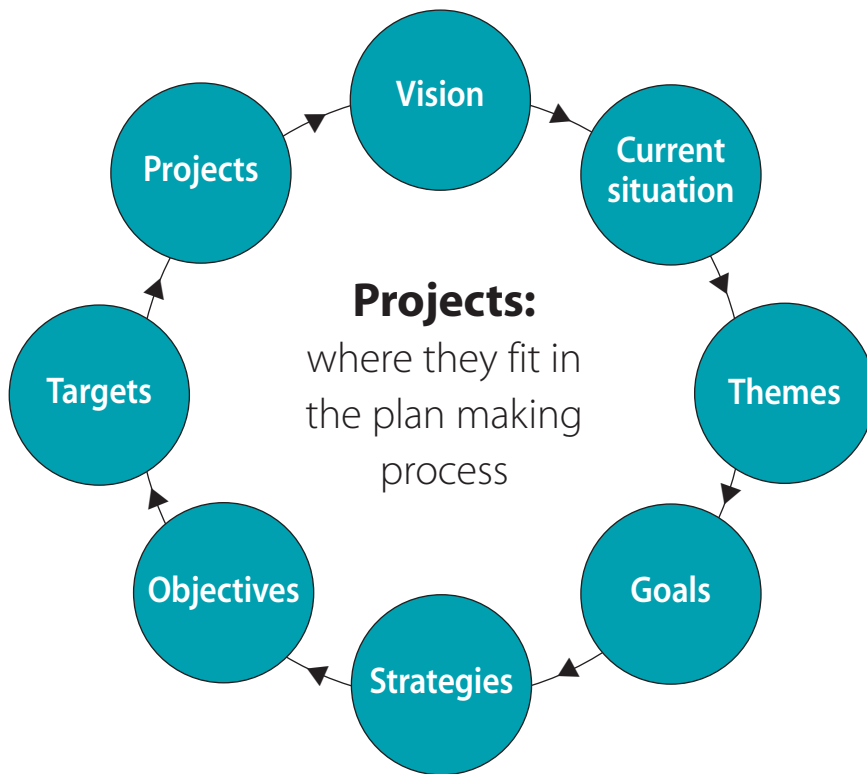
The Key Challenges covered in this section include:

- **Challenge 1:** How do we identify projects?
- **Challenge 2:** How do we prioritise projects?
- **Challenge 3:** How should we involve the wider community?
- **Self Evaluation Checklist**



Chapter Five

The Principles



Why is it important?

Projects are the building blocks of your plan, where people begin to see and feel change on the ground. When people actually see things happening they begin to believe that all the talk and planning is worthwhile. Projects generate a commitment from the wider community.

Projects are so powerful that the temptation is to let them lead the regeneration of your community. Often local communities organise themselves around specific projects. Committees and action groups form around important local ideas for a new skateboard park, the new community centre or the new play area for example. While this can be a really

useful way to generate enthusiasm and get the regeneration of an area moving, continuing on a project-by-project basis does have its problems. For example, it is often the groups that are the best equipped who succeed rather than the project that will bring most benefit to the community.

Placing your projects in the context of a well thought through plan for your area harnesses all the power of projects while avoiding the disadvantages. Once you have a vision and strategy based on your understanding of your current situation you can judge how relevant a project is to the future of your community. "Will it help us achieve our goals? Does it fit with our

strategy? Will it help us realise our vision?" The chances are that the projects that have already generated a community interest will fit with your plan. Where they don't your plan will help you weed out 'the lemons' and judge new project ideas as they arise.

Even more importantly, your plan will help you to prioritise your projects, enabling you to concentrate on the things that really matter. The plan will ensure everyone is pulling in the one direction, allocating your volunteer labour to the projects that really matter.

It is easy to generate a wish list of projects. Any community can do that by running an event and simply asking people for their ideas. Plan making requires more thought and effort but the rewards are always greater. Remember the washing line (LINK CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.3)? The projects hang on the strategy that links your current situation to your vision. This is why projects are of such importance.



The Practice

What is a project and what makes it a priority?

Many people see projects as physical things involving buildings and land. They envisage new houses, new workspaces, a new play area or a new roof on a village hall. Projects can, however, cover a wide range of actions that will help you to achieve your vision. These can include, for example:

Identifying projects when you have a plan is very straightforward. It encourages people to broaden their horizons while giving you a measure of whether a project idea will help or hinder.

Having established which projects will help you it is essential to prioritise each project. Keep this simple by categorising projects under now, soon or later. Deciding which category will depend on the degree of difficulty of the project, the availability of resources

and its sheer significance to your vision. This will help you to focus on what is most important and use your scarce resources wisely.

Types of Projects

Planning	Prepare a tourism development plan.
	Prepare an access and transport study for surrounding communities.
Financial	Create an investment fund for new project ideas.
	Negotiate access for local businesses to the 'seed corn' fund established by the government.
Physical	Build 10 housing units on the derelict site at 54 – 65 High Street.
	Develop a local skateboard park at the recreation ground.
Feasibility	Undertake a feasibility study into the development of the old cattle market for workspace units to prepare for this project.
Research	Undertake a skills audit.
	Research the potential of a project to establish a microbrewery in the area.
Organisational	Establish a new local group to lead the tourism development plan.
	Set up a new Building Preservation Trust to lead the local conservation projects.
Promotional	Develop a local branding for crafts, food and produce.
	Develop a local tourism marketing strategy.
Skills & People	Set up a local training course on sustainable building techniques for local builders.
	Persuade the local college course to run the course on returning to work.
	Employ project staff to sustain our work.

Chapter Five

How do we achieve this?

This is a crucial time to involve the wider community and build support for your plan. The careful planning to get you to this point will give you the confidence to actively involve more and more people. You will have involved local people and groups at earlier stages but now you can really begin to test the support for your emerging plan.

Whatever way you decide to involve people (LINK CHAPTER 4, SECTION 4.2), you must explain the earlier stages of your work. People will want to focus on projects and it is important to give them an insight into the vision, current situation and strategies you have developed. You can then present project ideas and priorities for comment and you can plan an event (or series of events) to involve them in identifying the projects and setting priorities.

This work will bring people, groups and new partners on board. It will raise the profile of the work, build support for your plan and ensure it is heading in the right direction.

The Big Issue

"People are being spun candyfloss dreams instead of real choices about the future. Lists of motherhood and apple pie aspirations are being sold as visions, and unachievable visions are being sold as strategies. It is time that the public sector learned to tell the difference between a vision, a strategy and a plan."

Michael Porter, Ex Harvard professor who advises the UK government on economic policy.

Wish list or strategic thinking?

Whether or not the Steering Group and wider community have understood the planning process will be obvious by the projects and priorities in your plan. Wish lists, or even well organised wish lists will give the game away. They will come unstuck quickly and set your community back at least 10 years in the regeneration game. Who in the community will believe you again if the plan fails to deliver? Will partners risk being associated with a poor regeneration initiative in your community in the future?

Clear links to your goals, strategies and vision will stand out, showing your community has really thought things through and is well organised for the task ahead.



Wicked Issues

The group that shouts the loudest.

The regeneration of communities can often be led by projects driven by the most vocal and well-organised groups. Some groups may have formed powerful alliances with local politicians, others may just have more access to resources such as photocopiers, meeting rooms etc. Some groups may have the support of more articulate members of the community. Some may just be full of people who dominate meetings and shout the loudest.

Not only does your plan give you a reason to question the importance and relevance of a project but also it gives you the way to raise and resolve the question. You can simply invite the local person or group to answer the basic questions about their project. How do they see it helping to achieve the goal and realise the vision? How might you work together on the chosen strategy to make the project happen?

It may be that you all agree that the project is a priority. Maybe it needs to be developed in a slightly different way? Maybe the local group wants to join forces to help make it happen? Of

course, if it doesn't fit at least you will have a well-prepared, logical argument to explain your decision.

The 'early win' project. This can give your work a real boost. A simple, easy to achieve project can help generate commitment and a feeling that things can actually change. They can, however, cause more trouble than they are worth when you are trying to get people to focus on planning not projects.

It is important that the chosen project is a clear priority. If a project is contentious it should be avoided. It will only serve to divide people. Avoid projects that are complicated as they are unlikely to happen quickly. In one community the 'early win' was seen as a major environmental improvement of a town square. Involving several different funding organisations it had dragged on for a couple of years. The Local Authority seized upon the new community energy and pushed for this project to be their early win. They saw it as a way of securing the commitment of a difficult partner who was 'holding out' on their contribution. The new Steering Group were drawn into a very damaging debate trying to sort this project out.

Remember, keep it simple and use it to build confidence in the plan making process. In one community the 'early win' completed the funding package for a long awaited youth café. In another it paid for new signage in the town centre.

Just playing the game. There will always be some who see the planning process as just another series of hurdles to jump in order to get the project they want. They see the vision and strategies as just a different kind of application form to fund their project. They will take part but are actually just 'playing a game'!

This is more difficult to spot but keep it in mind as your work progresses.

Being led by the priorities of funding organisations in making your plan.

This is an all too common approach to identifying and prioritising projects. When a community has not yet 'grown up' and taken responsibility for its future (LINK CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.3) it will still be asking "who can do things for us?" Looking at the priorities and programmes of funding organisations is an essential part of understanding your current situation. Being able to seize funding opportunities is a skill to be encouraged and developed by your Steering Group. But there is a balance to be struck.

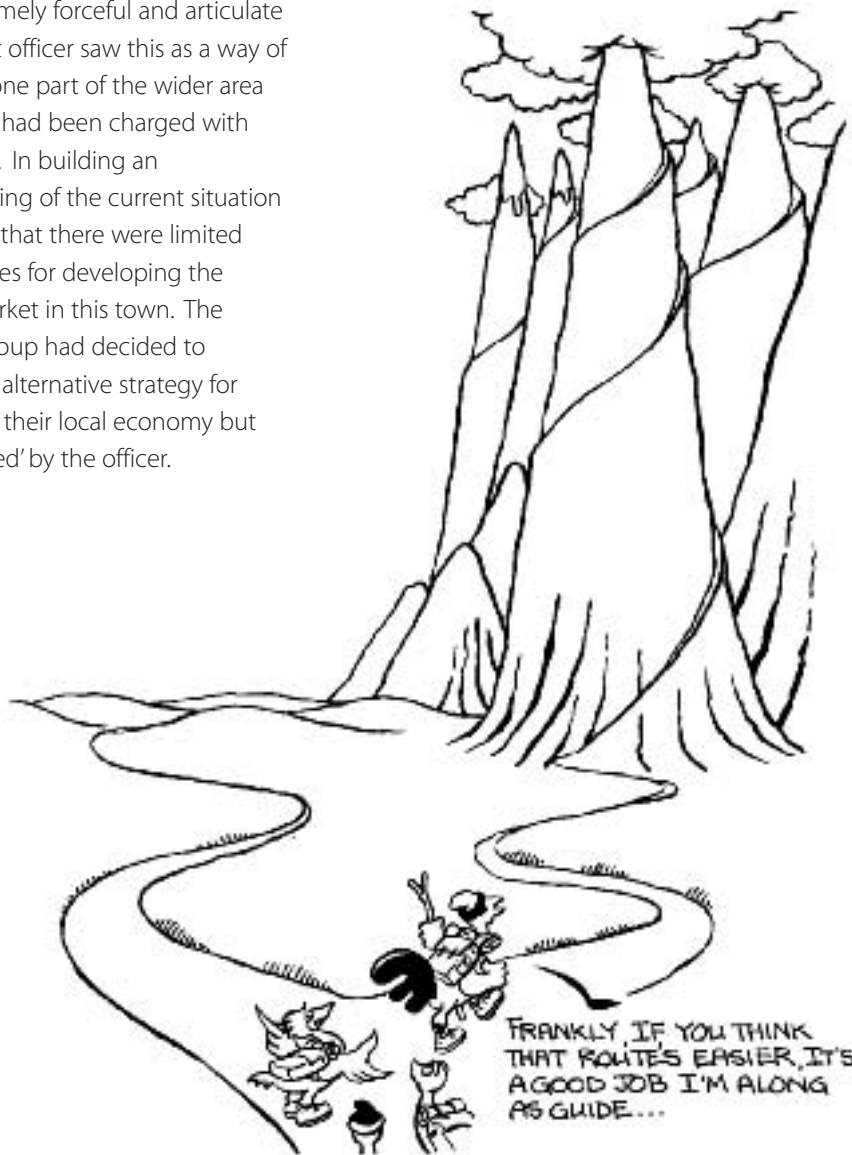
Simply choosing projects and priorities because they fit with others is a high-risk strategy. Government policy can change very quickly, cutting off the funding stream to your projects and leaving you red faced with no alternative route forward.



Chapter Five

Being led by the priorities of partners and their officers in making your plan. Encouraging and working with partners is essential but you need to be aware of their agendas and be prepared to bargain and compromise. One community spent a great deal of time and effort developing a tourism strategy because this was 'flavour of the month' within the Local Authority and was being led by an extremely forceful and articulate officer. That officer saw this as a way of delivering one part of the wider area strategy he had been charged with developing. In building an understanding of the current situation it was clear that there were limited opportunities for developing the tourism market in this town. The Steering Group had decided to develop an alternative strategy for developing their local economy but had been 'led' by the officer.

Once again, the planning process gives you the tool to avoid this situation. Asking the basic questions could have helped avoid 6 months of invaluable time and effort for something that didn't really fit.



Challenge 1: How do we identify projects?

There are four stages involved in identifying projects. Your Steering Group will find it helpful to work initially with its working groups and partners and then involve the wider community. If work is divided among working groups their ideas should always be brought back to the Steering Group for discussion and agreement.

Setting out your planning framework

You should carefully set out the elements of your plan that are already in place and list the projects under each theme.

Your Vision

Housing	Youth	Transport	Theme
Goal	Goal	Goal	Goal
Objective & Target	Objective & Target	Objective & Target	Objective & Target
Project 1	Project 1	Project 1	Project 1
Project 2	Project 2	Project 2	Project 2
Project 3	Project 3	Project 3	Project 3
Etc	Etc	Etc	Etc

Reviewing and testing initial ideas for projects

The earlier stages of your plan making will have identified a whole raft of project ideas. You should map these ideas organising them under the appropriate theme. Each project should then be tested by asking the question:

- Does the project fit our agreed strategy?
- Will this project help us achieve our goal?
- Will this project help us realise our vision?

You may have started developing project ideas through your working groups. You may have inherited worthwhile projects and are continuing to progress these. This is fine and it is likely that they will fit the overall direction of the plan.



Chapter Five

Reviewing your strategies and goals

As the list of projects begins to take shape under each theme it is time for some creative thinking. "Is this list of projects actually going to

achieve our goal? Do we need to identify other projects?" For example (LINK TO CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.3):

Theme	Affordable Housing
Goal	To provide 50 new 2 and 3 bed roomed affordable housing units over the next 5 years.
Strategy	A new community company will be formed to purchase the development land. You will train local labour in the principles and practice of sustainable construction techniques to undertake the construction and establish a community co-operative to manage the properties.
Objective	To secure x hectares of development land over the next two years. To secure development finance of £x million over the next two years.
Target	Year 1: Undertake feasibility study to identify potential development site, partners and funding sources. Year 2: Offer training and skills development to 50 local people in the construction industry.
Project	Project 1: Purchase and develop the old railway yard for the construction of self-build housing and linked workshop spaces. Project 2: Convert the old creamery for a mixture of business units, tourist information centre and flats.

On closer examination your targets are hinting at two further projects

Project	Project 3: Undertake major feasibility study to identify development opportunities, funding options and partners. Project 4: Link with local college to develop and deliver training course in sustainable construction techniques.
---------	--

Keeping your eye on the ball

Project opportunities will arise as your work continues. Changing circumstances may mean a project is no longer relevant (or as great a

priority). You should always keep your eye on the ball ready to seize opportunities and adapt your project ideas.

Challenge 2:

How do we prioritise projects?

Prioritising projects is all about being realistic and practical. This is a task for the Steering Group in consultation with your working groups and partners. You can then involve the wider community.

Prioritising should be reached through debate and discussion rather than trying to develop technical 'scoring methods'. It's much better to think things through together than spend time on a 'scoring system' that may encourage individual preferences and prejudices.

Planning for Real developed by the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation uses a

simple categorisation of Now, Soon and Later. This is likely to suit your plan making.

Projects are placed in a category by asking the following questions:

- Just how significant is this project to achieving your goal and realising your vision?
- How difficult will it be to actually make this project happen?
 - Is it technically complicated?
 - Who will lead on this and will it be a priority to them?
 - Does it involve lots of partners?
 - What resources will it require and how available are they?
- How long will it take to make the project happen?

To continue with the example we used in Challenge 1:

Priority	Project
Now	Project 1: Undertake major feasibility study to identify development opportunities, funding options and partners.
	Project 2: Link with local college to develop and deliver training course in sustainable construction techniques.
Soon	Project 3: Purchase and develop the old railway yard for the construction of self-build housing and linked workshop spaces.
Later	Project 4: Convert the old creamery for a mixture of business units, tourist information centre and flats.

Be realistic and hard. Make sure you weed out the projects that will just sap your energy and resources and contribute little to realising the vision.

casestudy

In Minehead the Steering Group held a half-day workshop to prioritise their project ideas. With the help of their consultant they developed criteria to translate their vision into action and evaluate their projects. Starting with an analysis of the bigger picture they identified the overarching priorities and themes of their Plan. Having identified the various project ideas they then tested each against a number of main criteria including:

- Economic Benefit
- Community Benefit
- Viability/do-ability
- Inclusiveness
- Sustainability

They then asked more detailed questions of each project relating to the themes and overarching priorities. For example, to what extent does the project:

- Provide new jobs?
- Reduce crime?
- Improve learning opportunities?
- Encourage economic growth?
- Increase recreational opportunities?
- Attract visitors?

The results of this workshop were collated and fed into the Plan making process.

Chapter Five

Challenge 3: How should we involve the wider community?

This is a crucial time to involve the wider community and build support for your plan. This is the point where you begin to talk about projects, the part most people want to focus on. Because of your careful planning you can present and generate project and priorities in the context of the vision and strategies you have developed. You can give people an insight into how their community works and explain the role you feel different organisations can play. You can get the wider community to 'buy into' the plan and shared vision of your future.

You may decide it is more appropriate to run a series of events to reach particular groups or areas in your community. Whatever you decide, you need to keep a number of things in mind in planning your event.

Planning the event

You need to decide whether you are going to consult people or involve them. Are you going to simply present your ideas and ask for comments or are you going to involve them in actually identifying and prioritising projects (LINK TO ARNSTEIN'S LADDER OF INVOLVEMENT PAGE 45). A great deal depends on the level of participation in your Steering Group and working groups up to this point. If you have had real difficulty in getting people involved this may need to be a high profile event to give people information about the plan, seek their views and get them

more involved. If you have a large number of people who are already familiar with the work you may have the confidence to really open things up and plan the event to get them identifying and setting the priorities.

Don't forget, members of the Steering Group and working groups will already have come a long way in their thinking and understanding about this work. You can't expect newcomers to simply join in your thinking at the same level.

Using existing groups can be another useful technique. You may already have a Youth Forum for example. If so it may be helpful to request a special meeting to involve them in the plan making.

Preparation

As always, careful planning of your event(s) is the key to their success. You will find it helpful to prepare a summary of the plan to date. Set out the basic elements of the plan in a simple newsletter or brochure. Give people the background to the work, a clear picture of the emerging plan (vision, current situation, themes, strategies, projects etc) and what you hope to get out of the event. Make it clear how these ideas came about and how you have involved people so far.

Running the event

Whether you are consulting people or actively involving them you may want to plan your event around 'stations'. You can have a 'station' for each theme giving details of the strategy, goals, projects and priorities. You can encourage people to visit the 'station' that interests them most and to contribute to the debate. If you have set up working groups around themes this is a good way to encourage people to sign up for future work.

The idea of using 'stations' is extremely flexible. You can have a Steering or working group member at each station and can plan different

kinds of activities at each station. You can get people to vote for their top three priority themes and most important project. You can also get people to add to or amend the list of projects. You can tailor the event to your needs.

Facilitating the event

This is another crucial point where you may choose to work with a regeneration practitioner skilled in planning and running such events.

Following up on the event

The event will help you to consolidate and develop your plan, your Steering Group and working groups. Don't retreat back into a committee room following the event. Build on your new contacts, develop your partnership and stay open to ideas and involvement.

Guidance, Skills and Contacts

What tools can we use?

- Planning for Real uses simple models as a focus for people to put forward and prioritise ideas (referred to in section 5.1). Prioritising projects is an important part of this tool.
- Wheel of fortune group prioritising method is a way for a group of people to rank competing priorities.
- The Fence prioritising method is a way for a group to arrive at a majority view on issues where there are conflicting options.

What skills will you require?

- Administrative skills to organise events.
- Community development skills to involve people and organisations.
- Facilitation skills to run meetings and events.
- Project development skills.
- Negotiation and mediation skills.
- Strategic thinking.



Chapter Five

Where can we find the help and information we require?

- Planning for Real is a registered trademark of the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation and information can be found at www.nif.co.uk
- For information on the Wheel of fortune and Fence prioritising see www.communityplanning.net

Self Help Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to help you to decide whether you have considered all the issues that will help in identifying and prioritising projects. It summarises and addresses many of the challenges and key points identified in this section. It could also be considered as a 'checklist of things to do'.

You may wish to photocopy this checklist and use it with your community and agency partners. You can of course, adapt it to suit your own circumstances. An electronic version of the form is available to download on www.southwesttowns.net

Section 5.4

Identifying & prioritising projects

	Comments on significance	Reviewed
Are you ready?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Have you a clear picture of all the earlier stages (vision, strategy etc)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you decided to work with a regeneration practitioner?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How do we identify projects?		
Have you set out the plan framework and reviewed your initial project ideas?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you tested your project ideas against your strategies and goals?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you tested your ideas with the wider community?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you keeping your eye on the ball for any changes in your situation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prioritising Projects		
Have you agreed the categories for the priorities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you placed each project in a priority?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Involving the wider community?		
Have you decided how to organise your events?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you identified existing forums where you can run an event?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you planned the event (e.g. with stations) and prepared thoroughly?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you following up on the event in the community?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Chapter Five

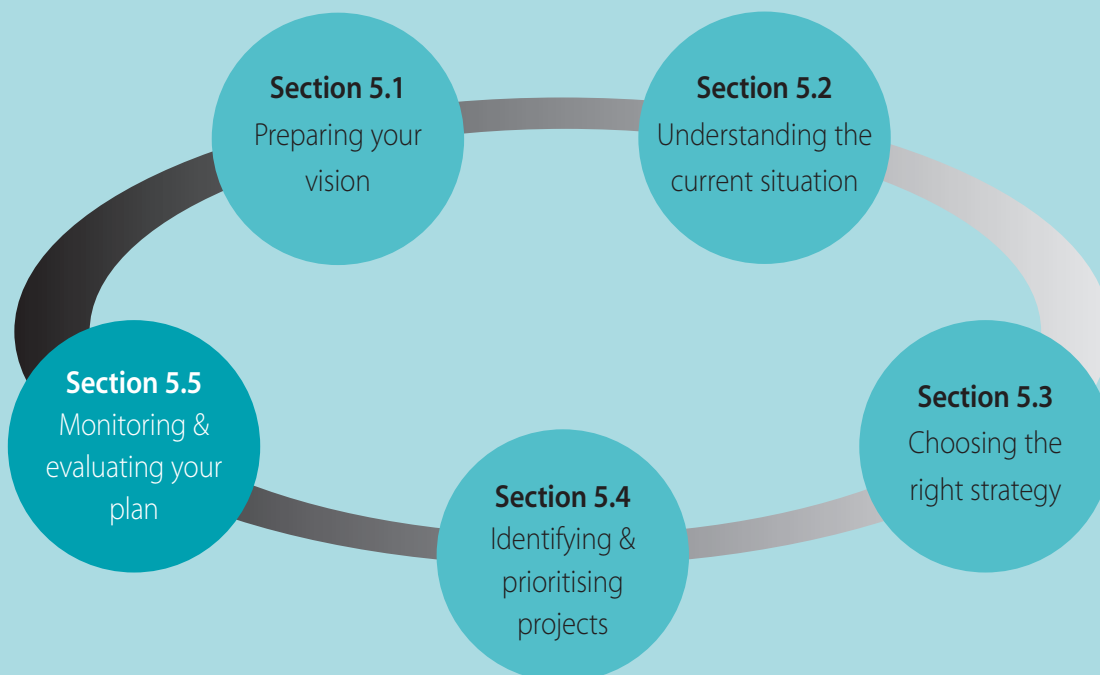
Section 5.5

Monitoring & evaluating your plan

Your plan is now really taking shape (LINK TO CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 & 5.4). It is now important to decide how you are going to measure your progress and learn from your achievements. This section will provide advice, guidance and practical suggestions on how to monitor and evaluate your plan.

The Key Challenges covered in this section include:

- **Challenge 1:** How do we develop and use our indicators?
- **Self Evaluation Checklist**



Chapter Five

The Principles

Why is it important?

Your plan has carefully set out where you are now, where you want to be and how you plan to get there. Now you need to address the question, "Just how are we going to tell if we are making progress?" How are you going to judge if your chosen strategies are succeeding? How are you going to learn from your work and alert everyone to the need to change direction if necessary? This is the importance of developing a simple and sound monitoring and evaluation process.



Monitoring and evaluation conjure up a very dry, number crunching process that can be seen as a chore. It is often a 'demand' of funding organisations that impose their own measures of progress on a community. Your plan-making gives you an exciting opportunity to set your own indicators rather than accept someone else's. What are the measures that will really show your community that your plan is bringing positive change?

The Practice

What is it and what is involved?

To establish a good monitoring and evaluation system you need to:

- Choose indicators to measure your progress against;
- Collect good information on a regular basis;
- Establish a way that you can learn from your progress and communicate your progress to others.

Your work to date has given you all the ingredients to set up a simple, sound monitoring and evaluating system.

Some creative thinking around the indicators you will use to measure your progress will help focus minds and energy on your work ahead.

An effective indicator measures, simplifies and communicates change. It must strike a chord with the community and should be:

- Acceptable to and developed by the community (i.e. through your plan making);

- Understandable by the community at large;
- Focused on your long-term vision;
- Described clearly and simply;
- Based on reliable and timely information.

To choose indicators the Steering Group need only examine the plan you have put together. By examining each theme of your vision, your indicators will be easily identified (LINK TO CHALLENGE 1). By reviewing the information you collected to help you understand your current situation you will know whether timely information is available or if you would need to collect it. Deciding how you are going to evaluate and communicate your progress is a case of good, sound business practice. You will be holding an annual review and preparing an annual report. Your working groups will be preparing project reports for the Steering Group. These are perfect opportunities to review your progress.

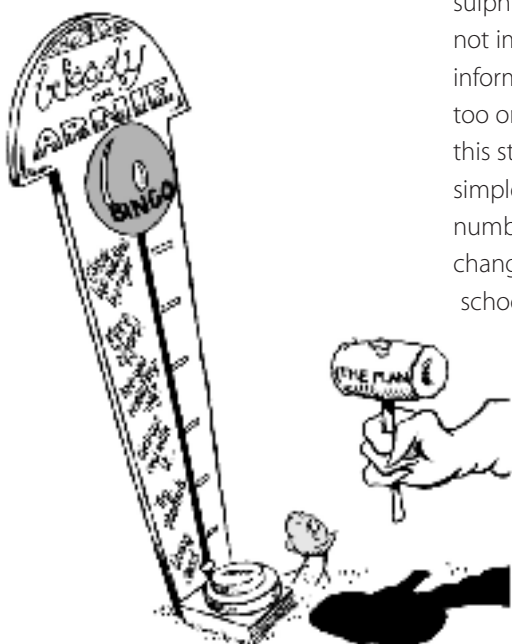
Who is involved?

As a prime role of the Steering Group is to co-ordinate your work they will be at the heart of the monitoring and evaluation. Once again you will be working alongside your working groups, community agents and regeneration practitioner. Setting the system up is more than half the battle. Once you have got it up and running, with a clear method of collecting the information you require, the system will begin to run itself. This will leave the Steering Group with the task of strategic thinking, using the information to present progress and alter course if required.

The Big Issue

Be bold with your plan and your indicators! This is your plan for the future of your community. It is therefore essential that you are the ones who decide how you are going to measure your progress. Your partners will be old hands at monitoring and evaluation. Public agencies in particular will have particular indicators that they use to measure progress. By all means learn from these but make sure your indicators are developed directly from your plan.

Your plan recognises the importance of linking all aspects of your community: social, environmental, economic and cultural. This is also the basis of Sustainable Development and this gives you an opportunity to embrace the sustainability agenda. Sustainable Development may well be a central principle of your vision and your indicators should reflect this (LINK CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.1).



Wicked Issues

Keep it simple. This is the key to good, workable indicators that will deliver effective monitoring and evaluation. Be careful to avoid too many indicators to measure your progress under any particular theme. Be sure the information you require for your indicators is easily accessible. Be wary of indicators that will require complicated new surveys to establish the data you need.

If a particular goal is of such importance then it may deserve the extra work to collect the information. There may also be a simpler alternative. One community for example, was extremely worried about the air pollution in their town centre caused by traffic congestion (particularly around the school). Projects to alleviate this included a safer routes to school programme to encourage parents and children to walk and cycle to school. Initially they wanted to measure the quantity of CO₂ and sulphur particles by the school. While not impossible, establishing baseline information and regular testing proved too onerous for the Steering Group at this stage. They eventually settled for a simple count of traffic flow and the number of children who were changing their habits regarding their school journey.

Remember the follow up. If a particular indicator requires a new survey, remember you will have to continue to collect information on a regular basis. It's no good commissioning a survey on a complicated issue without the Group having the skills

and equipment to continue the monitoring process. One community, for example, commissioned a survey on 24-hour noise levels around an industrial area next to a housing estate. The information gathered was extremely useful to reinforce the point that local residents had been making, but the Steering Group had neither the resources nor the equipment for the ongoing monitoring.

Being led by your partners. This issue has come up all the way through the planning process. In this case you need to watch out for particular partners wanting indicators that reflect their role and remit. Perhaps the local Housing Association is particularly keen to establish and monitor the true picture of housing need in the community. Or the local economic agency wants to measure business start-ups. Each will have their own indicators to fit their plans and programmes. If you share these priorities then by all means work together to include these in your monitoring and evaluation process. Be especially cautious if any one agency is a significant funder of your work and tries to pull rank.

Chapter Five

case study

The Loftus Development Trust in Cleveland was keen to embrace the sustainability agenda in their work. With a 10 year track record the Trust had been partners in a wide range of developments for the town.

They decided that they wanted a stronger monitoring and evaluation framework that reflected their sustainable development principles. Through a series of workshops they developed indicators for each project or action under each theme of their plan. Examples included:

- **Housing:** number of houses built to sustainable construction standards
- **Recycling:** weight of paper recycled through community recycling project
- **Environment:** no of dog poos per sq m in the local park.

Each working group was responsible for collecting the information to monitor the projects under their theme.

Challenge 1: How do we develop and use our indicators?

Choosing your indicators

Developing indicators is very straightforward. Just keep in mind that an indicator should measure, simplify and communicate change. Remember it must strike a chord with the community and be easily understood. Indicators help you measure your progress towards your vision.

You will find it helpful to take each theme of your vision and discuss just how you will recognise if you are moving closer to your vision. For example, considering the future of transport in your community your goal is to reduce the need for travel while making fuel-efficient transport systems accessible to all. You feel this will improve air quality and provide a safe environment. One suitable indicator might simply be traffic volume on your roads.

Another community envisaged a safe and clean town environment as a key to their economic future and quality of life of local residents. They felt suitable indicators would include the number of fisherman on the pier, surfers using the beach and the number of dog messes per sq m in the town park.

As you work through each theme keep in mind the need to 'think differently'. Remember your plan will be breaking the mould of what has gone before and so traditional indicators may not be a good measure of your progress. For example, in relation to the health of your economy:

- The diversity and vitality of the local job base may be a more appropriate indicator than the unemployment rate;
- The number and variety of local employers may be a more effective indicator than the size of the economy.

By working through each theme in this way you will develop a set of indicators to measure progress. Remember, an effective indicator should be:

- acceptable to and developed by the community (i.e. through your plan making);
- understandable by the community at large;
- focused on your long-term vision;
- described clearly and simply;
- based on reliable and timely information.



If you really want to embrace the sustainability agenda there are some excellent sources of information for your Steering Group at the end of this section. As sustainable development is a priority for government and public agencies this will fit with the national agenda.

Collecting the data and information

In choosing your indicators you will need to identify the data required and the most appropriate time intervals to collect the information. For most indicators this is a very logical, common sense approach.

For example, if one of your indicators is the number and variety of local employers it is pointless collecting information on a weekly basis. Your strategy to widen the variety and type of businesses is likely to take time to influence your economy. Talk through the most appropriate time frame as each indicator is developed.

It is extremely important to be disciplined about the information collection. It can be a task for working groups or even community agents but the Steering Group need to remain in the central co-ordinating role. Working Groups can alert the Steering Group if there is a sudden and alarming change. For example if several small businesses close down in a short space of time you can find out the reasons why and act accordingly.

Try and gather an interim report on your indicators every six months with a full report prior to your annual review. You may find it helpful to learn from the monitoring and evaluating systems of others.

Guidance, Skills and Contacts

What tools can we use?

- Social Auditing is an innovative tool which balances a range of indicators to audit your progress.
- Auditing Community Participation can be a particularly useful way of monitoring and evaluating involvement in all aspects of your work.

What skills will you require?

- Administrative skills to organise events.
- Community development skills to involve people and organisations.
- Facilitation skills to run meetings and events.
- Organisational skills to sort, order and collect information.

Where can we find the help and information we require?

- Information on the Social Auditing process can be found through Community Business Scotland at www.cbs-network.org.uk
- Auditing Community Participation is a method developed by Danny Burns and Marilyn Taylor. Information can be found at www.jrf.org.uk in the findings and publications section.
- Advice and guidance on conventional methods of monitoring and evaluation can be found through your partner agencies who will be skilled in this area.
- Information on indicators of sustainability can be found at a variety of sources including the government web site at www.sustainable-development.gov.uk, Forum for the Future at www.forumforthefuture.org.uk and within the South West at www.oursouthwest.com

Chapter Five

Self Help Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to help you to decide whether you have considered all the issues that will help in identifying and prioritising projects. It summarises and addresses many of the challenges and key points identified in this section. It could also be considered as a 'checklist of things to do'.

You may wish to photocopy this checklist and use it with your community and agency partners. You can of course, adapt it to suit your own circumstances. An electronic version of the form is available to download on www.southwesttowns.net

Section 5.5

Monitoring & evaluating your plan

	Comments on significance	Reviewed
Are you ready?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Have you a clear picture of all the earlier stages (vision to project priorities)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you understood the links to Sustainable Development (see Big Issue)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choosing your indicators		
Have you identified the initial indicators for each theme of your vision?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you ensured that each indicator meets the criteria to be effective?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you researched the links to developing indicators of sustainable development?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collecting and using the information		
Have you identified the data each indicator requires?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you decided how often information should be collected?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you identified new surveys and research that are required?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you identified who will collect and monitor the data?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you agreed how often to compile a full report on the indicators?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you agreed to report on your monitoring and evaluation at your annual review?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Chapter Five

Chapter 6

Organising your community

This chapter is for members of the Steering Group. It will explain how your Steering Group can grow into a local organisation to lead your work in the longer term. It will challenge you to decide exactly what role your organisation is going to play and what legal structure it should take. It will also challenge you to think about how you can utilise your volunteers, consultants, community agents and project staff to best effect and includes:

- Section 6.1: Developing your local organisation
- Section 6.2: The people in your local organisation

Chapter Six

Inspirations

Your market town – the centre for services

Social, industrial and agricultural changes have “altered the historic function of market towns” said a recent State of the Countryside report by the Countryside Agency. “Their traditional role as commercial, administrative and social focal points in otherwise extensive rural areas has evolved over time to add new functions, including tourism, to some and to encourage the growth of completely new settlements. “They have been identified in public policy as a potential service provider and economic engine for their rural hinterlands, as well as for the towns themselves,” it goes on. All of this makes a “particularly significant issue in the rural landscape”, the report concludes.

The role of the market town as the ‘hub’ for surrounding rural communities is key to the regeneration of the area. In Diss in Norfolk, the town’s Citizen Advice Bureau has recognised that the relationship between town and country is a two way one and is taking its services out to the hinterland. Using the Community Legal Services Strategic Plan to prove there was a need for a new rural legal service to combat social exclusion and poverty, it successfully bid for funding of £185,000 over three years from the Community Fund. The cash will fund four part-time staff to work in a newly established anti-poverty unit, which will eventually hold sessions in 12 outreach posts as well as visiting the housebound in their homes.

The unit will provide a comprehensive anti-poverty and advocacy service so that disadvantaged groups can access high quality advice service throughout South Norfolk. The service will deal with debt, welfare rights and employment law. As well as liaising with statutory agencies and other CAB’s, the project workers will work with local schools, youth groups, carer and other voluntary organisations, and employer associations to improve financial literacy, increase benefit uptake and promote employment good practice.

The disappearance of shops in Henlow in Bedfordshire was causing great hardship in the community. Pensioners had to travel four miles to get their weekly payments while those from Haynes had an eight-mile journey. The Parish Council refused to accept this and engaged a number of organisations in solving the problem. They raised the cash and persuaded Consignia to support three rural Post Offices. Henlow now has a village store and post office and in nearby Lidington customers at the Green Man pub will soon be able to pick up their pension and enjoy a pint having negotiated an interesting combination of uses!

Further information:

www.countryside.gov.uk/vitalvillages

www.legalservices.gov.uk

Section 6.1

Developing your local organisation

This section will explain the importance of developing a clear mission for your organisation and a legal structure and constitution to equip you for your chosen role. It will help you to think through the issues and provides advice, guidance and suggestions on how to achieve this. The key Challenges covered in this section include:

- **Challenge 1:** How do we develop our roles and responsibilities for the longer term?
- **Challenge 2:** How do we define the mission of our organisation?
- **Challenge 3:** How do we choose a structure for our organisation?
- **Challenge 4:** How do we gain the skills to run our organisation?
- **Challenge 5:** How do we involve the wider community?
- **Self Evaluation checklist**

Chapter Six

The Principles

"Having prepared our plan we had to decide how we wanted to make things happen? Do we stand back and try and encourage others to do it? Do we want to take a real stake in our future and invest in land, buildings and business? We decided it was a bit of both?"

Local Steering Group member

Why is it important?

You will have established your Steering Group to help you kick-start the work, get people involved, and prepare your plan. During these early stages you will have been seizing opportunities as they arise while concentrating on preparing your plan. Your Steering Group will have been acquiring new skills, developing new ways of working and growing in confidence. Now the focus of your work will begin to shift to actually making the plan happen (LINK CHAPTER 7). It is therefore important to revisit the roles and responsibilities of the Steering Group and decide how it should develop to lead the work ahead.

Your vision looks 20 to 30 years ahead and describes the economic, social, environmental and cultural future your community aspires to. Your vision clarifies the values and principles that are central to what your community wants to become. By contrast, your mission is written for the organisation that will lead the work. It sets out the specific role of the organisation in a way that is in line with the values and principles of your vision.

Having set out your mission you will need to consider what structure, and in particular the legal structure, is best suited to the role you have chosen for your organisation.



The Practice

From the mission, the organisation takes its lead on **what** it is meant to do, **how** it is meant to do it and **why**? This will determine how it uses its time, skills and resources. It will guide both the way it works and the way it develops.

To prepare a mission you must really understand what you are trying to achieve. You have to really know your business. All your work to date will equip you to determine a strong mission for your organisation that will help you to:

- decide what your organisation will do on behalf of your community;
- make it clear what can be expected of the organisation and what others will do;
- inform the staff, volunteers, consultants, community and other organisations about the purpose of your organisation.

To determine the most appropriate structure for your organisation (your constitution) you should weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of a number of options in light of your chosen mission. These are set out in Challenge 3.

At the heart of your deliberations are the questions:

- Do we want to become a doing organisation, for example owning land, buildings and businesses to make things happen?
- Do we want to influence and lobby others to make things happen?
- Just how much responsibility do we want to take to achieve our vision?

Your organisation may combine

different approaches. For example, you may own buildings while choosing to lobby others to make different projects happen. You may start off slowly encouraging others to make things happen and only start doing things yourselves when you have the confidence and skills. By thinking through these basic questions you will go a long way to deciding what kind of legal structure your organisation should adopt.



The Big Issue

It is your organisation! The big issue here is to do with the level of responsibility your organisation assumes on behalf of your community. Community Strategic Planning encourages communities to play an active role in the future. It encourages you to think differently and form a different kind of relationship with your partners. Only you can decide if and when the time is right to move your Steering Group onto a different footing, a footing that will enable you to not only influence and form partnerships, but to invest in the future of your area.

The Wicked Issues

Not taking the mission seriously.

Some mission statements can be glib and simplistic. They are often more to do with the customer focus of companies. In creating an organisation to help make your plan happen, defining your mission is of crucial importance. Don't be tempted to shortcut the process for the sake of a 'catchy slogan'.

Adapting someone else's

constitution. Learning from the experience of others is to be encouraged. Simply taking their constitution and amending the name of the organisation will not help you. It may seem like a quick solution but it will come unstuck very quickly. You will miss out on the important process of thinking through the best structure for your organisation and all the benefits that will bring. It will mean that those involved in the new organisation may have a very poor understanding of what their roles and responsibilities are. This is particularly alarming where company law governs your constitution.

No training for the 'management

committee'. Again this is particularly alarming if company law governs your organisation. There is no substitute for being well briefed and well informed, especially if you are taking on financial commitments.

Forgotten about your members?

At every stage of your work you should be thinking about how to involve and inform your wider community. Failure to do so at this stage can leave people deeply suspicious about the motives of the new organisation. This can be very

damaging when trying to build a membership base.

Staying a Steering Group for too long.

One community came to a point where they wanted to employ staff and enter contracts for various ventures. As they were still operating as a Voluntary Association they missed some significant funding and investment opportunities.

Not taking professional advice.

Communities are often tempted to try and muddle through on their own. This is one area where it is really useful to work closely with experienced professionals.

Chapter Six

Challenge 1: How do we develop our roles and responsibilities for the longer term?

Moving on from the Steering Group

In Section 4.1: 'Establishing a Steering Group' you were encouraged to undertake the following challenges:

- Agreeing what the Steering Group should do;
- Who should be involved and how do we attract the right people?
- Defining roles and responsibilities?
- Establishing an appropriate structure;
- Building your skills and knowledge.

Now that you have prepared your plan you should revisit these, first as individuals then together in a session facilitated by someone neutral. This will help you to determine if it is time to move on, and if it is, it will give you clues to help you define your mission and agree the appropriate structure for your organisation.

Challenge 2:

How do we define the mission of our organisation?

What is in a mission statement?

Your Steering Group members develop the mission of your organisation. It says what you are going to do, who will benefit and how you will do it. All of this should be captured in 100 words or less!

To put together a mission statement for your organisation you should answer three key questions:

- What function will the organisation perform?
- For whom does the organisation perform this function?
- How will the organisation go about performing this function?

Answering the WHAT question

The crucial issue is how tightly to define what your organisation will do? If the 'what' question is answered too broadly you can risk taking on too much. Your resources will be stretched too thinly and you could end up in a situation where you don't do any of your chosen tasks particularly well. If it is answered too specifically your organisation will miss opportunities.

One organisation decided that it was going to focus on the creation of community business and the provision of training. They saw this as a way of strengthening their local economy, a

main priority to emerge from their work. This is a very legitimate approach and there are many exciting examples of such organisations throughout the UK (LINK TO GUIDANCE SECTION). A disadvantage can be without their drive, leadership and determination the other themes in the plan got left behind. No one was really picking up the priority projects that had been identified under housing, transport, youth etc. This should be considered if you decide to focus on one particular theme of your plan.

Lobbying, co-ordinating and harrying statutory agencies to deliver services and projects is an invaluable part of a community's work. There can, however, be disadvantages if you rely on this as the only approach to making your plan happen. One organisation quickly realised that it was the community energy in leading the preparation of the plan that had given the work momentum. Other partners were happy to work alongside them when the community were leading by example. When the community appeared to take a step back and look to the partners to pick up the baton for particular priorities it just didn't happen. Rather than being led by the plan, partners were once again led by their own internal priorities.

Many successful organisations often strike a balance somewhere between these two examples.

Answering the WHO question

When defining your mission don't forget to say who is intended to benefit from the work of the organisation. It may be everyone who lives and works in your area (you need to define the area) or it may now be more focussed either geographically or by community of interest (youth, elderly, disadvantaged groups etc).

Answering the HOW question

This concerns how your organisation will actually deliver its work and involves looking at

case study

In order to lead and manage the process of regeneration of the Langport area, the Langport Forum decided to develop a locally based project located in Langport town centre with its own staff. The aim of the project is to improve the economic and social well being of the Langport area and its hinterland by the establishment of a 'one stop shop' service in the centre of town.

The objectives of the project are:

- To provide a focal point for the regeneration of the area;
- To provide a permanent location for the Langport Tourist Information Centre;
- To provide an inclusive community and business support office that can be used as a drop-in information centre;
- To provide local office facilities for business advice services, including a local business / enterprise champion that can provide on-site and outreach advice to businesses in the area and establish co-operative strategies and local marketing initiatives;
- To provide a retail outlet exclusively for local producers (e.g., pottery, paintings, willow crafts, baskets, bottled cider) not in direct competition with existing traders.

Chapter Six

the various strategies you have adopted in your plan. Remember the washing line (LINK CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.3)? A strategy charts the route between where you are now and where you want to be. It links your current situation to your vision. Your projects will be guided by your strategy, helping you to achieve your vision.

Depending on your answer to the 'what question' you can summarise and include the appropriate strategies in your mission statement (LINK CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.3: CHALLENGE 3). Remember strategies can include, for example, research and planning; inward investment; technical assistance; taking a stake etc. One community answered the how question by making it clear that they would achieve their mission by attracting inward investment, establishing a loan fund for new enterprise and investing directly in projects to benefit their community.

Drafting the mission statement

It is likely that the people and partners involved in the Steering Group will include the key players in the area. These are the people to involve in drafting the Mission statement for the new organisation. Be sure to invite anyone else who you feel will become important to the new organisation. It is helpful to work with a facilitator to help you structure the discussion.

One organisation started their workshop session by asking for everyone's thoughts on the "what, who and how" questions. These were simply recorded for everyone to see and consider. They then tested each phrase through discussion with everyone in the room.

They then worked in small groups of two and three to draft a mission statement. Each mission statement was presented for discussion and was tested against the following questions:

- Does the statement reflect the values and principles that underpin our vision and sustain our work?

- Does it clearly describe what we want to do?
- Is it clear who we are doing this for?
- Is it clear how we intend to carry out our work?
- Is the statement clear and concise?
- Is the statement realistic?

From the discussion that followed the best parts of each mission statement were drawn together to form a draft mission statement for the organisation.

Challenge 3:

How do we choose a structure for our organisation?

Having redefined your roles and responsibilities and agreed the mission for your organisation you will need to consider what legal structures are most appropriate. In other words you need to agree the constitution of your organisation. In general you need to ensure that your chosen structure:

- **reflects** the principles and values of your organisation (e.g. if you want to involve all the people who live and work in an area you may want an open membership base that reflects this).
- **allows** you to actually do what you want the organisation to do (i.e. if you want to invest in local enterprises, registering yourself solely as a charity may not let you do this).
- **enables** you to appoint staff and enter contracts.
- **protects** the members and board members of the organisation (i.e. if your organisation is going to buy land and buildings you will want people to be protected against personal liability for any projects that go 'pear shaped').
- **enables** you to build the partnership you want (i.e. you can actively involve different partners in the management of your organisation).

- **allows** you to raise the funds you will require from all the different sources you plan to target (e.g. charitable trusts, public sector grants, loan funds etc).

Choosing your legal structure is a serious business and it is advisable to seek advice from an experienced regeneration practitioner and solicitor. There are helpful organisations and publications to guide you in this work (LINK: GUIDANCE SECTION THAT FOLLOWS). The law and procedures for forming companies and registering charities varies in different parts of the UK.

A brief summary of the most common structures is outlined in the table below. You should consider each structure and weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of each for your organisation.

In the MCTi, and throughout the UK, a growing number of area based regeneration initiatives are becoming Development Trusts.

Development Trusts combine some of the options above. They are 'not for private profit' and are usually established as companies limited by guarantee, often with charitable status. They often have a membership base drawn from those who live and work within a particular geographical area. As the charitable status will limit the commercial activities that can be undertaken many Development Trusts also establish trading subsidiaries.

The MCTi also aims to reinvigorate local involvement in town, parish and district councils. These are key partners in the regeneration of an area and your organisation should be looking to form strong working partnerships. Increased community involvement will bolster these local councils and strengthen local democracy.

case study

For the first two years of the MCTi in Bridport the community decided to operate as an unincorporated group working closely with the Town Council. As work progressed they decided to explore different possible structures for the organisation. The driving force behind this was a desire to establish an organisation that was community led and clearly independent of any partner.

The Steering Group enlisted the support of the local Co-operative Development Agency who ran workshops to help people consider the different possible structures. The Development Agency then worked with the Steering group to assist them through the set up period, developing a Memorandum and Articles of Association and helping with the registration of the company and securing charitable status.

The Bridport Community Initiative is now leading the regeneration work in the area.

Chapter Six

Structure	Description	Pros and Cons
Voluntary Association (Unincorporated Association or partnership)	This has no legal status or recognition. Organisations and/or individuals agree to work together for a common purpose. A simple constitution or memorandum will often be drawn up.	<p>PROS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● There are no set up costs as there is no formal registration process.● There is no requirement to complete an annual return.● There are no detailed statutory procedures to be followed. You just need to set out standard procedures for AGMs etc in your constitution.● It is much less intimidating for those considering becoming a member or standing for election onto the management committee. <p>CONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● It may be seen as 'less professional' in the eyes of potential funders.● It is not recognised in law as having a legal existence separate from its members. This means that contracts (for example leases) have to be entered into by the office bearers.● There is a significant risk that members of the management committee could be personally liable for any debts and liabilities.● Cannot employ staff so must rely on a partner to do this for them.● Is often not viewed as an 'accountable body' by public agencies and so must rely on a partner to receive funds on their behalf.
Company limited by guarantee	Established as a legal company registered at Companies House. Governed by company law you must submit annual accounts. The company has a Memorandum and Articles of Association and is established on a 'not-for private profit basis'. Development Trusts are constituted in this way.	<p>PROS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Limited liability (usually £1) for members of the company.● Company is a clear legal entity separate from the people involved in it. It can therefore employ staff; enter contracts to buy land and buildings in its own name.● Subject to the democratic control of its members.● Generally regarded as a stable and professional body by funders. <p>CONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● There are formal registration and ongoing procedures (e.g. filing annual returns, notification of changes to Directors etc).● There are various statutory requirements in company law regarding running meetings and making decisions.● Directors are likely to require training to equip them for their roles and responsibilities in the company.● A company structure is more intimidating for those considering becoming involved or putting themselves forward as a Director.● Setting up and running costs are higher than for a voluntary Association.

Section 6.1

Developing your local organisation

Structure	Description	Pros and Cons
Partnership agreement	A legally binding agreement between two or more parties. Can be for any purpose and can take numerous forms (e.g. joint venture).	<p>PROS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● It is a legally binding agreement.● Relatively straightforward and low cost to establish and run.● A common structure to involve public agencies. <p>CONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Particularly appropriate for specific projects or really well defined activities
Charitable status	If all the objectives of an organisation are charitable they can apply to become a charity. Companies and other kinds of organisation can apply for charitable status.	<p>PROS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Charities are recognised as having both credibility and status.● Good fundraising potential.● Activities are tax exempt. <p>CONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Charities limit what you can actually do to activities that are by definition charitable.

Chapter Six

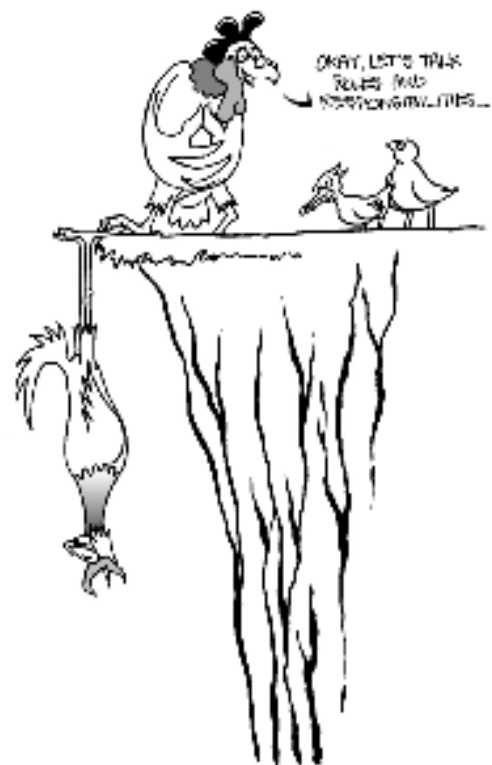
Challenge 4: How do we gain the skills to run our organisation?

Training

When establishing your Steering Group you were encouraged to offer those involved the opportunity to gain the basic skills in running an organisation. It is always worth remembering the importance of these skills as new members join your organisation. In other words this type of training should be ongoing.

When you decide to form your new organisation you may need to call upon more training. If for example, you establish a Development Trust, it is essential to fully understand the roles and responsibilities of being a company director and trustee. Your Company Secretary may need specific training. Updating the skills audit of those involved will help you create a new training programme (LINK CHAPTER 4, SECTION 4.1).

Making training and personal development a regular part of your work is to be encouraged.

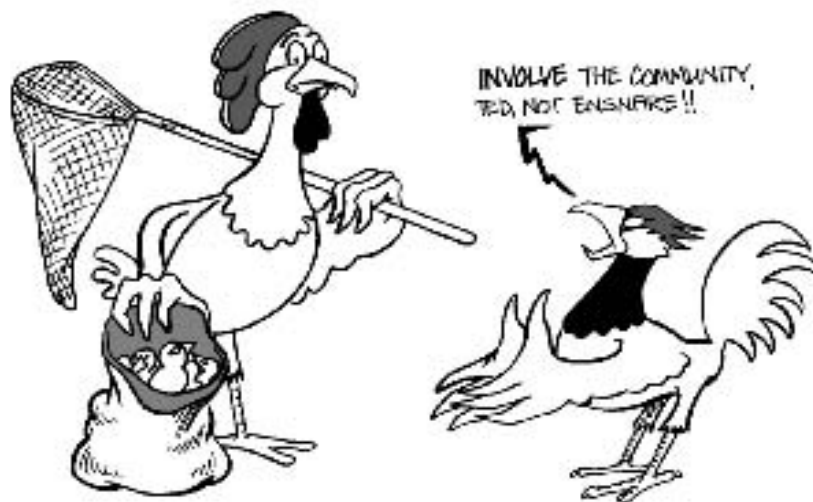


Challenge 5:

How do we involve the wider community in this work?

If you choose a structure that relies on a membership drawn from your wider community and partners, it is particularly essential to involve them in forming the new organisation. You can choose the methods to involve people from those you have found most successful in your work to date (LINK CHAPTER 4, SECTION 4.2).

One community called a public event to explain the proposed mission and structure. They held small discussion groups, invited comments and succeeded in signing up those willing to be initial members at the end of the night.



case study

In one town the original structure of their Steering Group, the Town Forum, was not working well. In theory this existing 'umbrella group' brought together representatives from local organisations, the Chamber of Commerce, the Town and Parish Councils and the Local Authority.

As this was an existing organisation, many of the representatives did not feel connected with the work under the MCTi. They were there to represent their group rather than taking an active part in the work to regenerate their area. When a large inclusive public event was held a new wave of volunteers became involved bringing fresh blood and energy to the work of the Forum.

Chapter Six

Guidance

What tools can we use?

- See information section below.

What skills will you require?

- Administrative skills to organise events.
- Community development skills to involve people and organisations.
- Facilitation skills to run meetings and events.
- Legal skills for constitutions and structures.

Where can we find the help and information we require?

Choosing the correct structure for your organisation is an essential task and deserves careful consideration. Advice and information can be sought from:

- The National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service who can put you in touch with your local CVS at www.nacvs.org.uk
- Action with Communities in Rural England who can put you in touch with your local Rural Community Council at www.acre.org.uk
- The National Council for Voluntary Organisations at www.ncvo-vol.org.uk
- Development Trusts Association at www.dta.org.uk
- Co-operatives UK at www.co-operatives-uk.coop
- Community Development Foundation at www.cdf.org.uk
- Charity Commission at www.charitycommission.gov.uk

In Scotland where the legal system is different information can be found from:

- The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations at www.scvo.org.uk
- Inland Revenue (who register charities) at www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk

Networking and sharing information on your experience and knowledge of structures and constitutions is essential. See www.southwesttowns.net and www.countryside.gov.uk/market-towns

Self Evaluation Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to help you to decide whether you have considered all the issues that help in defining the mission and structure of your organisation. It summarises and addresses the many challenges and key points identified in this chapter. It could also be considered as a 'checklist of things to do'.

You may wish to photocopy this checklist and use it with your community and agency partners. You can, of course, adapt it to suit your own circumstances. An electronic version of the form is available to download on www.southwesttowns.net ►

Chapter Six

	Comments on significance	Reviewed
Are you ready?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Have you decided it is time to develop the Steering Group into a local organisation to sustain the work in the longer term?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you revisited the challenges in section 3.1?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do we define a mission?		
Have you decided who to involve in defining your mission?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you answered the what, who and how questions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you developed a draft mission statement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you tested the draft mission statement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you finalised your mission statement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do we choose a structure?		
Have you sought professional advice to help develop your constitution?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you researched and considered the main options?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you decided on a legal structure and developed your constitution?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do we gain the skills to run the organisation?		
Have you updated your skills audit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you planned your training programme?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do we involve the wider community in this work?		
Have you decided who to involve and what methods to use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you involved the wider community and your partners in the preparation of the mission statement and the development of the legal structure?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 6.2

The people in your organisation

This section will explain the importance of deploying all the people and skills that are available to help you in your work. It will help you to think through the issues and provide advice, guidance and suggestions on how to achieve this. The key Challenges covered in this section include:

- **Challenge 1:** How do we identify the skills and resources available in our community?
- **Challenge 2:** What can we use a Community Agent for and how do we find and appoint them?
- **Challenge 3:** How do we find and appoint consultancy help?
- **Challenge 4:** Appointing Project Staff
- **Self Evaluation checklist**

Chapter Six

The Principles

Why is it important?

Planning for your community is about thinking differently and taking responsibility for your future. It is about developing your skills, experience and organisation to lead the regeneration of your area. To achieve this you should constantly be looking for ways to invest in your place and the people involved in your work.

Any successful business, agency or organisation knows that it has to identify the skills it needs, employ the highest calibre of staff, invest in training and crucially, know when to bring in outside help. They would not dream of trying to muddle through so why should you?

You have a huge advantage over businesses and agencies in your volunteers. Volunteers are the backbone of any community led organisation and are a major resource that should be valued and nurtured. Organisations who develop a supportive environment for their volunteers are rewarded with loyalty and hard work. Take them for granted and they will soon disappear back into the community.

Successful community organisations supplement the skills, experience and time of their volunteers. They may employ local people, project staff or consultancy help to work alongside the professional officers of partner agencies. They match the task to the people most suited to carry it out successfully.

The Practice

Identifying the skills you require, finding the right people and deciding how to set them to work is a fundamental part of planning for your community. Undertaking a Skills and Resources Audit will help you with this work (LINK CHALLENGE 1). The people available to you are likely to be one of the following:

- **Volunteers:** the heart and lungs of your community and without their active involvement your work is unlikely to succeed. They are likely to be involved in your Steering Group and working groups. They will help manage your work and be actively involved in preparing and implementing your plan. Your community may have musicians who will play at a community event, others may undertake administrative tasks, help organise events, help with surveys and carry out practical projects. They will use their talents to bring your work to life. Most importantly they will be your ambassadors in the community, spreading the word as they go about their daily business.
 - **Community Agents:** local people who are paid on a part-time basis to help the Steering Group and local organisation prepare and implement your plan. Community Agents may help with administrative tasks providing a service to the Steering Group, local organisation and their working groups. This might involve organising meetings, booking venues, preparing leaflets, organising mailings etc. Depending of their skills and experience
- Community Agents may also take on preparing reports, conducting interviews, surveys, preparing budgets and assisting in the development of particular projects.
- **Project Officer:** this is usually a professional person employed as a member of staff over a fixed period (say three years), to a wide ranging job description related directly to implementing projects in your plan.
 - **Consultant:** consultants can provide invaluable professional assistance at each stage of your work. Consultants are usually appointed on specific, short term, self-employed contracts to provide a range of services. They can provide assistance on the different steps in preparing and implementing your Plan (e.g. establishing your Steering Group, preparing your vision, understanding the current situation etc). They may facilitate seminars and events. They might provide specific services (e.g. an architect, a lawyer or a structural engineer) to help you advance a project or help support your organisation.
 - **Secondment/Partner:** you may be offered the support of staff from within a partner organisation. This can either be on an informal basis or a dedicated secondment. Your local authority for example, may offer help from community development staff. A partner may be able to give you access to their marketing or legal department for a specific project. In Bodmin, the Local Authority offered dedicated time of one of their regeneration staff to help develop the work. In

Totnes, a County Council Officer was seconded to the local project to help them with fundraising and to develop the group and their plan.

Different people will be appropriate at different times. Without volunteers your work will not get off the ground. Community Agents will be helpful at whatever stage you are at. Project Officers are likely to come on board once you have developed your organisation and are really moving on to implementing your plan. Consultants can be used at any stage providing advice on the whole process or for specific projects. Partners are likely to contribute officer time from the outset helping to advise the Steering Group. Formal secondments are only likely when specific roles can be clearly identified.

The Big Issue

Thinking locally, acting professionally. It is important to respect the range of skills you will need to succeed and the level of professional expertise you will require to be effective. Community Planning is now a respected professional discipline and you should consider enlisting the support of skilled professionals to help you with your work. Striking a balance in deploying volunteers, paying local people, employing project staff and appointing consultants is the key to success. Would you consider building a house without involving any tradesmen or an architect?

Wherever possible you should deploy local skills and keep money within your local economy. This will help your community become more self-sufficient. Ensure you have a clear picture of the skills and human resources available in your community (LINK CHALLENGE 1). When you have to look outside your community aim for the highest standard of skills and expertise. Think locally and act professionally.

The Wicked Issues

Skills and Resources Audit is only half done. (LINK: CHALLENGE 1)

Establishing the skills, experience and resources that are available in your community is an extremely important part of your work. It takes time to develop and is not a one-off event. If you undertake the audit too early you may not have built enough confidence and understanding in your community for anyone to make a commitment through the audit. Try not to rely solely on a form filling exercise. Follow up on the audit and contact the people who have completed the form. Remember to update the audit on a regular basis, new people will come on board and others will leave for a variety of reasons. Most importantly, remember to register your organisation under the Data Protection regulations (LINK: GUIDANCE AT END OF SECTION).

Consultants – “a waste of money”:

Local communities are traditionally cautious in appointing consultants. This is a healthy policy when your work is about developing local skills and experience. There is, however, a balance to be struck. Community Planning is a respected professional discipline and consultancy services have their place in your team. Specialised advice (e.g. legal or architectural) is easily identified. It is often more difficult to decide whether to appoint consultants to help you with the stages of preparing your plan and developing your organisation. In the South West a number of the communities have struggled over a number of months to make progress. A consultancy appointment has given them direction and helped them

Chapter Six

build a momentum. Many of the leading examples in the South West (e.g. Langport and Minehead) have employed significant consultancy help in preparing their plan and establishing their local organisations. A great deal depends on the skills available to your community but don't reject consultancy support out of hand!

Consultants – “they didn't deliver”

Good research before appointment is the key to weeding out the good from the indifferent. Talk to other communities and take up references. It is also essential to make the brief as clear and specific as possible. If you are clear about the things you want your consultant to do they are much more likely to deliver it. For advice on constructing a good brief see guidance at the end of this section.

“Jack in the village can do that” Be very cautious about using unpaid advice from a local professional. It may well be that the skills are locally available but you have to be absolutely certain that this advice will be of the highest standard. It is very difficult to have any control over work carried out like this on an unpaid basis if it goes wrong or is not up to scratch. It is also important to have a fair and open appointment process for consultancy work. If you have decided that you need high quality professional advice by all means ask local companies to tender for the work.

Overloading your Project Officer.

Some communities see a Project Officer as an answer to the regeneration of their place. You need to be very careful to share the responsibility through the work of volunteers and the appointment of

Community Agents, consultants and secondments. It is important to establish team working, giving local people the opportunity to take responsibility for their plan. If you invest all the work and knowledge in your Project Staff you risk being left high and dry when the funding runs out or they move to another job. Appointing local people as Community Agents will root your work in your community. They can do a great deal of the work of Project Staff if you can't get revenue funding for such appointments. If you have Project staff they can share the load.

Appointing Community Agents. It is extremely important to have a well thought through and rigorous appointment process for your Community Agents. Take time to consider the job description and the background you would like a candidate to have. Failure to have an open and transparent appointment process can raise concerns in the wider community.

A hasty decision might mean you make a poor appointment.

Managing your team. In building your team of volunteers and paid people you have to keep in mind the management of all of these people. If you have a Project Officer (remember they must have a direct line manager!) are Community Agents going to report directly to that person? How will you co-ordinate work if you have to rely on the members of your Steering Group or local organisation? Careful planning is required.

Employment law. This area is a minefield and it is essential that you seek legal advice well before you make your first appointment. If appointments are made through a partner then they will have a well-developed policy. If your local organisation is entering a contractual arrangement directly you must seek advice.



Challenge 1: How do we identify the skills, experience and resources that are available in our community?

Wherever possible you should be looking to use and develop local skills. This will help you to keep money within your local economy and sustain your work in the long term. It is therefore important to establish exactly what skills, experience and resources are available in your community and from your partners. This will help you to use them effectively and identify training needs. It will also help you to identify the tasks where you may want to 'buy in' help through appointing community agents, consultants or project staff. You can use a 'Skills and Resources Audit' to help you build this picture and update it as your work develops.

Who undertakes the audit?

The Steering Group or local organisation leading the work usually undertakes this audit. Remember to include your partners as this will help you to identify the skills and resources they may be willing to offer. Include local organisations and businesses in addition to individuals.

What form does the audit take?

The audit is usually a simple questionnaire developed by the Steering Group or local

organisation. It can be distributed by hand, by post, by leaving it in shops and community venues or a combination of these. One community chose to identify a 'hit list' of local businesses; organisations and individuals they felt would be open to taking part. They delivered the questionnaire by hand, explaining what it was all about and encouraging people to complete and return the form. They also publicised the audit in the local press and left copies at various 'stations' they set up around their community.

When should we carry out an audit?

Do an audit when your Steering Group is established and running well. It will help you get the word out and encourage people to come forward. Remember your audit is a living resource and should be regularly updated. As your work becomes better known new people may have the confidence to contribute their skills and resources.

It may take time to develop the audit and your database of skills and resources. Especially at the start of your work people will be wary of committing themselves to the relative unknown of this work. Start small and build up over time as your credibility grows in your community.

How exactly will it help?

At every stage of your work your audit will help you to identify when to 'buy in' help and from whom. With each new task you should ask what skills and experience you require and establish whether or not they are available locally. In Great Torrington in Devon they have an experienced Development Trust with full admin support. This means they can undertake a range of work themselves but may appoint consultancy help on specific projects. For example, they brought in an experienced youth development worker to design and undertake a consultation exercise with the youth of the area. In Helston they appointed a number of Community Agents to help with administration, involving the surrounding parishes and supporting the working groups.

Chapter Six

Storing, using and updating your audit

The Data Protection Act covers all aspects of the storage and use of information. It is extremely important that you take professional advice on this. If you build up records on individuals and groups it is likely that you should register under the Data Protection Act ([LINK TO GUIDANCE SECTION](#)). It is of equal importance to ensure that your audit is kept up to date. You may find it useful to ask new members of the organisation to complete the audit when they join. It may be appropriate to review the whole audit say once a year.

Audit developed by the Kingsbridge MCTi Group in Devon

Market and Coastal Town Initiative (MCTi) for the South West

Skills and Resources Audit for Steering Groups and Local Partnerships

Introduction

Local people who get involved in the MCTi process are committed and talented. The skills of individuals and organisations involved in the MCTi steering groups and local partnerships are vital to the success and development of both their Community Strategic Plan and their organisation. This audit will help establish exactly what skills and resources are available in your community. This will help you use them effectively and identify potential training needs. It will also help you plan for the tasks you may want to 'buy in' through the appointment of Community Agents or Consultants.

The Audit

The information below can be adapted and used as the basis of the audit for your steering group or local partnership.

Skills and Resources Audit for: Insert Name of Steering Group or Local Partnership

Introduction **from your steering group/local partnership.....**

A range of skills are needed in the partnership, for example:

- Working together as a group
- Chairing meetings
- Minutes and Note-taking
- Marketing, promotion and publicity
- Public speaking Project development
- Financial management

- Interviewing local people
- Preparing Funding Applications
- Undertaking research
- Professional skills (e.g. legal, architectural etc)

It would be extremely useful for the Partnership to know about your skills, local interests and experience – what you can give in terms of your time and experience and what you want to get out of your involvement with MCTi. This information will be shared with other members of the local Partnership.

We also need to identify local resources that could be useful in drawing up or implementing the local MCTi Community Strategic Plan. For example, you, or the organisation you belong to, may have a collection of local photographs that could be useful for a local exhibition of the town or parishes. You may have a computer or video that someone might borrow, with training, to type up minutes or video a local presentation. You might have a shop or a shed that could be used, temporarily, for storage of materials if need be, for a local event to showcase the MCTi process. You may even have a van that might transport publicity materials or display boards.

We would be grateful if you would fill in the skills and resource audit questionnaire below and send it to (insert contact details) by (date)

Skills and Resources Audit for: *Insert Name of Steering Group or Local Partnership*

Name:

Contact Details:

Address:

Tel no: email address:

The skills and experience I can offer the Partnership are *(please tick your skill level)*

Skill and Level	Quite good - working knowledge	Excellent skill / experience level
Chairing meetings		
Taking minutes/notes		
Working as a member of a project group		
Writing Reports		
Writing Press Releases		
Designing Leaflets/Posters		
Interviewing local people		
Public Speaking - acting as an 'ambassador' for the regeneration process locally		
Finance Skills - setting/understanding project budgets		
Finance skills - accounting for expenditure		
Appraising projects to assess how feasible they are.		
Organising events		
Running events – facilitating groups etc		
Interviewing people - market research		
Creative skills - musician, artist, photographer etc		
Other (please identify)		

Chapter Six

Interests and Hobbies: what interests and hobbies do you have that might be useful to the MCTi process locally - e.g. local history, amateur dramatics, local music group, botany etc.?

.....

Expert Technical Skills: do you have a particular 'expert' technical skill that can be called upon (on a paid or voluntary basis) – e.g. architect; legal adviser accountant?

.....

Do you have any underused resources that you would be prepared to loan to the Partnership e.g. use of building for meetings, vehicle or equipment?

.....

What do you want to get out of your involvement in the Partnership e.g. experience in volunteering in my community, skills training and development, socialising etc?

.....

Are there any particular things you would like to do e.g. chair the Partnership/distribute leaflets, chair a particular theme group e.g. transport; youth, design posters, take notes of meetings, write a newsletter press release about the process, edit/write the Action Plan report etc. Please note training may be given

.....

How much time do you have to offer over the next 6 months e.g. number of hours per week?

.....

What is your Vision for the area? How do you think it should be to live, work and play here in 10 years time? Write your own Vision below

.....

What are the Key Issues and Difficulties you think the area faces in achieving your Vision? These might be economic, social, environmental or cultural. There are some suggestions of headings, below, and you might have others

Economy e.g. the range of shops needs improving; skills don't match available jobs etc

Town Centre

Tourism

Transport

Housing

Youth, Community, Health and Education

Environment

Other

Thank you very much for answering this questionnaire. Information from it will be shared with other members of the Partnership. Please send the questionnaire to *(contact details)* by *(date)*.

Any other comments

.....

Challenge 2:

What can we use a Community Agent for and how do we find and appoint them?

What is a Community Agent?

A community agent is a local person or organisation who is appointed and paid to help their community prepare and implement their plan. They help to root the work in the local community and ensure you develop local skills for the work ahead. A community agent is usually directly responsible to the local Steering Group or organisation leading the work. In preparing your plan community agents can work alongside your volunteers, consultants and the agency staff who support your work. In implementing your plan they may work alongside any project staff you appoint. You can choose to have a network of Community Agents supporting your work.

What does a Community Agent do?

There are usually two types of Community Agents. Those who provide mainly administrative support and those with the skills and experience to help develop your work:

● Community Agent - administration:

Such appointments are likely to service the Steering Group or local organisation and their working groups. They can act as a central point of contact and their work may cover:

- organising meetings;
- booking venues;
- talking and distributing minutes;
- preparing leaflets and posters;
- organising mailings;
- basic book keeping;
- compiling and maintaining a contacts database;
- helping with the local skills and resources audit;
- other general administrative tasks.

● Community Agent - development:

Such appointments will help you to develop your work at a local level including:

- Preparing reports;
- Writing press releases;
- Conducting interviews;
- Undertaking research;
- Preparing budgets;
- Facilitating group work at meetings;
- Developing certain projects;
- Identifying funding opportunities and completing funding applications.

How do we find the right person to be a Community Agent?

Remember, by definition you are looking inside your own community for such a person. You may already know of likely people, they may

case study

In Helston in Cornwall Community Agents have been central to their work. Three Community Agents have been appointed in roles ranging from 10 hours a week to 24 hours a week. One post was to cover administrative duties to take the pressure from volunteers. They booked meeting rooms, photocopied agendas and took minutes at meetings. A second Community Agent helped to undertake the Countryside Agency Healthcheck. In this work they made links with the surrounding parishes. The third Community Agent helped to deliver the Townscape Heritage Initiative partly funded by English Heritage.

Kerrier District Council employed the Community Agents and dealt with all contractual and payroll matters.

Chapter Six

come forward as volunteers or be identified through the skills audit. It is very important to appoint through a fair, open and transparent process. Your partners will be able to provide advice and support in this.

Remember, it is essential to offer a Community Agent access to training opportunities and briefings on the work. The whole point is to develop their skills and experience to help you deliver your work and build the experience available to your community.

Who should employ and manage a Community Agent?

The Steering Group or local organisation that are leading the work should manage your Community Agents. By all means enlist the support of partners (e.g. the Local Authority) as employers, but always ensure that the Community Agents are reporting directly to the Steering Group or local organisation. To ensure things run smoothly they must report on a regular basis. Appointing a specific member(s) to this management role may be helpful.

Depending on the stage you are at, there are usually two options for actually employing a Community Agent:

- **The local organisation:** Once you have been properly constituted you will be able to employ people directly. Your partners will recognise your constitution and you will be seen as an 'accountable body' able to receive public funds. You can define your own terms and conditions for any appointment (self employed or staff).
- **A partner:** If you are still at the Steering Group stage you may wish to use a partner to receive funds or employ people on your behalf. For example, In Helston, the District Council employed all Community Agents. In this case the partner will have their own terms and conditions.

What are the terms and conditions of a Community Agent?

Obviously terms and conditions will have to be developed to fit local circumstances and who is actually the employer. For guidance, within the MCTi the following terms and conditions are recommended:

- Community Agent - administrator: £6.00 per hour plus expenses and other benefits;
- Community Agent - development: £8.00 per hour plus expenses and other benefits
- Appointments are in the region of 30 hours per month over a 6 to 12 month time period.

As a rule of thumb, if the task you want to achieve requires skills valued at higher than £8/hour or on a more permanent basis it is suggested that you look to a consultancy or project staff appointment.

A Step-by-Step Guide to appointing your Community Agent.

- **Step 1:** Prepare your work programme and undertake the audit of the skills and resources available to your local partnership.
- **Step 2:** Identify the tasks that you wish a Community Agent to undertake and whether the appointment should be to help administer the process or develop the process. Decide how long each appointment should be for and how many hours you need to budget for.
- **Step 3:** Decide how the Community Agents are to be managed by your Steering Group or local partnership and how they will report to you.
- **Step 4:** Decide who is going to employ the Community Agents and on what basis (self employed or employed). Decide on benefits that apply to the appointment (expenses, holidays etc).

The people in your organisation

- **Step 5:** Prepare job descriptions and person specification.
- **Step 6:** Advertise the opportunity in your partnership and your community.
- **Step 7:** Interview and appoint your Community Agent(s).
- **Step 8:** Ensure your Community Agent is briefed on MCTi and identify their training needs.

A range of resources (e.g. sample job descriptions and contracts) are available ([LINK GUIDANCE AT END OF SECTION](#)).

Developing good practice for your volunteers and Community Agents

It is essential that you develop good practice in using volunteers and employing Community Agents. The Steering Group should welcome volunteers and it is an excellent idea to produce a 'welcome pack' for volunteers. This should include an introduction to the Steering Group or local organisation along with background

information on your work. This will help bring the volunteers up to speed and make them feel a valued part of your team. Depending on the size of your volunteer force it can be an idea to appoint members of your Steering Group or local organisation as liaison officers for your volunteers. Discussing training and skills development opportunities with volunteers can be another constructive move. A similar approach with Community Agents will help foster a team approach.



Chapter Six

case study

In Langport they regard the appointment of their consultant as the best decision to date. The Chairman of the Langport Forum urges groups to avoid the approach summed up by “ Jack in the village can do this sort of thing and he can do it for nothing”. He feels the advantages of involving a skilled professional are that they can help you look outward and see the issues in a different light. They bring regional and national experience and most importantly can play the role of ‘honest broker’.

They identified consultants from the directory at www.southwesttowns.net. The Steering Group then prepared a brief and invited 5 consultancies to submit tenders. Taking advice from partner agencies they were careful to ensure that the brief was what they wanted, rather than the views of any one partner. They appointed their consultant after a detailed interview process.

Challenge 3: How do we find an appoint consultancy help?

Consultants can provide a wide range of services to communities planning their future. Individuals, organisations and commercial companies can offer consultancy services. Consultants providing the service do so on a self-employed basis working to a specific contractual agreement.

It is important to remember that consultants should be used to supplement the skills available to the community through volunteers, Community Agents, Project staff and your partners.

What can consultancy services be used for?

Common examples of consultancy services offered to communities who are planning their future include:

- design and delivery of community events and consultation exercises;
- preparation of your plan (e.g. vision, current situation etc) and your operational plan;
- development of your Steering Group and local organisation (e.g. constitution, working group structure etc);
- undertaking feasibility work and develop specific projects;

- carrying out research, surveys and monitoring and evaluation;
- preparation of fundraising strategies and funding applications;
- design and delivery of training and briefing events.

Consultants can become valued and trusted members of your team. When you find consultants you work well with, longer-term relationships can be formed where you can call upon their services when required. Consultants may offer very specific skills (e.g. a lawyer, architect or accountant) or general skills in regeneration. Consultants work on their own, with a network of associates or as part of a larger consultancy organisation.

How do we find a consultant?

The best way to find consultants is by recommendation from another community or a partner. This way you will find out their strengths and weaknesses first hand. There are various ‘directories’ of consultancy services available (LINK GUIDANCE AT END OF SECTION). The MCTi has its own directory of consultancy services. Before inclusion in the directory, every consultancy must attend a full briefing on the MCTi and information is provided to them on a regular basis. The directory can be found at www.southwesttowns.net

How do we appoint a consultant?

If you are very clear about exactly what you want a consultant to do you should:

- Prepare a full brief for the work you wish them to do. This should include:
 - an introduction to the work you wish them to do and your Steering Group or local organisation;
 - any relevant background information;

Section 6.2

The people in your organisation

- a detailed description of each task you want them to carry out;
- specific outputs you expect the consultant to deliver;
- any milestones that will mark progress during the work;
- the timescale and timetable for the work;
- a budget for the work if this is already set;
- the form you would like their submission to take and when it must be submitted by;
- the interview date;
- details of contact person.

A very detailed brief can sometimes be a disadvantage. Over specification can prevent the consultant from engaging creatively with the work. It is helpful to build a good understanding within your organisation of the work you want carried out. By not over specifying you will encourage creative thinking from your consultants and you can then choose the best ideas for what you want!

You should ask the consultant to provide:

- details of how they propose to undertake the work;
 - a list of recent clients;
 - a brief synopsis of similar projects;
 - name position and contact details of the people who will undertake the work;
 - a full budget breakdown of everyone who will be involved including the day rate and no of days assigned to each individual;
 - name, position and two referees.
- Send the brief to a number (at least three) of consultants with the appropriate skills and experience;

- Interview at least three consultants and take up all references prior to the interview if possible;
- Appoint and issue a contract to the chosen consultant.

It is normal practice for the terms of the contract to be up to 50% of the fee in advance with the balance paid in stages until satisfactory completion. If you have a fully constituted local organisation you can issue the contract. If you are a Steering Group you are likely to need a partner agency to issue the contract on your behalf.

A number of organisations provide helpful information, checklists, and examples of contracts and briefs (LINK: GUIDANCE AT END OF SECTION). Your partners may be able to offer help and advice in selecting and appointing consultants. Public agencies will have particular experience in this area.



Chapter Six

Challenge 4: Appointing Project Staff

What is a Project Officer?

A Project Officer is usually appointed on a full time (or part-time contract) for a defined period (often three years). They usually have a wide ranging job description related directly to the implementation of your plan and developing your organisation. This is a key appointment and is likely to be central to the success of your work. Other project staff may be appointed to undertake specific pieces of work. For example, many communities have secured funding to employ a 'Healthcheck Worker' from the Countryside Agency. This appointment is designed to help the group through the planning process. In other communities, English Heritage have funded an appointment to progress specific conservation and built heritage work.

When can you appoint Project Staff?

The answer to this is usually in your ability to seize funding opportunities as they arise. Public, private and charitable funding for such appointments can arise at any time. If you have not yet established your local organisation you will once again require the services of a partner to employ the Project Staff. In MCTi you are encouraged to involve your community and prepare your plan by using local volunteers and Community Agents supplemented by the skills of your partners and specific consultancy appointments. This roots the work in your local community and partnership. Once your plan is prepared you will be in a better position to fully justify more permanent, full-time appointments.

How do we appoint and manage a Project Officer?

Such an appointment is likely to be one of the biggest decisions you are likely to make. Securing the appointment of first rate Project staff is a skilled process. You will also be entering the territory of employment law. It is essential that you seek both legal and human resources advice to guide you. Your partners may be able to help and there a number of helpful guides produced by organisations supporting the voluntary sector (LINK: GUIDANCE AT END OF SECTION).

It is absolutely crucial to develop a strong management framework for your Project Staff. Your organisation must control their work programme. While you may set up a specific working or sub group for this it is recommended that a named individual from the organisation is the line manager for Project Staff.

Guidance

What tools can we use?

The MCTi can provide you with:

- An example of a work programme;
- Examples of job descriptions and person specifications for a Community Agent;
- Examples of a contract if you choose to appoint your Community Agent on a self employed basis;
- Links to other communities who have appointed Community Agents;
- Links to specific training courses for Community Agents;
- Examples of job descriptions and contracts for Project Officers;
- Examples of contracts to employ consultants.

What skills will you require?

- Administrative skills to organise events;
- Community development skills to involve people and organisations;
- Facilitation skills to run meetings and events;
- Human resources/personnel skills;
- Legal skills for contracts and employment legislation.

Where can we find the help and information we require?

It is absolutely essential that you seek professional advice when entering contracts of employment and utilising volunteers. Information and advice can be found through:

- The National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service who can put you in touch with your local CVS at www.nacvs.org.uk

- Action with Communities in Rural England who can put you in touch with your local Rural Community Council at www.acre.org.uk
- The National Council for Voluntary Organisations at www.ncvo-vol.org.uk
- Development Trusts Association at www.dta.org.uk
- Co-operatives UK at www.co-operatives-uk.coop
- Community Development Foundation at www.cdf.org.uk

For further information on employing Community Agents see:

- The School for Social Entrepreneurs at www.sse.org.uk

For information relating to volunteering see:

- Volunteer Development England at www.vde.org.uk

In Scotland where the legal system is different information can be found from:

- The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations at www.scvo.org.uk
- Inland Revenue (who register charities) at www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk
- Volunteer Development Scotland at www.vds.org.uk

For information on training opportunities see:

- Countryside Agency at www.countryside.gov.uk/market-towns, Action for Market Towns at www.towns.net and www.southwesttowns.net

Chapter Six

Self Evaluation Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to help you to decide how best to deploy people to help you in your work. It summarises and addresses the many challenges and key points identified in this chapter. It could also be considered as a 'checklist of things to do'.

You may wish to photocopy this checklist and use it with your community and agency partners. You can, of course, adapt it to suit your own circumstances. An electronic version of the form is available to download on www.southwesttowns.net

Section 6.2

The people in your organisation

Reviewed	Comments on significance	
Are you ready?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Have you decided to employ people to help with your work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you considered what people you need (Community Agent, Volunteer, Consultant etc)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you taken legal and human resources advice on your employment practice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you identified a partner to act as 'employer' if you are still a Steering Group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Undertaking a Skills and Resources Audit?		
Have you adapted the standard Skills and Resources Audit to suit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you agreed how the audit will be undertaken and by whom?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you completed the audit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you followed up on the audit contacting those who responded?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you analysed the audit and made recommendations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you created a database from the audit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you registered to cover Data Protection regulations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you agreed when you will review the audit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appointing Community Agents		
Have you decided what you want your Community Agent(s) to do?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you prepared job descriptions, agreed terms and conditions and agreed the appointment process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you agreed the interview process and panel?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you agreed who will manage the Community Agent(s)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Chapter Six

Reviewed		Comments on significance
Have you issued your 'welcome pack'?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you established their training needs?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appointing Consultants		
Have you spoken to other communities and researched directories to find the right consultants?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you prepared the brief and the terms and conditions of the appointment?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you agreed the interview process and panel?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you agreed who will manage the consultant?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appointing Project Staff		
Have you decided what you want your Project Staff to do?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you prepared job descriptions, agreed terms and conditions and agreed the appointment process?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you agreed the interview process and panel?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you agreed who will manage the Project Staff?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you issued your 'welcome pack'?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you established their training needs?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Chapter 7

Making your plan happen

This chapter is for the members of the Steering Group (or your organisation) and your partners. It will explain how you can implement your plan and continue to develop your organisation. It will challenge you to make your plan operational and form new working relationships with the partners who can help you make your plan happen and includes:

- Section 7.1: Making your plan operational
- Section 7.2: Securing the resources you need

Chapter Seven

Inspirations

South Molton calls together their 'Brokering Table'

The Market & Coastal Town Initiative process culminates in a gathering together of agencies and funding providers to gain in principle support for the Action Plan and the projects therein. Support may include commitment to funding, inclusion in capital programmes or in forward plans for the organisation. This gathering is known as a Brokering Table. The first meeting of the Brokering Table was held in January 2004 and introduced the South Molton Strategic Action Plan to gain endorsement. Subsequently the table will be called together as projects require up-front funding to look at the feasibility of projects or where feasibility studies have been carried out or are not required, the actual costs of the project.

Alongside the Brokering Table, MA2K the community organisation responsible for delivering the projects identified in the Action Plan is working closely with the Local Strategic Partnership. MA2K felt it was important to open the channels of communication via the LSP before calling together the Brokering Table. In this way, agencies have come to the Brokering Table prepared for specific projects, can ascertain how the projects fit with their own priorities and be able to give commitment to delivering projects, funding or other support within specific timeframes.

The event in January was hosted by around twenty members of the MA2K and they were delighted that thirty seven delegates from many organisations were able to attend. They all fully supported the plan and gave their commitment to work in partnership.

Nick Harvey, MP has given his full support for the plan and has now committed that to paper within the Strategic Action Plan document. He says: 'I am confident that this plan points the way forward to a brighter future for South Molton and the many parishes which look to it as their focal point. If the partnerships which have been formed in creating the plan can grow, and rise to the challenge of implementing it over the years to come, then I believe it will come to be looked back on as a crucial turning point in South Molton's future.'

Further information:

Janet.Kennedy@northdevon.gov.uk

Section 7.1

Making your plan operational

This section will explain the importance of making your plan operational; organising people, money and activities to make things happen on the ground. It will help you to think through the issues and provide advice, guidance and suggestions on how to achieve this. The key Challenges covered in this section include:

- **Challenge 1:** How do we set good objectives?
- **Challenge 2:** How do we prepare our action plan?
- **Challenge 3:** How do we monitor and manage our action plan?
- **Self Evaluation checklist**

Chapter Seven

The Principles

Why is it important?

Strategic planning is about producing a long-term plan (LINK CHAPTER 4). It paints the big picture. Operational Planning is about producing an action plan to make the big picture actually happen.

You will have prepared your long-term plan looking 20 to 30 years ahead and carefully set out:

- your vision;
- an understanding of your current situation;
- the main themes that link where you are now to where you want to be;
- your goals under each theme looking 5-10 years ahead;
- how you plan to achieve each goal;
- the projects and actions that will help you achieve each goal and realise your vision.

You will have developed your local organisation, its mission and its legal structure. You will have begun to think

through how you can deploy the people who are available to your organisation. In other words, the big picture is firmly in place and you will be really well organised to play your part in making things happen.

Operational planning is about getting down to the nitty-gritty of how you are actually going to make things happen. It is a cyclical process and looks one or two years ahead and organises people, money and activities to get things done. It helps you to prepare an action plan. While everyone wants to see the big picture, every partner and funder will want to know exactly how you are going to achieve things on the ground. This is the other great benefit of your action plan.

The Practice

What is an action plan?

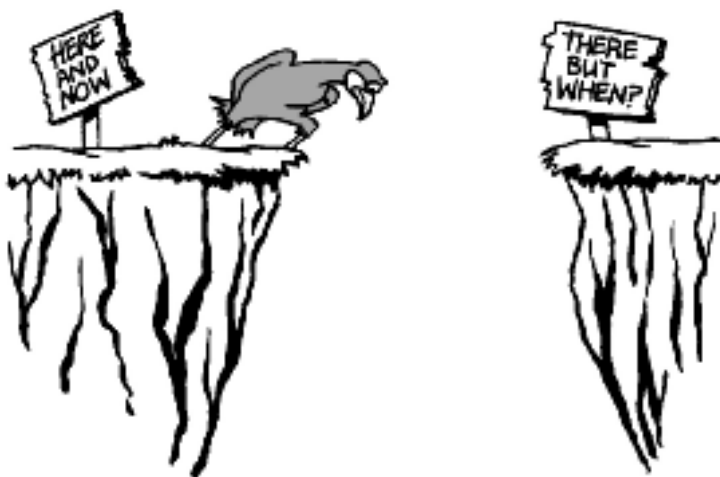
Your action plan will make it clear what needs to be done, who is going to do it, how it will be done, how much it will cost and where you will get the money from. It will also explain how you are going to measure and manage your progress. It is a very practical and important document.

Developing your long-term plan is challenging. Actually delivering all the projects and actions in your plan is even harder. Things rarely go smoothly when you start to make things happen. Deadlines will change, people working with your organisation may leave, funding conditions may alter and actual costs may differ from the budget. Careful planning will minimise disruption but the key to a good action plan is monitoring progress and being able to react quickly and effectively to changes.

Action Plans should be constantly monitored and formally reviewed at the end of each year. This will help you measure your progress and reset objectives for the year ahead.

What should your action plan contain?

Your long-term plan will identify themes (e.g. housing, transport, economy etc) and set out what you wanted to achieve over the next 5 to 10 years under each theme (your goals). Your action plan will set shorter-term objectives (1 or 2 years) as to how you are going to reach each



goal. Your action plan should include the following information for each objective:

- Who is it for (the beneficiaries)?
- A description of the project or activity;
- Who will manage the project or activity?
- How much of their time will it require?
- What are the milestones, timescales and targets?
- What are the costs and sources of funding?
- What are the outcomes and outputs?
- How are you going to measure and monitor progress?
- What are the risks involved in this project or activity?
- What is the priority of this project or activity?

Your action plan takes your long-term plan to a new level of detail. It will take each theme and show exactly what you are going to do each year to progress the various projects and activities that you have set out.

The Big Issue

Making sure your plan actually happens! Operational planning is all about ensuring that your visionary, long-term plan actually happens. It is about organising yourselves and carefully setting out the steps you are going to take to make things happen on the ground.

As well as careful planning it needs grit and determination to make things happen. You have to develop a 'can do' attitude, being decisive even when things are unclear and obstacles are put in your way. Your organisation must display leadership!



The Wicked Issues

Ensuring your action plan is successful is a real skill. It is likely to take time to gain the experience required. This is one area where it is wise to seek training opportunities and professional support. There is a great deal of information available on different aspects of action planning (e.g. budgeting, cash flow) and some of the sources are listed in the Guidance section.

Stretching yourself too far. This is very common. Most experienced organisations agree that actually making a project or activity happen is by the far the most difficult part of planning for your future. There are so many different things that can go wrong. Don't take on too much in the early years.

No priorities. Your long-term plan will have prioritised the projects and actions (probably into now, soon and later). Preparing your action plan requires you to prioritise again. It may be that you discover that all the projects that are in the 'now' category would stretch your organisation too far in any given year. They might require more days than you have at your disposal. You might not have enough money to do them all in the first year. Your action plan should explain why you have made the hard choices. Failure to prioritise in this way will end in disaster!

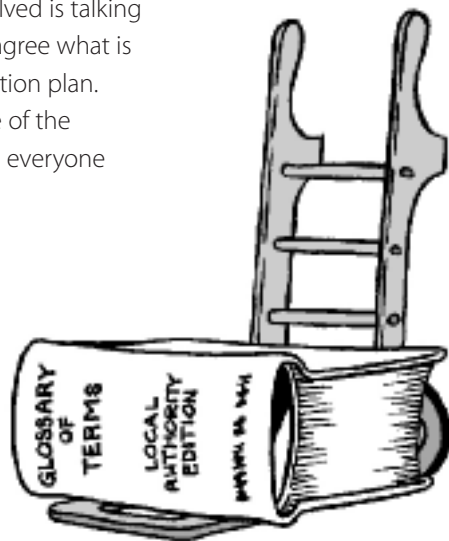
Budgeting and Cash Flow. Be realistic and always assume that things may cost slightly more and that funding will arrive late! Take into account lead-in times and always build in contingency funds. Involve your

Chapter Seven

partners in this exercise. Their experience will be invaluable and they are much more likely to help out if they understand the basis of your original calculations. Always check your sums!

Balancing strategic and operational planning. Some organisations continue to think about the big picture for too long. Partners, funders and local people will only value the vision if they see progress towards it on the ground. Equally, others move to thinking about making things happen too quickly. This loses the value of the strategic thinking and you are much more likely to end up working on a 'well organised wish list of projects'.

When is an action plan an action plan? Business Plans, operational plans, strategic plans, delivery plans...and so the list goes on. Different individuals and organisations often have a very different understanding about the same term. It is really worthwhile to run a session on this subject with all your partners. Make sure everyone involved is talking the same language and agree what is actually involved in an action plan. Write down the outcome of the session and circulate it to everyone involved.



Challenge 1: How do we set good objectives?

In CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.3 we discussed where objectives fit in the overall planning for your area and organisation.

The example given was:



case study

The Marbury Development Trust are running on a whole number of fronts; getting things done; re-organising the management committee; getting the first joint venture up and running with the Housing Association. They realised that the annual objectives were going to be really important to how they proceed on a day-to-day basis.

They set their objectives to define their priorities in the areas of housing and employment. These were the themes they felt would most influence the health of their community. For example, in the next year they are going to undertake the housing needs survey and the audit of available development land. They want to undertake a feasibility study on the redevelopment of the old brewery site for a mixture of housing and employment uses.

They specified when each objective would be accomplished and created a work plan to say who is going to do what by when to make sure things get done.

Theme	Affordable Housing
Goal	To provide 50 new 2 and 3 bedroom affordable housing units over the next 5 years
Strategy	We will take a stake in our community by investing in land and buildings while seeking to establish venture capital for development. We will train local labour to undertake sustainable construction projects and underpin this strategy with sound research and planning.
Objective	To secure x hectares of development land over the next two years To secure development finance of £x million over the next two years To secure a training provider in sustainable construction techniques
Target	Year 1: Undertake feasibility study to identify potential development sites, partners and funding sources Year 2: Offer training and skills development to 50 local people/contractors into sustainable construction methods
Project	Project 1: Purchase and develop the old railway yard for the construction of self build housing and linked workspaces Project 2: Convert the old creamery for a mixture of business units, tourist information centre and affordable flats.

In preparing your action plan you need to pay particular attention to setting your objectives and targets. Remember your objectives will help you to focus on what needs to be done and how you are going to deploy your resources to do it.

Setting your objectives

Objectives are best set by the management group of your local organisation. Groundwork is often done by the staff you may have employed. Take each of your themes and under

Chapter Seven

each goal develop the objectives that will help you move forward. Remember you are trying to take the steps that will reach your goal in the way your strategy describes.

In setting each objective you should ask yourselves:

- **Is it realistic?** Does it take reality into account?
- **Is it attainable?** This is not about wishes; you have to be sure it can be done given all your understanding about the obstacles and constraints.
- **Is it specific?** Well-set objectives are not general or vague. They are clear and state exactly what has to be done.
- **Is it measurable?** It should be easy to evaluate your objectives and tell when they have been achieved.
- **Is it meaningful?** Does it relate to your goal, strategy, mission and vision?
- **Does it have a clear timescale?** Objectives should be set within a clear timeframe with deadlines.
- **Is it co-ordinated?** Well-set objectives are logically linked to each other.

Once you have all your objectives together you should review the list and ask:

- Is each an important achievement in itself or is there any repetition?
- If we achieve these will we have made progress towards our goal?

You will then have a well-set list of objectives on which to base your action plan.

Challenge 2: How do we prepare our action plan?

Your action plan should identify the tasks and steps necessary to achieve each objective. These are often initially prepared for the management group of your organisation by staff or consultants. It is, however, essential that the management group take the final decisions working closely with their partners. The action plan should include information on the following:

- **Who is it for?** Who will benefit (e.g. local business, young people, unemployed)?
- **A description of the work involved?** Details of the project or activity.
- **Who will manage the project or activity?** Naming the individual(s) involved and their position in the organisation (e.g. Project Officer, consultant, and community agent).
- **How much of their time will it require?** You should estimate the number of days involved in managing the project for everyone involved.



- **What are the milestones, timescales and targets?** Milestones are the main events that can be marked as the work proceeds. Targets should be specific things that can be measured and will indicate your progress.
- **What are the costs and sources of funding?** One of the most difficult parts of preparing an action plan. Accurate costs and funding sources may require feasibility work. If general budgets are set make clear on what basis the figures have been set. If budgets have been set after feasibility work, say so.
- **What are the outcomes and outputs?** Outcomes specify what effect the result will have, outputs specify what the physical or immediate result is.
- **How are you going to measure and monitor progress?** If your targets are well set and the management of the project or activity is clearly defined evaluating progress will be straightforward. You should ensure that your targets are developed in line with the overall monitoring and evaluation of your long-term plan (LINK CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.5)
- **What are the risks?** This is a crucial part of preparing an action plan.

case study

The Haltwhistle Partnership in Northumberland was established in 1993 following a regeneration study. In 2000 they reviewed their overall Plan for the area with the help of a consultant. This covered the period 2000-2005. As part of the review the consultant worked with the management committee to prepare an action plan for the year ahead.

The management committee decided that the action plan for the year needed to focus on reorganising and kick starting the work again after the early years of the organisation. Priorities included:

- Preparing a fundraising strategy.
- Marketing and promotion.
- Getting projects to a funding ready stage.
- Partnership structure (in particular a membership drive).
- Implement 2 priority projects (economic and environmental).

The consultant did a great deal of the background work and helped to run workshops. A local worker helped them from the Rural Community Council. They both reported directly to the management committee

Chapter Seven

Assessing risk

Assessing basic risks is based on common sense. You don't need any specialist knowledge. There is a saying "What can go wrong, will go wrong"! While you may be lucky, any funder will raise an eyebrow at any part of an action plan that says, "There are no risks in this project".

Try your best to predict the things that may go wrong. Common problems include staffing, funding and partnership working. Try to judge the significance of the risk and the steps you have taken to reduce the risk. Develop and put in place any logical contingency plans.

Deciding on priorities

This is a crucial stage in preparing your action plan and must involve the management group of your organisation. You may have constructed a very detailed action plan where each component part is achievable and realistic. Looking at the whole action plan you have to ask:

- Do we have the people to undertake all this work?
- Do we have the budget to undertake all this work?
- Do we have the capacity as a management group to keep our eyes on all of these balls at once?

The detailed information you will have assembled for each project or activity will be invaluable. For example, if you simply add together all the days that you have allocated for every project does this equate to the number of days you have available from your team of staff, consultants, community agents and volunteers. Does the money add up?

If you have to make hard decisions about what you take on in any given year, make them now! Look at the risk assessments. Look at the priorities. Be ruthless, especially if you are a young organisation still learning the ropes. It is far better to have a small number of successful projects than a larger number of failures!

Challenge 3: How do we monitor and manage our action plan?

Management and monitoring are inseparable. How can you manage a project or activity without knowing what is happening to it? Monitoring and management require:

- you to identify the person who will be the manager;
- you to say how that person is accountable to the organisation;
- good monitoring systems;
- effective use of monitoring systems.

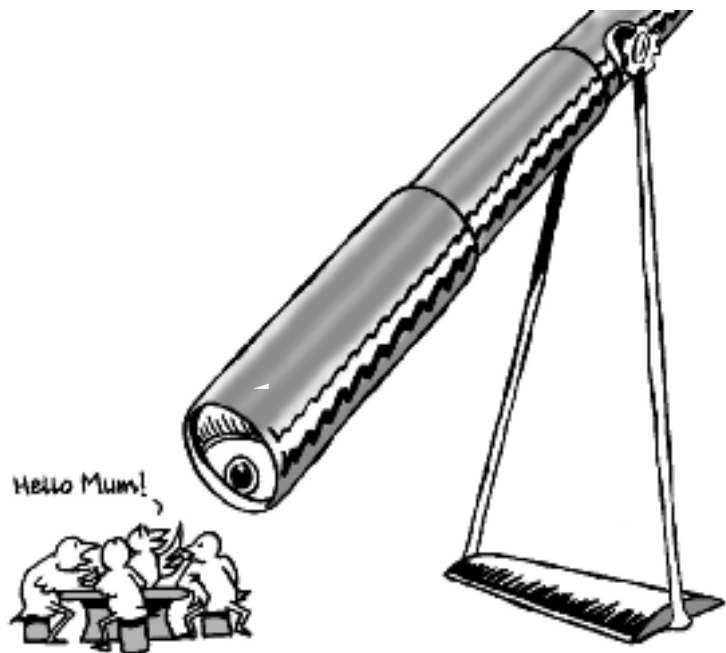
The benefits of monitoring include:

- accountability to your members, your community and your partners;
- early identification of problems;
- evidence of the benefits of your work;
- learning about what works and what doesn't.

A good system should define:

- **What you are going to monitor.** What do you need to know and what aspects of the project or activity do you want to monitor?
- **How frequently you are going to monitor the project or activity.** This may change as the work progresses.
- **How you are going to collect and collate the data.** Who is going to be responsible for this?
- **How you are going to use the data collected.** How and when are you going to report on progress?

It is important to write down your monitoring and management systems and ensure that there is a common understanding of all terms used (e.g. outputs, outcomes, targets etc). Involve your partners and funders. Make sure you are collecting the information they will require to invest their funds and resources.



Chapter Seven

Guidance, skills and contacts

What tools can we use?

- See information section below.

What skills will you require?

- Administrative skills to organise events.
- Community development skills to involve people and organisations.
- Facilitation skills to run meetings and events.
- Business planning skills to develop your Plan.
- Strategic thinking.

Where can we find the help and information we require?

- A first class source of information and guidance on all aspects of Action Planning can be found in the New Opportunities Fund publication 'Working in Partnership: A Sourcebook' available at www.nof.org.uk

Self Evaluation Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to help you to decide whether you have considered all the issues that help you produce your action plan. It summarises and addresses many of the challenges and key points identified in this chapter. It could also be considered as a 'checklist of things to do'.

You may wish to photocopy this checklist and use it with your community and agency partners. You can, of course, adapt it to suit your own circumstances. An electronic version of the form is available to download on www.southwesttowns.net

Section 7.1

Making your plan operational

	Comments on significance	Reviewed
Are you ready?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is your long-term plan complete?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your organisation ready to make your plan operational?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does everyone have a common understanding of what an action plan is?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do we set good objectives?		
Does everyone have a common understanding of what an objective is and where it fits in the planning process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you developed objectives under each of your themes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you tested each objective?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you reviewed and tested all of the objectives together?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do we prepare our action plan?		
Have you answered all the detailed questions about each objective?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you assessed the risks involved?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you decided on priorities and agreed your action plan for the year?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do we manage and monitor our action plan?		
Have you established an effective management and monitoring system?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you agreed to review your action plan each year?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Chapter Seven

Section 7.2

Securing the resources you need

This section will explain the importance of forming new working relationships with your partners to secure the support, assistance and money you will need to make your Plan happen and develop your organisation. It will help you to think through the issues and provide advice, guidance and suggestions on how to achieve this. The key Challenges covered in this section include:

- **Challenge 1:** Establishing your brokering table
- **Challenge 2:** Running your brokering table and keeping it going
- **Challenge 3:** Preparing a fundraising strategy and fundraising applications
- **Self Evaluation checklist**

Chapter Seven

The Principles

“What is the point of going to all this effort to prepare a plan and organise ourselves if it doesn’t actually help us make things happen on the ground?”

Local Steering Group member

Why is it important?

When regeneration is tackled on a project-by-project basis numerous individual funding applications are required for each project. The community submits an application and the funder decides whether or not it is successful. It creates an ‘us’ and ‘them’ situation. By preparing a plan, developing a local organisation and involving your partners in making things happen you have the opportunity to change this relationship.

You will have shown that you are prepared to take responsibility for your future. You will have been making projects happen and seizing funding opportunities as they have arisen. You will have been forming good working relationships with your partners and finding out who is likely to support different aspects of your plan. As your plan is long-term and covers all the different aspects of community life, it will be clear that no single partner will make it all happen. You now need to find ways to bring influential agencies, organisations and investors together to consider your Plan and how you can work together to make it happen.

Your partners have an equal responsibility for this. Bringing beneficial change to local communities is surely at the heart of their business. Failure to accept this responsibility will mean that communities will have to take their plan apart and push each project through all the different funding doors. This wastes time, resources and the value of strategic thinking and partnership.

The Practice

In the MCTI, the agency partners and organisations that came together to design and develop the initiative take this responsibility very seriously. They are keen to ensure that in encouraging local communities to plan for their future, their efforts are met effectively by those with the advice and resources to help make things happen. To do this the MCTI has introduced the idea of ‘brokering tables’.

One door to many doors

“Brokering: mediating, negotiating, advising.”

Roget’s Thesaurus

The brokering process will give your plan and your organisation credibility. Establishing a brokering table will help you to bring influential partners together to help you make the projects and actions in the plan happen. It will give you the opportunity to explain your plan and introduce your organisation. You will gain an understanding of how each partner works and what their different requirements and procedures are. It will help you get results.

It will give your partners the opportunity to share responsibility for making things happen. They will have the chance to work together while building a productive working relationship with the community. Most importantly, it will help them achieve their own targets with well thought through projects backed by the community.

In Bridport, South West Arts welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the work. Their Director commented that while he knew lots of the other partners around the table it was unusual for them all to be in the one room at the same time. While he often visited the town to meet various arts groups this was the first time he had the opportunity to consider the 'big picture' in terms of regenerating the whole area.

What it is and what it is not!

A successful brokering process means you must continue to think differently. In preparing the plan you were prepared to think beyond individual projects. In creating your organisation you were prepared to take responsibility for the future of your community. In making your plan happen you have to be prepared to negotiate and understand the requirements of your partners. This is not a glorified application process to fund your plan!

The challenges in this section will offer guidance on ensuring you secure the advice, support and money to make things happen. It is important to acknowledge that the brokering process:

- **Is** about partnership working, building a common understanding of everyone's requirements and unlocking funds.
- **Is not** a single pot of money.
- **Is** about opening up a dialogue with your partners.
- **Is not** about an exchange of cheques.

- **Is** about simplifying the application process for projects and actions.
- **Is not** about a single application form.
- **Is** about establishing an ongoing working relationship.
- **Is not** a single meeting.
- **Is** about involving key organisations.
- **Is not** about every partner being present around a table.
- **Is** about money, advice, support and good practice.
- **Is not** just about money.

How does the brokering process happen in the MCTI?

The MCTI brokering process happens at two levels:

- The local brokering table: where the community meets with their partner agencies and investors to discuss how best to make their plan happen.
- The Regional Management Group: where the partner agencies and investors discuss how best to co-ordinate policy and resources for the benefit of communities taking part in MCTI.

Community Strategic Plans are brokered at the local level. This is where you should focus your attention!

The Big Issue

'Us and them'. This is all about changing the relationship between those with the resources and those seeking the resources. One community likened their relationship with their partners to a football match. If we were a football team we want our partners to be our coaches helping us to win matches. Often they feel more like a goalkeeper or even worse, the referee!



Chapter Seven

The Wicked Issues

Worried about managing

expectations. Many partners will be concerned that they are committing themselves to attending a whole series of meetings. It is important to warm them up and explain the brokering process to them. Reassure your partners that this is about building a good working relationship and that their support for the brokering process is important. Discuss how they would like to work with you and how you can meet their requirements.

Hiding behind procedures.

Partners can tend to hide behind their own procedures rather than come and talk face to face with communities. Sometimes they may not have the staff resources to come and meet you, but if you feel that a particular officer is hiding behind procedures try going around them. Approach other parts of their organisation and try to establish personal contact with the 'right' person to explain your work.

Not prepared to think differently.

It is important to acknowledge that your work is also asking partners to think and act differently. Often staff are not used to talking face to face with the community. Encourage them to join you on training courses or visits to other towns. Once again try and build a personal relationship with the people representing your partners.

How does this link to Community Planning?

You are likely to find that many of the public sector partners will already be involved in statutory Community Planning. They may already come together through groups called Local Strategic Partnerships that

help to oversee Community Planning. Hopefully you will have been working closely with your Local Authority from the start to link your work to that of the statutory Community Planning process.

As more communities within one Local Authority area prepare a Plan, partners may want to centralise the brokering tables with the Local Strategic Partnership. They may see this as an effective way of using their resources. It is important that you are in control of finding the resources for your Plan. Encourage your partners to take an 'overview' at the Local Strategic Partnership while taking a more hands on approach at a community level.

Hard to fund projects. No matter how successful you might be there are often projects that you simply can't match to a funder or funding opportunity. Be prepared for this and remember that funding priorities change regularly. Alert people to projects like these and ask your partners to keep an eye open for future funding possibilities. You will have plenty of other projects to be getting on with.

Just give us the money! Guard against any part of your organisation

sending out this signal. Everyone is aware that the whole point of putting together a Plan is to realise your vision. You are trying to build long-term working relationships and nothing will chase people away quicker than that feeling that you just want them to write a cheque.

It's only about money. Be careful not to miss the opportunity to discuss other types of help. Partners will have skills and experience that may be useful. They may offer staff time, office equipment or simply a meeting room. One community was offered the help of a marketing department to assist with the promotion of the organisation.

Strings and moving goalposts!

Always be on your guard for onerous strings attached to funding programmes. Be careful that you have the resources to undertake the monitoring required. Public sector funding is also infamous for changing goal posts at very short notice so regularly monitor funding programmes on offer. Finally remember to stay true to your vision and your plan rather than being driven by the priorities of funding programmes and agencies.



Challenge 1: Establishing your brokering table

Before you start

In truth, forming new relationships with your partners happens as soon as you start work. You will find that some paid officers may get actively involved in your work from the earliest point. In Bridport the Chief Planning Officer for the District Council attended all the workshops to think through the Plan for the area. At each stage of the work you will have encouraged your partners to get involved. By the time you have published your Plan many of the partners who can make things happen will already be keen to get started.

You will have been making projects happen and seizing funding opportunities as you have been preparing your plan. It is, however, important to mark the point when your plan is complete and you are really looking to get everyone thinking about how to make things happen on the ground.

Before calling the first meeting of your brokering table you need to be confident that you have:

- your organisation (this can still be the Steering Group) in place to show everyone who they are dealing with and what an effective partner your community will be;
- your Plan in place to explain to everyone just what you want to achieve and how well thought through your ideas are;
- developed a real understanding among your members in the brokering process. You don't want someone demanding money for their particular project at the first meeting!

It is often useful to set up a briefing session on the brokering process to get everyone on side. Going to visit another community who has their brokering table already up and running can also be helpful.

Who should host the meeting? The meeting should be hosted by your organisation in your community. This is your Plan for your area.

Who should chair the meeting? This is a crucial part of your work and finding someone skilled in negotiation and chairing meetings is essential. Especially in your opening meeting you may feel that your own chairperson needs to be involved in your presentation. In this case some communities have asked their regeneration practitioner to chair the first meeting on their behalf.

Who should attend the meeting? The brokering process is likely to involve:

- your organisation;
- public agencies (e.g. Local Authorities, Housing Associations, Countryside Agency, Regional Development Agency, Environment Agency etc);
- investors (e.g. charitable foundations and private companies).

Public agencies and investors will be identified by the themes, projects and actions in the Plan and the geographical area it covers. If a priority is to create more affordable housing you will obviously want to involve the Housing Association. Remember not every partner will actually want to attend every meeting (or indeed any of the meetings). This does not mean that they can't be part of the brokering process.

case study

In Langport, the Forum carefully planned the first meeting of their brokering table. Their Plan was complete and they had a very good idea of the priority actions and projects. They had a good idea of which partners they needed to bring on board.

The key figures on the Forum divided responsibility for contacting each to warm them up face to face or on the telephone. In many cases these partners had already become involved in the work through specific project discussions.

Langport's consultant chaired the first meeting to free up the Chair of the Forum to lead the presentation on the Plan and their organisation. They asked partners to consider a general commitment to the principles of their work and specific assistance on individual projects.

The Chair of the Forum feels that the big success of the first brokering table was not actually asking anyone for money.

Chapter Seven

How many people should attend? Keep the meeting as small as practical. It is much better to win the support of a few key partners to begin with then start widening the net.

Promoting your Plan. Your Plan should be circulated well in advance of the meeting giving people lots of time to digest it.

Warming up your partners. Take time to contact your partners before the meeting. Let them know how it is going to be run and what is expected of them. People don't like being put on the spot or being unprepared. In Langport members of the Steering Group were allocated 3 partners they had to speak to prior to the meeting. Some partners were content with a phone call others requested fuller briefings in advance of the meeting.

Accommodating your partners. Find out what will suit them best. This may be an obvious thing such as the time of day and potential dates. They might suggest they bring a colleague or have suggestions about how the meeting can be run.

Do your research. Look at the brochures or annual reports of the partners you want to invite. Find out what they are about and what their priorities are likely to be.

Prepare your case. This is an important opportunity to build the credibility of your organisation and your Plan. At the opening meeting you want to make a clear and punchy presentation to your partners explaining:

- the background to your work and the involvement of both your community and your partners;
- the process you have been through;

- the Plan you have devised emphasising the 'big picture' and its strategic nature and the organisation you have created, explaining the structure (working groups etc);
- what you expect of your partners. This should emphasise the partnership approach as opposed to a request for a cheque.

Effectively you are saying to your partners we can work together to ensure everyone meets their requirements and targets. This can be a 'win-win' situation.

Influencing and lobbying

Your plan, and indeed the brokering process can help you to influence your partners (particularly statutory agencies) to spend more, and more wisely, in your community. By clearly setting out your long term priorities and forming strong working relationships you can begin to influence policy and programmes in favour of your community.

As relationships develop you can lobby for partners to spend existing resources more effectively while lobbying for new resources for your community.

Challenge 2: Running your brokering table and keeping it going

Your first brokering table

Your opening meeting is all about winning support for your Plan and your organisation. You should structure the agenda to ensure:

- everyone is clear about the purpose of the meeting;
- you restate the main principles of the brokering process;
- everyone is clear about what the Plan contains and how your organisation works;
- you give each partner the opportunity to respond to your presentation and outline the role they wish to play and who will be the main point of contact;
- you identify 'missing' partners and likely funding opportunities;
- there is agreement on the 'terms of reference' of your brokering table and how people would like it to operate;
- there is agreement on the next steps and the date of the next meeting.

The outcome from the first meeting should be an initial 'buy-in' to your work. You should begin to get a picture of:

- who are the enthusiastic partners and who is the main contact to deal with;
- what they expect of you;
- what their application process is and what to emphasise;
- what exactly they can offer (e.g. money, staff time, secondments, advice);
- who the other partners are, who should be involved and how best to involve them?

In one community the chair of the Steering Group telephoned the key partners to talk them through the first meeting. He quickly realised who were the enthusiastic supporters with a positive contribution to make. He made sure he turned to them first for a response to the presentation at the first meeting setting the tone for the rest of the meeting.

In another community the chair of the Steering Group stresses that they actually didn't start talking about money until later meetings. The earlier ones were all about building trust and a relationship and finding out how people wanted to work together.

Chapter Seven

The second meeting

It is essential to follow up the first meeting with clear notes, action points and guidance on the next steps. Remember most of the brokering happens outside of the meetings. Your second meeting is likely to:

- report on progress and reaction to the first brokering table;
- start to focus on particular projects and actions and how they can be progressed;
- seek the involvement of partners in promoting, marketing, preparing a fundraising strategy and other areas of your work.

In one community each working group left this meeting with a clear idea of the particular projects they were going to pursue and how they could be funded. The working group for the transport theme left to progress one of their priority projects to secure evening transport for young people from the surrounding rural areas into the town. One of the partners had offered the support of their transport officer while another had pointed to their grant programme for such projects.

Keeping it going

Most of the ongoing work is likely to be between the working groups and the relevant partners. Actual meetings of the brokering table should seek to:

- co-ordinate action and ensure everyone continues to see the big picture;
- identify new funding opportunities and partners;
- resolve projects that are proving to be hard to fund;
- offer advice on updating and reviewing the plan.

Only call meetings when they are absolutely necessary. Concentrate on working with partners outside of meetings where they can often be much more productive. Use your annual review process and get together to involve everyone. Celebrate your successes and praise your partners. Everyone likes to be associated with success!



Tamar Community Futures - the First Brokering Experience

The Tamar Community Futures (TCF) Steering Group produced their Strategic Action Plan (SAP) in June 2003. It was published as a working document, with brokering envisaged as a means to develop the actions and build working relationships. A first brokering table was held in September to present the SAP and identify the potential role of the partners. The results were very positive and a second brokering session, focussing on the largely economic and tourism objective of 'marketing' took place on 26th November 2003.

TCF, as the first MCTi project in Cornwall and Devon to reach the brokering stage, offer this record to assist others embarking on the brokering process.

Choosing a brokering table

The Steering Group originally planned on going to brokering in early July, shortly after publication of the SAP. However, a potential clash with early summer holidays and a concern about rushing the arrangements meant the decision was made to wait until autumn. A further advantage to choosing a later date was an offer, by the South West of England RDA, to flag up the TCF brokering table to a range of MCTi partners attending a meeting in July.

The invitation list

The aim was to invite representatives of potential partners who could contribute at a strategic level.

South West of England RDA helped us in this process, by providing a list of the partners invited to their July meeting. This list formed the basis of the invitations but was amended to suit the needs of our SAP. In particular it was necessary for us to invite representatives from both sides of the Devon and Cornwall border.

The invitation letter

The aim was to be welcoming, to stress the community commitment to the process and convey our expectation of a positive outcome.

Invitations to a "Presentation of the TCF Strategic Area Plan", rather than a brokering table, were sent out in the first week of August. We were aware that this was not an ideal time to send out invitations so follow up emails, telephone contact and letters were made at the end of the month and into September. Les Roper, South West of England RDA, assisted this process by contacting some of the outstanding replies and chasing up possible contacts.

The brokering environment

The aim was to provide a relaxed and comfortable environment within the TCF area.

A venue was chosen that reflected the nature of the area, a village Methodist hall, recently completed with local commitment, enjoying excellent views of the valley are sited alongside a community built Millennium Green. In keeping with the 'buy local' approach of the SAP, a one-person business was asked to provide a buffet of locally sourced foods. Informal flower arrangements reflecting the rural countryside outside helped to create an attractive venue. Displays, highlighting existing projects, were kept to a minimum to ensure the main focus was on the contribution of the partners to the brokering day itself.

The agenda

The aim was to be both informative and receptive.

The agenda consisted of a welcome, a presentation of the SAP, question time, group work and a plenary session. It was felt that an all day event would prevent some organisations from attending, so we started at 9.45am and finished at 12.30pm – with time for networking over lunch.

Presentation

The aim was to provide background information about the TCF area, the process that led to the SAP and our expectation of the brokering process.

A very visual PowerPoint presentation by the Chair of the Steering group identified many of the unique qualities of the area that helped to shape the SAP. An outline of the community consultation process helped to explain why

the particular format of the brokering day had been chosen to engage the brokering partners. The presentation made it clear that no financial commitments were being sought at this stage (guaranteed to relax the participants!) and that any expression of interest only committed partners to being further involved.

The delegates pack contained background information, details of ten specific projects entitled '10 opportunities to fund' and a Pro Forma, which each delegate was asked to complete and leave with us. The latter provided us with details of each organisation's area of interest, a named contact against each theme and basic funding details.

Group work

The aim was to gather information on work being planned or currently underway that might help deliver the objectives and to identify funding partners.

The work was undertaken using over 30 A1 worksheets of 'bubble tables', which we had devised and employed to good effect during the community action days. The objective and proposed actions were clearly displayed under each theme with bubble space for resources and partners to be identified by individuals working at their own pace. Steering Group members, with knowledge of the theme group work, were on hand to give further background information.

Plenary Session

The aim was to provide feedback from the worksheet session and on brokering in general.

A question had been planted to ensure that the session flowed but in the event was not required. Those attending commented positively on the event and a date, agreed by the Steering group earlier, was given for the next brokering session.

Supplementary Information

Paid co-ordinator time spent on the brokering table amounted to approximately 75 hours including:

- Meetings with Steering Group members and officers plus follow up communications (to plan, format, presentation & final details).
- Planning and production of worksheets from the SAP.

Chapter Seven

- Communication (compile/circulate/amend invitation list; prepare/send letters and agenda; follow up invitations with email/tel/letters and agenda; prepare and distribute press release – follow up interviews).
- Arranging venue and catering (seek appropriate venue and on-site visit, seek caterer and source local food suppliers for caterer – meet to discuss, arrange florist, arrange payments).
- Preparation of material: (compiling 'opportunities to fund' information; purchase/compile delegates packs; prepare PowerPoint presentation; provide facilitators checklist).
- Setting up including coordinating final arrangements; collection of background displays; worksheets; PowerPoint; catering and setting out venue.
- Event day.

Further time was spent on the follow up work to that event and the work for the second brokering event in November. The cost of putting on the event was approximately £325.

Jane Osborne,
Coordinator Tamar Community Futures

Challenge 3: Preparing a fundraising strategy and funding applications

The brokering process will help you to develop good working relationships with a wide range of funding partners. However, many potential funders will never be actively involved. This is likely to include major charities and those who control national sources of money. They may not have staff resources to visit every community who apply for funds or simply prefer to stick to their particular funding procedure.

In these cases your Plan and your organisation will still be of value. Funders like to see the 'big picture' and how a particular project they might fund fits with the well being of a community. They want to know that their investment will be well looked after by an organisation they can trust.

Developing a fundraising strategy

In making your plan operational (LINK CHAPTER 7, SECTION 7.1) this is dealt with in more detail. The brokering process will help you with your fundraising strategy. Use the knowledge, skills and experience of your partners to help you prepare this strategy. It is likely that your fundraising strategy will include clear goals for:

- meeting the core costs of the organisation;
- developing and running projects.

It may be that your organisation is also looking to develop an asset base of its own by investing in land, buildings and business projects.

Developing high quality funding applications

There are two golden rules in preparing good funding applications:

- Be brief. Grant giving bodies receive thousands of applications.
- Read the guidance for applicants. Provide exactly what they ask for.

Preparation and research is the key to a successful application. Grant giving organisations want to support well thought through applications, supported by the community. They want to be reassured that the skills are in place to make the project happen and to look after it in the long term.

Many charitable grant givers will exclude you from a further application within a 12-month period. It is always worth a telephone call to see what information or reaction you get. Many of the larger charities run open days/workshops that are well worth attending (e.g. National Lottery, Lloyds/TSB Foundation).

case study

In reviewing their overall Plan for the area in 2000 the Haltwhistle Partnership asked their consultant to prepare a fundraising strategy for the period 2000-2005. This involved the consultant in background research on potential funding opportunities and matching opportunities with the themes and priorities of the plan. The fundraising strategy covered the public, corporate, charitable and European sectors.

In addition to an overall strategy the consultant worked with the Partnership to identify immediate funding opportunities, prepare a 'directory' of possible funding sources and good practice guidance on preparing a funding application. The directory entries gave contact details, summarised priorities for investment and offered particular points of guidance (amounts, revenue or capital etc).

The consultant worked closely with the Partnership to decide how it should be structured to deliver its Plan and implement the fundraising strategy.

Chapter Seven

While each grant giver will have a slightly different procedure, a good funding application will include:

- a brief description of the project and the amount you are requesting clearly set out at the start.
- a brief description of your organisation, its work, management and staffing structure, and current budget.
- a description of the purpose of the project for which funds are required, the amount sought from the funder, who will manage the project, the project start and finish dates and the results expected.
- a budget for the project, details of funds already raised and others being approached.
- how your project intends to monitor and evaluate the project.
- your plans for sharing information about the project and what you learn from it with others in the field.
- the most recent annual accounts.
- your organisation's charitable status and details.
- the contact name, address and telephone/ e-mail details.

These good practice guidelines can be used as a template and adapted for most applications. Always remember, every grant giver has their own "angle" and it is worth thinking this through rather than simply reproducing the best practice guidelines.

Influencing others

An additional fundraising strategy is to work with local organisations and individuals to maximise the take up of grants, services and benefits. You may find, for example, that very few businesses are taking advantage of local grants and investment programme. By raising

awareness and offering training or briefing you may greatly increase the flow of investment into your local economy. During your work you may find that specific groups (e.g. the disabled or long term unemployed) are unaware of supportive services or are unable to take advantage of them. Finding out why this is the case and finding a solution may increase the quality of life and well being of these groups.

Working on local access to grants and services can be a real 'win win' situation. Your organisation will gain strength, friends and members while ensuring your community is better off.

Guidance

What tools can we use?

- See information section below

What skills will you require?

- Administrative skills to organise events, research funding sources and complete funding applications.
- Community development skills to involve people and organisations.
- Facilitation skills to run meetings and events.
- Negotiation and mediation skills to run your brokering process.
- Business planning skills to develop your Plan.
- Strategic thinking.
- Fundraising skills.

Where can we find the help and information we require?

There is a plethora of sources of information on fundraising:

- Two of the most reliable web based sources are at www.fundinginformation.org and www.funderfinder.org.uk. You may find that your local Council for Voluntary Service or Rural Community Council already subscribes to a funding finder that you can use.

Other organisations with funding advice and directories are:

- Countryside Agency at www.countryside.gov.uk
- National Council for Voluntary Organisations at www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

For government grants see www.governmentfunding.org.uk

Self Evaluation Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to help you to decide whether you have considered all the issues that help in securing the resources you will need. It summarises and addresses the many challenges and key points identified in this chapter. It could also be considered as a 'checklist of things to do'.

You may wish to photocopy this checklist and use it with your community and agency partners. You can, of course, adapt it to suit your own circumstances. An electronic version of the form is available to download on www.southwesttowns.net ►

Chapter Seven

	Comments on significance	Reviewed
Are you ready?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Have you completed your Plan?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you developed your organisation (or Steering Group) to lead the work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does everyone involved understand what the brokering process is about?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establishing your brokering table		
Have you found a good Chair for the meeting?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you identified who should take part?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you circulated and promoted your Plan?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you 'warmed up' your partners?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you planned things to accommodate your partners wishes and requirements?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you prepared your case and rehearsed your opening presentation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Running your brokering table and keeping it going		
Have you done all the preparation detailed in challenge 1?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you planned your agenda?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Did you achieve all the planned outcomes?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you followed up all the contacts and actions?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you circulated clear notes of the meeting?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you agreed the 'term of reference' and dates for further meetings?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Preparing a fundraising strategy and funding applications		
Have you developed a fundraising strategy?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you researched and prepared your funding applications?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Chapter 8

Sources of information and advice

This chapter lists sources of information and advice and gives you the opportunity to add your own notes to your Sourcebook.

Chapter Eight

Inspirations

Westray Development Trust: Planning for renewable energy resources

As the largest of Orkney's North Isles, Westray may be very different from the cities and towns of the mainland but their Development Trust has a powerful message for communities embracing a sustainable future. They see the Development Trust, their partners and their Community Plan as the key to a sustainable future. Their vision is to develop renewable energy resources within Westray for the benefit of their community. Their Energy Development Plan 2002-2012 is a leading example of sustainability in action.

The Trust has been aware for some time of the value of natural resources within Westray. With this in mind they have formulated their Energy Development Plan. In addition to developing renewable energy sources they are determining just where energy is consumed in their community with a view to improving energy efficiency where practicable.

Combining the benefits of generating renewable energy and reducing consumption, they aim to improve the standard of living for local people and the efficiency of their businesses. The opportunities and benefits to Westray are significant and include:

- Greater self-reliance
- Sense of ownership and belonging
- Increased awareness of environmental issues

- New revenue streams
- Reduced operating costs
- Potential job creation
- Skills development
- Potential to research and develop new technologies

Already small wind turbines provide energy for their new youth project, the Hofn. New developments at the school and the Care Centre building will all use renewable energy. Their Plan includes ambitious targets including:

- Register with the EU Renewable Energy Partnership's programme the Trust's aspiration for Westray to become a 100% community-owned renewable energy island before 2012; generating from community renewable projects the equivalent kWh as is consumed annually.
- Maximise the involvement of the youth of Westray in the execution of the plan.
- Reduce local transport dependence on fossil fuels and have at least one green transport project up and running before the end of 2003.
- Establish a community energy co-operative and/or investment club in 2003.
- Develop a state of the art awareness in wind, tidal stream, hydro, solar and energy from waste renewable technologies.
- Investigate the potential for local manufacture of renewable energy technologies.
- Eliminate fuel poverty in Westray by 2005.

The Trust are supported in their work by Highlands and Islands Enterprise policy to 'Strengthen Communities'. Westray are an example of a community who can confidently call their Community Plan SUSTAINABLE!

Further information: www.westray-orkney.co.uk

Information, advice and notes

The organisations and publications listed below are all referred to in the text of this Sourcebook. For a comprehensive list of helpful resources we would recommend the *Community Planning Handbook* by Nick Waites (see publications section below).

Helpful Organisations

Action for Market Towns

PO Box 299, Bury St Edmonds,
Suffolk, IP33 1UU
Tel: 01284 756567
Fax: 01284 761816
Web: www.towns.org

Action for Communities in Rural England

National Association of Rural
Community Councils
Sommerford Court, Sommerford Road,
Cirencester, Glos GL7 1TW
Tel: 01285 653477
Fax: 01285 654537
Email: acre@acre.org.uk
Web: www.acre.org.uk

Active Communities

Web: www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Alan Caldwell Associates

Specialists in Community Planning
and Regeneration
Mill of Ross, Comrie, Perthshire, PH6 2JR
Tel/Fax: 01764 679565
Email:
admin@alancaldwellassociates.co.uk
Web: www.alancaldwellassociates.co.uk

Community Development Foundation

60 Highbury Grove, London, N5 2AG
Tel: 020 7226 5375
Fax: 020 7704 0313
Email: admin@cdf.org.uk
Web: www.cdf.org.uk

Community Business Scotland

Princes House, 5 Shandwick Place,
Edinburgh, EH2 4RG
Tel: 0131 229 7257
Fax: 0131 221 9798
Email: info@cbs-network.org.uk
Web: www.cbs-network.org.uk

Co-operatives UK

Holyoak House
Hanover Street
Manchester, M60 0AS
Tel: 0161 246 2900
Fax: 0161 831 7684
Email: admin@cooperatives-uk.coop
Web: www.cooperatives-uk.coop

Countryside Agency

Head Office, John Dower House,
Crescent Place
Cheltenham, GL50 3RA
Tel: 01242 521381
Fax: 01242 584270
Email: info@countryside.gov.uk
Web: www.countryside.gov.uk

Charity Commission

Tel: 0870 333 0125
Email:
enquiries@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk
Web: www.charity-commission.gov.uk

Inland Revenue (Scotland – Charitable Registration)

FICO (Scotland)
Trinity Park House
South Trinity Road
Edinburgh, EH5 3SD
Tel: 0845302 0203
Fax: 0131 777 4045
Email: Charities@inlandrevenue.gov.uk
Web: www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk

Development Trust Association

20 Conduit Place, London W2 1HZ
Tel: 020 7706 4951
Fax: 020 7706 8447
Email: info@dta.org.uk
Web: www.dra.org.uk

Development Trust Association for Scotland

54 Manor Place
Edinburgh, EH3 7EH
Tel: 0131 220 2456
Fax: 0131 220 3777
Email: info@dtascot.org.uk
Web: www.dta.org.uk

Development Trust Association for Wales

35b Albert Road
Penarth,
Glamorgan, CF64 1BY
029 2019 0260/0259
Fax: 029 2019 0258
Email: saraboome@dtawales.org.uk
Web: www.dta.org.uk

Forum for the Future

227a City Road, London, EC1V 1JT
Tel: 020 7251 6070
Email: info@forumforthefuture.org.uk
Web: www.forumforthefuture.org.uk ►

Chapter Eight

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Homestead, 40 Water End
York, North Yorkshire, YO30 6WP
Tel: 01904 629241
Fax: 01904 620072
Web: www.jrf.org.uk

Future Search Network

Resources for Human Development Inc
4333 Kelly Drive
Philadelphia, PA 19129 USA
Tel: +1 800 951 6333
Fax: +1 215 849 7360
Email: fsn@futuresearch.net
Web: www.futuresearch.net

National Council for Voluntary Organisations

Regents Wharf
8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL
Tel: 020 7713 6161
Fax: 020 7713 6300
Helpdesk: 0800 2 798798
Email: ncvo@ncvo-vol.org.uk
Web: www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service

177 Arundel Street
Sheffield, S1 2NU
Tel: 0114 278 6636
Fax: 0114 278 7004
Email: nacvs@nacvs.org.uk
Web: www.nacvs.org.uk

Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation

The Poplars, Lightmoor
Telford TF4 3QN
Tel: 01952 590777
Fax: 01952 591771
Email: nif@cableinet.co.uk
Web: www.nif.co.uk

New Economics Foundation

Cinamon House
6-8 Cole Street, London, SE1 4YH
Tel: 020 7407 7447
Fax: 020 7407 6473
Email: info@neweconomics.org
Web: www.neweconomics.org

New Opportunities Fund

Head Office, 1 Plough Place
London, EC4A 1DE
Tel: 0207 211 1800
Fax: 0207 211 1750
Email: general.enquiries@nof.org.uk
Web: www.nof.org.uk

Renewal Net

Web: www.renewal.net

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

The Mansfield, Traquair Centre,
15 Mansfield Place
Edinburgh, EH3 6BB
Tel: 0131 556 3882
Fax: 0131 556 0279
Web: www.scvo.org.uk

School for Social Entrepreneurs

18 Victoria Park Square, Bethnal Green,
London, E2 9PF
Tel: 020 8981 0300
Fax: 020 8983 4655
Email: admin@sse.org.uk
Web: www.sse.org.uk

South West Regional Development Agency

Sterling House, Dix's Field,
Exeter, Devon EX1 1QA
Tel: 01392 214 747
Fax: 01392 214 848
Email: enquiries@southwestrda.org.uk
Web: www.southwestrda.org.uk

Sustainability South West

2 Rivergate, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6ED
Tel: 0117 900 1801
Email: pharding.gosw@go-regions.gsi.gov.uk
Web: www.oursouthwest.com

Volunteer Development England

New Oxford House
16 Waterloo Street, Birmingham, B2 5UG
Tel: 0121 633 4555
Fax: 0121 633 4043
Web: www.vde.org.uk

Volunteer Development Scotland

Stirling Enterprise Park, Stirling, FK7 7RP
Tel: 01786 479593
Fax: 01786 449285
Web: www.vds.org.uk

Publications

Community Planning Handbook
Nick Waite, 2000 by Earthscan
publications 1-85383-654-0
Web: www.communityplanning.net

The Guide to Development Trusts and Partnerships

David Wilcox, Development Trust
Association, 1998. 0-9531469-0-3.
Handbook aimed particularly at those
setting up a trust
Web: www.partnerships.org.uk

Working in Partnership: A sourcebook
SQW Ltd for the New Opportunities
Fund 2002
Web: www.nof.org.uk

Other helpful Organisations, Websites and Publications

Members of the editorial panel for the sourcebook have recommended these.

Black and minority ethnic neighbourhood renewal and regeneration network

This organisation is the 'Centre of Excellence' for neighbourhood renewal for ethnic groups.

Web: www.cemvo.org.uk/bnrrn.htm

Crime Concern

Crime concern is a major agency dealing with all aspects of crime and the website contains interesting material about projects and publications.

Web: www.crimeconcern.org.uk

Communities Scotland

Communities Scotland brings together community regeneration and housing. The Scottish Centre for Regeneration is the 'knowledge and practice site' for regeneration in Scotland. The third web link includes different techniques for regeneration.

Web: www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk

Web: www.scr.communitiesscotland.gov.uk

Web: www.ce.vommunitiesscotland.gov.uk

Neighbourhood Renewal Unit

The home of England's Neighbourhood Renewal Unit.

Web: www.neighbourhood.gov.uk

Planning Aid

Planning Aid is a voluntary service offering free, independent and professional advice on town planning to community groups and individuals who cannot afford to employ a planning consultant.

Web: www.rtpi.org.uk/pa-paid.html

Regenerate (Community led estate regeneration advice service)

This organisation provides advice to those involved in neighbourhood regeneration, principally through funding visits to organisations with successful track records.

Web: www.regenerate-uk.org

Regeneration Magazines

New Start

Web: www.newstartmag.co.uk

Regeneration and Renewal

Web: www.regenerationmagazine.com

Publications

Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit making Organisations

John M. Bryson

