

Engaging the hard to reach in sustainable development



Presentation by Barry Pearce

South West



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The profile of community involvement has increased significantly

- Given official boost by:
- new Planning Act (2004)
 - ‘Community Involvement in Planning: The Government’s Objectives’ (2004)
 - PPS12 Local Development Frameworks (+ Companion Guide) (2004)
 - PPS 1 Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)



Lots of official advice

- CI should be appropriate to the level/type of planning + local circumstances - based on a clear understanding of the needs of the community and fit for purpose
- Front loaded – from the earliest stages
- Relevant to people’s experience – how they are most likely to get involved (no one size fits all)
- Continuous – showing how ideas have developed, with clear formal stages for involvement, not disjointed/ ‘tick box’
- Transparent and accessible – clear as to when people should participate, **inclusive of hard to reach groups**
- Planned from the start, enabling timely involvement, fitted-in with other community involvement (e.g. on community strategies)
- ALL GOOD STUFF!



Planning shapes the places where people live and work. So it is right that people should be enabled and empowered to take an active part in the process. Strengthening community involvement is a key part of the Government's planning reforms.



Understanding who doesn't participate – and why

LA beliefs – the *usual suspects*:

- ethnic minorities, refugees
- manual SEGs, the poor, council tenants, lone parents, unemployed, poorly educated/trained
- working households
- disabled
- young, elderly
- women, les/bi/gay

*But in reality
it's more
complicated!*

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Who doesn't participate: some research evidence:

	<i>Not civically engaged</i>	<i>Not involved in local organisations during last 3 years</i>	<i>Has taken no action to solve local problem</i>	<i>Not voted</i>
Nationally (S West)	16 (13)	79 (73)	73 (71)	41
Aged 16-29	23	87	85	61
BMEs	27	87	84	53
No education	20	86	78	
Unemployed	22	89	79	56
Private renter	25	87	80	54
Single	20	85	81	
Lone parent – with dependent children	22	88	81	
Living in top 30% IMD areas	21	85	74	

NB.:

- *not* all the usual suspects don't engage – elderly, low SEG, lone parents with young children, working households
- some others don't engage e.g. private renters, singles, lone parents with grown kids
- and class/ social group, demography does *not* explain much of the variation
- lots of local variation but due to other factors

Implications:

- Don't *just* think of the usual suspects
- Don't just be focussed on particular demographic/social groups
- Need for a balanced approach to targeting

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Other characteristics of non-participants

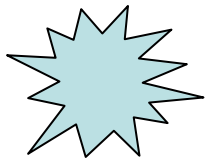
- not organised
- no clear representatives
- don't meet at regular venues
- unlikely to attend unfamiliar/ formal/ inaccessible events
- supporters
- non-locals
- in-mover users of the new development

Implications:

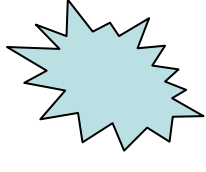
- Don't rely on focus groups/ interest groups/ formal meetings/ where 'representation' required – use informal approaches
- Be innovative, experiment
- Work at community wide, not just local/ focussed level (e.g. surveys), for breadth and depth

Why they haven't participated: the research evidence

Reason	So what we can do?
1 makes no difference: •groups make decisions, not individuals •the outcome is known anyway – there's no choice •don't trust decision makers •nothing to gain personally	Ensure involvement is collaborative, power is shared; Ensure choice and use their knowledge Offer genuine involvement, improve info, be responsive Make it more interesting/ matter
2 lack of knowledge – of process, outcomes	Improve information + learning possible. Build capacity
3 apathy and fatigue	Make it more interesting + worthwhile
4 inconvenience	Improve convenience
5 lack of time – other things more important	Make it more interesting, convenient, worthwhile
6 not interested in planning	Make it more interesting, make it matter
7 it's boring, too hard	Make it as simple as possible
8 decline in feeling of duty to engage	??
9 content with likely outcomes/ others to deal	??



Engaging the hard to reach: Planning Aid's Top Tips



- Understand who doesn't participate – and why
- Tailor approach to local circumstances
- Work on at least 2 different levels – the big and the focussed
- Communicate – inform but also maintain dialogue
- Innovate and experiment with forms/ methods of participation - get away from formal, think informal
- Provide incentives - make it fun, visionary, make it easy – go to them
- Make it interactive and genuinely collaborative, not just informing
- But realistic
- Work in partnership - enable and support - build capacity – and use local knowledge.
- Make it continuous. Keep involving – to a timetable
- Get *independent* help yourself!

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South West Planning Aid

- Charitable organisation; Part of Royal Town Planning Institute; independent of central and local government.
- (though part funded by Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004 £3.8m for 3 years Nationally)
- Provides free, independent and professional advice on planning issues to groups and individuals who cannot afford consultants' fees.
- Regional Service and National Office

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Planning Aid: Our Approach

- Work at level of development proposals and development plans – and forges links between statutory and non statutory (e.g. parish plans, community strategies, village design statements)
- Specialists in planning (Chartered Planners) – staff, also team of qualified volunteers
- Emphasis on enabling self help by professional and independent support, advice/ information, training - increasing capacity to participate
- Bring together – broker - communities and planners
- Use innovative participation techniques – emphasis on informal
- Focus on those who can't afford professional advice
- Address non participation of 'hard to reach' groups - targeting particular communities
- Work with area agencies, umbrella groups as well as local groups and individuals

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