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# Community Led Planning - East of England Case Studies

A Report for the Regional Empowerment Partnership

Status: Version 1



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**Rural Action East comprises:** Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity, Cambridgeshire ACRE, Rural Community Council of Essex, Community Development Agency for Hertfordshire, Norfolk Rural Community Council, Suffolk ACRE

## Executive Summary

This report builds on two previous pieces of research, presented to the Regional Empowerment Partnership:

- Community Led Planning activity in the East of England
- Community Led Planning National Overview.

This report provides details of 12 Case Studies within the East of England, undertaken to research the impact and influence of Community Led Plans on Local Authorities and within local communities.

Feedback from both communities and Local Authorities across counties and the region varied considerably, as to awareness and understanding of CLP and how to use the resulting plans. This led to variation in influence and impact of Community Led Plans. Some of the points highlighted for successful CLP process and impact were:

- CLP is a good way to unite communities and has the ability to create a stronger community spirit
- The need to work with the Parish Council to ensure they understand the benefit and value of Community Led Plans and they are actively involved in the process
- The need for considerable volunteer effort rather than money
- Early and active involvement by partners, such as Local Authorities and Parish Councils
- Greater understanding and awareness of CLP by Local Authorities and their officers
- An implementation plan is put into place to support the delivery of the Action Plan
- The need for a mechanism within Local Authorities to receive and distribute CLPs and Action Plans to appropriate officers
- CLP has had an influence on local decision making in some counties, in particular relating to Sustainable Community Strategy and local planning applications.

The research has been undertaken by Rural Action East on behalf of the Regional Empowerment Partnership. Findings from this report will be used by the Partnership to inform its future actions and activities. The research will also be distributed throughout the Rural Community Council network within the East of England and shared across the Rural Community Action Network.

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# 1 Introduction

The Regional Empowerment Partnership (REP) for the East of England is an independent strategic body, supported by public, private and the voluntary and community sectors (VCS). The partnership set-up in 2007 has the aim to improve the quality, coordination and evidence of empowerment within the region, with a focus on providing evidence on National Indicators (NI) and in particular NI4 (*percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality*).

Rural Action East has been contracted by the REP to review the main community led planning activities within the East of England, specifically concentrating on types of plans, numbers, locations and the level of resource and support available to develop and deliver these plans.

Rural Action East (RAE) works for rural regeneration within the East of England and has three major objectives:

- **Advocacy** - To proactively influence regional strategies, policies and decision making on issues affecting the quality of life for rural communities
- **Programme Delivery** - To manage and deliver regional contracts and projects for the benefit of rural communities
- **Performance Improvement** - To build capacity within the regional Rural Community Council network through effective collaboration and promotion of improvements in quality and productivity.

In this report we will continue our activities and expand upon the knowledge already gathered on Community Led Planning by investigating in detail twelve Case Studies from within the East of England, gaining a perspective from both the community and Local Authorities on the effectiveness of Community Led Plans.

To date Rural Action East has contributed to the development of parish planning as a form of community led planning. With colleagues across the country, we supported the development of a Parish and Community Planning 'Toolkit' and are currently active across the region on its practical application in rural parishes. We have dedicated web pages on Parish Plans, with downloadable documents. We have also developed a pilot Parish Plans database and are consulting on the development of a national database.

## 2 Research Approach

The aim of the research was to investigate and understand how and why CLP is successful from two perspectives. Firstly, how did the community carry out the work; which and how useful were support organisations; what impact has it had on their community; and what are the key factors for success.

The second aspect was the role and understanding of the Local Authority. Did it understand CLP and how it related to national and local policies; how was it involved in the process; how were the results used by it; and how could it and the Local Strategic Partnership engage better and benefit more from CLP?

This research utilised our network of Rural Community Council (RCC) officers from each of the six counties in the East of England, who are actively engaged in supporting and guiding communities through the Community Led Planning process.

An initial workshop was held with the Empowerment Co-ordinator and colleagues from each of the six counties to agree:

- Where the case studies should be based, ensuring a mixture in community size and types of CLPs
- The questions to be asked to communities and the Local Authorities/ Service provider's relating to the effectiveness and impact of CLPs.

See Annex A for questions asked of a member/ several members associated with the CLP (in most cases a representative from the steering group).

See Annex B for questions asked of Local Authorities (an officer from a relevant department).

A follow up workshop with RCC officers was held to review and discuss findings from the research, ensuring any key points were identified and included within the final report.

The communities listed below were selected based on:

- Availability to meet with RCC officers in short time period
- Working relationship with RCC officers regarding their CLP
- Some specifically chosen as they were known to be active communities
- Success with implementing their actions and winning funding for projects
- Urban based plans (including a pilot using RCC CLP resources)
- The type of CLP which had taken place in the community.

County	District	Parish	Type of Plan	No. of Households
Bedfordshire	Mid Bedfordshire District Council	Silsoe	Parish Plan	750
	Bedford Borough Council	Kempston	* Neighbourhood Plan	1,200
Cambridgeshire	East Cambridgeshire District Council	Mepal	Parish Plan	410
	South Cambridgeshire District Council	Cottenham	Parish Plan	2,600
Essex	Braintree District Council	Helions Bumpstead	Village Design Statement and Parish Plan	174
	Chelmsford Borough Council	West Hanningfield	Parish Plan	535
Hertfordshire	East Hertfordshire District Council	Little Hadham	Parish Plan	413
	North Hertfordshire District Council	Knebworth	Urban Plan	4,300
Norfolk	North Norfolk District Council	Fulmodeston, Barney and Croxton	Parish Plan	215
	Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	Marham	Parish Plan	400
Suffolk	Suffolk Coastal District Council	Melton	Parish Plan	1,565
	Mid Suffolk District Council	Stowupland	Parish Plan	940

\* Kempston Neighbourhood Plan was approached slightly differently. It was an urban pilot project as part of a service level agreement between Bedfordshire Rural Community Charity and Bedfordshire County Council, demonstrating how skills gained from working in rural areas could be transferred into an urban area.

It is acknowledged that there is some limitation to the research methodology in the small number of case studies undertaken. Also in terms of selection of communities, as only those who have undertaken CLP and been supported positively by RCCs were studied and were therefore likely to be more willingly involved with the research.

### **3 Approaches to carrying out CLP**

To understand how a community went about developing its plan and the resultant impact, it was felt important to understand why the twelve communities chose to undertake a CLP. Responses included:

- As a result of a meeting between the Parish Council and the Rural Community Council
- The community thought it needed doing
- As part of a service level agreement between the RCC and the County Council
- Thought it was a good way of involving the wider community in local projects
- Concern about inappropriate planning applications being approved and encouragement from the Borough Council to undertake a Village Design Statement (VDS)
- Lack of community spirit and dispersed nature of hamlets making up the village
- To benefit the community and improve local quality of life and create a stronger community spirit
- Frustration with the Parish Council and the feeling of disengagement from the community.

The above suggests a common triggering factor that drives the community to undertake a plan, is a specific issue that concerns many residents. This may be an external trigger such as a planning proposal or an internal prompt such as a desire to improve local facilities and create a stronger feeling of community.

#### **3.1 Involvement**

The research looked into the level of involvement with CLP and by whom.

##### **3.1.1 Community**

The community groups were asked questions covering the:

- Steering group
- Community
- Partners.

(A steering group is made up of representatives from all sections of the community and will lead the CLP activity from start to finish).

In terms of forming a steering group, in many cases volunteers actively came forward as a result of a public community event or meeting. Although two groups noted significant difficulty in recruiting volunteers, with individuals having to be targeted and encouraged to join. However on occasions this resulted in the resignation of the individual after one or two meetings.

Some steering groups clearly worked well and collaboratively as a team taking on the various roles needed, others noted a key 'Community Champion'; an

individual who (in several cases) had a detailed understanding of and experience in local government processes (and language), along with useful skills including strategic and planning, IT and funding.

Ensuring the plan and actions identified were inclusive and representative, it was essential for the whole community to participate in consultation activities. To achieve this, communities within this research undertook the following activities:

- Launch events, to promote the idea and the CLP process
- Door to door callers handed over questionnaires
- A large print questionnaire was created to include those with poor sight
- Neighbours assisted older people filling in the questionnaire
- Regular communications such as information in Parish Newsletters
- A prize draw of £50 to encourage people to complete and return the questionnaire
- Specific consultation events, with some of the harder to reach groups, including 'likes and dislikes' activities
- Guided environmental or photographic walks.

It is generally found that because these activities are led by community members there is a greater likelihood of a higher level of community participation. One Steering group was successful in achieving very high response rates to its consultation activities, up to 91% and subsequently 81% as a follow-up 5 years later whilst refreshing their CLP.

### 3.1.2 Partners

In terms of partners, this refers to the Parish Council (PC), Local Authorities (LA) or Service Providers (such as Police or Primary Care Trust). Often there were one or two representatives from the PC on the steering group, sometimes as representatives of the PC, at other times as independent individuals. There were varying degrees of support but often it proved a process of information sharing and feedback as opposed to providing direct support.

Support from LA varied considerably from substantial to none. In Norfolk for instance, although it is not clear whether there had been an invitation to be involved or whether the community felt able to undertake the plan independently. This also appeared to be the case in Cambridgeshire as groups did not think to engage with their LA during the process of producing the Parish Plan. At the other extreme, significant involvement and support was received from East Hertfordshire Council, Mid Bedfordshire District Council, Bedford Borough Council, Braintree District and Essex County Councils with local officers actively engaged in the CLP process.

## 3.2 Funding

The average cost of completing a Community Led Plan is in the region of £2,000 (although this is dependent upon the size of the community). Costs would include introducing the plan through a community event, initial consultation

activities for instance 'Planning for Real' and 'likes and dislikes' events, printing questionnaires, evaluating the data and publishing a final report. This budget does not take into account volunteer time, which may amount to 500 hours per plan over the course of 12 - 24 months.

In most cases, the Parish Council contributed to costs, with other income received from the Countryside Agency, delegated funding through the Rural Community Council network, Awards for All, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and its Rural Social and Community Programme (RSCP) along with local businesses and fundraising from within the community.

### **3.3 Support**

As well as those actively involved with the CLP process, we also wanted to establish:

- Who supported groups through the process
- What kind of support was provided
- How this could be improved.

In all cases within this research RCCs were cited as the main supporter, providing guidance and advice through the process. Also identified were other local CLP steering groups who were further down the CLP process. This networking was often facilitated by the RCC. There was some mention of Local Authority support during the production of the CLP in Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire.

## **4 Published CLP formats**

There are various schools of thought relating to published plans, with no agreements to a prescribed or definitive format.

In collating and assessing the plans investigated within this report the general format appears to include:

- History or background of the parish
- Demographics of the local population
- Details of the consultation undertaken, along with the response rates
- Themes (these varied according to each individual community), but generally included transport, local amenities, affordable housing and environment
- Action plans, these matched the identified theme, with recommendations and actions, who was responsible for delivering the action, potential sources of funding, partners and timescales for completion
- Finally, a 'What happens next' / future of the plan.

National ACRE<sup>1</sup> 'Community and Parish Planning Toolkit' suggests that a Plan should include:

- Foreword
- Introduction
- Snapshot - profile of community
- Issues
- Action Plan.

However the CLP process is carried out and whatever the format of the final published document, the over arching principle is that the plan is community developed and owned and it is ultimately the community's decision as to how it is presented and published.

## 5 Impact of CLP on local public sector decision making

The plan is not an end in itself but is undertaken to improve the quality of life for members of the community. Although many actions (greater than 40%) can be implemented by the community alone, many of the more complex and higher impact actions require support from the Local Authority (LA). As such, their role, involvement and support is crucial to maximising the benefits of CLP. To understand this, LAs were approached and questioned both generally on CLP and also on the specific Plan which had been identified as the Case Study.

### 5.1 Bedfordshire

Within Mid Bedfordshire District Council, plans are advertised and promoted internally. The Silsoe parish plan was used in negotiations with developers relating to Cranfield University developments.

At Bedford Borough Council, action plans are distributed to appropriate staff in relevant departments. The plans and actions can be used as a measure of performance in staff appraisals. Also the County Council agreed to purchase mobile security cameras as an identified safety need from the Kempston community. In addition a countywide by-law was introduced preventing the sale of cars on certain streets.

### 5.2 Cambridgeshire

Within East Cambridgeshire District Council, plans are presented to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), with all members receiving a copy. Responses from the LSP are fed back to Cambridgeshire ACRE to communicate to the community. The plan is also shared amongst various departments within the Council including Anti-social Behaviour team, Transport Services, Highways Department and Economic Development.

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<sup>1</sup> ACRE, Action with Communities in Rural England, [www.ACRE.org.uk](http://www.ACRE.org.uk) and [www.communityledplanning.org.uk](http://www.communityledplanning.org.uk)

South Cambridgeshire District Council makes all plans accessible to staff via their intranet. In particular the Housing and Planning departments refer to plans as and when necessary and plans are used to influence and feed into the Sustainable Community Strategy.

### 5.3 Essex

Braintree District Council (BDC) part fund a Rural Community Council of Essex field officer who spends one day a week within its offices and co-ordinates the support available to communities wishing to undertake a plan. The council also undertake an annual Parish event which includes 'meet the experts' and services provided by BDC and its partners. Specific to Helions Bumpstead, Environmental Engineers now include ditch clearing as part of their work programme.

Chelmsford Borough Council actively encourages communities to develop Village Design Statements (VDS) which are used by Planning Officers in their consideration of planning applications. To date, 38 planning applications have been made for the area of West Hanningfield since they completed their VDS in 2007 and on 14 occasions the VDS was referred to by officers relating to applications.

### 5.4 Hertfordshire

East Hertfordshire District Council use the plan as a reference document and share it with the Local Strategic Partnership, Planning Policy department and other Parishes undertaking plans.

We were unable to gain a response from North Hertfordshire District Council, regarding the influence of CLPs or feedback on Knebworth's Parish Plan.

### 5.5 Norfolk

Within North Norfolk District Council, it was difficult to establish whether the plans had had any influence other than being used to provide information on the local community and possibly identify avenues of support. In addition NNDC could not identify how Fulmodeston, Barney and Croxton Parish plan contributed to its decisions or activities.

Although the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk occasionally received CLPs, it was noted that the groups do not necessarily engage with the Council. However, plans submitted are used as a source of information and material consideration in planning applications. As above, it is not clear how Marham Parish plan contributed to the Council's decisions or activities.

Another Norfolk Council was approached as it actively uses and supports CLPs. Broadland District Council confirmed results of consultations are entered onto an internal database, accessible to all staff. Plans are also included within relevant Parish policy file accessible by the Local Development Framework

team (LDF) and used as evidence during the development of site specific planning policies. A quarterly report is provided to the Broadland Community Partnership (Local Strategic Partnership) on CLP activity.

## 5.6 Suffolk

We were unable to gain a response from Suffolk Coastal District Council, regarding the influence of CLPs or feedback on Melton's Village Plan.

Within Mid Suffolk District Council, the officer interviewed had only been in post for two months and therefore was unaware how actions were used throughout the council. The Plan relating to Stowupland had been used to feed into the Local Development Framework; they were also awarded £2,500 from the Council toward various social activities identified within the Plan.

## 6 Delivery of Actions - issues and support

Upon completion of the plan, numerous actions will have been identified; these actions can be classified as:

- Initiatives that local people and groups can do for themselves
- Actions that can be delivered in partnership with local community groups, but need some external resources or support
- Issues on which to influence public authorities and service provider policies.

As mentioned earlier, Rural Action East has developed a database to record actions from completed Parish Plans and to map them against Local Strategic Partnership Community Strategy objectives and 'Quality of Life' themes. In 231 plans published since 2001, to date:

- Over 9,347 actions have been identified
- 47% of actions can be implemented through direct community action
- 34% of actions needed support from a public sector partner to implement.

### 6.1 Delivery

Within the small sample of case studies, information on the delivery and implementation of plans will be relevant only to that sample studied. It is recognised there will be variations in details across the counties and throughout the region and that generalisations can only be suggested rather than asserted.

In several cases, a specific Action Plan Implementation group or committee was set up by the community to deliver actions identified; alternatively the Parish Council took ownership of the plan and its actions, with some actively delivering whilst it appeared other Action Plans have stagnated.

## 6.2 External Support

In terms of support from outside the Parish Council most groups identified and confirmed support from their Local Authority was critical to success in delivering their actions. The Local Authority along with local Rural Community Council also facilitated signposting groups to the 'right' contact. Others noted support from both Police and Fire and Rescue services.

Within Braintree District Council there has been set-up of a specific 'Braintree District Parish Plans Support Group' to assist communities with delivery of their action. In addition Essex County Council have set-up 'Making the Links - Making it happen' initiative which will fund up to 80% of the costs of the top priority action in a Parish Plan provided there is a minimum of 20% financial commitment from the Parish Council precept.

## 6.3 Monitoring

It is often down to the Parish Council to monitor progress with actions, which regularly appear as agenda items. However, it was noted in one community, the Parish Council did not monitor nor provide feedback on Actions to the community.

One particular Parish Council developed a grid to indicate which actions had been completed, removed, in progress or still to be done it also produced a spreadsheet to record grants awarded for projects identified in the Action Plan.

Other methods of communicating progress on actions have included publication in newsletters, on parish websites, through reports to the Parish Council and on community notice boards.

Within the East of England, RCCs have little direct involvement with implementation or monitoring of actions.

## 6.4 Barriers

Several case study communities faced barriers to delivering and implementing their actions. The various responses included:

- Lack of funding, whether from the Local Authority having had their budgets significantly reduced, or lack of funding pots for specifically identified actions, such as youth activity. However, those actions which required minimal funding appeared to be easily delivered and achieved
- Lack of support or enthusiasm from the Parish Council, with the suggestion of 'a feeling of being criticised for what had been done in the past'
- Poor support by the Local Authority, particularly in relation to working in partnership with the Parish Council to deliver certain services. Also, in

certain counties, some departments (Highways and Planning) appeared to be difficult to engage with.

## 6.5 Successful Action Plan Implementations

Despite the barriers faced by communities, there have been some very positive outcomes from actions which have been implemented:

- In Bedfordshire, a by-law was introduced to stop selling of cars on particular roads
- Grants totalling in excess of £200,000 have been awarded to the twelve case study communities in this research to implement their Actions
- A notable achievement within most communities proved to be the ability to unite communities and develop a greater number of social activities
- Development of an increased sense of belonging.

## 7 Community View of CLP

The feedback varied considerably on the value of Community Led Plans, with an interesting quote:

*"It's never completed. We always acknowledged it was not a one-off but a rolling programme"*

Comments repeated throughout the research were positive and included:

- Got to know a lot more people and have a greater understanding of RCC
- Worthwhile process
- Improved community spirit
- Opened up lines of communication.

On a more cautionary nature, comments from some respondents included:

- Process was slow due to social and economic changes going on in the village
- Effort needed to talk through the process with Parish Council for them to understand and avoid conflict
- Process takes twice as long as envisaged
- Be flexible and realistic of what can be achieved
- Test water see if there is a need for the plan, the volunteers and that you have their commitment to support its development and implementation
- Disappointment with the lack of responses from LA, Local Strategic Partnerships and Service providers.

Suggestions from communities on how to improve the quality and value of the plans included:

- To get high response rate, ensure as many people as possible are involved with the process and keep village/ community informed and engaged
- Seek input from and guidance of someone who has already been through the process

- Consultation questions should be as specific as possible
- It is advantageous for the Steering Group to have someone skilled at report production and layout and have representatives from different interest groups.

A final thought from one community group:

*'Remind people who continually put up barriers that the world cannot standstill, to live in a museum paying homage to the past does not give our children opportunities to develop, that we have to grasp opportunities to change for the betterment of all in the community and that to control the change ourselves is better than having it imposed on us by outside authorities'*

## 8 Local Authority view on CLP

To gain a view point from each of the Local Authorities where the CLPs had been undertaken, one or two officers from relevant departments (such as Planning or Community) were contacted. They were asked for their views on:

- How CLP relates to local policy
- Perceived benefits for communities undertaking a CLP
- Quality issues surrounding CLPs.

### 8.1 Relation to Policy

In terms of relating CLP and its results to local policy, comments from the various officers questioned, included:

- CLP provides framework for LA to deliver under many areas such as the Place Shapers, Community Empowerment, Neighbourhood Leadership programmes
- CLP referenced in 'Draft Strategy for People and Places in the Braintree District to 2025' which is the combined Sustainable Community Strategy and LDF Core Strategy
- VDS remains the most appropriate document the community can put together that can have a meaningful input to the work of the local planning authority, the VDS focusing on the village level of detail carries out an important supplementary planning document role.

Other comments include:

- Biggest challenge to make sense of all the data
- Important that plans are owned by the community and they set their own priorities
- CLP is vital to strategies and policies as it gives a grass roots view of where resources should be allocated
- CLP can inform policies on a general scale rather than location specific.

## 8.2 Benefit to Communities

Local Authorities perceived that there were numerous benefits to community groups in undertaking CLP activities, for instance:

- Gives community a say in service delivery & opportunity to request additional services
- Can help individual community members by giving them more confidence to develop their own aspirations
- Gives community confidence that the Parish Council is representing the whole community and that they can take forward their views strongly
- Enables local villagers to look at their local environment in a way that they might not have seen it before
- Gives improved understanding of planning and other disciplines relating to the built and natural environment
- Provides community with an evidence base of needs and issues so that they can apply for funding
- Community spirit is enlivened and people will begin to talk about key issues affecting the parish. This enthusiasm can lead to a process of self-help in the form of increasing sustainability of a parish
- Good opportunity to gather information and get the community working together.

The overarching theme from these comments, suggests the idea of community spirit, unity and confidence, demonstrating needs and potentially delivering on actions.

## 8.3 Quality issues / Weakness of CLPs

Within this section, LAs put forward suggestions to what they thought were weaknesses of CLPs:

- Possible weakness could arise if not inclusive and representative so that those with their own agendas may unduly influence the plans
- Amount of time to produce a CLP
- Sustainability greatest challenge - working group to deliver actions
- Limited resources the Local Planning Authority can give to each group
- Groups often do struggle in producing plan that are meaningful at local level for Local Authorities
- Time scales - communities pace is usually different (longer) to that of the local authority
- Completed action plans vary in content/ format and expectations
- Often there is not sufficient detail on the right kinds of issues regarding Spatial Planning) to be able to fully influence policy making
- Can raise local expectations and then not achieve their actions due to lack of funding or momentum. CLP is half the process, with critical part being implementation of the actions.

To improve the quality of plans and actions the following were suggested by some Local Authority officers:

- Action planning process needs to involve local authorities to ensure realistic partnership actions
- Early and continuing discussions need to take place between appropriate service providers and CLP groups
- Many CLP suffer from poor consultation response rates - a combination of techniques may be more efficient, effective pre-publicity is essential
- Link in more with actual statistics from statutory bodies
- Community groups producing VDS would benefit from greater engagement with planners, this should be independent planner possibly Planning Aid workers
- Involve more partner organisations at the action planning stage
- Support is needed to ensure that all sections of the community are involved
- Expectations managed, be realistic about what can be achieved.

It is important to note, that many of these activities are already carried out in some counties within the region. However, what is clear from the points raised above is that actions need to be realistic and supported by the community; be developed with involvement with the LA; and to be pursued more promptly (in time with LA planning and budgeting timescales).

## 8.4 Final Thoughts

To conclude some of the general comments and advice to both communities and other Local Authorities are:

- It's Wonderful! I think that it is the way forward and I would like to use it more
- Communities need to keep producing CLP and we'll keep listening
- Emphasis needs to be placed on pushing the actions forward from the completed plans. Improved post-plan follow up and analysis of whether the community aspirations were actually met
- Communities are better placed to identify their own local needs and prefer to take ownership of their priorities
- LA needs to recognise the challenges of working with the voluntary sector
- Need a greater focus on the importance of CLP and links with strategy and service delivery. Should be more mainstreamed in some way
- Senior managers and directors need to be convinced of the benefit
- CLP has the power to reconnect participative and representative democracy through the involvement of relevant elected members, the wider community and relevant stakeholders in the process.

And finally, "*There is not and should not be a 'one size fits all' approach to CLP, there should be flexibility for communities to develop a process which is entirely suited to their needs*".

## 9 Recommendations

Whilst this research provides only a brief snapshot of the impact and influence of Community Led Plans and opinions from both Communities and Local Authorities or Service Providers, there is some clear guidance and advice which should be shared with both groups, which could potentially add value and contribute towards evidence on NI4.

For Communities:

- Skills of steering group are important, it is beneficial to have someone with working knowledge of local government
- Willingness to adapt consultation techniques to suit needs of local community and to ensure plans are as inclusive as possible. A wide variety of consultation exercises should be used rather than rely solely on questionnaires
- To work with the Parish Council to ensure they understand the benefit and value of Community Led Plans and are actively involved in the process
- Need to have a supportive Parish Council with a dedicated Implementation Group to deliver the Actions
- Support from Rural Community Councils (as independent facilitators) is often beneficial
- The need to ensure an implementation plan is put in place to support delivery of the Action Plan.

For Local Authorities:

- There is a need for a mechanism to receive CLPs and Action Plans and distribute to appropriate officers
- Greater and earlier involvement with the CLP process helps communities to have realistic expectations and understanding of Local Authorities/ Service providers roles
- Provide communities (should they wish) with guidance regarding the level/ type of information which would be of value and beneficial in contributing to Local Authority policies and strategies.

## 10 Document History

Version	Date	Author	Description
Draft A	March 09	Clare Nagle	Draft report for comment
Version 1	April 09	Clare Nagle	Amendments based on feedback received on initial report

## Annex 1: Community Questions



### Case Study Research - Community Questions

#### 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of Plan/ Statement	
Name of interviewee	
Role in CLP activity	
Size of your community	
When did you start your plan? (Date of 1 <sup>st</sup> steering group mtg)	
How long did it take to complete (ready for production)?	
What influenced the timescale?	

#### 2. THE PROCESS

Why did you undertake a CLP activity?

--

What were your (community) expectations in undertaking a plan? Were they met? If not why?

Expectations?	Were they met? (Y/N)	If not, why?

Did you encounter any problems going through the process? (For example involving the local community) How did you overcome them?

Yes/No	If yes, what were they?	How did you overcome them?

#### 2a. Involvement

How did the steering group form? How easy was it to attract volunteers to the steering group?

--

Was there a key community champion/ leader who drove the plan forward? What kind of influence did they have?

Yes/No	Influence?

Was the parish council involved with the process?

Yes/No	How?

Was anyone from the local authority, LSP or service providers (for example Police, PCT or Fire) involved in the process? If yes, who and how?

If yes,	who?	How?

If there was no local authority involvement, why not?

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Did you have any difficulty getting the local community involved with consultation activities?

Yes/No	If yes, why?

How did you ensure your whole community contributed to and were represented within the plan and the actions developed?

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## **2b. Funding**

Were you able to access any funding to develop & complete your CLP?

Yes/No	If yes, how much	Who from?

## **2c. Final Report & Actions**

Did you carry out any consultation on your draft action plan before it was published?

Yes/No	If yes, who with?

Did the group bear in mind local authority strategies/ documents when producing the plan? (so that some of the actions reflect their priorities)

Yes/No	If no, any reason?

Who did you send the final produced report and action plan to?

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## **2d. Support**

Who did you receive support from and what kind of support did you receive during the process?

Who from?	Support received?

How could the support you received be improved?

Who from?	Improved support?

## **3. IMPACT OF PLAN & ITS ACTIONS**

How did you manage the transition from publishing the document to implementing the actions?

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**3a. Actions**

Who is managing the delivery of the action plan now it's completed?

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Have you received external help implementing your action plan?

Yes/No	Who?	How?

Is the action plan monitored? Who monitors it? How is it monitored?

Yes/No	Who monitors?	How?

Is progress on the actions fed back to the community? If so, by who and how?

Yes/No	Who?	How?

Were/Are there any barriers you faced/ are facing in delivering your actions? How did/ are you overcome/ overcoming them?

Barriers faced?	How you overcame them?

Have you received any funding since completing your plan to implement your actions?

Yes/No	If yes, how much?	Who from?	What for?

**3b. Outcomes**

What difference has the plan made to your community?

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Does your parish council view the CLP as a useful document? What impact has it had on their decision making? Have they used it?

Useful Y/N	Impact on decisions making	How used plan & actions

Have you received any feedback from LA/LSP/ service providers? What was it?

LA/ Service Provider	Feedback Y/N?	What was it?

Do you feel your CLP has influenced any plans or decisions made by LA/LSP or service providers?

Yes/No	If yes who	What have you influenced?

Do you feel it has been a worthwhile process?

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Do you have any intentions to refresh your plan? If yes, is there anything you would do differently?

Yes/No	If yes, what would be different?

Is there any advice you would give to any new groups starting out on the process?

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**Abbreviations**

**LA:** Local Authority (e.g. District Council)

**LAA:** Local Area Agreements. These set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government and the local area (LA and Local Strategic Partnership) and other key partners.

**LSP:** Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are non-statutory, multi-agency partnerships, which matches local authority boundaries. LSPs bring together at a local level the different parts of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors; allowing different initiatives and services to support one another so that they can work together more effectively.

## Annex 2: Local Authority Questions



### Case Study Research - Local Authority/ Service Providers Questions

Within the general questions, please ask those questions you feel are relevant to the organisation.

#### 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of Interviewee	
Organisation	
Job role/ title	

Community Led-Planning is a step-by-step process that enables local people to work together to consider their needs for the future (create a vision) and develop an action plan that will help them achieve their shared ambitions.

#### 1a. Policy

In light of the government's White paper, Real People Real Power, as part of the duty to involve (LAA/LSPs), what role do you think CLP has in supporting this?

Involve the community?	CLP in your strategies/ policies?

Do you feel they have any weaknesses? If so what are they? And how can they be improved?

Yes/No	What weaknesses?	How to improve?

How do you think a community benefits from completing a CLP?

Are there any ways, you perceive the quality of CLPs could be improved?

#### 1b. Process

Are you aware of the process in producing a CLP?

How is your department/ organisation involved in the plans?

If not, why?

If so, how?	
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What resources/ funding do you provide to support CLP activity?

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**1c. Implementation of Plan & Actions**

Do you receive copies of CLP? If yes what do you do with them?

Yes/No	If yes how?

Are the actions noted and used? If so how?

Yes/No	If yes how?

Do you give advice to Parish Councils/ community groups on the actions you are taking from their plans? If yes, please provide examples?

Yes/No	If yes, examples

For how long do you feel the findings from a plan will be relevant? When would you encourage a community to update their plan and actions?

How long relevant?	When to update CLP?

**2. QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO THE CLP**

Were you aware of ..... CLP?

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Were you involved in supporting the community during the CLP process?  
If yes, how did you support the community?

Yes/No	If yes, how?

If yes, did you feel it was a good use of your time?

Yes/No	Why?

If no, would you like to have been more involved? And how?

Yes/No	If yes, how?

Were you able to contribute to the content of the consultation questions?

Yes/No	If yes, how?

If no, is this something you would be able to do in the future? How?

Yes/No	If yes, how?

Did you provide any feedback to the parish council or community regarding the final plan and its actions?

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When the published plan and actions are received how is the plan used? Who was it shared with?

How used?	Shared with?

Has the plan influenced any decision making or resource allocation for the particular area?

Yes/No	Can you provide an example?

How were the issues and actions raised within the CLP relate to your organisation's plans and priorities?

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Do you have any general comments or suggestions regarding Community Led Planning?

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