

## Community Engagement Strategy

Community Engagement refers to the process by which groups such as ours build ongoing relationships with the community for the purpose of applying a collective vision for the benefit of the community.

### **Introduction**

1.1 The primary purpose of the NPC is to produce a plan that will help shape the development of the Parish over the next 15-20 years. The committee also recognises that this process has the potential to strengthen and empower the community and this is reflected in its Mission Statement.

A Neighbourhood Plan should be prepared by the community that lives in, works in and uses the Neighbourhood Area. Neighbourhood Planning can build relationships within a community, strengthen civic pride, help to reinvigorate local democracy and bring people together around a common set of aims. However, to achieve its full potential any Neighbourhood Planning process needs to properly organised and supported with a clear plan for engaging with the community.

Cornwall Council Neighbourhood Planning Communication and Engagement Strategy

1.2 For the plan to have validity, and to be approved by the inspectors, it must reflect the considered views of all stakeholders, i.e. all residents and businesses in the Parish. Specifically the Regulations state: -

1.2.1 “(2) In this regulation “consultation statement” means a document which—

(a) contains details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed neighbourhood development plan;

(b) explains how they were consulted;

(c) summarises the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted;  
and

(d) describes how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed neighbourhood development plan.”

1.3 Community engagement is a well-studied field and much has been published about it. There are organisations who specialise in nothing but this area. For the purposes of this strategy we will adopt the principles defined by the International Association for Public Participation, IAP<sup>2</sup>.

1.4 IAP<sup>2</sup> recognises five levels of engagement; informing, consulting, involving, co-opting and empowering. These are levels and not stages - engagement continues at all of the levels throughout the engagement process.

### iap2 public participation spectrum

developed by the international association for public participation

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
<b>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL</b>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
<b>PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC</b>	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
<b>EXAMPLE TOOLS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fact sheets</li> <li>• Websites</li> <li>• Open houses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public comment</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Public meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Deliberate polling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen Advisory committees</li> <li>• Consensus-building</li> <li>• Participatory decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen juries</li> <li>• Ballots</li> <li>• Delegated decisions</li> </ul>

## 2 Background

2.1 In the Parish of Botus Fleming (PBF) the process of Community Engagement began in April 2016 when the PC delivered a flyer to all households and hosted a public meeting. More than 50 residents attended the meeting. Information was given about the nature of Neighbourhood Planning. Many were keen to share their views about how the Parish should develop and some were keen to become involved in running the process. The initiative was supported unanimously by all present. Those who volunteered to have a role in producing the plan were invited to form a sub-committee, the Neighbourhood Planning Committee. While awaiting formal approval from Cornwall County the NPC has worked to ensure robust engagement and communication with the Parish Council and has dedicated time to examining the issues relating to engaging the wider community.

## 3 Defining principles

3.1 Democratic government is predicated on the fact that elected representatives have the freedom to act in the best interests of their electorates – representative democracy. Although the NPC is a sub-committee of an elected body it cannot assume to represent, or be representative of, the stakeholders. The NPC is a conduit

through which all residents and businesses can channel their thoughts and feelings so that all stakeholders have the chance to influence the content of the plan – participative democracy. The NPC will use the information obtained to create the Draft Neighbourhood Plan which will be judged by the residents in a referendum.

3.2 People lead busy lives and have many conflicting priorities. This week's news about neighbourhood planning is next week's dim memory. If we are to stimulate and maintain interest in this project we must keep it in the public eye, employing all methods to raise its profile by ensuring that as many people as possible have regular and frequent exposure to news about the plan.

## **4 Strategy**

### **4.1 Informing**

4.1.1 The NPC must ensure that all stakeholders have sufficient information, and understanding of that information, to enable them to have informed views about neighbourhood planning.

4.1.2 The NPC must communicate all progress and developments throughout the duration of the planning process.

4.1.3 Inclusion; a register of residents will be obtained from Cornwall Council and every effort will be made to engage with each one in a way that reflects their circumstances.

4.1.4 The NPC will establish a register of email addresses of residents and businesses so those who have access will receive information electronically and will be encouraged to access the NPC website and social media.

4.1.5 Printed media will be delivered to those without email.

4.1.6 Feedback; individuals will be informed if they express wishes that cannot be met through neighbourhood planning and will be helped to focus their comments on what is possible.

4.1.7 Methods; the following were identified at a recent NPC meeting;

- Newsletter plus submission to "The Times Community" section of the Cornish Times.
- Facebook: posting Flyer and updates on community Facebook page.
- Website with link to Parish website.
- Posting on Saltash Community Noticeboards.
- Word of mouth/face to face.
- Email mailing list
- Events.
- Notices and signs
- Local networks, identify key individuals in community to act as information hubs.

## **5 Consulting**

5.1 While the preceding section refers to the giving of information, the Consultation process is about receiving the thoughts, views and ideas of the stakeholders. Some individuals will be well informed and keen to share their thoughts at the earliest opportunity. Others will be more difficult to engage.

### **5.2 What do we want people to tell us?**

At the initial public meeting there were many residents who were keen to express a view about how the planning process had impacted on their personal circumstances. There were also those who saw the NDP process as a way of obstructing change. While these voices must be heard they are not in themselves sufficient to inform the NDP. Indeed, personal considerations may undermine the emergence of our NDP and lead to rifts in the community through Nimbyism and finger pointing, e.g. "any development will have to be in Hatt as we are in a AONB". To avoid this situation and to encourage a long-term perspective we will initially canvass views on the future vision of the parish, a place for our children and their children. These views will be sought during "open days" held at the Church Hall. The information will be analysed and common themes used to create a vision of the parish in 15 - 20 years. the Committee will then determine the planning implications for housing, jobs, services, amenities and infrastructure and these areas, and the requirements stated in the Cornwall Local Plan, and this will form the basis of the second round of consultation.

### 5.3 How do we consult?

5.3.1 There is no single method of consulting that will reach 100% of the stakeholders. It will be necessary to develop a range of approaches. It will also be necessary to keep an accurate record of who has contributed so that those who have not can be targeted. Options for consultation include:

#### 15.3.2 Public meetings.

FOR	AGAINST
Economies of scale, stakeholders can share ideas, can generate momentum.	Not everyone likes to attend meetings - fewer than 10% of residents attended initial NDP meeting. Timing will not suit some people.

Suggestion. Rather than holding a meeting we could hold an "open day", probably at the Church Hall. A poster exhibition would reinforce the information already given and NPC members would be in attendance to explain and record views. An 8.00 till 8.00 opening should make it accessible and would make it easier to consult with individuals.

#### 5.3.3 Piggy-backing on other meetings

FOR	AGAINST
Ready made audience, no administration or organising. Poster exhibition already in Church Hall.	Possibly intrusive, attendees have different agenda

#### 5.3.4 Events.

FOR	AGAINST
Community cohesion, fun,	Time and effort and cost involved, limited appeal.

#### 5.3.5 Survey/questionnaire

FOR	AGAINST
Everyone is given a chance to contribute, quick and easy.	Evidence shows that the response rates for surveys is not large.

5.3.6 Electronic communications

FOR	AGAINST
May be preferred by younger people,	Not accessible to all, potential for flaming or trolling.

5.3.7 Door to door, face to face.

FOR	AGAINST
Personal, enables individual approach, accesses hard-to-reach residents.	Intrusive, some may resent it, risk to caller.

5.3.8 Suggested approach.

We need to start a conversation with our stakeholders. Every conversation starts with pleasantries and ice-breaking. We will introduce ourselves through our information campaign and we could break the ice by organising an event, possibly a "grand launch".

A bonfire/barbecue and byo fireworks is one idea. Within a few weeks we could then hold our Open Day(s). Following that we should be able to write our vision statement for the parish and begin the process of identifying specific areas for the NP to focus.

A further, more detailed, round of consultation could take place in early 2017 to determine the views of the stakeholders on the issues identified in the previous round of consultation and efforts could be made to make this as inclusive as possible.

5.3.9 Quality control. It will be necessary to have a standardised method of recording the outcome of consultation. Information from the first round will be "soft" and will require careful analysis to identify trends although it has to be hoped that there will be a broad consensus across the parish. The second round should be more systematic and be easier to categorise and analyse.

6 Involving, co-opting and empowering:

6.1 These areas should automatically accompany a robust information and consultation strategy. Sensitive methods of engagement should leave stakeholders feeling valued and encourage their continued involvement in the process. Some may want to become more involved by joining the NPC or setting up neighbourhood hubs. Returning to the stakeholders for clarification and refinement of the plan will generate a sense of partnership and giving them the right to vote in a referendum will be further empowering.

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