

Case Study:

Penarth Heights Parks Re-development

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Key stakeholders: Councillors, Residents, Interest Groups, Running Clubs, Youth Groups and Skaters

Case study text

1. Brief outline of project

Due to the recent re-development of the Penarth Heights residential area a significant amount of Section 106, community funding that is attached to the redevelopment, has been made available to invest in community Parks around the new development. The Council was keen to invest the section 106 funding into one park in particular at Paget road, the plan was to redevelop the park and install a skate park, or a skating area in the park. After initial consultations with residents received negative feedback, the plans have since changed and the section 106 funding will now be split between three parks that are within the allocated distance to the redevelopment. It is now hoped that the funding will be spent to re-develop a skating area in Cogan, to redevelop a Park on Dingle Road and redevelop Plassey Square Park. The redevelopment work will be consulted on as one whole project, this will give residents the opportunity to respond to all redevelopment plans at the same time and feedback both aspects of plans they may be positive and negative about through the same forum.

2. Details of the issue addressed

It is the intention that this project will be bottom-up, co-productive, and led and informed by the Penarth Heights community. The project hopes to deliver Parks redevelopment that is reflective of the residents wants and needs, specifically reflective

of the needs of young people in the area. The previous experience of residents has been largely at a 'communication' or 'consultation' level of engagement, as a result some residents have voiced concerns and negative opinions about not only the re-development itself, but of previous plans to invest the section 106 funding into one park in particular. This project therefore, has aimed to actively involve and engage residents in the planning process from the very start; heavily engaging with youth groups and skate groups to develop a picture of what these groups would like developed in which parks.

3. Actions/approach taken

Following the negative response to the previous consultation on Paget Road Park, where an open meeting was held with residents in a local pub, it was decided that the plans for the Paget road park would be re-thought and the section 106 funding re-allocated to improve other play areas in the area as well as Paget Road. A meeting was held with the Councillors for the area, and Councillor King's son, a local skater, who acted as a gatekeeper to other skaters in the area. Through the meeting we were able to garner the opinions of the local skaters and found out that rather than developing skating facilities at Paget road, it would be preferred if the existing skating facilities at Cogan leisure centre could be improved and perhaps a scooter area for younger children installed in Paget road.

Another Park identified as being eligible for Section 106 funding is Dingle Park. The Park has had some work done to it in recent years but not extensive work and the facilities are in need of re-development. The Park is represented by the 'Friends of Dingle Park' interest group, the group is primarily vocal on social media but has taken an interest in the maintenance of the park. An engagement session was organised with the group through utilising contacts in the Parks department who have regular contact with one of the group's leaders. Through engagement with this stakeholder it was decided that one of the primary issues in the park is the parks fencing and shrubbery, and that improving these would go a long way to improving the aesthetic of the Park and encouraging more users.

Through consultation with Parks staff we identified a further stakeholder group that regularly uses the Park. A number of running clubs regularly use the park as an area to run through, we therefore approached these clubs to gather information about how the experience of Dingle Park could be improved. The groups fed-back that there was the potential for a 'Trim Trail' to be installed in the park, this would allow the running groups to continue to use the park for fitness runs and may encourage others to utilise the park for fitness in the future.

A further park that was identified as an area for re-development was the Plassey Square Park. Historically residents have been against re-developing the play facilities in the park; however this previous consultation was undertaken over 10 years ago. Residents are currently being consulted on whether to replace the existing play facilities in the park and the installation of a fence to make the park more secure with increased traffic due to the re-development of Penarth Heights. This engagement will hopefully overcome some of the barriers and negativity that were attached to previous consultations, and offer new residents from the new developments the opportunity to reflect what play facilities they would like in the area.

4. Summarise areas of good practice in relation to your project

Consultation on the Parks has primarily been about providing stakeholders with a positive experience of engagement. One critical factor in this project has been about learning from the lessons of previous consultations. The initial consultation with residents on the re-development of Paget Road received negative feedback, this consultation however was an open meeting held in a pub which allowed the conversation to be dominated by certain individuals. While this feedback was taken on board, and reflected by looking to utilise the funds in more than just one area, this project has tried to avoid previous mistakes and has tried to build stakeholders and service users into discussions from the very beginning. By involving stakeholders from the very beginning of the engagement process it was hoped that we would establish a culture of collaboration with stakeholders such that stakeholders will also develop a sense of ownership over the project. This will be essential due to the nature of the section 106 funding in that we will deliver the re-developments to parks, but have limited resource to maintain the facilities afterwards.

Through the project we have also overcome a previous reluctance from service providers to relinquish any degree of power over a project. Previous developments in the area have been categorised by either negative or limited consultations. This project has sought to overcome these barriers by involving stakeholders in the planning process and continuously engaging with stakeholders to ensure that plans are both reflective of their wants and needs, but are also realistic and deliverable.

The project has sought to move away from traditional methods of consultation, such as the open meeting that was held in a local pub on the Paget Road Park re-development, to more open methods of engagement such as going out to engage with Skaters, running groups and interest groups. It is hoped that by utilising these methods that the project is categorised by a more representative subsection of stakeholders, inclusive of both quiet and passionate voices.

5. Analyse how the engagement process could be improved

Although the project has been successful a number of measures could be taken to improve the engagement. It might have been possible to improve the engagement by working more with relevant partner organisations, we could have engaged with the Penarth Town and Community Council and this organisation as a gatekeeper to other partner organisations with an interest in the project. To have included these organisations from the start of the project would have resulted in a better degree of power sharing than has been experienced in the project.

Due to the nature of the project, utilising section 106 funding attached to the redevelopment of Penarth Heights there has been a risk that the project may have been overly jargonistic. This may have discouraged certain interested parties from engaging with the project and therefore, the project may not be representative of all interested parties. The project could be improved if the information provided was presented in a more simplistic way as to encourage a greater variety of stakeholders to become engaged in the project, and a more diverse range of views represented.

A further factor that could improve the project is if the engagement process had been given more time, due to the project being attached to Section 106 strict time restraints were placed on the project to ensure that the deadlines for spending the Section 106 funding had been met. The engagement process could have been improved if a greater amount of time could have been spent to ensure that all interested stakeholders had been consulted at that plans were reflective of the majority view of stakeholders. Although a great amount of work has been undertaken to ensure that plans are reflective, there is a risk that due to limited timescales some views have been overlooked.

6. Rate your approach to the project against the National Principles for Public Engagement and briefly explain why you rated it this way?

Principle	Evaluation 1= very poor: 2 = poor: 3 = average: 4 = good: 5 = excellent				
Engagement is effectively designed to make a difference	1	2	3	4	5
Encourage and enable everyone affected to be involved, if they so choose	1	2	3	4	5
Engagement is planned and delivered in a timely and appropriate way	1	2	3	4	5
Work with relevant partner organisations	1	2	3	4	5
The information provided will be jargon free, appropriate and understandable	1	2	3	4	5
Make it easier for people to take part	1	2	3	4	5

	Engagement was conducted with groups who might have been previously over looked, engagement has been out in the community rather than expecting stakeholders to come to us.				
Enable people to take part effectively	1	2	3	4	5
	The engagement offered all interested parties the opportunity to take part in the discussions on the Plans for the parks at multiple stages within the engagement.				
Engagement is given the right resources and support to be effective	1	2	3	4	5
	Due to the time restraints placed on the project due to the nature of section 106 funding, had the project had the luxury of more time additional stakeholders could have been sought.				
People are told the impact of their contribution	1	2	3	4	5
	As the project has not yet been delivered it is hard to measure against this principle, stakeholders will be offered the chance to give feedback about the project however, and will be told how their feedback has informed the parks plans and how this has been put in place.				
Learn and share lessons to improve the process of engagement	1	2	3	4	5
	We have categorically learnt from the failings of previous consultations and have made positive steps in this consultation to move to a shared power model of engagement.				