

Community Led Planning enables local people to plan for their future and develop an action plan to help achieve their shared ambitions. It provides an opportunity to consider all elements needed for a sustainable future.

This guidance identifies a range of social, economic and environmental matters that affect a community's sustainability, that you may want to consider as you develop your Community Led Plan.

## A Sustainable Community

In order to be viable in the long term, communities need to achieve a balance between a range of social, economic and environmental needs.

In 2004 Sir John Egan was asked by Government to consider how communities could be more sustainable. He suggested that they must "*meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, their children and other users*" by:

- Offering choice
- Making effective use of natural resources
- Enhancing the environment
- Promoting social cohesion and inclusion
- Strengthening economic prosperity

He also identified eight characteristics that together capture the essence of a sustainable community, under the headings: Services; Environmental; Equity; Economy; Housing & the Built Environment; Social & Cultural; Governance; and Transport and Connectivity.

Discussing these characteristics, in the context of the information that you gather about your community, may help you to identify particular local problems and develop actions that could be taken to improve the area's long-term vitality and viability.

## The Sustainable Communities Act

The Sustainable Communities Act 2007 and subsequent regulations introduced a range of changes to make it easier for local councils to deliver effective solutions to local problems.

Opportunities range from ways of supporting local services, such as pubs and post offices, through to retaining local financial benefit from community energy projects.

As you develop your ideas for a sustainable community this Act may offer opportunities, working with your local council, to make the changes that you need.

NALC (National Association of Local Councils) guidance for Town and Parish Councils: [www.nalc.gov.uk/resource/sustainable-communities-act-2007](http://www.nalc.gov.uk/resource/sustainable-communities-act-2007)

### Community Led Plans

- Can include any issues important to a community.
- Based on community consultation and include an action plan for the future.

### Community Sustainability

- Relates to all aspects of your community: Social, Economic and Environmental.
- Can help frame your actions to enhance the community's vitality and viability.

### Using sustainable community headings when planning your Plan

- Helps everyone to think about wider ranging, longer term issues for the community.
- Use early on to assist every part of the Community Led Planning process.

## Elements for a Sustainable Community

You may want to include the following in your Community Led Plan. The full Sustainable Communities Workbook, further guidance and case studies are available on our website: [www.cumbriaaction.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk)

### Services

In your plan, consider the health, social, and learning needs of all. Community owned and managed services may offer solutions e.g. Community Exchanges, pubs, and post offices.

### Equity

Use information such as Parish Profiles to help you understand who lives and works in your community. Throughout your plan, consult with and consider the needs of all.

### Housing & the Built Environment

Use your plan to find out about local / affordable housing need and suitable sites. Community land trusts and self build could offer solutions to affordable housing provision.

### Governance

Involve as many people as possible in your planning process. Encourage others to participate in the work of the parish council and local groups.

## Sir John Egan's 8 elements for a sustainable community:

**Services:** Public, private and community and voluntary services that are accessible to all.

**Environmental:** Providing places for people to live in an environmentally friendly way.

**Equity:** Fair for everyone in our diverse world and for both today's and tomorrow's communities.

**Economy:** A thriving and vibrant local economy.

**Housing & the Built Environment:** High quality buildings.

**Social & Cultural:** Active, inclusive and safe with a strong local culture and other shared community activities.

**Governance:** Well run communities with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership.

**Transport & Connectivity:** Well connected communities with good transport services and communications linking people to jobs, health and other services.

### Environmental

Is there a need for open spaces and play areas to be provided or improved? Explore opportunities for 'green' community projects, promoting energy efficiency in local homes, renewable energy options, community composting etc.

### Economy

Your plan can provide information to support local services and businesses. You might also think about the needs of young people to access job opportunities.

### Social & Cultural

Use your plan to promote existing groups, events and activities. Are there any gaps and if so, are there the skills and capacity to address these locally?

### Transport & Connectivity

Links to services outside the community are important. Community transport, social car schemes and access to broadband may offer ways to meet local needs.

**For more information please contact ACTion with Communities in Cumbria on Tel: 01768 425 666 or visit our website: [www.cumbriaaction.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk)**

### ACT champions community and rural issues

ACTion with Communities in Cumbria, Room 11, Redhills House, Redhills Business Park, Penrith CA11 0DT  
T: 01768 425 666 | [www.cumbriaaction.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk) | [info@cumbriaaction.org.uk](mailto:info@cumbriaaction.org.uk) | Follow us @ACTCumbria  
Registered in England as Voluntary Action Cumbria | Charity Registration Number 1080875 | Company Number 3957858

©ACT 2025 This publication may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as ACTion with Communities in Cumbria copyright and the title of the publication specified.