

Community Led Plans are local, action-based plans which address a wide range of problems and opportunities facing communities. They can include social, economic and environmental issues and give everyone in the community the chance to be involved.

Where to start

Community Led Planning is a process that enables local people to work together to consider their needs for the future, and to develop an action plan to help achieve their shared ambitions.

This process has its own value quite apart from the plan it produces. Many communities enjoy the time they spend producing a plan. They make new friends, establish new links between groups and individuals, and form better relationships with Local Authorities and other organisations which can support them.

The process leads to the production of a Community Led Plan, a document setting out what local people value, and what they would like to change. This should include a description of the community, an explanation of the process, results from the consultation, and a clear action plan.

The most important part of this document is the action plan for projects to achieve the aspirations of local people. The action plan sets out what needs doing, how it will be achieved, by whom, the timescale, and how it will be resourced.

What are the benefits?

Community Led Planning can create cohesive, empowered and active communities in which people can influence decisions that affect their area. It can:

- Foster **Community Activity**. Getting together to talk about your community and take part in consultation events often builds community spirit and people find things start to get done.
- Leverage in **Funding**. Most grant applications require 'evidence of need' and a Community Led Plan can help to do this. It can also help you persuade local authorities to prioritise the actions coming out of the plan, and make resources available this way, too.
- Influence **Policy**. Often local authorities and agencies need good quality information about what issues matter most to communities. A coherent, well put-together plan can help influence policy.
- Provide a foundation for **Further Planning** such as Neighbourhood Planning or a Community Emergency Plan.

What is a Community Led Plan?

- A process which encourages action, by the community, for the community.
- A document setting out a vision for the future and an action plan for how to achieve it.

What can a Community Led Plan do?

- Encourage community activity, building community spirit.
- Provide evidence of need to attract funding and affect policy.

Give everyone the opportunity to be involved

- Ensure your steering group has wide representation from the community.
- Consult as many people as possible - try to make it fun, interesting, and accessible.

The timescales for community led plans vary according to the various circumstances of communities.
Evidence suggests that the timescales below are a good working guide

Milestones	Time	Resources
Getting Started Involve the wider community, find out if there is general support for the project. Contact your local authorities. Establish a Steering Group Ensure this group has wide representation from the community. Nominate a steering group member to liaise with local authorities. Develop a Project Plan Put together a programme of activity and a budget.	4 months	Volunteer time Meeting room hire
Community Consultation Involve as many people as you can in interesting and fun ways. Utilise existing events, activities and communications to maximise your efforts and increase participation. Check how your plan could fit in with current local and regional strategies.	6 months	Volunteer time Consultation costs: e.g. refreshments, room hire, Promotion
Prioritising and Planning Action Sort and prioritise issues from the consultation and decide how to take action on them. Consult local authorities and agencies on your proposed activities. You may need their help to deliver them. Drafting the Action Plan Share a draft of your Action Plan with the community, local authorities and other agencies. All organisations identified in the Action Plan should be consulted. Finalise the Plan Produce the final document and Action Plan; launch it with the wider community and celebrate!	6 months	Volunteer time Meeting room hire Design / printing Launch event
Implement the Action Plan Start to deliver your action plan. Try a mixture of delivering quick, easy to achieve projects, to maintain momentum, and set in motion more strategic actions which will take longer. Monitor and review the Plan Plan regular reviews and updates. Keep all partners and the wider community informed of progress - e.g. at the Parish Council annual meeting.	Ongoing	Project costs Budgeting for some smaller 'quick-win' projects may help to get things started Volunteer time

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

ACT champions community and rural issues

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