

Community Empowerment and Co-Management in Greenspace Workshop 28.2.2019

Notes from workshops, discussion and feedback

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK FORMS – 25 Forms handed in

Q1 How have you found today overall?

Enjoyable:	5 – (17)	4 – (6)	3 – (1)
Useful:	5 – (14)	4 – (9)	3 – (1)
Informative:	5 – (15)	4 – (9)	3 – (1)
Inspiring:	5, - (16)	4 – (7)	3 - (2)
Inclusive:	5 – (15)	4 – (10)	

Comments:

- Would like more on the way Lordship Rec achieved so much
- Covered everything – good
- Very thoughtfully designed day! Great grounding (?) at beginning
- The day went very quickly. Well done to the facilitation team
- Very valuable to share
- Better direction (needed) to the Hub
- Very enjoyable day, Lots of lessons to take back
- Great energy and stories. Well facilitated. Good for all 3 of our core team to attend in terms of group cohesion and bonding and idea sharing.
- Great relevant content moving forward
- Very good day. Pleased I came
- Collaborative, networking. Inspire each other
- Excellent pace throughout the day
- More Best Practice, ecology, permaculture, kids initiatives, youth re-employment, conflict resolution
- Thank you so much

Q2. How did you find the various sessions?

Presentations:	5 – (12)	4 – (12)	3 – (1)
Workshop/small groups:	5 – (12)	4 – (11)	3 – (2)
The Walkabout:	5 – (10)	4 – (10)	3 – (5)

What could have been improved?

- I think the 3 sessions in the afternoon would have worked better as 4
- The group session felt a bit rushed (especially the second one)
- More time to see Lordship Rec!
- Slightly shorter. More movement
- Bigger space? Food in separate space
- Not enough room to move swiftly
- Longer walkabout. Meet some user groups? Participate in mini activity?
- Very well organised and most effective! Thx
- Longer time to walkaround and find out about examples of community empowerment in action
- Think the timings were off for the walkabout due to lunch. Would have liked more time to see things
- Nothing really. The lunch was particularly great! Thanks for vegan food and almond milk
- Stopping at 1 for lunch!
- Longer lunch hour
- Nothing Awesome day. Thank you.
- Maybe a screen pointer so that presentation can be seen throughout by all. A stick would work fine.
- Huh – more time!! Limit each talker to 2 mins in group workshops!!

Q3. How did you find the various practicalities?

Pre-event information:	5 – (13)	4 – (10)	3 – (2)
Documents handed out:	5 – (16)	4 – (7)	3 – (2)
Refreshments:	5 – (19+++)	4 – (5)	

What could have been improved?

- Weather
- Didn't discover the water until quite late – cold drinks
- Event better than pre-event hinted at
- Acoustics of the room
- The Food
- Think pre-info could have been slightly clearer
- Consider start and finish times as for those out of London we hit double peak trains. More networking time please
- Nothing
- Keep going
- Perfect, seamless

- More water, lemons, stretches. Start with longer mediation on visioning, greener world, hold that vision as counter-media Sad effect, Landgrab.

Q4. What was the ONE most valuable aspect of the day for you?

- Making contacts
 - There are groups with worse problems?
 - Learned a lot from other groups
 - Friends group have the nicest people!
 - Meeting others and hearing of their problems!
 - You are not alone
 - Sharing
 - Meeting other groups and sharing. Time to think. Advice from Lordships Rec guys superb experience
 - Inspiring element. Makes me want us to up our game!
 - Focus and never give up
 - Connecting with so many like-minded individuals. Thank you
 - Can tell this took a lot of time to plan and we are all most grateful ! (Pat Gross)
 - Information given
 - Having the opportunity to talk to other people and exchange information/stories
 - Shared enthusiasm, more inspiring ideas to boost creativity and involvement
 - Hearing other people's experiences
 - Just Go Off and Do, Don't Wait
 - Getting to meet others and learn from them
 - Group sessions, networking, etc
 - Meeting other green spaces. Being inspired by Lordship Rec. Very well facilitated, etc.
 - Inspiring achievement of all groups, So much information and help available. Listening to each other
 - Communications and inclusion is crucial to work together and move forward
 - Meeting everyone
 - Collaboration and information
 - All of it
 - Time to think, contacts, interaction with others
 - Hearing success stories, projects begun without waiting for backing or funds. New contacts made. Empowering
 - Networking. Soup!
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Comments from floor on Paul presentation (ie Feedback on site visits to date)

- Scary
- Firefighting – we aren't presenting a professional front to the council
- Looking for income generating facilities as we have no money
- We are a nuisance to the Council
- Brent – may be getting rid of Green Flags
- Hackney – some way in the middle

Dave and Paul made this comment:

Look at strengths

Examples of positive things

Build on strengths

Question from the floor: What do we have in common? How diverse are we?

Paul E said : It may be useful to look at ends rather than average: give information on the characteristics of each participant e.g building (do they have one) and what are the achievements in each participative group so we can pick the brains of a group with a similar priority to us and share the experience we have gained.

Dave M said: We are a strong movement

A group doesn't have to achieve success in all areas. There isn't one model to aspire to as every park is different. We will have better success in some respects than others. Start with small activities.

FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS AFTER THE PRESENTATION ON "LADDER OF PARTICIPATION"

- The privatisation of land means common space is under threat, so protecting green space, we can use as we choose is political. Part of the green agenda, protecting our lungs and our free assembly.
- Need to understand the political angle of your council
- Some parks can generate income – it is a powerful tool
- In some circumstances the landowners are hostile but if you drill down there may be some reason
- Temporary privatisation threat
- Engagement with landowners at Turn Moss jumped up the ladder. Managing group dynamic
- Using positivity to strengthen hand with other partners
- You know the space

- Changing perceptions can show your Friends group can deliver it. Change LA's perception of how people use the group.
 - Aspire to go up ladder.
 - Big range on Table 5 from top to bottom.
 - Contractors no involved, Amey – have to get partnership with them.
 - One group (present and making this comment) has responsibility (Green Flag and paddling pool) but no control or support. Have had to use threat that will give it back.
 - Play councillors at the same game. You can get the kudos if we get the money.
 - Wandsworth/Richmond joined. Very different approach between the two Boroughs. Friends group are very important to Richmond.
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Flipcharts from Table discussions on WHAT DOES COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT LOOK LIKE?

TABLE 1.

- Visibility
- We give local people a voice
- Co-operation and vision
- Bring in other community groups!
- Raising own money
- Make Things Happen in Parks – events and activities, examples given:-
- ❖ Holding a local market weekly
- ❖ Dementia walk with others (started with a local care home running a dementia walk but has now expanded into a community walk and joint activities with the dementia group such as carol singing)
- ❖ Cricket match to integrate Asian community
- ❖ Park Run
- ❖ Activities that integrate people of different age

TABLE 2.

- Council have ultimate power – work for good relationship
- Litter picking – Volunteers – clearing space
- Lottery funding for fridges/freezers removal – worked with local schools. Housing Association helped.
- Talking with everyone in the community – dog owners, football groups
- Events in the park for fundraising
- Help with insurance
- Possible to overturn council supporting building for celebrity on public land
- Free trees and bulbs available

- Grant for repairs
- If council doesn't respond, just do it!
- Speak to all users and catch people coming off trains or other locations where there are a mass of people
- Code of conduct for dog walkers.

TABLE 3.

Hackney Downs: Tree planting, Fund day with Mayor

Central Park: Monthly walks (FB), Bird spotting, Local history

Woodcock: Graffiti, Local School Comp., Funding from Council

Turn Moss: Clean up

Milkwood: Residents Assoc. concern over anti-social behaviour, wanted improvements to local space. Direct engagement with youths. £1/2 million raised, exercise bikes

Meadow Orchard: Lime rendering workshop, Cob building, volunteer catering. Whole site! NHS

TABLE 4.

Turn Moss: Conservative Council development threat, countered by Grassroot protect to keep green space and keep it going. 13 hectares of sports pitches and nature spaces, by River Mersey. Thousand wrote in, 1300 responses against plans. Labour council really listen

Wandsworth Park: Flower beds. Taking on a small area and adding more. Absorb locked area into park. Made it Asset of Community Value.

Hackney Downs: SEN children, workshop bird houses in estate. Very colourful. Cricket event > Mayor (agreed/attended/agenda???)

Lordship Rec: No-one talking about Lordship Rec Park. Formed User Group. Regular meetings. Power to make decisions. FOLR Chair. Small areas improve. Get permanent park staff.

Meadow Orchard: Health and Well-Being week – Arts, Music.

- Eco-Building. Kids helped build. Initially stood off but after 30 mins got stuck in, empowered. Play-learn. Forest School and Permaculture. Next generation.
- Fruit into jams and pickles to sell. Food foraging and share.
- Skills: fire-lighting, cob oven baking – pizza days, Picnics
- Water Management and willows, following rivers (Hidden and stream outward across to other 'greening', 'rewilding projects'.

Nesta: Lake District, deprived area. Youth Forum to discuss the issues.

TABLE 5.

Cob Roundhouse Project, part of Meadow Orchard:

- 2000 volunteers
- Sourced all local materials
- Built by hand and is used by community
- Members can use space
- 7 years to build, still being built.

Wandsworth Park ACV: Land was to be leased/sold to neighbours. Friends of WP filed for Asset of Community Value to protect and save land. We won!

FEEDBACK TO WHOLE GROUP WHEN INDIVIDUAL TABLES CAME BACK TOGETHER

Examples of Community Empowerment they picked to feedback:-

- Weekly Market
 - Park Run
 - Eid in Park
 - Events, eg. Cricket
 - Volunteer Litter picking
 - Got funding to remove fridges and freezers
 - Don't always ask Council for permission – just do it!
 - Direct engagement with young people
 - Exercise bikes
 - Eco-building in Meadow Orchard
 - Wandsworth Park – Asset of Community Value
 - Turn Moss – stopped building of training ground
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TOPIC ONE:**How to improve relationships with owners/manager****MAIN ISSUES**

- Lack of communication > clash of events/disgruntlement
- Understanding the relationship between different owners/managers
- Contract with private operator blocking
- Finding gatekeeper/liason person
- Nature of contracts Council has with contractor – exclusive rights just go with their provider e.g. café exclusive rights
- Long response time
- Feeling of being left out
- Complacency
- Respect (or lack of)
- Lack of time

UNDERLYING FACTORS BEHIND ISSUES

- Public Service Ethos
- Red Line
- Lack of Finance> austerity
- Cuts leading to uncertainty
- Lack of trust, eg. History
- Lack of Transparency/bigger picture
- Reluctance to change

WHAT ARE OWNERS/MANAGERS INTERESTED IN?

- Glory
- Take ownership of what they haven't done
- Votes

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO GET THEIR ATTENTION?

- Build the relationships with people on the ground
- Build trust

- Friends Groups/Forums
- More People > Listen
- Savings
- New Ideas –tick all the boxes

- Forceful and firm attitude c-> ? be nice to them
- Regular e-mail contact /system
- Ongoing communication
- Show case of “Best Practice”
- Re-engaging youth
- Large public campaign at time of election
- Manifestos
- Being associated with a positive local initiative (rather than political)
- Identify relevant Committee/Chair

TOPIC TWO

How to improve relationships with User Groups and Stakeholders

- Lordship Rec experiences
- Sports clubs – ask to send reps to FG meeting and informal sports
- COMMS
- *Email list of local groups to invite
- *Informal groups e.g. dog owners
- How to improve diversity of involvement
- Relations with nearby sites
- Do Newsletter to keep people informed
- NHS clinic next door – access issues
- *SCHOOLS – get them involved
- Mosaics project, now a keen partner on site
- Find out individual needs/shared needs/what we can achieve as part of collective
- Ensure park is “something for everybody”
- Be positive. Have overarching themes, eg, health and wellbeing
- Help/respect each other
- Build relations slowly and surely
- User Forum meetings regularly
- Friends Group should Chair as have interest of park as a whole
- Informal communication is good e.g. over a meal
- Set up FG sub-groups and autonomous groups
- Annual or rolling calendar
- Get groups who hire a facility/space regularly involved
- Give schools a raised bed each to use
- Problem with a church wanting part of park for themselves – dispute now getting resolved
- Establish dialogue with various groups
- Hold stakeholders mtgs under non-contentious theme e.g. safety issues
- Understand the local community and its groups/they can cascade information
- Be strategic/intelligent with possible dissenting groups/do lots of listening
- Involving non-represented sections of the community/people with no gardens, people with English as second-language
- Issue with turnover of staff and reps from other groups
- Use events to develop partners
- Try to keep everyone happy
- Use social media
- Contacts with faith groups
- Partnerships can save time and effort for us!
- Link our events to other group's events and vice versa
- Being approachable/good communications
- Ask people what they want
- Friends Group should be the link

TOPIC THREE

Strengthening our own groups so they work well

WHAT ARE OUR STRENGTHS?

Passion, enthusiasm
Broad range of people
Local, constant, Local knowledge
Collective organising
Straightforward, asking for what you want
Can Galvanise people
Like minded, shared values
Strong networks
Shared goals
We find and become friends
Motivated by altruism
We use the character of sites to develop better sites than local authorities can – not an identikit site
Able to think laterally

WHAT ARE OUR CHALLENGES?

NEED MORE MEMBERS, HOW TO ATTRACT THEM, PARTICULARLY YOUNG PEOPLE AND RETAIN THEM

Suggestions:
Outreach, talk to people, ask them to tell their family and friends
Get in touch with young people - Duke of Edinburgh scheme, schools
Have a website
Develop an email list, newsletter
Organise an event – can be small scale, advertised by posters
Don't push people too hard, give them a range of ways to get involved and be specific about what you want them to do

BETTER INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Regular meetings,
Calendar of events
Recognise skills and explore if people have hidden skills
Informal meetings/picnics walks.
Email,
Newsletters
Rules of meetings
Develop Policies to deal with conflict before it arises, eg, Code of Conduct, Complaints policy

GETTING RESOURCES

Want to Developing facilities to be more inclusive
Problem of uncertainty of funding
Beg, borrow what you need. Don't be afraid to ask and be specific in the request
Pro bono services
Blow your own trumpet, advertise what you are doing, e.g wear Hi-Vis vests if working in the park
Work in partnership to pool resources
Think of ways to generate your own income, which will be under your own control e.g having a market in the park

DEVELOPING SKILLS

IT skills needed
Legal skills – may be able to access Pro Bono help.

HOW DO WE PUBLICISE AND RAISE PROFILE

Twitter, Facebook
Can have a closed contact list for active members and then positing for all members.
Forward
Press

Questions and Answers. (not sure when this occurred in the day)

Notes from Flipchart

- Talk about positive and build on the strengths
- Good to know skills and experience of different groups so we can share with each other
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- Challenge > relationship with Council and their attitude
 - > Cuts
 - > Parks – pressure to convert to sports facilities
- Need to improve how we present (to) each other
- Feeling of fire fighting>
 - Lots of meetings
 - Time issue
 - Time to engage is limited