



Training & Development Action Plan

Background

The 5 Town Network was established in 2003 as a mechanism for sharing experience, knowledge, skills and best practice across the West Sussex coastal strip. The Network seeks to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the long term regeneration and vitality of Selsey, Bognor Regis, Littlehampton, Worthing and Shoreham by Sea.

Since its inception, the Network has hosted a number of training, capacity-building and networking events at locations across the coastal strip. Each participating Local Authority (Adur, Worthing, Arun and Chichester) has developed a vision or “masterplan” for its town centre building on best practice and using each others’ experience and knowledge.

In October 2006, the Network was awarded £1m of funding from SEEDA for 2.5 years in order to begin to take forward implementation of these visions and to continue to develop the skills amongst practitioners in the region to aid successful delivery of regeneration projects.

Learning Laboratory

SEEDA, through South East Excellence, have nominated the 5 Town Network to become a “Leaning Laboratory”. This programme, developed and run by the Academy for Sustainable Communities, focuses on projects aimed at delivering the sustainable communities agenda. The Learning Laboratories will pilot innovative approaches and new ways of working in order to:

- Produce a clear national and regional picture of the need for skills
- Create a cadre of projects with a wide-ranging set of characteristics thus providing a number of strong, good examples
- Demonstrate what works and what does not in terms of changing behaviours and increasing relevant skills through robust projects
- Share these findings more widely to inform and support other projects and speed up learning and progress elsewhere

Learning Laboratories are likely to share core characteristics including:

- Work aimed at improving skills and increasing capacity locally
- Piloting approaches to developing key generic skills, including community engagement unless this is already well established
- Engaging with one or more of the ASC’s priority areas (professionals, young people, communities)
- Improving the ability to disseminate knowledge and information regionally – for instance, increasing RCE’s ability to act as a regional source for information and knowledge and sustainable communities – whilst linking into information on transferable lessons which can be disseminated through ASC.

- Include plans for ongoing monitoring and reporting, and participation in an evaluation programme to be managed by ASC.

If selected as a Learning Laboratory, the Network will receive an offer of grant in the region of £50,000 for the year 2007/08. This grant would be to supplement the capacity-building and training programme currently run by the Network to increase the skills pool across the coastal strip in delivering sustainable communities. South East Excellence provided the 5 Town Network with a grant to undertake scoping work for the proposal in the form of two workshops facilitated by BURA.

The Workshops

The first workshop was held on 5th December 2006 and participants from across the 5 Towns looked at the following issues:

- What has worked well in the 5 Town Network to date?
- What learning styles have worked well and why?
- What skills are required for implementation of the adopted visions for each town?
- What are the most important skills gaps?
- What is required in the future to meet these needs?

Participants at this workshop identified the need to hold another workshop with a wider audience who also have a role to play in the delivery of the Sustainable Communities Agenda.

The second workshop was held on 12th March 2007 and included a wider range of participants, including councillors, officers and other organisations. After presentations on the 5 Town Network, Learning Laboratories and a presentation on sustainable communities by Natalie Brama-Pearl, Adur's Community Wellbeing Manager, Jess Steele outlined the findings from the December workshop.

The workshop session was in two parts. First, three groups defined as councillors, officers and 'other organisations' discussed the following questions:

Councillors	Officers	Other Organisations
What skills do you think councillors bring to sustainable communities? What skills/knowledge do councillors need to develop further? How could these best be gained?	What skills do you think officers bring to sustainable communities? What skills/knowledge do officers need to develop further? How could these best be gained?	What skills do you think your organisation and your partners bring to sustainable communities?
How can you assist your officers to nurture sustainable communities better?	How can you assist your councillors to nurture sustainable communities better?	What skills/knowledge do you and your partners need to develop further? How could these best be gained?
What do other players need to learn?	What do other players need to learn?	What do other players need to learn?
How could the 5 Town Network Learning Laboratory help?	How could the 5 Town Network Learning Laboratory help?	How could the 5 Town Network Learning Laboratory help?

In the second part of the workshop, three mixed groups were each given a set of 22 recommendation cards with findings and suggestions from the first workshop, along with a set of gold stars to allocate to those they wished to prioritise.

At the end of the workshop, participants were encouraged to respond to some taster questions on issues around governance and management of sustainable communities.

They were also asked ‘What’s so great about the 5 Town Network?’

Full reports from both workshops are provided in the appendices.

Overview of Findings

NETWORK FEATURES

There is strong agreement that the Five Town Network is a useful breakthrough with great potential both within the five towns and as an exemplar of a learning network for sustainable communities. The Network aims to build a **shared understanding** of the complex sustainable communities agenda and the options and visions for Coastal West Sussex and the individual towns.

All participants agreed that it is time to **expand the network**. There has been 'buy-in' from a core group of officers for some time. It is now essential to widen the officer group focus from 'economic regeneration' to cover all aspects of sustainable communities, and to engage better with councillors and other partners (including health, education, housing, jobs, transport, community organisations). The core management group should remain a manageable size. Individual members of the wider Network should be well informed about Network aims and programmes but be able to 'dip in and out' of a menu of activities.

Engaging with and upskilling **councillors** is recognised as an important issue relevant across the country, and part of a wider question of how political and organisational cultures impact on the ability of all partners to deliver sustainable communities.

Recognise **existing skills** and weave them together in order to deliver a holistic, joined-up approach.

A new team for the 5 Towns?

All over the country, regeneration is hampered by short-term funding that comes down from above in silos that don't match up against each other. Local authorities and other local partners have to 'join it back together' and make it work over the long timeframes that sustainable regeneration requires.

In addition, seaside towns suffer from their 'peripherality' making it harder for them to attract them the most experienced regenerators who tend to choose places like Manchester, Liverpool and London.

As things stand, each of the five towns will struggle to attract and retain the quality of workforce that can achieve the step-change they seek. Those that do take on important roles find themselves either permanently seconded around the place or forced to change jobs before they have seen the work through in order to protect their own employment status. If not addressed, these issues of capacity, skills and turnover will hamper progress towards sustainable communities and will undermine the dynamic learning culture that the 5 Town Network represents.

One solution could be to establish a permanent 5 Town Regeneration Team or a shared but externalised regeneration organisation.

Recommendation: Undertake an options appraisal for establishing a permanent 5 Town Regeneration Team or a shared regeneration organisation. Begin by meeting with key staff and councillors from the Regional Cities East who have been developing a shared regeneration team.

LEARNING STYLES

There was overwhelming support for a mix of learning styles, a combination of formal training, conference events, study tours, presentations, influencing the induction process, learning from experience and from each other.

FORMAL TRAINING

A few 5 Town Network members are already participating in some modules within the BURA Regeneration Training programme. Discussions have begun to explore the potential to adapt the programme to have a strong coastal focus and to be delivered from a university venue in Brighton. This would provide formal training to key network members and would establish an ongoing legacy from the Learning Laboratory.

Recommendation: commission development and delivery of a Coastal Regeneration Training Programme

One of the problems with formal training, conferences and visits is the time commitment required. It has been suggested that, alongside the training programme, a series of early evening lectures/debates could be delivered by the tutors on the evening before each training module. This would attract councillors and other partners who would not be likely to take up the training itself.

Recommendation: series of early evening lectures run alongside the training programme.

CONFERENCE EVENTS

At the first workshop it was agreed that a major conference event on the broad themes of the sustainable communities agenda would be a useful end-point for the Learning Laboratory to work towards over the course of the year.

Recommendation: Sustainable Communities conference event to be held in March 2008.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

Learning from those who have done it already (best practice)

Participants would like to learn from and be inspired by people who have 'done it' in related circumstances, especially where the Egan skills have delivered results. They recognised this means people must be prepared to listen and learn.

Some felt that visits are too time-consuming. Solutions could include developing a menu of contacts so Network members can work out where and when they can/want to visit. Visits could be filmed and screenings could be followed by video conferences. Speakers from elsewhere could be invited to Coastal West Sussex (so that only one person travels).

While some participants would like to hear from others how they have dealt with specific common issues such as Section 106, post office closures etc, the officer group was also interested in gaining knowledge about larger regeneration schemes, feeling that since such schemes did not exist in the 5 Town area, officers sometimes lacked the confidence and ambition that comes with this experience. A greater knowledge of such schemes might "lift their horizons" to be more adventurous with their own projects.

Recommendation: Develop menu of best practice contacts, alongside a programme of filmed visits, leading to the proposed Sustainable Communities event at the end of the Learning Laboratory year.

Learning from those who are facing similar challenges (wider networks)

Participants would like to make more use of existing networks, particularly the BURA Seaside Network. The 5 Town Network has already sent speakers and delegations to the Scarborough conference (Mar 07) and will continue its involvement in the form of some key individual

‘champions’ who can gain ideas. Others felt that this national network could only be useful for ‘strategic’ rather than ‘local’ knowledge, and some were concerned about the costs and travel implications. There was some interest in online networks to deal with these concerns. The officer group said the 5 Town Network should make better use of professional networks (eg. TCMs are members of ATCM, planners are members of RTPi. But they don’t necessarily benefit from each other’s networks). Representatives from non-council organisations felt they could bring access to other networks.

Recommendation: Maintain involvement in the BURA Seaside Network. Gather information on other networks to include in the Directory of Expertise (see below)

Learning from each other within the Network (skill-sharing)

The 5 Town Network is already enabling mutual support within and between the 5 towns and this should be further developed. The officer group felt they need to know what skills and capacity other officers/departments have and that this would increase the ability for officers to act outside their area of expertise with a project (ie by approaching the relevant department). This will require being less territorial, and trusting other officers to help on a project where appropriate.

Recommendation: Undertake a Skills & Strengths Audit leading to a ‘someone who knows’ Directory of Expertise, including councillors and partners outside the local authority.

Recommendation: Develop systems for skill-sharing (mentoring, buddying, shadowing, job-swaps, secondments) that are built into corporate programmes rather than just for the year of the Learning Laboratory. Develop common Job Descriptions across the towns to facilitate this. Include sharing knowledge explicitly within job descriptions.

Recommendation: Develop Councillor Teams across the LA boundaries to address a common problem and upskill each other

INFLUENCING CORPORATE RECRUITMENT, INDUCTION & TRAINING

Influencing corporate training and induction programmes can be a way to embed the Learning Laboratory for the long term.

Councillor induction. One councillor in the group agreed it is crucial to “invest in induction as a foundation for all later work”. A perfect induction would give you a profile of every councillor which could be matched against particular project work. Also need to consider processes of councillor recruitment.

Officer induction. The induction already includes something on ‘vision’. It was agreed that officers should spend more induction time beyond their own team/department. With turnover rates at 8% it would take 12 years to induct the whole workforce, however this actually isn’t that long in the sustainable communities timeframe.

Recommendation: Undertake research into:

current recruitment processes – what skillset are HR recruiting prioritising?

current induction processes for councillors and officers

current corporate training programmes and budgets

and make recommendations to influence and improve these with 5 Town Network support.

LEARNING AREAS

Participants prioritised three main learning areas

ENGAGEMENT

Learn how to get, keep and use genuine engagement from the local community.

Identifying the community. Communication methods. Involving hard to reach groups. Managing expectations. Bringing in other players (eg use children’s homework based around a regen project).

Important to de-mystify ‘talking to people’ – take the scariness away and learn how to be open to communities and know what to do with their input.

The Network is keen to develop and share expertise in community engagement. While some officers had skills and experience in this field they wanted to develop expertise in “knitting the grass roots with the strategic aims of the Councils, gaining an overall picture that includes both the community and the economy.”

Recommendation: Training in community engagement principles, tools and techniques

NEGOTIATION

Improve one-to-one and team-to-team negotiation skills. Selling ideas, gaining commitment. This can be seen from two different but potentially complementary perspectives:

- developing business acumen and hard-nosed negotiating expertise, being able to challenge the developers, knowing what a good deal looks like
- developing better understanding between public-private-community sectors

Understanding different perspectives is a key aspect of successful negotiation. While the councillors in one group were not keen on this – they felt they “don’t care what makes developers tick, only how to resist them” – most participants recognised the importance of educating and understanding other sectors/players. They also felt it is important to demonstrate to the private sector the benefits it can get out of working more effectively with officers.

Recommendation: ‘This is My World’ cross-sectoral masterclasses (short sessions 1-2hrs)

- public sector officers
- elected councillors
- private sector developers/investors
- community and voluntary sector

While participants generally welcomed this approach some felt it would be best arranged around live case studies; one idea was to get a developer and other players in a car driving round talking about a live project.

TEAMWORKING

Learn to work as a team across disciplines, departments and sectors. Understanding how a ‘single’ project could engage lots of departments/sectors. Start with shared goals and understanding and improve cross-departmental communication on project work. Identify what would need to change for this to work well. Avoid wasting scarce resources through repetition and duplication.

Recommendation: ‘Regeneration Sans Frontiers’ – an interactive learning process to encourage team work across departmental and sectoral boundaries

Participants wanted to develop holistic teams that could see the whole picture and share common goals. They felt that talk of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ regeneration, and the separation of teams and funding dealing with economic/physical and community/social regeneration, is unhelpful. It is important not to replicate locally these external failures of joining up.

Recommendation: Establish ongoing learning structures - mixed project working groups and action learning sets

OTHER IDENTIFIED LEARNING AREAS

Participants also identified the following specific areas for training and development.

- commissioning and managing consultants
- creative S106 (for general wellbeing)
- development finance and financial appraisal skills
- transport policy and practice
- develop/share common project management language/practice

Recommendation: source bespoke or off-the-shelf training on these aspects and compare costs against potential to learn from each other and existing networks

Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Who by</i>	<i>When by</i>
A new team for the 5 Towns	<p>Arrange to meet with key staff and councillors from the Regional Cities East who have been developing a shared regeneration team.</p> <p>Options appraisal for establishing a permanent 5 towns regeneration team or a shared regeneration agency.</p>	<p>5TN Mgmt Gp (BURA could facilitate this meeting)</p> <p>CEOs group</p>	<p>June 2007</p> <p>Jan 08</p>
Coastal Regeneration Training Programme	Adapt existing BURA regeneration training programme and arrange marketing, logistics, and delivery in Brighton	BURA (JC)	Launch in Nov 07
Coastal Lectures	As part of the training programme, arrange for tutors to deliver evening lecture/debate prior to their module.	BURA (JC)	Launch in Nov 07
Sustainable Communities conference	Develop programme for conference throughout the year, including key speakers and regional best practice	5TN Mgmt Gp	March 08
Best Practice	<p>Create menu of BP contacts using South East Excellence Awards site.</p> <p>Develop programme of filmed visits to best practice case studies.</p>	<p>BURA/SEE</p> <p>5TN Mgmt Gp</p>	Jun 07
Networks	<p>Maintain active involvement in the BURA Seaside Network</p> <p>Gather information on other networks to include in the Directory of Expertise</p>	<p>5TN Mgmt Gp & members</p> <p>5TN Co-ordinator</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Jan 08</p>
Directory of Expertise ('Someone Who Knows')	<p>Undertake a Skills & Strengths Audit of officers, councillors and other partners in the 5 Towns.</p> <p>Gather other useful information to include and produce the Directory in loose-leaf and electronic formats</p>	<p>5TN Mgmt Gp (commission?)</p> <p>5TN Mgmt Gp</p>	<p>Sep 07</p> <p>Jan 08</p>
Skill-sharing	<p>Research JDs across the 5 Towns, with a view to creating more common ground and adding knowledge sharing</p> <p>Enhance internal systems for mentoring, shadowing, job-swaps and secondments.</p>	<p>5TN Co-ordinator, with support from HR</p> <p>5TN Mgmt Gp</p>	<p>Nov 07</p> <p>Jan 08</p>

	Develop Councillor Teams across LA boundaries to work together on common problems.	CEOs group with governance services	Nov 07
Influencing recruitment, induction & training	Undertake research into recruitment, induction and training processes and budgets and make recommendations for influencing and improving these with support from Learning Laboratory	5TN Mgmt Gp	Nov 07
Community engagement training	Commission training in community engagement principles, tools and techniques	5TN Mgmt Gp	Sep 07
Cross-sectoral masterclasses	Commission bespoke x-sector masterclasses, perhaps as part of BURA pilot	5TN Mgmt Gp	Sep 07
Interactive team-working pilot	Undertake 'Regeneration Sans Frontiers' pilot on one or more local area issues to explore the barriers to cross-sector, cross-dept working	CEOs group 5TN Mgmt Gp	Jan 08
Ongoing learning structures	Establish mixed project working groups and action learning sets to facilitate ongoing cross-silo working	CEOs group 5TN Mgmt Gp	Mar 08

Indicative Costings

1. Coastal Regeneration Training Programme		
development costs		£10,000
guaranteed places	10 @ £1500 each	£15,000
2. Series of lectures/debates		
tutor fees	10 @ £200 each	£2,000
venues & catering	10 @ £200 each	£2,000
3. Sustainable Communities conference		
production, logistics and management fees		£12,000
4. Create menu of BP contacts		£1,500
5. Filmed visits to case studies 4 @£1500 each		£6,000
6. Budget for attending other conferences 10 @ £350 each		£3,500
7. Directory of Expertise – research and production		£8,500
8. Community Engagement training		£5,000
9. Cross-sectoral masterclasses 3 @ £3,500 each		£10,500
10. Support for interactive team-working pilot		£2,500
TOTAL IF ALL ELEMENTS ARE PURCHASED		£78,500

N.B. Savings could be made by combining some of these elements in a single contract, or more of the work could be undertaken by staff within the 5 Town Network management group.

Evaluation Framework

Since a core purpose of supporting the Learning Laboratories is to learn from what works, we append a Weaver's Triangle for the 5 Town Network project. This is a useful tool to assist with planning around monitoring and evaluation.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Notes from Workshop 1: 5th December 2006

Appendix 2: Presentation of Initial Findings

Appendix 3: Notes from Workshop 2: 12th March 2007

Appendix 4: BURA Training Programme modules

Appendix 5: BURA Seaside Network information