

You've consulted your community, involved local agencies, and analysed your results, now it's time to write your Plan. Whatever your approach, there are some things ALL plans should contain, and other issues you will need to consider.

Where to start

Have a plan for writing your Plan! Think about the structure of the Plan early on as this may influence other elements of the process.

It can help to split the job of writing your Plan between working groups, or individuals. If more than one person is contributing, agree a common structure beforehand and make sure everyone is clear about what they need to provide. It's useful for one person to pull it all together at the end, to ensure the whole document is coherent.

Ask someone from outside the group to proof read and provide feedback on the document. They can spot errors the group have missed, and show where more (or less) detail may be required.

Think very carefully about the chapter structure of the Plan. Does it follow a logical order? Think of your Plan as a story, with a beginning, middle and end. Also, if someone wanted to just dip into your Plan, is it clear where they could find an introduction, and a summary of the actions?

Will your Plan work at both a local level and a policy level? Provide local authorities with a draft copy of your Plan for comment.

Information to include

A good Community Led Plan should start with a factual snapshot of the community as it is now: Where is it? How many people live there? What do they do? What are the key physical and environmental features?

It is important that you are open and honest about how you have worked on your Plan. List members of the Steering Group and any interests they represented. Also don't forget to mention any professional advice and support the Steering Group received.

Give details of how you consulted people in the community. What different types of consultation did you use? How did you identify what issues to consult people on and what to ask?

Did you target any particular groups or sections of the community e.g. young people, businesses, older residents? How did it go, how many people responded? Also, how did you keep people informed of progress?

Importantly, always make sure you give your Plan a title and a date, and include contact details for who to contact for more information.

Plan ahead

- Think about the structure of the Plan early on.
- What format do you want your plan to have, and who will write it?

Avoid unnecessary mistakes

- Ask someone outside of the planning group to read the draft and feed back.
- Provide Local Authorities etc. with a draft copy of your plan for comment.

Review your Action Plan, keep it up to date

- Does your action plan refer to the issues raised, is it realistic (see 'Writing your Action Plan').
- How will you update people on progress of implementing your Plan e.g. community website?.

Action Plan

The Action Plan is the most important part of your Plan (see ACT guidance sheet: 'Writing your Action Plan').

- Is there an Action Plan?
- Does it refer to the issues raised?
- Are your actions realistic?

Implement, monitor and review

Your Plan needs to be able to change over time, reflecting the progress made, and external changes. Ensure you explain when you will review it and how.

You could discuss it at Annual Parish Meetings, include updates in the local newsletter and keep a 'live' up to date version on a community website.

Layout and presentation

How a Plan looks is important, but a clear layout and good English is more important than glossy paper and full-colour photos. Don't be afraid to have a Plan that is cheap to print, but well worth reading.

Pictures, maps, and graphs break up large areas of text, and can communicate your point more effectively. Is there a problem with litter on the playground? Don't tell your reader, show them.

A photography or drawing competition as part of your consultation could provide a 'winning' image for your front cover.

Online Plan?

You may already have a community website or want to start one. Putting your Plan online, with a printed summary for residents, can be a cheaper alternative to printing the whole thing.

This also give you the opportunity to keep your Plan up to date, and feed back on progress. ACT will put a copy of your Plan on the our website.

Example Plan contents

Executive summary:

Usually written by the Chair of the steering group, this is an opportunity to formally present the Plan to the community and wider audience.

Background to the Plan:

Why did you do the Plan and how does it fit into the bigger picture? Include who was on the steering group.

Introduction:

A brief description of your community: location, demographics, geography, history, services, distinguishing features etc.

The process:

How did you do the Plan, who else did you involve, who advised you and what happened?

Summary of the results:

Key findings from your consultation.

Subject areas:

Information and summary of the findings for each of the areas covered in the Plan e.g. housing, environment, transport etc. Include any quotes from your consultation which illustrate the views of the community.

Next steps:

What happens next? How will the Action Plan be implemented and how can people volunteer to get involved in the future?

Acknowledgements:

Thank everyone involved in the process, mention significant contributions from individuals and organisations by name.

Contacts:

One main first point of contact for more information, plus any other key contacts.

Glossary:

List of any technical terms, acronyms etc. used.

Action Plan:

The most important part of your Plan. See separate ACT guidance sheet.

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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