

Sustainable Communities Workbook

ACT champions community and rural issues

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Is yours a sustainable community?

Sustainable development was originally defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” In 2004 Sir John Egan was asked by the Deputy Prime Minister to examine how communities could be more sustainable.

Egan suggests that sustainable communities must meet ‘the diverse needs of existing and future residents, their children and other users’ by offering choice. In order to be sustainable, communities must:

- Make effective use of natural resources
- Enhance the environment
- Promote social cohesion and inclusion and
- Strengthen economic prosperity.

He introduced what is referred to as the ‘Egan Wheel’ (see left), which can be used as a tool for assessing sustainable communities. It is this wheel that we will use to understand what your community may need to do to underpin its future sustainability.

As a basis for discussion, this workbook suggests a 20 year vision for each aspect of a sustainable community, invites you to consider where you are now in the context of that vision and to then think about the actions that may need to be taken over the next 20 years to underpin your community’s future.



The Egan Wheel

Introduction

This workbook has been developed to help groups engaged in planning for the future of their community to think about the actions that may need to be taken if their community is to continue to thrive for the foreseeable future. It does this by asking the group to make an assessment of their community in respect of each of the eight segments of the Egan wheel.

Firstly, what is a community? In this context it might be a single village, a parish, group of parishes or a wider locality. It is up to those involved in developing the community led plan to decide upon the area to be covered by their work.

The group can then use this workbook to carry out an early assessment of the area and get a general sense of how it is performing, and how it may need to change in order to be “sustainable”.

We have used the Egan wheel to shape this process because it will encourage you to make an initial assessment of all aspects of the area. Depending upon your conclusions you may then wish to focus more detailed investigation and consultation on particular issues.

The workbook comprises eight sections, one for each segment of the Egan wheel. Each section comprises three elements:

- A vision for your community in 20 years time

- A set of questions that encourage you to consider different aspects of that vision and to identify changes that may need to take place
- A judgement in which you score how you feel that your community currently rates, helping you to see where you may need to take action first.

You can complete the workbook as a whole group or ask smaller groups to consider particular sections before coming back together to compare notes.

To use the workbook start by considering the vision – do you agree with it or does it need to be changed, and how, to best reflect your community?

Once you have agreed this vision consider each of the subsequent questions in turn, thinking about what the community is like now, how you would evidence your answer and then consider whether some actions may need to take place if your 20 year vision is to be achieved. Having answered all of the questions in a section then make a judgement about how your community scores before moving on to the next section.

Once all of the sections have been completed plot your scores onto the ‘spidergram’ to see where the community is performing well, and where most change needs to take place. This will help you to target your subsequent community led planning activity.

Good luck!

Section 1 – Social and Cultural

20 Year Vision : Active, with a strong sense of community

In 20 years ours will be an active community where there are a range of events, clubs and societies, many run by the local community. Local people will identify with our community and believe that everyone is important. They will communicate effectively and look out for one another, helping each other to feel valued and keep safe.

- *Do you agree with this statement?*
- *How does it need to be amended to reflect how you would like your community to be in 20 years?*

Consider the following statements	Where are we now?	How can we evidence this?	What actions are needed in order to achieve our 20 year vision?
1. There is a strong sense of community identity and belonging.			
2. There is tolerance, respect and engagement with people from different cultures, backgrounds and beliefs.			
3. There is friendly, co-operative and helpful behaviour in our community.			
4. There are opportunities for cultural, leisure, community, sport and other activities.			
5. Levels of crime and anti-social behaviour are low with visible, effective and community-friendly policing			
6. All people are socially included and have similar life opportunities.			
7. There is a sense of community identity and belonging.			

Social and Cultural Judgement

In considering your answers to these questions you have compared your community with the statement at the top of the section. Now make a judgement about how the community performs relative to that statement, thinking about the whole community when you respond, rather than just your own views. In making your judgement, apply a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means you strongly disagree and 5 means that you strongly agree that the headline statement describes your community.

Scale	Tick one box
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Section 2 – Governance

20 Year Vision : Well run and well represented

In 20 years our community will be well run with a combination of strong formal governance and informal structures and committees. The community will maintain effective relationships with local councils, agencies and service providers and make good use of its elected representatives.

- *Do you agree with this statement?*

- *How does it need to be amended to reflect how you would like your community to be in 20 years?*

Consider the following statements	Where are we now?	How can we evidence this?	What actions are needed in order to achieve our 20 year vision?
1. We have strategic, visionary, representative, accountable governance systems that enable inclusive, active and effective participation by individuals and organisations.			
2. There is strong, informed and effective leadership and partnerships that lead by example.			
3. We have a strong, inclusive community and voluntary sector.			
4. We share a sense of civic values, responsibility and pride.			
5. We make continuous improvement through effective delivery, monitoring and feedback at all levels.			

Governance Judgement

In considering your answers to these questions you have compared your community with the statement at the top of the section.

Now make a judgement about how the community performs relative to that statement, thinking about the whole community when you respond, rather than just your own views.

In making your judgement, apply a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means you strongly disagree and 5 means that you strongly agree that the headline statement describes your community.

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Section 3 – Transport and Connectivity

20 Year Vision : Well connected

In 20 years our community will benefit from transport services and communications which minimise carbon consumption whilst linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services.

- *Do you agree with this statement?*

- *How does it need to be amended to reflect how you would like your community to be in 20 years?*

Consider the following statements	Where are we now?	How can we evidence this?	What actions are needed in order to achieve our 20 year vision?
1. There are transport facilities, including public transport, that help people travel within and between communities.			
2. Facilities are in place to encourage safe walking and cycling.			
3. There are accessible and appropriate local parking facilities.			
4. The community has widely available and effective telecommunications and internet access			

Transport and Connectivity Judgement

In considering your answers to these questions you have compared your community with the statement at the top of the section.

Now make a judgement about how the community performs relative to that statement, thinking about the whole community when you respond, rather than just your own views.

In making your judgement, apply a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means you strongly disagree and 5 means that you strongly agree that the headline statement describes your community.

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Section 4 – Services

20 Year Vision : Well served

In 20 years our community will benefit from public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all.

- *Do you agree with this statement?*
- *How does it need to be amended to reflect how you would like your community to be in 20 years?*

Consider the following statements	Where are we now?	How can we evidence this?	What actions are needed in order to achieve our 20 year vision?
1. We are well-educated people from well-performing local schools, further and higher education and training for lifelong learning.			
2. There are high quality, local health care and social services.			
3. We have a range of accessible, affordable public, private and community services (e.g. retail, financial, utilities, social)			
4. Service providers coordinate their planning and think long-term.			

Services Judgement

In considering your answers to these questions you have compared your community with the statement at the top of the section.

Now make a judgement about how the community performs relative to that statement, thinking about the whole community when you respond, rather than just your own views.

In making your judgement, apply a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means you strongly disagree and 5 means that you strongly agree that the headline statement describes your community.

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Section 5 – Environmental

20 Year Vision : Environmentally sensitive

In 20 years our community will care for and manage its environment and local people will be taking their part in tackling global climate change, living within environmental limits.

- *Do you agree with this statement?*

- *How does it need to be amended to reflect how you would like your community to be in 20 years?*

Consider the following statements	Where are we now?	How can we evidence this?	What actions are needed in order to achieve our 20 year vision??
1. There is efficient use of resources with existing buildings adapted and new buildings designed to minimise their impact on the environment			
2. Service provision is designed to use resources efficiently and to moderate or mitigate environmental impact (e.g. energy, land, water, flood defence, waste minimisation, etc).			
3. People live in a way that minimises negative environmental impact and enhances positive impact (e.g. recycling, walking, cycling).			
4. Natural resources and biodiversity (e.g. air quality, noise, water, etc) are protected and improved.			
5. In making decisions now we have due regard to the needs of future generations.			

Environmental Judgement

In considering your answers to these questions you have compared your community with the statement at the top of the section.

Now make a judgement about how the community performs relative to that statement, thinking about the whole community when you respond, rather than just your own views.

In making your judgement, apply a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means you strongly disagree and 5 means that you strongly agree that the headline statement describes your community.

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Section 6 – Housing and the Built Environment

20 Year Vision : Well designed with appropriate housing types

In 20 years our community will be well designed and attractive with good quality buildings and public spaces. It will provide sufficient decent homes to meet the needs of a range of household sizes, ages and incomes.

- *Do you agree with this statement?*

- *How does it need to be amended to reflect how you would like your community to be in 20 years?*

Consider the following statements	Where are we now?	How can we evidence this?	What actions are needed in order to achieve our 20 year vision?
1. Our community has a strong sense of place (e.g. a positive feeling and local distinctiveness).			
2. Well-maintained, local, user-friendly public and green spaces offer facilities for everyone including children and older people.			
3. There is a sufficient range, diversity and affordability of housing to meet our needs.			
4. A high quality, well-designed built environment of appropriate scale, design and layout complements the distinctive character of the community.			
5. There are high quality, mixed-use, durable, flexible and adaptable buildings.			

Housing and the Built Environment Judgement

In considering your answers to these questions you have compared your community with the statement at the top of the section.

Now make a judgement about how the community performs relative to that statement, thinking about the whole community when you respond, rather than just your own views.

In making your judgement, apply a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means you strongly disagree and 5 means that you strongly agree that the headline statement describes your community.

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Section 7 – Economy

20 Year Vision : Thriving

In 20 years our community will have a successful local economy which is diverse and provides a range of employment and business opportunities.

- *Do you agree with this statement?*

- *How does it need to be amended to reflect how you would like your community to be in 20 years?*

Consider the following statements	Where are we now?	How can we evidence this?	What actions are needed in order to achieve our 20 year vision?
1. There is a wide range of job and training opportunities.			
2. Sufficient land and buildings are available to support economic prosperity and change.			
3. There is dynamic job and business creation.			
4. We have a strong business community with links into the wider economy.			

Economy Judgement

In considering your answers to these questions you have compared your community with the statement at the top of the section.

Now make a judgement about how the community performs relative to that statement, thinking about the whole community when you respond, rather than just your own views.

In making your judgement, apply a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means you strongly disagree and 5 means that you strongly agree that the headline statement describes your community.

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Section 8 – Equity

20 Year Vision : Fair

In 20 years our community will be fair for everyone, including those from other communities who use its services and facilities.

- *Do you agree with this statement?*

- *How does it need to be amended to reflect how you would like your community to be in 20 years?*

Consider the following questions / statements	Where are we now?	How can we evidence this?	What actions are needed in order to achieve our 20 year vision??
1. Who makes up the community? What types of people, ethnic and religious background, age?			
2. Employers have workforces that reflect the make up of the local community.			
3. All groups are well catered for in terms of activities, facilities and services.			
4. There are no tensions between different groups in the community.			
5. All young people, whatever their background, have access to fair life chances?			

Equity Judgement

In considering your answers to these questions you have compared your community with the statement at the top of the section.

Now make a judgement about how the community performs relative to that statement, thinking about the whole community when you respond, rather than just your own views.

In making your judgement, apply a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means you strongly disagree and 5 means that you strongly agree that the headline statement describes your community.

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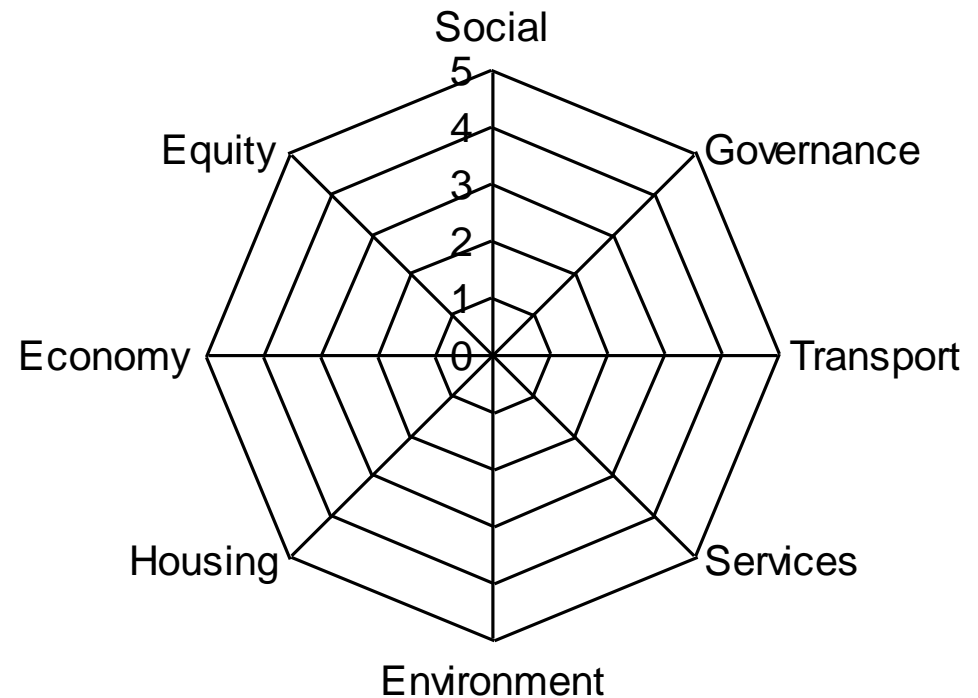
Summing Up - Collating the Results

Now is the time to bring your conclusions together. Using the 'spidergram' on the right, enter the scores that you have agreed in the relevant sections.

Working as a group, discuss the conclusions that you can draw from the exercise:

- Are there clear aspects of the community that will need particular attention as you carry out your community plan?
- How will you consider the actions that may need to take place in 5, 10 or 15 years time, as well as those you can do tomorrow?
- What information and evidence do you need to gather to validate your conclusions?
- How will you get more people from your community involved in discussing its future, and in developing and delivering the actions that you think will be needed.

Based on this discussion you will need to agree just how you are going to take your action planning forward.



This workbook has been developed by ACTion with Communities in Cumbria based upon the approach introduced by the Sustainable Rural Communities Toolkit: www.ruraltoolkit.org.uk

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