

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Bassetlaw District Council

Bassetlaw Neighbourhood Planning Marketplace: empowering community plan makers

Bassetlaw District Council are active supporters of neighbourhood planning, with 9 plans now 'made', 15 plans under development, and a number of prospective plan areas currently being explored. Despite the coverage of neighbourhood planning activities in the district, and the similar activities being engaged in by steering groups, little interaction was taking place between them. This was not problematic, but was rather seen as an opportunity to explore what benefits could be accrued by bringing groups together; the *Neighbourhood Planning Marketplace* concept was born.

The format of the event was inspired by an officer's doctoral research project, which examined ways to enhance public participation in planning, particularly how to assign value to local and tacit knowledge. In translating the research into practice, the aim was to provide neighbourhood planning groups with the opportunity to showcase their work, and to learn about the work undertaken by other groups. The potential for collaborative work to emerge was also anticipated.

The format of the event was designed to provide a relaxed environment in which to share ideas and experience. Presentations made 'from the front' were consciously avoided, with the focus instead being placed on 'market stalls', each hosted by a neighbourhood plan group, providing information and opportunities for discussion. In this configuration, district council officers were positioned very much as facilitators, but still on-hand to provide information and answer queries as required.

A key element of the event was the use of posters, produced by the district council, to summarise the plan development activities of each active neighbourhood plan group in attendance. Through the use of a consistent format, the posters assisted comparisons to be

made between groups, such as their stage in the plan production process, and the types of supporting evidence they had assembled.

In practice the event was a great success, with over 75 people in attendance, representing 26 neighbourhood plan areas, both active and prospective, elected members, and members of Bassetlaw Youth Council. Feedback from the event is currently being collated, but initial reports have been encouraging, including:

- groups using the knowledge acquired at the event to refine their own work,
- new contacts forged, including 'critical friends' offering to provide informal support to other groups,
- expressions of interest in new neighbourhood plan areas, including synergies between areas previously deemed to be too small to support a plan on their own.

Further activities are likely to follow in due course.

For further information, contact:

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