

People Powered Community



CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Beyond Consultation	5
Findings – Cross-theme issues	6
Relationship building	6
Democracy & Power	7
Childcare	8
Information & Communication	9
Perception of the area	10
Nothing About Us Without Us Is For Us – making our voices heard	11
Findings – Localities themes	12
Place (including Housing)	12
Health and Wellbeing	13
Children, Young People and Families	14
Education, Training and Employment	15
Community Safety	16
Case Studies	17
Sean Fitzharris	17
Vanessa Cousins	17
Muirhouse Shopping Centre redevelopment: trusting relationships mean better outcomes	18
Appendix	19

Introduction

Scotland's communities are a rich source of energy, creativity and talent. They are made up of people with rich and diverse backgrounds who each have something to contribute to making Scotland flourish. Central and local government needs to help communities to work together and release that potential to create a more prosperous and fairer Scotland.

Participation with communities lies at the heart of community planning. CPPs must support community bodies to participate in all parts of the process, in the development, design and delivery of plans and in review, revision and reporting of progress.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 - A summary (February 2017)

We, as the Community Action North steering group, have tried to distil the community conversations, consultations and conferences over the past five years into this report. There have been discussions on issues including food poverty, ethnic diversity, community empowerment, place-making, youth services, green space and the environment. Residents have come together to explore how we can build a sustainable, resilient neighbourhood for the future.

We have discovered our neighbourhood is indeed a source of energy, creativity and talent as stated above. It is rich and diverse and that diversity gives us strength. We have a history rooted in supporting each other and organising to gain more resources and better services to improve everyone's quality of life. We have developed social enterprises, we run community centres and have set up our own charities and development trusts. We campaign on issues from racial harassment to damp housing and social security cuts.

This is a community that is used to working together and wants to participate as equals in the future design and delivery of services. Over the past five years, people have created spaces and places where they can meet and do things in their community. Thanks to the skills and expertise of local people, we now have flourishing gardening groups, many of whom took over neglected and abandoned spaces and transformed them into community gardens which bring together a diverse group of residents to grow and share food. We are a community which gets together over a meal we have cooked together, we create and exhibit our art and crafts and perform theatre and music. A brownfield site has been transformed into an amphitheatre for outdoor performances, an empty shop transformed into a thriving art workshop. We have great youth organisations which provide a range of services for young people. Local people set up a community shop to provide fresh fruit and veg locally and be a meeting and information point. We have support groups for parents, for young single mums, for those with addiction issues and mental health problems. All of these rely on the unpaid labour of local people and the work of grassroots voluntary sector projects and front line public service workers in libraries, community centres and surgeries.

continued overleaf >



People cannot be expected to be full participants in designing services unless they are already used to actively doing things in their community; sharing their skills and expertise, learning from others, as demonstrated above. A confident community arises when everyone's potential is harnessed to the benefit of that community.

We have ambitions and welcome the opportunity to work with our partners in the public sector to realise them. What we want to achieve will come as no surprise, it is what every neighbourhood wants. We want good quality housing based on need not profit, that people can afford; we want beautiful green spaces. We want lots of accessible community space where the community can meet and do activities. We want to be safe. We want excellent schools and space where we can learn new skills and become better educated. We want lots of activities for our young people and to support them to become active citizens in the world. We want to be a physically and mentally healthy community.

We want everyone to find their place here so no-one is left behind and everyone is valued. We want to combat the loneliness of people by ensuring the community provides lots of ways of getting involved and meeting people. We want to make sure the voices of those not normally heard are at the heart of our community building. We want to create sustainable well paid jobs and to take advantage of opportunities to own and run our own enterprises. We want to explore new ways of working with our fellow partners.

This report doesn't concentrate on what we want changed. We concentrate on the how do we make the changes we want. We hear from the public sector that their wish is to do things with us not to us. This means participation and partnership has to be embedded in everything: it simply becomes how we do things. It is a way of working that goes beyond consultation and treats people as equal partners in developing our public services in the future.

How do we do that? How do we create relationships, systems and processes that support participation, partnership working and co-production of services? This report seeks to answer these questions. We see this as the core of what we need to achieve and understand this won't happen overnight. It is part of a five year plan.

We think it's crucial that we build these strong foundations at the outset to ensure we can all work together productively to build the community we all want to see.

Community Action North (CAN) steering group





Beyond consultation

“The process of doing these kind of things online (consultations) is very isolating – you have no-one to discuss things with and it encourages you to stay at home, which is not a good idea. There are fewer opportunities to talk to people face-to-face and have human contact. This is not a good thing for individuals or communities.”

Member, Power to the People group

This report draws on all of the most recent community conversation and participative events we are aware of that have been carried out by CAN and other local organisations (listed in Appendix). It is an attempt to capture the key, recurring issues the community has identified during these consultations. A steering group comprising six local people has worked with CAN staff to ensure this is a true reflection of the community's views and thoughts.

We have done our best to organise discussions to fit with the five Localities themes of Place; Health and Wellbeing; Children, Young People & Families; Education, Training & Employment and Community Safety. However, where particular subjects fit more than one theme, we have pulled them out separately as cross-cutting issues.

Findings: Cross theme issues

Relationship building

“Is it a heart sink moment when you come to work?” K, male, 60s

“It feels we’re here to suit the council, when it should be the other way around” S, female, 30s

The importance of having good relationships between local people, politicians, managers and workers in the neighbourhood is stressed time and again.

At present, there are frustrations on both sides. The community feels fobbed off by many services, patronised and judged. As pointed out in the quote above, we wonder what people feel when they are coming to work here. If public sector workers in the area are feeling that their work is a burden and the community a nuisance, and the community feel staff are unhelpful and rude, we can’t begin to improve the services in the area.

As can be seen in the number of consultations and engagement exercises the community has taken part in (see Appendix), people do want to be involved. The frustration comes when people feel they’ve been consulted to death, but nothing has changed. “You feel the decision has already been made” is a fair reflection of many people’s views.

Consulting and engaging can often mean seeking people to tick a box to justify a decision already made by those with power. The community wants to be an active participant in community building, not passive objects to be consulted or engaged as and when others decide they need community input.

People have relationships with people, not with institutions or agencies. There has to be trust between all parties. Trusting relationships don’t simply happen, but have to be created. This needs to be acknowledged practically by creating time and space for those relationships to be built.

How do we do this? Suggestions

A training programme is created in which community members, front line staff and management take part. This is designed to bring people together, learn from each other and understand better each other’s roles and responsibilities in community planning.

Explore establishing a mutual mentoring scheme. This means community members and a public sector employees spending time in each others environments and learning from their different experiences. It worked well for the Poverty Truth Commission which can be used as a model.

Create informal ways of service providers getting to know the community in all its diversity.



Democracy and power

“Most formal consultation processes are tokenistic – people only get asked their views on minor things: the big decisions have usually been made beforehand. Engagement is restricted in terms of what people are allowed to discuss/comment on. This is not genuine community engagement or empowerment” - Power to the People group member

“Develop a more effective and democratic model for local decision-making. Community Councils and Neighbourhood Partnerships are not working for the benefit of the whole community.” - participant, People Powered Community event

‘For things to change politicians need to be prepared to give up power.’
- participant, People Powered Community event

The relationship between providers and the community has been characterised by the public sector doing things to the people, not with them. That relationship has to change so the community is an equal partner in making decisions about what happens in their neighbourhood. Active community participation requires time and resources and an independent community-led body, properly resourced, which will enable and support the participation of local people.

The area covered by North West Locality is vast and doesn't have any meaning for people who live their lives in streets and neighbourhoods, not localities. Localities are top down structures which suit the way professionals work, but not how local communities want to get involved.

North Edinburgh residents need a structure or forum that is much closer to them if they are to properly participate. The community wants service providers to come to them, so they get to know the local people they need to deal with on a daily basis. They want space to discuss long term plans with providers and to talk about new ideas. The community also needs somewhere where they can hold providers to account.

How do we do this? Suggestions

A forum is established covering the old Social Inclusion Partnership area. Hosted by CAN, it will bring together local people and service providers to discuss priorities in the locality plan and ideas of how to implement them. It will establish clear roles and responsibilities for each party with clear lines of accountability.

CAN is engaged in ongoing participatory work in the community, generating information and ideas to inform community planning partners.

Community participation is embedded as a basic principle of how we do community planning. The National Standards for Community Engagement are used as guiding principles.

The community participates at the earliest stages of service redesign and planning developments. Ways of making it simple for the community to be participants are explored.



Childcare

“I wouldn’t be able to work without access to affordable, flexible childcare”

- Mother, North Edinburgh Childcare Social Impact Report 2015 - 16

“I would have to reduce my hours at work significantly if North Edinburgh Childcare was not available” - Parent, North Edinburgh Childcare Social Impact Report 2015 - 16

“North Edinburgh Childcare provides my son with a wide range of social interactions with children of different ages; it allows him to be creative and also exercise when he wants to join in” - Mother, North Edinburgh Childcare Social Impact Report 2015 - 16

The lack of local affordable childcare prevents parents, especially single parents, getting work, into education and participating in their community. People feel strongly that access to good quality childcare is vital for a child’s development. They also think that there is scope to build community capacity around childcare e.g learning opportunities around all aspects of child development especially around issues of ADHD and autism.

It is difficult for one organisation to sustain a creche itself. All partners need to explore setting up and resourcing a community creche service where various services and organisations could buy in and people using their service, attending an appointment etc could use the creche.

How do we do this? Suggestions

Bring together relevant agencies to share what information is already available about childcare and to look for shared solutions and resources that tackle the issue across the area.

The needs of black and minority families and families with children with disabilities are included in service design.



Information and communication

'People need to have options and choices and be able to use whatever form of communication is the most suitable for meeting their needs'

'There are not enough classes available to teach people IT skills as it is – and that's before we see the next round of cuts to these services!'

'Completing consultation processes and making enquiries about services online are difficult tasks for people with literacy problems and learning disabilities such as dyslexia. It also disadvantages people from the BME community for whom English is not their first language – this form of communication demands a high level of literacy.'

All of the above are comments by members of the Power to the People group

Everyone agrees that information and communication is really important, and it is a theme that is repeated every time residents of north Edinburgh are consulted on anything. There are many layers to this. People need to find out what is going in their community, from local activities to large scale developments. They need practical information on how to access services like surgeries and schools. For new migrants, and people learning English, finding their way around the system is particularly difficult.

People often feel that they are fobbed off or passed around various departments when trying to get information from or about public services. People need to know what rights they have regarding service provision and how to access them. People miss the North Edinburgh News, the free community newspaper.

Everyone wants to know who the one person is they need to contact about a particular issue. They also thought being issued with a reference number when contacting the council would enable them to follow up any enquiry.

How do we do this? Suggestions

All partners need to find ways of providing better, more joined up basic information about services. Involve local people in how to do this.

Create a Community Diary (possibly on-line, an app e.g. My North Edinburgh, but must be easy to print). Every agency needs to commit to providing information.

Find ways of using other media to involve people e.g. live streaming of meetings to involve people who can't get along; filming events, etc.



Perception of the area

'We're seen as being junkies or alkie's' - woman, People Powered Community event

People feel there is a stigma attached to coming from this area. Any press coverage is usually negative, regardless of all the achievements the community has made. Living with this stigma has a detrimental effect on people's wellbeing.

The efforts of local people to create projects that bring people together and improve their own lives builds pride. Gardening and cooking groups, singing and drama, arts and crafts, social history and computer classes, book groups and youth clubs, archery groups and gymnastics, community barbecues and ceilidhs: all are dependent on the volunteer labour of the local community and all create that sense of community spirit.

Young people feel that the general run down state of the area contributes to outsiders' perceptions of what people in North Edinburgh are like. They do not feel they are recognised for their good work in the community. The North Edinburgh Youth Awards are a great way to highlight achievements and show the outside world the good things going on in North Edinburgh.

How do we do this? Suggestions

All agencies and community work to promote the positive activity happening in the area across all media platforms. We share each other's good news.

We work with local elected representatives to combat negative stereotypes of the area, through promoting people's achievements, rewarding people and making sure good news stories hit the press.

A community fund is developed to support local groups.



Nothing about us without us is for us - Making our voices heard

The current programme of welfare reforms is impacting on the lives of local families and the community as a whole. We need resources and facilities to protect us from austerity. Indicators for childhood poverty highlight the extent of this issue in poor neighbourhoods

- Power to the People report

Forth has different needs to other wards in North West Locality which are relatively affluent (see Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation). Council budgets should be redistributed to protect services in the poorest areas of the city. - Power to the People budget response

We are one of the richest nations on the planet and we should not be contemplating cutting our library service. These are essential services, not luxuries. Volunteers should add value, not be a substitute. - Power to the People group budget response

The council should be prioritising its resources in areas which have the worst poverty and who are going to be hit hardest by any cuts in services. These areas will lose much more than better off areas. - Power to the People group budget response

Poverty and inequality impact on people's lives in North Edinburgh. Zero hours contracts, cuts in benefits and public services, sanctions, high rents, low wages mean people living under a lot of stress. The impact of the benefit cap and high rents means families made homeless. Lack of power, of a say in your life and that of your community has an impact on your life. We need to see measurable change for the better for everyone in the community.

The steering group feels strongly that by coming together in different ways to support each other is the key to making a real difference in their community. We need to work with partners to develop community resources with strong foundations enabling lots of activity to flourish and still be around in the next 5-10 years.

Much of what makes life difficult in the community is the result of policies and laws made by local and national governments. The community needs independent support to make their voice heard by politicians and policymakers and to be the heart of the policy making processes which have an impact on our lives.

We need to know if what we do is making a difference. We want to come up with a way of measuring people's experience of life in the community beyond the statistical information about health, education, income etc. The numbers are very important, but the community also wants to capture the qualitative information, to find out if people are living better quality lives as defined by them. The community is interested in working with others from universities and other institutions to support local people to do their own action research.

How do we do this? Suggestions

CAN works with community and relevant and interested partners to develop ways of measuring outcomes which are meaningful to the community

CAN and partners deliver training and participatory research on issues and subjects identified by the community to support them to represent themselves and their views to people in power.

Partners agree to prioritise their resources in areas like North Edinburgh which feature highly in the SIMD.

Findings: Localities Themes

Place

People are very positive about the area's community centres, and there is an optimism that the regeneration of the shopping centre and the surrounding environment will offer lots of exciting new opportunities.

Community Spirit: The community must have access to community spaces and resources to allow this to flourish.

People praised the local gardening groups and arts groups. People want more opportunities to get together and have community events and do more activities. There is a real demand for more community space for workshops and community kitchens, space for young people and where the community can gather together.

Local people would like to see more public events and see the green spaces better used. It was also felt that community owned social enterprises could be set up to look after the green spaces. More cycle tracks and opportunities for people to take exercise.

Some feel community clean-ups are a good way of getting neighbours together and also help improve the area at little cost. There are strong feelings, though, that not everything can be done by volunteers and it has to be clear that the council has a responsibility to keep the area clean.

Community feels some pride in having worked with the authorities on the development of the new shopping centre in Muirhouse – 'the community has made a difference.' We want to be involved in planning at a much earlier stage and to make sure new developments work for the benefit of the community. We want to develop our ability to generate income and create jobs by owning our own enterprises and developing community resource and tourist related business on the Waterfront site.

People want more community space to do things and better use of existing space especially in the evening. Craigroyston Community High School was mentioned in particular. It has a lot of resources but is expensive and difficult to access.

The negative views centred around cleanliness, especially issues of dog fouling and fly tipping. Anti-social behaviour and vandalism were also highlighted.

Lack of access to community facilities in the evening and the cost of using some of them is an issue

Place - Housing

Temporary accommodation is in a very poor state of repair; some of it is unfit for families

Council house stock left is in really poor condition. Damp is an issue again.

Overcrowding – there are not enough three bedroom homes available

Social house building programme won't address long waiting lists

The Council are not getting empty properties back into circulation quickly enough.

Private landlords are still an issue, rents are high and properties not kept in good repair

People want to see more council houses built, especially homes for larger families.

How do we do this? Suggestions

An asset map of the area is produced including natural assets, skills, and experience of people in the area, local groups and activities etc. The map should be digital and easy to update.

Relevant partners and the community work with the local school to improve access for local people

Community members (community peers?) could work with housing officers to develop good working relationships based on the officers' new way of working in local 'patches'.

CAN and regeneration team continue working together on the redevelopment of the shopping centre.

Bring together local housing associations, council and local people to tackle issues around rent regulation, poor housing stock and future house building.

Health and Wellbeing

'Just because you're smiling doesn't mean you're fine.' - young person, Total Craigroyston

'Nobody likes to talk about mental health but there needs to be more support, particularly for young people at exam time.' - young person, CAN consultation

Young people wanted more targeted support for their mental health needs.

Many people experienced long waits for access to psychiatric services. People did want more 'talking cures' rather than be given anti-depressants.

There are lots of activities in the area, in the community centres, high school, and art centre. People understand the importance of exercise and healthy eating, but it's difficult to use leisure facilities if you have young children, or if you don't have enough money.

Engagement with GP surgeries is improving - link workers may prove key to this. People want to develop good long term relationships with a named health care professional/GP. Many people feel that professionals too readily dismiss their concerns or don't listen.

Support/training for food volunteers readily available and tailored for local needs

People with health conditions tend to have good relationships with their healthcare providers and are better able to get the services they need.

Families are able to live together in the same community: This provides an important support network which allows parents and grandparents to help with childcare.

People who needed interpreters are unhappy that often this meant having a consultation over the phone. They want face to face appointments like everyone else.

The lack of information about what services are available and how to access them is an issue, as is a lack of understanding on the part of the GPs on different issues affecting minority ethnic communities.

How do we do this? Suggestions

CAN and other local agencies work with local surgeries to develop patients' councils or similar where local patients can work with local health care professionals to improve services long term. People with disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups need to be included as a matter of course.

NHS and other relevant partners provide more information about what services will be in the new partnership building and how we build relationships between the providers there and the community.

Resources are targeted at grassroots voluntary sector and community organisations to support people to participate in their community at different levels and in different activities, especially people at more risk of isolation due to disability, age and ethnicity.



Children, Young People and Families

“Often it’s just having somewhere where you’ll get a smile and cup of tea that makes the difference” - woman, People Powered Community event

“We don’t want to be handed the responsibility for running centres on a day to day basis. We don’t want to have to fundraise to pay for staff and bills. We don’t want to have to open up buildings and go on health and safety training courses. Being forced into doing this to save our community centre is not empowerment!” - Power to the People group member

People identified the community centres, youth clubs, libraries, North Edinburgh Arts and other public places and spaces as being vital for the life of the community. Creating activities and organising events involving the whole community were seen as being important to bring people together.

Being a parent needs to be valued more. Mothers talked about feeling under surveillance and if a health visitor or any professional was coming to the house they would make sure it was immaculate in case they were judged. There was a feeling that you couldn’t say if you weren’t coping because your child would be taken off you.

The Patchworks sessions ran by NHS Lothian were very popular with mothers. New mums were able to drop into the surgery, the baby be checked, but also, there was time and space for the mum to have a cup of tea and chat with other mothers and for the health visitor to have a chat with them too. People want to see services like that, which are easily accessible and designed around the needs of individuals.

The steering group feel strongly that parents need space to be able to talk honestly. All parents make mistakes at some point, and all need support at least now and again. The parenting classes are seen as being helpful, more so for the relationships build with the community worker in many cases than the actual course. But there is still a need for space and resources for parents to come together to support and learn from each other.

There is a real concern over what is happening to local community centres, which are seen as vital in providing the kind of open and accessible support unavailable elsewhere. People also wanted to be able to use them in varied ways in the evening.

Young people aspire to live in a community that is respectful, equal and welcoming. They want the opportunity to visit other areas. North Edinburgh Young Peoples Forum (NEYPF) members said some local young people never see other parts of the city or the country to meet other young people and share experiences. NEYPF members appreciated residential at Pilton Retreat in Ratho, for example.

How do we do this? Suggestions

CAN and partners work with existing programmes and projects which already support the local community in organising community events to make them sustainable and build capacity in the community to manage them and do more.

The vital role community centres play in North Edinburgh is recognised practically.

All partners work with local management committees of community centres to make sure the centres are resourced properly so they remain open and accessible to all. Public agencies consider how they can use them to deliver their services locally.

Support a local ‘buddy’ scheme where local people can give out information to people and accompany them to activities

All partners seek to work with local youth service providers to maintain existing services and find ways of bringing in new resources. All interested partners to explore how we can offer after school activities for every child from 7 - 18 in the long term.

Education, Training and Employment

“Loads of money is poured into short-term employability schemes and courses - but that doesn't create any more jobs.” - young woman, North Edinburgh Young People's Forum

“It is hard to look for work or even to think about applying for jobs when you are not sure if we are going to have a roof over our heads” - young mother, All About Me group

Local adult education groups, such as the Social History and Power to the People groups and adult education classes at the high school are popular with the community. People enjoyed attending arts and crafts groups, drama and music groups. Getting involved in classes and groups has been transformational for many people.

The community is enthusiastic about the possibilities of starting social enterprises and small businesses as part of the regeneration of the shopping centre and Granton Waterfront. People have skills, are keen to learn new ones and want opportunities to create work.

Many community members have undertaken training, including first aid and food hygiene courses. Seven local people took up apprenticeship places with local organisations supported by Community Action North. Five local people are now studying for their Activate qualification, a certified course in community development developed by Glasgow University.

People are involved actively in doing a lot for their community, but it can't all be about volunteering. Secure, well paid jobs for local people are important.

Young people want more opportunities created in learning and employment, and feel that more career/ life skills training should be provided. Forum members suggested that help with application forms, budgeting skills and interview skills training would also be useful.

Job opportunities need to be better advertised

There is discrimination against the black and minority ethnic community in securing employment

There are not enough well paid, secure jobs available locally

There needs to be a good mentoring scheme to support people moving from unemployment into work, maybe involving volunteering, sessional work, etc. Advice on benefits and supporting people in the transition to work needs to be provided locally.

How do we do this? Suggestions

CAN works with relevant agencies and local people to undertake a feasibility study to set up a ground maintenance and facilities management social enterprise for the new shopping centre, and beyond.

CAN works with partners to develop support mechanisms around individual need to help people get and sustain work where appropriate

CAN works to develop a relationship with the college and universities to explore how the community can take up opportunities they have, and how they may be able to support the community at a local level

The provision of locally based community and adult education classes, including ESOL courses, in the local area is supported and long term funding sought to maintain and develop them.



Community Safety

“Living in Muirhouse you really have to watch where you’re walking - if it’s not broken pavements, it’s dog dirt! It’s hard enough getting about during the day, but you take a real chance if you go out at night because the street lighting is so poor.”

Older Man, West Pilton Lunch Club.

The local community police were praised. People believe the community is safer when the neighbourhood has dedicated police officers who get to become familiar faces. Young people felt that bullying had improved at schools since the introduction of Rights Respecting Schools and the Mentoring in Violence Programme.

There is still the issue of car and motorbike crime, with the motorbikes been driven recklessly around the area. West Pilton Park, other green spaces and the Shopping Centre are places to be avoided in the evening. Anti-social behaviour remains an issue.

For people with mobility problems, the poor state of pavements and lack of dropped kerbs can make getting out and about very difficult.

The poor quality of street lighting remains an issue.

The work being done by the local Friends of West Pilton Park group was praised but there is still a lot to be done to make the park feel safe

Domestic abuse is an issue. It has been raised by women from migrant communities whose status means they are unable to leave abusive relationships because they can’t access public funds.

How do we do this? Suggestions

All partners establish a review of Community Safety. Local people are unclear what happened as a result of Stronger North and what is happening now.

Relevant partners work with the community to improve street lighting, pavements and roads. lack of dropped kerbs and seating make it difficult for people with mobility problems to get around.

All partners work towards North Edinburgh becoming a Dementia Friendly Neighbourhood, starting initially with the redevelopment of Muirhouse Shopping Centre.



CASE STUDY: Sean Fitzharris

“My life changed a lot five years ago, because it was then that I took on the caring responsibilities for my son Malcolm. I quickly realised I had to learn more about cooking; Malcolm was a fussy eater and I knew I had to widen the range of things he ate and introduce healthier options.

“Pilton Community Health Project was very helpful and the staff supported me all the way. I attended a Men into Cooking group and PCHP also booked Food Health & Hygiene and Food & Nutrition courses.

“I realised that, if I am having problems with my son’s eating, other parents could be experiencing the same issues too and it was this that gave me the idea for the MAD (mums and dads) cookery groups.”

Sean has delivered a series of MAD cookery sessions in the local area and has now worked with around 36 families.

“My own health has been a problem, and sometimes I have been guilty of taking on too much and this can cause frustration. Then there are external factors: difficulty in getting access to the high school to put on the classes, for example. Sometimes it seems like the systems and structures put in place by the authorities are set up to knock you back!

“I know I will never be able to work, so doing volunteer work here in the community is ideal for me. I got help and support here when I most needed it and I want to give something back – the MAD classes let me do that. Our community is stigmatised by people who don’t really know it and we know there is a lot of really good grassroots stuff going on here.

“I’d like to see better facilities – I would love to take the kitchen they have at Craigoyston and place it in a community facility for wider use. I also hope to see more volunteers involved in the MAD sessions; it would be great to take these out into other communities too.”

CASE STUDY: Vanessa Cousins

“Life is a bit like snakes and ladders. Five years ago I found myself on benefits and living in a council house in Granton. This was all new to me – I didn’t know the area, I knew no-one and didn’t have a clue what facilities were here. I visited the library, community centre and Pilton Community Health Project and quickly learned there was so much going on in the area.

“Adult education is an issue I care passionately about, so when our community rooms came under threat so I used what skills I have to help to save them – my background is in development: bringing people together, coming up with ideas and seeing them through. I set up an online petition and got to work building our committee, setting up a constitution and all the other things that needed to be done. Our campaign to save the service was successful and it brought it home to me how important it is that people talk to each other and work together to resolve issues.

“I found at first that people were not particularly welcoming at community events – I felt a bit awkward when no-one spoke and I would leave early. However I realised that I also needed to change the way I thought about things and that others probably felt awkward too. I think community buddies or ambassadors would be a good idea to make that first visit less intimidating.

“Everyone is very scared of change, particularly when you have no control over that change. Some of the changes being discussed are just too big, overwhelming. People will need a lot of hand-holding and we should proceed with small chunks; little steps to ensure people don’t feel intimidated.

“I want to play an integral part in the developing community. There will be lots of opportunities here and I want to help make things happen. We should recognise what we have inside ourselves – we can create possibilities, think beyond the garden gate. We have already influenced the design of the shopping centre development and we can change things. There may be economic poverty but there is no poverty of imagination.”

Muirhouse Shopping Centre Redevelopment: trusting relationships mean better outcomes

Muirhouse Shopping Centre is and has been a dirty, unsafe, unloved space for a long time. In autumn 2016, the City of Edinburgh Council embarked on plans for a complete redevelopment of the centre and the surrounding area. This would involve new retail units and new flats as well as new public space.

The regeneration team at CEC worked with designers to come up with a plan and devised a questionnaire to put to local people. The plans and visualisations were presented as part of a community event in October 2016. Generally people weren't happy with what they were offered: it was too dark, there was little space to socialise and no green space. Local people felt that, once again, decisions had been made elsewhere by those in power. The community was simply expected to go along with what the experts told them.

Rather than leave it there, with a community that would have to live with the results of planning and design decisions that they didn't agree with, CAN organised another event to explore the issues more thoroughly. The designers arrived and set up their projector for the presentation. Residents arrived. It seemed that once again we had one side trying to convince the other they had all the answers..

However that didn't happen, as the conversation was changed. Diarmaid Lawlor from ADS spoke and encouraged everyone rather than thinking about bricks and mortar and parking places, to imagine what they wanted the space to feel like, the activities they wanted to do there.

Those creative conversations threw up ideas about wanting a more light, Mediterranean feel to it and they wanted space that encouraged walking and cycling, and where different generations could meet. They wanted designs that linked buildings and spaces together.

The designers and regeneration team listened instead of presenting and left with the community's ideas.

There was a follow up event, after the changes had been made to the plans. What difference had community participation made? New plans were unveiled. The community were excited by them. Their ideas had been incorporated. The space was light and bright, buildings had been lowered to let the sun in, which meant there could be space for a community garden. There was seating designed to encourage people to spend time with each other and areas where small children could play. It was a place you could enjoy spending time in. The relationship between designers, community and council had altered. There is now the beginning of a relationship based on trust. The community were listened to, their ideas enacted and as a result, there is a better plan for the centre.



Appendix

Total Craigroyston / May and June 2012

Nine events attended by 215 individuals, 37 teams and organisations (18 from local authorities and 19 from voluntary sector) to develop a Road Map, highlighting the issues of concern to people and what changes they wanted to see.

<http://www.totalcraigroyston.co.uk/key-documents/>

Community Action North: conversation cafes / April 2015 – July 2015

Around 130 people were involved in these events. People's main concerns centred around the state of Muirhouse Shopping Centre, the poor state of the environment generally including roads and pavements.

Community Conference: What Next For Our Community? / February 2016

Organised by CAN and Granton Improvement Society and facilitated by Oliver Escobar of What Works Scotland, around 45 people participated in a conference at Craigroyston Community Centre.

People Powered Places event / October 2016

Thirty people attended. Keynote speakers were Diarmaid Lawlor (Architecture & Design Scotland) and Elke Loeffler (Governance International). The event focused on the possibilities brought about by community-led regeneration, in particular opportunities for co-production initiatives around the Shopping Centre area.

Community study trip to Mannheim and Freiburg / March 2017

Community Action North organised a study visit to examine place based and participatory approaches to regeneration in Germany. Two local people accompanied staff from CAN, North Edinburgh Arts, Governance International and Architecture and Design Scotland.

Locality Improvement Plan development - Phase 2 / April - May 2017

The consultation builds on the work of previous community engagement activities and has taken the form of small focus groups: older people's lunch groups at West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre, North Edinburgh Young People's Forum and the North Edinburgh Chat Café

People Powered Community event / May 2017

Forty-six people attended the event held in North Edinburgh Arts.

Other reports referenced

Positively Diverse - Report from a learning event on creating an inclusive North Edinburgh organised by Living In Harmony. <http://www.pchp.org.uk/resources/positively-diverse-report>

Good Food for All – A report from a community conference held by Pilton Community Health Project in December 2014 to explore food poverty in the area and make suggestions to alleviate the issue.

<http://www.pchp.org.uk/resources/good-food-all-do-we-have-ingredients-well-fed-north-edinburgh-conference-report>

What's next for West Pilton Park? - This report describes the consultation process, findings and subsequent proposals for West Pilton Park carried out in 2015 by Pilton Community Health Project and Parklife. <http://www.pchp.org.uk/resources/whats-next-west-pilton-park>

Moving Forward – Report from a piece of participatory research to identify the real issues impacting on physical activity participation in Greater Pilton. <http://www.pchp.org.uk/resources/moving-forward>

Youth Talk June 2015 - Report on consultation and conference by and for young people.

Fairer Scotland submission - 20 local people attended events run by Pilton Community Health Project or North Edinburgh Timebank

Power to the People November 2015 - Response to City of Edinburgh Council budget consultation by community activism group based at Royston Wardieburn Community Centre.

