

RTPI South West Branch Workshop: Sustainable Rural Communities Toolkit

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Identifying Sustainable Rural Communities – the toolkit approach

- Study commissioned by Devon CC, North Devon DC & West Devon DC, with partners
- Focus on Spatial Planning within LDF processes, but clearly linked to LSPs and other rural planning initiatives
- Phase 1 of a development process
 - Review of current knowledge and practice
 - Development & testing a “toolkit” approach
 - Later phases to take to implementation

What is the toolkit for?

- Place shaping
- New way of thinking about 'place' – beyond hierarchies
- Understanding the way a place works, the way its residents / businesses use it
- Identifying the activities and relationships it hosts
- Defining the role it plays – in people's lives and within the district
- Guiding planning and investment strategies & decisions

Who is the toolkit for?

- Communities
- Representatives of communities
- Policy makers (planning & services)
- Stakeholders (e.g. an RSL)

How will the toolkit be used?

- Evidence base
- Options analysis (core strategy & determining applications)
- Community led planning
- Visioning
- Community Engagement

What will the toolkit be / do?

- Improve the quality of local place shaping
- Provide 'Decision Support'
- Assess the current performance of a community against characteristics of sustainability
- Common, evidence based approach
- Support relative comparison

What will the toolkit not be / do?

- A means of allocating settlements within a hierarchy
- Provide all answers on the specific allocation of development
- Define a development strategy
- Provide a “sustainability” score or a ranking

Toolkit Requirements

- Needs to identify key characteristics
- Needs to reflect dynamics of change
- Needs to be useful for various agencies
- Needs to be robust for use in spatial planning
- Needs to engage local community
 - Information and insight
 - Buy-in and ownership

What is a Sustainable Community?

- Many dimensions – not just physical or environmental
 - “In our view, there is no such thing as an unsustainable place, only unsustainable behaviours”
Rt Hon Hillary Benn MP
- Can change over time
- Some issues beyond control of planners and other agencies

Characteristics of a Sustainable Community : the Bristol Accord

UK Presidency : EU Ministerial Informal on Sustainable Communities



1. Active with a strong sense of community
2. Well run and well represented
3. Well connected
4. Well served
5. Environmentally sensitive
6. Well designed with appropriate housing and public spaces
7. Thriving with a flourishing, diverse and innovative local economy
8. Fair

The Toolkit in Use

- Basically two-stage process:
 - Evidence gathering
 - L.A. & partners to assemble data sets
 - Dialogue/judgement
 - Facilitation of process with communities
 - Reaching a conclusion

Example from “worksheet”

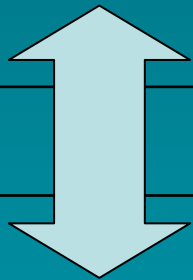
Headline Statement A: Active with a strong sense of community

Sustainable communities are active places where there are a range of events, clubs and societies (many/all of which are run by the local community). People living in sustainable communities identify with their place and believe that everyone in the community is important. They communicate effectively, and look out for and after one another, helping each to feel valued and keep safe.

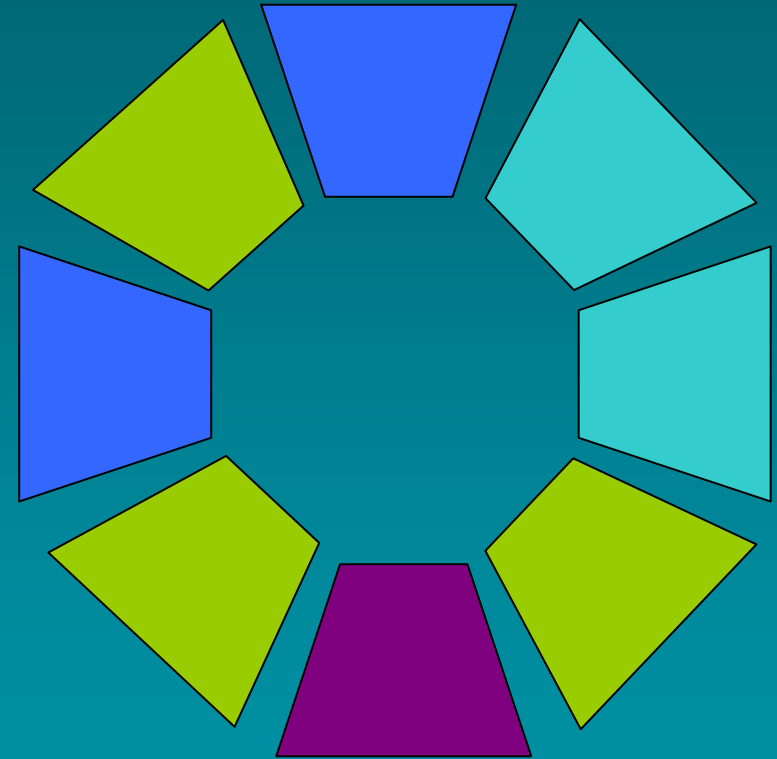
	Facts and Data	Stage One: Evidence based Assessment	+ ve / -ve	Stage Two: Community Assessment	+ ve / - ve
A1: Shared Activities		<i>Provide your answers in the space below</i>		<i>Provide your answers in the space below</i>	
Does the community organise events and activities for itself and others?	<i>Number and range of clubs, societies and events. Size of population.</i>	<i>There is a diverse range of clubs and societies including children, sports, drama, music,</i>	+ ve	<i>Agree that there is a wider range of activity and events which are well supported by the community.</i>	+ ve

Assessing Current Performance – Judgement

Per Characteristic – e.g. Active with a Strong Sense of
Community

++	Strongly Agree
+	
=	
-	
--	Strongly Disagree

Toolkit conclusions



Next Steps

- Steering Group process for development & “roll-out”
- Preparations within LDF processes
- Co-ordination with LSP partners
- Co-ordination with communities
- TOOLKIT IN USE