

City Park Strategic Workshop

20th June 2012 at The Storey Creative Industries Centre, Lancaster

Facilitator: Dee Hennessy on behalf of the PROUD Project.



INTERREG IVB

Overview

The purpose of the workshop was to explore the contrasting, overlapping strategic goals of policy makers and opinion shapers in Lancaster for areas such as transport, culture and heritage, environment and community engagement and how the City Park project could advance the strategic aims of the sectors to make a positive contribution to the economic, cultural and social wellbeing of the city.

By exploring what will be involved to realise future plans for the city, attendees highlighted their knowledge of the obstructions they foresee and developed solutions to overcome these that utilised participant's networks and resources.

Participants ranged from Senior Managers and officers from County and City Councils from services including: Museums, Environmental Services, Planning, libraries, Marketing and Tourism, Public Realm, Archaeology, Strategic funding and Regeneration and Policy and the Lancaster Sustainability Partnership. 3 County and City Councilors represented the wards around the City Park area.

Others organisations represented were: The Civic Society, The Storey Gallery, The Chamber of Commerce and Malcom Reading Consultants who acted as representatives for The Duchy Observers from the wider project group and PROUD were there in an observer role to assist and support the group.

24 people attended in total.

Community Representatives

The representatives of local communities voiced apprehension over the Duchy's plans for the Castle, and concerns the city park site might be over developed and spoilt for local users. David Hamilton stated that The Duchy wishes the green space behind the Castle to be much improved and of a high quality. But that this didn't mean over developing the space or going against its character, instead expressing desire for a sensitive approach to improving the space. He was able to confirm that The Castle development is likely to be a mixed-use space for heritage and commercial use.



The shared aspiration of the group throughout the workshop for City Park was that a high quality space should be created as the 'back garden of the Castle', bringing improvements that balanced the needs of local residents, wildlife and archeological remains and brought improved access, footpaths and signage.

Issues around planning were seen to be a real barrier to improving the site in terms of overcoming red tape, conflicting agendas and resistance to change. The planners in the room

admitted they struggle to engage people creatively and welcomed the solution of a series of events to engage communities. The councilors felt planners should be engaged earlier in the creative process.



Key to the colour-coded cards

Yellow: the self identified discussion groups

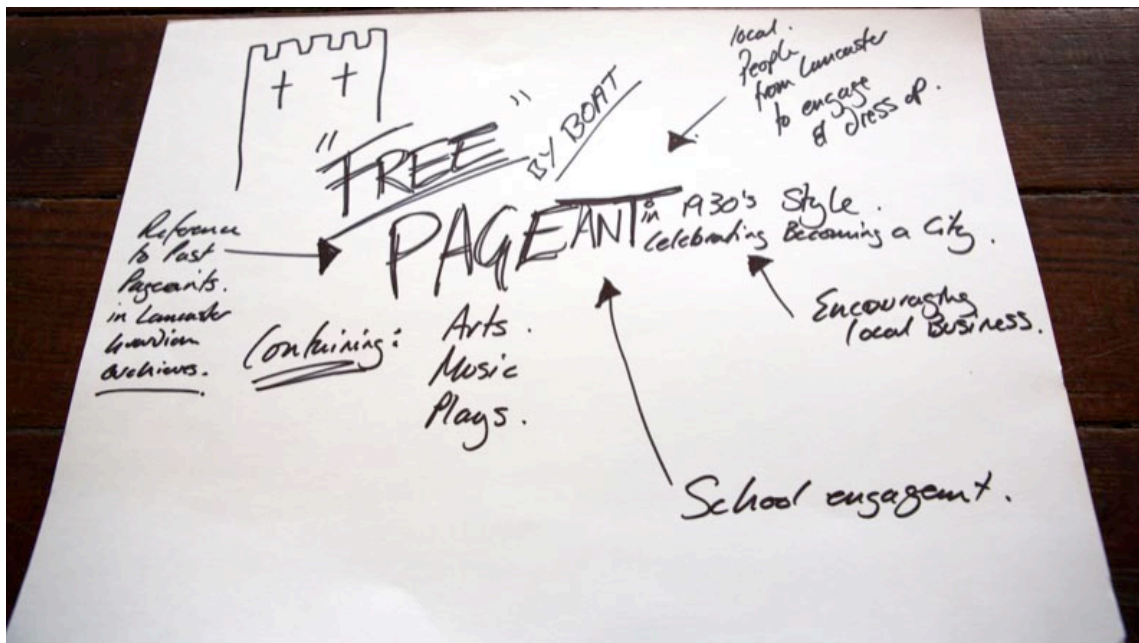
White: things about the City Park site that mattered to the group

Red: things the group felt were a barrier or obstacle to improving/changing the site

Blue: thoughts of the other participants about what might overcome those barriers

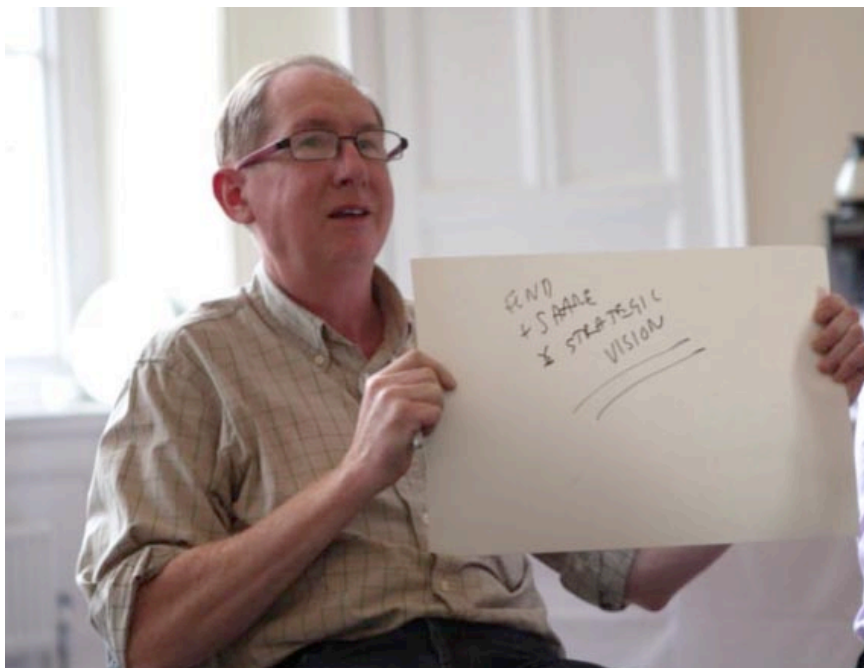
The Councils

There was a focus on planning, bureaucracy and the economic climate hindering change. It was agreed there was a need for an increase in joined up working between the councils, but that this is much improved between the City and County Councils. Also the councils agreed that they needed to listen and learn from the needs and wishes of communities and develop imaginative ways to engage with them. At the end of the workshop one idea that came from the council was a River Pageant for all ages and communities.



The Duchy and Business

The focus here was on the need for more ambition and a strategic vision combined with strong leadership to drive change and deliver projects with commercial potential along with better relationships between the private, public and third sector. More joined up thinking and collaborative working between City and County Councils with shared objectives and transparent processes with defined responsibilities between the councils would be welcomed by The Duchy to facilitate and support significant change in the whole area.



Communities of Interest

There was an interesting debate between the distinction between ownership and user ship of the City Park space. Some felt that if people didn't use the space already then they would not feel any ownership and uninclined to take part in any consultation. Other members of the group maintained that communities do and should feel ownership of public spaces such as City Park and be invited to be involved in meaningful discussions over its future. Working in mixed groups in the second half of the workshop showed people already had clear ideas of how the space might be improved.



The Creative Community

This group focused on a general lack of ambition and strategic vision in projects like these due to risk aversion of the Councils and people being afraid to aspire higher due to a lack of available funding and resources. The group urged people to be ambitious and allow communities to use their imaginations to generate great ideas for space that would give it a unique visitor offer and feel. They felt that the most ambitious ideas can be made realistic and achievable using creativity, innovation and collaborative working to create a distinctive space that sets itself apart from other city parks. Innovative community led ideas will generate funding as the bids that stand out from others if the ideas are developed in the right way.



Key Messages

STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS
BUILD TRUST
COLLABORATE FOR CHANGE
HOW?

How can people in this room
support the 'Beyond the
castle project

- join advisory board
- support creative engagement process
- other

BE POSITIVE
BE BRAVE
GO FOR IT



People Researchers Organisations Using Design

The City Park Strategic workshop was funded through the PROUD EU INTERREG IVB Programme at Lancaster University. For more information on PROUD visit:

<http://imagination.lancaster.ac.uk/activities/PROUD>

