

In spring 2012 community groups based within a half mile of the perimeter of King's Cross Station met for a day of planning on the theme: how can we get the best out of all the developments happening here for our existing communities and for the new communities soon to move into the area?

This is what happened...



KXCommunity

It's all about you

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Our thanks

King's Cross Community Projects would like to thank all those that helped make this event a great success including

Cllr Paul Convery

Cllr Sarah Hayward

E C Harris staff

Julie Johnson

Simon Castle

The Only Connect Theatre

The Open Space Technology Facebook Group

Voluntary Action Camden

Voluntary Action Islington

Will Perrin

Clare Hill





The plan

King's Cross Community Projects started life back in 2008. It was set up by a group of local residents. Originally it was to have been named the 'Wharfedale Road Greenwall Project'. A neighbour suggested that as we were going to set up a charity we might want to call it something that would have wider use. That way anyone wanting to run a project in future but not wanting all the hassle of setting up a separate organisation could make use of the charity with all its accompanying administrative and financial setup.

So we agreed we'd take the inclusive approach and cover the area within a half mile radius of the perimeter of King's Cross Station. People living and working that close to the station tend to identify with King's Cross and our everyday lives are heavily influenced by what happens at and around the station.

A name like King's Cross Community Projects wouldn't lie down. Having started our web presence we were soon approached by organisations interested in supporting local community whether as volunteers or as funders. It seemed too good an opportunity for our neighbourhood to miss so, after much thought, we decided to grasp it.

Locally based international company E C Harris approached us. Their staff take part in an annual 'Community Challenge' raising funds for local good causes. They had decided to donate funds to King's Cross Community Projects each year. We were to be one of three charities they would give ongoing support to, the others being Help for Heroes and the London Wildlife Trust. In the first year we were gifted £10,000. We agreed to hold some of that in trust to maintain the greenwall project in future years and the remainder to support community activity in King's Cross. But how?

We decided to run what we called the 'Mapping Project' to find out what community based organisations were already operating in King's Cross and to bring them together at an event on one day. We wanted to find out directly from the grass roots experts what King's Cross Community Projects might be useful for and how we could best use the E C Harris donation.

To date the mapping project has delivered a new political map of King's Cross; a growing Google map showing community organisations, voluntary sector support organisations, schools, colleges, social housing estates, green spaces, arts & cultural organisations and the two town halls for our area; a database with the details of all of these; and the bare bones of another project to raise the profile of the patch, called 'Beating the Bounds'.

The event became 'KXCommunity: it's all about you'.

Summary of recommendations

Closer collaboration between KX communities

1. Develop a closer critical friendship between community groups and ArgentKX/N1C remembering that we need to prove we bring added value to the table, otherwise developers will not take us seriously.
2. Encourage N1C to support a local festival to showcase the work of local community based organisations.
3. Make good use of community funding arising from KX developments.
4. Focus on the positives – common ground.
5. Create a community pin wall to advertise local events.
6. Hold a Euston Road street festival as Euston Road is seen as the 'River Jordan' locally so a festival here would be iconic of bringing KX together.
7. Make better links with Central St Martin's and KX Construction Skills.
8. Hold an event in the new KX Square and invite local talent to perform (KX's got talent!)
9. Develop a KX Facebook page specifically for local young people
10. Publish a youth magazine for KX (similar to Fitzrovia Youth Action's magazine, perhaps in partnership with The Guardian).
11. Rebrand KX in terms of heritage and diverse cultures.
12. Increase pride in the area by making better use of KX heritage and linking it with the diversity of local people.
13. Develop a communication strategy and a community involvement strategy for KX.
14. Use the internet, posters, existing networks and word of mouth to communicate these recommendations.

Lack of youth opportunities and involvement

15. Include local sports facilities on the KXCommunity map and promote this (the map can be found at <http://bit.ly/kxgoogle>).
16. Facilitate development of a KX Youth Forum, to be led by local youth.
17. Investment and opportunities should be directed by local youth and youth led.
18. Work opportunities arising from local investment should be concrete.
19. There should be some focus on ensuring young people are work ready.
20. Camden and Islington councils should use local youth-led enterprises as preferred contractors.
21. Subsidies offered to new retail outlets should be used to encourage employment of local young people.
22. Communicate lack of involvement & opportunities to local decision makers.
23. Ensure young people are represented at the next KXCommunity event.
24. Inform Global Generation about this discussion.

Living high streets, urban realm and active area management

25. The key high streets should be York Way, Euston Road and Gray's Inn Road with Camley Street having a special role. These streets are not currently being developed as high streets which is a great loss to the community and to visitors to the area. Camden, Islington and Transport for London should work with a high streets Tzar (like Mary Portas) to bring this about. These streets should be developed and managed both day and night.

Small workspace/social enterprise

26. The concept of a University of the Arts local fringe comprising small affordable workspaces for arts and culture start-ups needs to be developed into a concrete proposition.

A plan for inclusivity and involvement

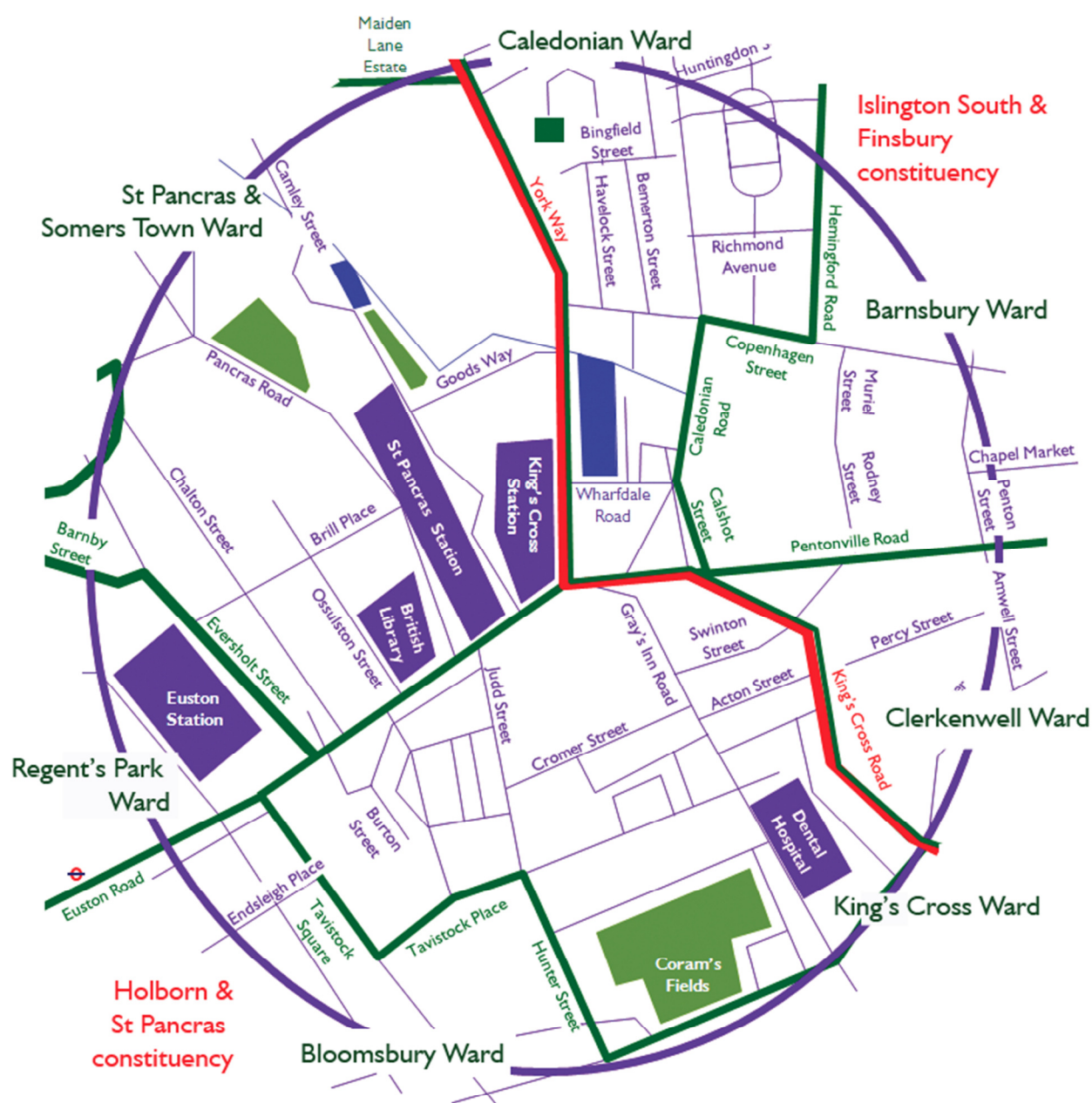
27. Identify common concerns and questions through local delegates or experts and design a multiple choice involvement/participation survey. Use IT, email, tweets local events etc. Possibly set up a website to collate responses to the survey. Ask all known local groups.
28. Have a stand at all local events and festivals, for example St George's, Mela, Cally festival, Coram Fields, Grimaldi Park. Possibly raise funds for a milk float to use as a stand ready to move from event to event. Talk to attenders to find out what their concerns and questions are.
29. Encourage Meet your Neighbour initiatives.
30. Explore raising funds for a full time job to manage this as a stand-alone project.



Kings Cross – the patch

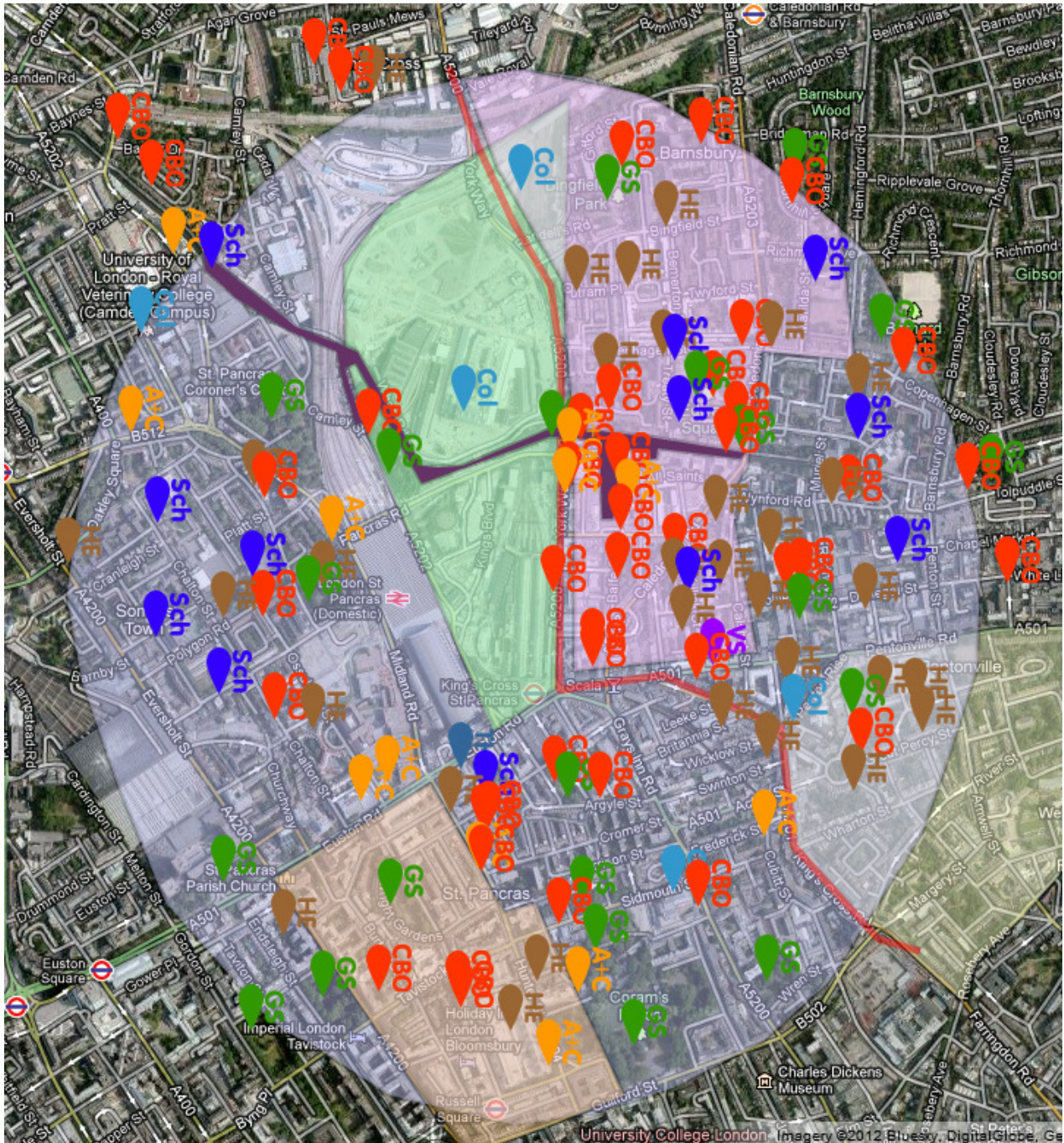


The political and administrative map can be found at <http://bit.ly/kxmap> where MPs and councillors details are given as links.





The Google map can be found at <http://bit.ly/kxgoogle> where you can click on each icon for details. Additions are always welcome. Entries on the Google map also appear on our database.



Who's who

We publicised the event on the kingscrossenvironment.com website and asked Voluntary Action Camden and Voluntary Action Islington to circulate community based organisations with the details. Organisations represented on the day were:

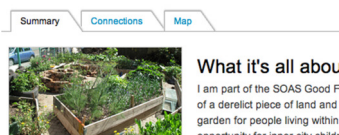


Louise Gates of
The Calthorpe Project
www.calthorpeproject.org.uk/



Greg Cowan of
LivingStreetsKX
livingstreetskx.blogspot.co.uk/

Idea: Common Ground SOAS Garden



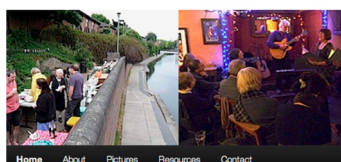
Andrew Lowe of
Common Ground Student Society
bit.ly/commongroundSOAS



Phil Paulo of
London Wildlife Trust (at Camley
Street)
www.wildlondon.org.uk/

Elm Village Tenants & Residents Association

Welcome to our friendly community in Camden Town, London



David Powell of
Elm Village Tenants and Residents
Association
evtra.org.uk/



Stella Hamada of
New Horizon Youth Centre
www.nhyouthcentre.org.uk/



Jessica Robinson of
Groundwork London
www.london.groundwork.org.uk/



Peter Tomkins of
St Pancras Chambers Residents Association

King's Cross Development Forum



Robert Milne of
King's Cross Development Forum
kxdf.wordpress.com/



Lisa Tang and Ned Collier of
Thornhill Bridge Community
Gardeners
bit.ly/thornhillbridgegardens

Kings Cross Environment



Will Perrin of
The King's Cross community
website
www.kingscrossenvironment.com

Voluntary **Action** Islington



Chris Taylor and Nelson Batista of
www.vai.org.uk/



Leah Dixon of
Pioneer House Residents Association

The Open Space format

We wanted the day to be about the community groups there, not about us. We needed to choose a format that would be as democratic as possible, one where the participants decided the agenda, were free to discuss the issues and made their recommendations without us butting in. We chose an Open Space format to do this - <http://bit.ly/openspaceKX>.

Community Development practitioners will be very familiar with the Open Space method, as will large companies – particularly those in cutting edge industries needing to push their strategic boundaries. It is with these organisations that the Open Space approach has been developed over the past twenty years,

What happened – the reports

We asked ‘How can we get the best out of all the developments happening here for our existing communities and for the new communities soon to move into the area?’

Participants were invited to identify themes for discussion. As a result the following reports were produced.

Closer collaboration between KX communities

Convenor: Leah Dixon.

Participants: Jessica Robinson, Greg Cowan, David Powell.

Discussion

How to ensure everyone benefits from the opportunities at KX, or... how can we achieve equity of benefit?

N1C is a massive benefit to KX as a whole.

A major benefit would be more green spaces and clean air.

We want to celebrate KX! and clearly recognise past and present local activists on whose shoulders we stand.

Issues:

- The segregated nature of KX – localism in own street!
- Boundary & borough issues need to be broken down
- How do we get everyone to join together?
- How do we recruit new people – not just the regulars?



Recommendations

1. Develop a closer critical friendship between community groups and ArgentKX remembering that we need to prove that we bring added value to the table, otherwise developers will not take us seriously.
2. Focus on the positives – common ground.
3. Create a community pin wall to advertise local events.
4. Hold a Euston Road street festival as Euston Road is seen as the ‘River Jordan’ locally so a festival here would be iconic of bringing KX together.
5. Encourage N1C to support a local festival to showcase the work of local community based organisations.
6. Make better links with Central St Martin’s and KX Construction Skills.
7. Make good use of community funding arising from KX developments.
8. Use the internet, posters, existing networks and word of mouth to communicate these recommendations.
9. Hold an event in the new KX Square and invite local talent to perform (KX’s got talent!)
10. Develop a KX Facebook page specifically for local young people
11. Publish a youth magazine for KX (similar to Fitzrovia Youth Action’s magazine, perhaps in partnership with The Guardian).
12. Rebrand KX in terms of heritage and diverse cultures.
13. Increase pride in the area by making better use of KX heritage and linking it with the diversity of local people.
14. Develop a communication strategy and a community involvement strategy for KX.

Lack of youth opportunities and involvement

Convenor: Phil Paulo.

Participant: Stella Hamada.

Discussion

There is a need for outreach and involvement activities.

Young people are not currently encouraged to participate locally.

Youth are often excluded by the community and from access to community resources – ‘youth phobia’.

Recommendations

15. Include local sports facilities on the KXCommunity map and promote this (the map can be found at <http://bit.ly/kxgoogle>).
16. Facilitate development of a KX Youth Forum, to be led by local youth.
17. Investment and opportunities should be specified by local youth and youth led.
18. Work opportunities arising from local investment should be concrete.
19. There should be some focus on ensuring young people are work ready.



20. Camden and Islington councils should use local youth-led enterprises as preferred contractors.

21. Subsidies offered to new retail outlets should be used to encourage employment of local young people.

22. Communicate lack of involvement & opportunities to local decision makers.

23. Ensure young people are represented at the next KXCommunity event.

24. Inform Global Generation about this discussion.

Living high streets, urban realm and active area management

Convenors: Peter Tomkins, Greg Cowan, Will Perrin.

Participants: Lisa Tang, David Powell, Leah Dixon, Jessica Robinson.

Discussion

Euston Road, York Way and Gray's Inn Road are seen as high streets by local people yet are not being developed as such. This needs to change.

Camley Street also needs development into a more open and inviting area given the way the locality is developing.

The landscaping and street furniture in the area need attention.

An identity or brand would be very useful in pulling this together, for example KXVillage or I Love KX.

Would a business development district be appropriate?

Licensing issues need addressing.

KX is the largest transport hub in Europe, is a densely populated neighbourhood and is home to the A501 ring road. How can the need for pedestrianised high streets to enliven the area be integrated with transport needs?

High local rents and the high cost of ownership are increasingly barriers.

The area could more effectively reflect its role as a cultural/creative arts quarter on its high streets.

There is nothing in the mayoral manifestoes about this issue. It needs to be tackled as part of a London-wide strategy.

Recommendation

25. The key high streets should be York Way, Euston

Road and Gray's Inn Road with Camley Street having a special role. These streets are not currently being developed as high streets which is a great loss to the community and to visitors to the area. Camden, Islington and Transport for London should work with a high streets Tzar (like Mary Portas) to bring this about. These streets should be developed and managed both day and night.

Small workspace/social enterprise

Convenor: David Powell

Participants: Lisa Tang, Will Perrin.

Discussion

Where is the University of the Arts/Central St Martin's fringe?

What could UoA/CSM's interest be in developing a fringe with arts/creative workspaces etc?

What locally based artists could be involved? For example Anya Johnson, Cob Studio, Minnie Weisz?

Commercial, planning and social enterprise may all have an interest in seeing a fringe develop.

What happens after existing leases of older premises fall in? Could the freeholders be encouraged to assist in developing the UoA/CSM fringe?

How can Argent assist in development of a UoA/CSM fringe? Where should this be? Potential spot-sites are:

- Remploy, off York Way
- HSS tool hire on the Cally
- The old BP petrol station on York Way
- Camley Street industrial spaces
- St Pancras Way
- The canal
- The car wash on York Way (northeast corner of York Way/Wharfdale Road)
- KX Training Centre
- The arches around Outram Place
- Trans Euro Ltd

Recommendation

26. The concept of a University of the Arts local fringe comprising small affordable workspaces for arts and culture start-ups needs to be developed into a concrete proposition.



A plan for inclusivity and involvement

Convened by Daniel Zylbersztajn

Participants: Robert Milne, Louise Gates.

Discussion

There is low participation in some areas of KX, some communities are closed, side by side living, use of email groups can exclude many people, groups are not necessarily aware of each other.

Recommendations

27. Common concerns and questions through local delegates or experts and design a multiple choice involvement/participation survey. Use IT, email, tweets local events etc. Possibly set up a website to collate responses to the survey. Ask all known local groups.

28. Have a stand at all local events and festivals, for example St George's, Mela, Cally festival, Coram Fields, Grimaldi Park. Possibly raise funds for a milk float to use as the stand ready to move from event to event. Talk to attenders to find out what their concerns and questions are.

29. Encourage Meet your Neighbour initiatives.

30. Explore raising funds for a full time job to manage this as a stand-alone project.

What next

Participants were very keen that King's Cross Community Projects should host further planning days like this one.

King's Cross Community Projects will distribute this report widely.

Some recommendations can be taken forward by participants especially King's Cross Community Projects, others are more appropriate for our councils or by developers. KCCP will make sure the report is sent to all key players.

Some recommendations require funding. KCCP will approach the companies moving into the area for funding for these and for distribution to local community groups.

Learning points

Some notes from our facilitator:

Facilitating an Open Space event is an ambitious undertaking. It's easy to slip back into more traditional forms of facilitating – or even chairing – the event. I certainly did that in the last session of the day. However, it is a big mistake. I shied away from sticking to the very openly democratic methods required of Open Space events and because of that our final session lacked the spark and enthusiasm of the earlier sessions.

Preparation is all important and that includes being clear about what instructions are to be given and when. There could have been greater clarity for participants if the structure of event outcomes – the reports – had been made much clearer at the outset. At the next event this will be made much clearer and we may even use a batch of laptops to enable each group to write their report in a more structured format.

Open Space methods require the facilitator to ask participants to be prepared to be surprised. I'd advise facilitators to be prepared to be surprised. This event surpassed all expectations in terms of the commitment brought by participants and the quality of recommendations they have made.

Finally, it is very frustrating to facilitate an Open Space event if you actually want to participate as it's essential these roles are kept completely separate. I'll be giving careful thought to this next time!

Thank you to everyone that freely gave their time, expertise and enthusiasm on the day.

Any errors in this report are, of course, mine alone...

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