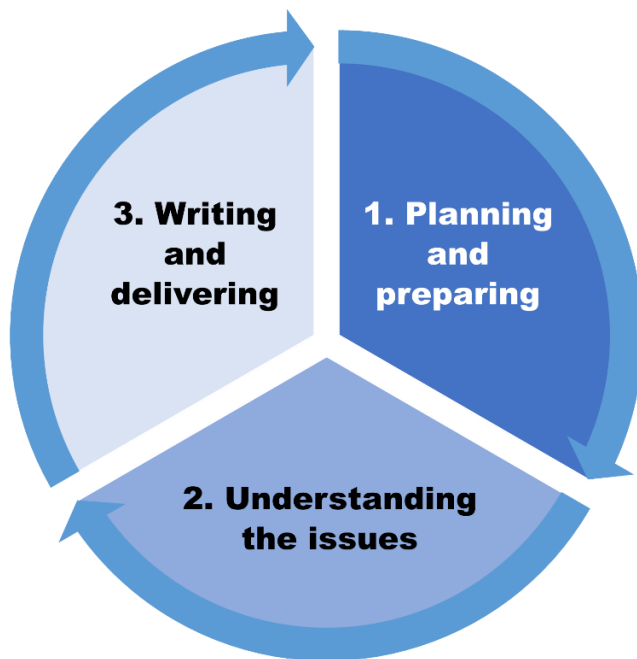# PAS Guide for Community Delivery of Local Place Plans

## Part 2: Understanding the issues

This Guide is designed to support your community through the process of developing a Local Place Plan. It is based on a simple framework:



This document focuses on **2. Understanding the issues**. Visit the PAS website for the other sections of the Guide, including an Overview to Local Place Plans and their role in the Scottish planning system.

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# Contents

# 1. Introduction

The key objective of this stage is to capture all the issues in your community, and then to analyse and summarise them over several stages of community engagement. Taking a positive approach, you will be transforming issues into solutions and proposals to determine what will happen and where. You will also want to identify who can take the lead on initiatives, prioritise, and consider timeframes.

This process should lead out of the strategy you developed earlier in the process (see Part 1 of this Guide).

We recommend approaching this stage in three phases.

## Phase One

## 2. Baseline desktop analysis

Activities and tasks to be completed here will involve:

- Demographic, socio-economic and statistical analyses.
- Community asset-mapping (if appropriate).
- Summarising any existing and previous community engagement.
- Summarising existing Local Development Plan and National Planning Framework policies affecting the area.
- Summarising relevant community plans (Local Outcome Improvement Plans, Locality Plans etc).

You may want to write a summary report of your findings which can form a chapter in the final plan and be used to prompt discussion during your engagement sessions.

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**Resources**

- [PAS Advice Service](#)
- [Understanding Scottish Places](#)
- [Historic Environment Scotland](#)
- [NatureScot](#)
- [Scottish Government Planning and Architecture](#)
- Statistics: [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#); [DataShine Scotland 2011 Census](#); [DataShine Scotland Commute](#); [Community Wellbeing Index](#)

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## 3. Key stakeholder discussions

To provide more detail on issues you have uncovered through your desktop analysis you will need to speak separately to key groups and individuals in your area. If you haven't already done so, it will be useful to carry out a stakeholder mapping exercise to work out who to speak to, e.g. community groups, landowners, local businesses, statutory bodies, local authority departments etc. This could also be done through dedicated surveys.

Early meetings will also help raise awareness of your intention to develop a Local Place Plan in your community. At these discussions you may wish to discuss:

- What the individual or organisation is doing locally.
- What they believe the key issues are in the area.
- What their aspirations are.
- How a Local Place Plan could help to deliver their objectives/aspirations – what role they would like in the process.
- What recommendations could they make that would ensure that all voices in the community are heard.
- Whether they can help communicate and promote the development of the plan and any associated events.

At these meetings you will also want to clearly explain:

- Why you think it's useful to develop a Local Place Plan.
- The benefits of taking a partnered approach to the development of the LPP.
- The way in which the process is likely to be delivered and be open to changing this if required.

It may be that some of the people you speak to at this stage may want to help-out and join the LPP steering group.

## 4. Early community engagement

This activity should be focused on reaching out to as many groups as possible, including young people and those seldom heard. The types of questions you may wish to ask could be:

- What do you like about the area?
- What would you like to see improved in the area?
- Do you have any bright ideas for the future?
- Is there anyone you think we should speak to?

You may want to consider running an online and/or hardcopy survey (delivered to each house or left in commonly used public spaces) to help develop an initial idea of the key issues that the community as a whole want to discuss.  This survey can help you develop an early diagnosis as to the issues your community is concerned about. Does this survey confirm the initial instincts of the steering group or not?

The results of this survey can help you make specific choices as to what themes to cover during later in-depth action planning workshop, based on a clear evidence base.  It is important that discussions aren't set up to cover topics that in fact no one is strongly concerned about, and that you have evidence to explain why you made choices to use limited time to focus on particular areas rather than others.

## 5. Communication in Phase 1

You will want to ensure that as many people as possible are both aware of your engagement activities and that they will inform your planning process. As noted in Part 1

of this Guide, there are several different ways in which you can promote events and opportunities, and you may wish to use a combination of these. Make sure that your community is aware that this is an opportunity to express their views on any and all aspects they think are relevant. Flyers, posters, social media and your newsletter will all be useful in promoting events.

It can be very helpful to create a "one-pager" summarising the who, where, what and when of your intended process. This could be written or summarised in a simple graphic. It can be posted alongside an initial survey to people's homes.

Once you have run your events you may wish to then use a newsletter to summarise what happened e.g. what you did, main topics of conversation, and what you will be doing next.

# 6. Going deeper

Once you have established an initial overview and understanding of the key issues your community want to talk about, think through what choice of events will enable the most people to come and share deeper thoughts during the process. Options include:

- Events that you initiate to gather people together:
    - Online conversations using Zoom or Teams.
    - In a public hall or other suitable venue.
    - In an open space in your community.
    - With other attractions like food or music, like a community BBQ.
- Events already happening which you can attend to connect with people:
    - Local festivals.
    - Existing groups of all shapes and sizes that are open to you coming in and talking, especially folks that tend to be ignored by the mainstream.
    - Sports events.
    - School classes (primary and secondary).
    - Local businesses during their employees' lunch hours.
- Other types of events and ways to connect:
    - Online surveys.
    - Drop-in sessions.
    - Street stalls.
    - Floor maps in your local shopping mall.

Think about creative ways to attract and inspire people to think about the big picture issues. Draw on the creative talents of local community members like musicians and artists to help.

Research innovative ways to connect with people during engagement sessions. Think about using a simple method, such as the Place Standard, to frame the conversations you will have.

**Tools and methods**

- **The Place Standard Tool**: A research activity which can be run with individuals and groups to help understand what aspects of your place need to be improved. There are now several versions of this tool available on the Our Place website, including versions for Young People, for Children, for focussing on Climate issues and for Inclusive Communication.

- **Focus groups:** Facilitated group discussions where participants are asked to think about the questions outlined. This may be a useful approach with young people or those who are unable to attend more public discussions given challenges such as mobility.

- **Surveying:** Conducting an online and offline survey with residents, asking questions like those outlined, can be a very useful way of capturing views from those who may not have enough time to commit to attending a workshop or public meeting. You can simplify the survey to make it accessible and easy to complete.

- **Surgeries and drop-ins:** By setting up a permanent or occasional pop-up surgery in your community, e.g. in a shopping centre or a community hall, you may be able to gather views from residents when it is most convenient for them.

- **Online engagement:** Using a digital platform can help the community pinpoint their thoughts, ideas and proposals online.

# Phase Two

## 7. Analysis

Once you have completed your engagement activities, you may wish to work with your steering group to theme the issues, initiatives and proposals. You may then wish to produce an interim report or set of presentation boards to summarise your findings, including the actions suggested, so that you can take these back to the wider community for further engagement. Make these as visually appealing as possible using imagery and mapping to make the information easy to understand.

Connect responses that have been shared by the community to thematic categories, and then consolidate this information to develop a count of how many people have said similar things can take time and effort.  Consider using spreadsheet programmes such as Google Sheets or Excel to gather the comments together for easy manipulation using the Sort and Filter functions.  Once categorised by high-level primary themes, you may

want to consider breaking the groupings of statements down further into sub-themes and categories for ease of assessment and counting.

This stage is often the moment where the deepest listening and understanding takes place. Coding and analysis like this can feel tiring at times, but it is a special responsibility; doing it well and with integrity conveys back to the community the value they have contributed through sharing their views in the first place.

Doing this background analysis work digitally can make it a lot easier to present your findings in a later report, or in initial presentation boards to gain further feedback and confirmation from your community.

You may want to consider finding ways to graphically represent what people have been saying about particular locations or buildings in your community. A tool that is currently (2023) being promoted by the Improvement Service to help you do this is called Parish Online. This is a software project to help your community build a Local Place Plan and licenses are currently free for 12 months through the Community Maps Scotland project.

Otherwise, you may want to consider using a simple presentation tool such as PowerPoint to present maps and to outline key areas in vibrant colours and icons.

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**Tools**

- Coding and analysis
    - Google Sheets, Excel or other spreadsheet programmes
    - PAS offers simple training in the principles and practice of coding.
- Presentation of data
    - Parish Online
    - Google Slides, PowerPoint or other presentation programmes

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# Phase Three

## 8. Refining, prioritising & setting actions

Having analysed the data and chosen ways to best re-present the findings back to the community, you should then engage the wider community to refine the issues raised and review your assumptions before they go into a draft plan. This step will underline the collaborative nature of your final plan, ensuring you have buy-in from your wider community and key stakeholders.

If you have many different proposals and ideas, it will be helpful to invite people to prioritise.  You could do this through a dot-voting exercise or by using an online ranking tool like Mentimeter. This will allow the community to collectively determine the big-ticket items that are of most importance, without losing all the other good ideas to pursue.

Once prioritised, you may then wish to refine a certain number of the priority proposals by considering the following questions. The number you can work on will be defined in part by the time and energy you have left for this stage:

- What do you think about this issue, idea or proposal?
- If an issue has been raised without a proposal/solution, what could you suggest as a way to address the issue being identified?
- There appear to be two or more solutions or proposals suggested to resolve a particular issue, which would you prefer?
- There are multiple proposals suggested across your LPP area, which ones should be prioritised?
- Who could lead and wants to be involved in delivering specific actions/initiatives?
- Which partner organisations could we work with?
- What timeframe do you think is feasible for the delivery of this idea?

The type of engagement you use here could take a number of different forms:

- **Workshops:** You may wish to bring the community together in a set of facilitated events to discuss any actions or initiatives in more detail and get them to vote on which ones could be prioritised. You could theme these workshops if you find there are several different issues to address, e.g. access, greenspace, facilities.
- **Drop-in sessions:** Over a set period at a local venue at which you present your findings to the wider community and ask them to respond to you directly with their thoughts and preferences.
- **Survey:** Use a survey to ask residents to feedback their thoughts and preferences.

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**Tools**

- [Dot voting](#) (in person)
- [Mentimeter Ranking Polls](#) (online)

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# 9. Communication in Phase 3

Using the same methods of communication that you have used previously, you will want to promote any activities you are running and any opportunities the community may have to inform this next stage of engagement. It will be important to be clear what you will be asking your community to do, and that this next stage will be about making decisions about priorities.