

Clay Futures



The Eden Project is an environmental education charity and a regeneration project. They have developed a range of approaches for engaging the public with the issues and opportunities that a sustainable future presents.

Location

The five parishes in Mid-Cornwall: St Blazey, St Stephen, Treverbyn, Par and Tywardreath and St Mewan. The engagement process ran between April and July 2009

Aim



Consult the local community about a possible Eco-town development and harvest opinion about their aspirations for the future and their pride in the past to provide a context for potential development in the area



Results from the Parish Plan questionnaires on display at the ClayFutures Fête

Photo by Eden Project

Led by the Eden Project, the ClayFutures team was comprised of members of the Sensory Trust, the local borough council, and a local voluntary service support organization. The team worked in conjunction with local parish councils, schools, and a number of experts including a planning consultant, workshop facilitators, local artists and designers.

The creative engagement approach was designed to create an inviting and immersive environment for local people which could act as a catalyst for constructive conversations about the future of the place where they live. This process encouraged people to consider the extent to which their aspirations could, or could not, be met by the proposals.

Furthermore, recognising that many people view public consultation with trepidation, the process was deliberately designed to attract the broadest possible audience from within the Clay Country.

The main focus of the community engagement was a 3-day drop-in event in each parish accompanied by a series of lead-in activities with local groups and schools.



A ClayFutures Fête

Photo by Eden Project



Lead-in activities with local groups



Local groups were identified through publicly available sources, such as phone books and the internet, from parish council directories and through recommendations from local people and service providers e.g. community network managers.

These groups were then visited by a member of the team to share a cup of tea, a piece of cake and have a chat about the community engagement event being held in their area. The groups were encouraged to talk about what 'a sense of community' meant to them, drawing on stories and memories of the area.

The underlying aim of these meetings was for people to get to know the ClayFutures team, to understand the process and to build the confidence of individuals from hard-to-reach groups so that they would feel comfortable about attending and contributing to the event. In some instances transport-needs were identified that would enable groups to attend the main event.

A separate series of lead-in activities were undertaken with schools which went on to inform and provide materials for the drop-in engagement events. See the ClayFutures Schools Engagement Case Study for details.

Engagement Events



A series of drop-in engagement events in each parish were devised that took the form of a community fête; an event with a strong cultural resonance in these communities. The Community fêtes were conceived as a collective process where information, ideas and opinions could be shared between everyone taking part.

Each venue was elaborately decorated with bunting, flags and banners and the consultation consisted of a series of installations on the key topics Homes; Sense of Community; Places and Spaces; Journeys; Services; Work; Young People; Eco-towns; and Parish Plans. Each stall had the look and feel of a fête stall and contained a series of open-ended questions, scrapbooks of information, small objects and curiosities to provoke interest and washing-lines to display completed question cards.



'Where's my house?'

Photo by Sam Morgan Moore



Places and Spaces stall

Photo by Sam Morgan Moore

ClayFutures team members welcomed everyone at the door, gave an explanation of the purpose of the events and instigated conversations with people around the key topics, encouraging them to participate. Information was collected using stickers, stamps, drawings and collages. Participants placed flags on aerial maps, used rosettes to give awards, wrote individual responses in their own words, or made verbal responses that were recorded by a team member.

After the consultation

All the information collected was analysed and collated into a downloadable report. Hard copies were sent to each parish council and to local libraries. Presentations of the results were given to a range of audiences, including an event to promote a new community funding source.

The evidence and ideas collected during the ClayFutures project have been used to inform Parish Plans and actions; provided background information for the St Austell Eco-town Programme of Development (a funding stream for local projects and infrastructure); the St Austell, St Blazey and China Clay Area Regeneration Plan; and European funding sources.



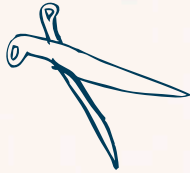
The report has also been used by local groups as a foundation for forming a new community interest company: Clay Community Greenspace and the development of a new local food project.

The information collected also provided baseline data that contributed to the selection of two of the parishes involved for the Big Lottery's 'Big Local' Initiative, making them eligible for approximately £1m over 10 years to support community projects.

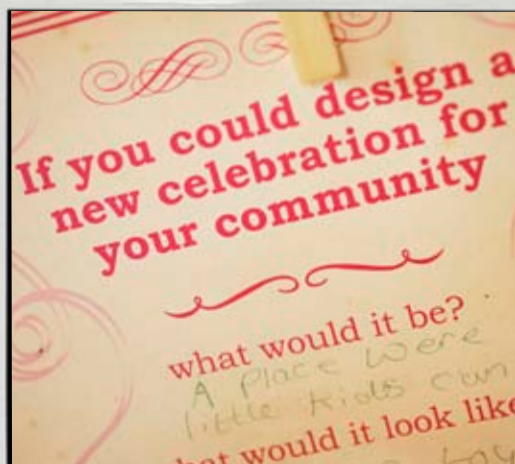
The Eco-town development company Eco-Bos also used the ClayFutures work to amend and develop their master-planning process, particularly in relation to issues such as access to greenspace for recreation and food growing, transport routes and infrastructure, affordable housing, and shops and services within walking distance of people homes.



Techniques



- △ Strong look and feel, in this case that of a local village fête.
- Use what's readily available. We designed our installations to look a bit like table-top sales because we knew that we could assemble the basic structure out of what was already there.
- △ Installations on different topics using different media to encourage a range of open-ended but structured responses as far away from the idea of clipboard consultation as possible.
- Question cards were designed to look like houses, vintage bingo cards, shopping lists, road signs, job adverts, award rosettes and party invites.
- △ Memory Slideshows of old photos. These provided the means to access a community's sense of identity and past glories.
- Provide refreshment for participants.
- △ A series of scrapbooks were created to inspire people with ideas on places and spaces, community-owned services and sustainable housing.
- Community Film. Using a professional film-maker, community elders gave local school children a tour of the area. Films like these give local knowledge a chance to shine and provide a motive for wider attendance. See the ClayFutures Schools Case Study for more on this approach.



Celebrate!

Photo by Sam Morgan Moore

Key concepts



- Work in partnership with others. The ClayFutures team had a range of multidisciplinary skills that helped shaped the engagement process and approach and included expertise in public engagement; accessibility and inclusiveness; creativity and design; community planning; land-restoration; mine-closure and post-mining regeneration; sustainable development; data collection and analysis; and marketing and event management.
- Create a convivial space that is inclusive and will appeal to people of different ages and abilities.
- Ensure all venues are accessible and inclusive.
- Encourage service providers and other community development organisations to take part and give people the chance to obtain information and engage with existing plans.
- Recognise and build upon the knowledge and experience held within the community.
- Encourage people to think positively about their locality and help identify opportunities for people to celebrate and highlight what was good about their community.
- Inspire people with new ideas and new aspirations: 'people can only shout about what they have seen'.
- Help connect people and ideas within communities by encouraging participants to read and comment on each other's suggestions.
- Ask simple, open questions to help people think about the broader needs and values associated with strengthening their communities and get the conversations going.
- Listen carefully and take people's responses seriously.
- Make the process enjoyable and fun!

