

clesbulletin clesbulletin clesbulletin clesbulletin

CLES bulletin is a topical summary of articles which have appeared in the professional press. Its aim is to provide a pithy précis of a subject area, drawing out the specific and common issues raised in the individual articles.

CLES Bulletin No. 4

Community Involvement

Involving the community in regeneration is a necessary part of the renewal process, yet it is not always plain sailing, as CLES' policy director, Neil McInroy highlighted in the recent CLES Voice on Community Empowerment. The problems and successes of community involvement are often covered in the professional press, and the issue has again frequently appeared recently in the regeneration, environmental and housing journals.

New Start¹ looks at ways of measuring community involvement, asking whether or not indicators are working, looking in particular at three efforts to develop successful indicators - the Audit Commission who are working on community empowerment indicators, the Active Community Unit who are looking at ways of measuring how a community is flourishing, and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit who are developing measures of community involvement in its programmes, for funding assessments.

New Start identifies problems in developing indicators and looks at criticisms of those developed, showing 'huge gaps' such as a lack of attention to diversity and equality, too little concern for youth involvement and a lack of emphasis on the level of involvement of black and

minority ethnics. It concludes that regardless of any holes, the indicators are likely to be helpful and make a difference.

Regeneration and Renewal² offers a good practice example of a co-operative in Hulme, Greater Manchester, which has been successful in involving the community. The Work for Change cooperative, birthed by Hulme residents themselves, has managed to transform their own ideas about business potential into reality by encouraging and assisting even the smallest of business ideas, meeting a local need and having a catalytic effect on the wider regeneration of the Hulme area. By involving the community every step of the way, the cooperative has been awarded a BURA award for Best Practice in Regeneration in 1998.

Green Futures³ looks at what happens when community involvement is managed badly. It emphasises the need to empower local communities in order to help them get to grips with sustainable development, arguing that without proper leadership, though, many such techniques simply lead to further disillusionment and a questioning of the democratic validity of the whole approach. *Green Futures* suggests that such scepticism risks throwing out the good along with the bad, and argues that the Government is showing signs of impatience with it all.

Roof⁴ magazine highlights what works with community led organisations. It looks at the different types of organisations which vary enormously, and what they do and the problems they face. It looks at the fact that funding and investment are at the core of those problems, but getting and maintaining a good relationship with the local authority is also an issue.

Roof explains that these organisations provide a local anchor for communities, encourage personal development, community building, wealth creation. *Roof* concludes that community organisations are a fantastic idea but they can't be expected to redress the issues they face by themselves.

Siân Thomas
Information & Policy Researcher, CLES

² Burwood, Simon Scrutinising success Regeneration and Renewal 23 August 2002 pp.18-19

³ Tuxworth, Ben Sit still while I empower you... Green Futures July/Aug 2002 pp.32-35

⁴ Minton, Anna Learning lessons Roof Sept/Oct 2002 pp.30-31

¹ Cane, Mary Making the grade New Start 9 August 2002 p.14