

case study

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Enhancing the Penymorfa Community Garden Project Consultation Using ICT

Community ICT Engagement Case Study

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Summary

This case study outlines how digital stills cameras can be used to support community consultation. In a Communities First led consultation, Carmarthenshire Connect supported residents to take digital photos of local community gardens to feed into the design process for a new community garden.

Background

Adjacent to Penymorfa Library in Llanelli is an area of land that is a hot-spot for anti-social behaviour. Waste is regularly fly-tipped and fires are started. The land is owned by a local estate and is not maintained. This lack of maintenance attracts the anti-social behaviour.

In order to change the area into a focal point for the local community to enjoy and be proud of, Glanymor & Tyisha Communities First secured a £50,000 grant to transform the land into a community garden. An agreement was made with the landowner for the area to be leased to a voluntary group for a minimal annual rent.

Communities First embarked on a consultation with the local community on how they wanted their garden to be designed. This process was started with a coach trip to view successful community gardens in the Amman and Gwendraeth valleys of Carmarthenshire and meet the groups behind them.

Engagement Purpose

Carmarthenshire Connect facilitated residents to use digital stills cameras to collect their views on community garden design and spark debate over the design of Penymorfa Community Garden.

Engagement Process

Carmarthenshire Connect worked with Communities First in advance of the community garden trip to plan how and why the residents on the trip would use the digital cameras and how the photos would be used later on in the consultation.

On the day of the trip, Carmarthenshire Connect joined the residents at the coach pick-up point. With a half hour journey to the first garden, some of the time was used to explain to the residents what the plan was, give a brief overview of the digital camera functions and allocate a cameras to each residents.

Residents were asked to take photos of features that they either liked or disliked in each garden. Each resident was given a laminated card with a smiley face on one side and a sad face on the other. Residents were asked to include this card in their photos, so that the features could be identified as either positive or negative.

The residents got to grips with the cameras quickly and easily. They took up the 'positive/negative garden feature' model with enthusiasm. Carmarthenshire Connect was on hand to support residents to use their cameras throughout the day.

Nearly 400 photos were taken by residents during the day. The total set of photos was initially split up into groups by garden, with each photo numbered in a way that indicated who took it. Through looking at the smiley/sad faces, Communities First staff were able to identify trends for liking or disliking certain garden features. This, in conjunction with the verbal responses received on the day, was a good way of collecting feedback on the many garden features that were viewed during the trip.

After the trip, a follow up meeting was held. Photos of both positive and negative garden features were printed and displayed at the meeting. The taker's name was included in the corner of each photo. Attendees were asked to give feedback on the garden features by writing on sticky-backed notes and sticking them next the photo that they were relevant to. This was a good way of involving people who attended the follow up meeting but were unable to go on the trip.



Some of the photos taken by residents

Benefits and Drawbacks

Benefits

- Residents could capture their thoughts on the garden features independently and in their own time
- Using a camera to capture thoughts *throughout* the day meant residents did not have to remember all the features at the end of the day or make notes during the trip
- Displaying residents' photos at the follow up meeting fostered a sense of ownership of the project
- Reinforced the idea that Communities First was focused on working towards a garden design that was created by the community
- Participants learn about digital cameras

Drawbacks

- A high number of photos results in a large amount of information to analyse
- Some photos did not include smiley/sad faces

References

See the blog posts from the Penymorfa Community Garden Project at

<http://www.carmsconnect.org.uk/labels/Penymorfa%20Community%20Garden%20Project.html>