



Phase 4: Sustainability

Report produced and presented by





Phase 4 – Implementation Contents

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1. Introduction and Background

This report completes the overall evaluation of the first phase of the Grey 2 Green project. Three previous reports have been completed focusing on the development and implementation of the scheme, which involved three identified grey spaces at locations in the Great Yarmouth Neighbourhood Management (known as Comeunity) area being developed to create green spaces. The schemes were developed and implemented through community partnership working with support from a range of agencies. The final phase of the evaluation addresses the issue of sustainability.

The issue of sustainability of the practical aspects of the schemes such as maintenance, was always envisaged to be an integral part of the scheme, and there was an awareness throughout the project that these issues would need to be addressed at the end of the implementation stage. It was also acknowledged that this would need to be partly achieved with a lower level of support from the statutory sector. The vision for the Grey 2 Green project was that the community would maintain a sense of ownership of the spaces, but would require the co-operation from a range of partners in order to maintain the green spaces themselves. There are therefore two main strands to sustainability in this context; one being the physical sustainability of the sites in terms of maintenance, and the second being the sustainability of the residents interest in the schemes themselves. This is in terms of maintaining levels of community support for the project at a time when the level of support and resources provided will be lower than during the implementation stage.

The three pilot schemes at Swirle's Place, Fox's Passage and Peggotty Road were completed at various points during 2008, with the Peggotty Road scheme being the third to be implemented during the summer of 2008, although there have been ongoing developments at all three sites. The development of these sites, from the initial consultation phase, has been recorded, both in written and photographic form, and has been summarised in the reports produced for the three previous phases.

In order to complete the sustainability phase of the Grey 2 Green project evaluation, the three Grey 2 Green sites were revisited in January 2009. The purpose of the visits was to observe the sites, and take photographs, to gain visual evidence of the maintenance of the sites, and to highlight any potential issues which had been raised during the previous consultation process.

It was decided that it would be beneficial to carry out further consultation with a sample of local residents. The aim of this consultation was to gauge residents' perceptions of the schemes at a time when the work on the sites had been largely completed. This would enable residents' views on how the sites were now perceived to be compared with some of the views that had been raised during the planning and implementation of the project. In doing this, the consultation aimed to address whether any of the concerns or issues that had been raised during the implementation stage had materialised, or been alleviated. The consultation also enabled information on the level of community involvement in maintaining the sites to be gathered.

Additionally, members of staff who had been involved in the implementation of the project were interviewed, in order to gauge their views on the project as a whole, what had worked well and any limitations to the scheme. This also gave an insight into how lessons learned from the first three Grey 2 Green developments would assist in the development of future schemes, which are being implemented at the time of this report.

2. Methods

For the purpose of this phase of the report, it was decided to carry out a snapshot survey of residents living in the immediate vicinity of the three Grey 2 Green spaces. A short semi-structured questionnaire was designed, which was used to consult with residents, and on some occasions gave residents the opportunity to provide more in-depth answers. Door knocking took place in each of the three areas with between 5 and 10 residents from each area taking part in the process. As with any exercise of this type involving a largely random sample, and because of time limitations, it was not possible to consult

with all the residents who had been involved at some stage in the schemes themselves. Some residents opted not to take part, reporting that they had not lived in the area for long, whilst some respondents had no awareness of the Grey 2 Green project, or the green spaces themselves. However, some useful data was gathered from the residents consultation which enabled comparison with the views expressed in previous reports.

The Grey 2 Green Project Environmental Specialist and Senior Community Development worker based within the Community Neighbourhood Management Programme were interviewed using a semi structured interview schedule. These interviews were designed to gather information about the sustainability of the project, particularly in terms of the partnership working between statutory agencies, including the Borough Council, and the residents themselves. These interviews again provided useful data, which add weight to some of the comments received from those involved in the residents consultation.

Throughout the report, photographs taken at different times of the year have been used to show the development of the green spaces. The most recent photographs were taken in January 2009, and provide visual evidence as to how some of the issues around sustainability have been addressed.

3. Findings

For the purposes of the report, the findings are presented in three sections, one for each of the three green spaces. Consultation findings from residents are shown alongside the findings gathered from interviews with staff members in order to highlight issues around sustainability from the perspective of both residents and staff members. This also assists in highlighting any differences in views between the community and project staff, although in general the findings show that partnership working has been very strong throughout the project.

3.1 Swirle's Place

Figure 1: Swirle's Place (August 2008)



Great Yarmouth Borough Council now include the Swirle's Place within their maintenance schedule, this means that at intermittent periods throughout the year the site will be maintained in terms of dealing with overgrowing plants, cutting the grass areas etc. In terms of resident involvement in the site, the Market Roads community group still runs, and has an active involvement in the site in terms of maintaining plants and general upkeep. In particular, there are two residents who are involved in this process. Additionally, there is one resident who has been very involved in the Grey 2 Grey scheme since the implementation stage, and also plays an active part in the community group.

However, this resident may soon be moving out of the area, and this highlights an issue which may have an impact on sustaining the level of community involvement in the project. There will always be a small number of residents who are willing to take on a leading role in projects of this nature, and there is a danger that over-reliance on such individuals could lead to there not being people to take over, should these people decide for whatever reason that they can no longer be involved in the project. This was highlighted as a concern in earlier phases of the project, particularly from those in the statutory sector who felt that sustained community involvement could be limited due to factors such as this.

However, it should be acknowledged that the planting for the sites was chosen specifically, in consultation with the Technical Officer (Yardley Associates), in order to minimise the amount of work that would be needed to maintain the planting. This therefore means that the level of community responsibility for maintaining the sites is greatly reduced. To a certain extent, the spaces should be self sustaining, in the worst case scenario that everyone in the area chooses to no longer express an interest in the sustainability of the sites.

In terms of the use of the green space, the Community Development worker suggested that the space is continuing to be used and maintained as a community facility. The cottages in the immediate vicinity have no back garden space and residents have used the area to sit quietly and enjoy the communal space, and in warmer weather sunbathing. Families with young children have also used it as a play space, for example using paddling pools. There was a recognised issue around anti-social behaviour in the area, which had been isolated to particular households. The communal space has in many ways helped to alleviate many of these concerns, and gave some residents a common purpose and the confidence to approach the issue. The Community Development worker reports that these issues have now been largely resolved in the area.

The Sunshine Crew (local youth group) have maintained their involvement in the project with support from the Community Development worker. During the last year the young people involved in the Sunshine Crew have focused activities on the Swirle's Place site, including painting stones to be placed among the flowerbeds. It is envisaged that part of the Sunshine Crew's summer activities in 2009 will focus on the green space once again. It is a positive feature of the project that younger people have been involved throughout the process, and also notable that their involvement is being sustained after the implementation phase.

Figure 2: Sunshine Crew painted stones and placed in flowerbeds as part of summer activities (August 2008)



A resident who had previously voiced his concerns around the scheme reported to the Community Development Worker that the work has transformed the area, looking much better than it had before. The fact that residents are reporting an improvement in the general look and feel of the area suggests that their involvement in sustaining the space is more likely to be maintained.

Figure 3: Swirle's Place green space (January 2009)



Another account provides an insight into how the spaces have been adopted by local residents. During the summer months, it was noted that some sunflowers had appeared in the space; these had not been planted as part of the original development. It later transpired that a resident had planted these herself, with her grandchild. The resident had always expressed an interest in the project but had chosen not to become involved fully in the planning and development stages. The resident had in some ways misunderstood the aims of the project, instead perhaps seeing it as a community garden style project. However, it highlights further the level of community interest and involvement in the project. Other residents reported that they were pleased to see the sunflowers, and it acted as a further way of sustaining community involvement in the site.

Figure 4: Flowers at Swirle's Place (August 2008)



The majority of residents who were interviewed in the Swirle's Place area in January 2009 believed that the area had been improved as a result of the Grey 2 Green scheme. Comments included:

"its cleaner and tidier, there is less rubbish"

"Definitely, the whole area is more open, more people are using it"

The new fencing was seen by residents to enhance the area, and some residents felt that this had contributed to reducing the amount of litter, and also the amount of dog mess.

One resident did highlight a concern with the grassed area, feeling that this could be cut more regularly and levelled off. This resident also felt the plants and flowers could be changed more regularly, but considered that residents themselves should take on this responsibility.

Other residents differed in their view, in that some concerns were raised about dogs mess, and suspected drug dealing in the area. A number of residents felt that CCTV would help remove some of these problems. There was also

an issue raised around wheelie bins being left in obstructive positions. None of these issues can be directly related to the Grey 2 Green project, but they have been highlighted as concerns which may limit peoples enjoyment of the space.

A number of residents reported that they felt there was a greater sense of ownership of the green space. One resident commented:

“All the neighbours get involved, no problems”

One resident also commented positively on the fact that the area had been actively used by young people, and that this had added to the sense of the space being owned by the whole community.

However, one resident’s views did not reflect the general consensus. This resident felt that the scheme had not improved the area. This was because of their perception that plants and flowers had died, and not been replaced, and the council had dug up seeds planted by residents. This resident did not share the view that children could play in the space, due to issues with particular residents not seemingly wanting to encourage children to use the space to play. This resident felt that any community involvement was limited to a small number of people, and felt that any sustainability would be dependent on some residents being “more rational”.

The snapshot survey of local residents in the Swirle’s Place area has highlighted some of the key issues around the scheme, and largely reflect the views provided during interviews with staff involved in the project. It is interesting to see that there are some differences in opinions of local residents, but this is always likely in snapshot surveys of this nature.

3.2 Fox's Passage

The Fox's Passage scheme has been acknowledged by those involved in the project as the scheme which most difficulties in completion have been experienced. This is due to the fact that once the site had been identified as one of the first phase Grey 2 Green sites, the planning stage highlighted a number of concerns from residents, which tended to focus more on the area as a whole, and not just the area identified for the Grey 2 Green space. These concerns were largely to do with access in the form of the condition of the pathways, and street lighting. Although planting was carried out in the area, it was considered to be of secondary importance to the residents overall concerns, and therefore the project was adapted accordingly.

Figure 5: Paved area providing access to Fox's Passage green space (January 2009)



The project had a higher level of technical considerations, and therefore required a higher level of co-ordinated activity between local community members, and contractors who were employed to carry out the agreed developments. It was acknowledged that this co-ordination did not always result in success, due to the number of different departments within Norfolk County Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council who were involved in this stage of the project.

There were issues in the area, identified by residents, around pathways, and street lighting, which have been previously highlighted in the earlier phase reports. The difficulty in co-ordinating the approach has been the main issue in the Fox's Passage. For example, the resurfacing of the paved areas which enabled access to the green space were completed before the new lighting was installed. Therefore when the lighting fitters came to install there was a need to dig up some of the paving which had just been relaid, and when the paving was redone, it did not match the original design:

Figure 6: Fox's Passage pavement (January 2009)



The lighting issue was also not fully resolved at this point as the residents concerns around where the lighting should be positioned did not match the view of the engineers. However, a meeting between lighting planners and residents held in January 2009, enabled the lighting planners to fully understand the residents concerns, having seen the area first hand. Unfortunately, this information was then not relayed to the actual member of staff who came to complete the job, who had been given the original specification for the project.

This difficulty raised the issue of accountability for the project as a whole. The Comeunity programme acted as a facilitator or link in the process of the community working with service providers to best meet the needs of the community. However, this role can only be taken so far, as there are statutory agencies such as highways maintenance who will have their own views, and agendas as to how such work should be carried out. Working so closely with local residents may not be something that individual workers within statutory agencies have had a great deal of experience, and so for both parties the working relationship is a relatively new one. It was highlighted that the idea of 'local people as experts' is a new concept to those who have had professional training in their specialised area of expertise.

The positive aspect of this has been that the community members have shown a determination and perseverance to ensure that their views are taken into consideration. This may have an impact in the longer term, in that residents are likely to feel that having worked hard to plan and develop the area, having overcome a number of difficulties, that they will then take a greater sense of ownership of the area. It may also lead to a higher than expected level of community involvement in ensuring that the area is sustained and maintained.

The area around the Fox's Passage did not have an existing community / resident group with which to liase around the sustainability of the space. The Green Square community group has been set up with assistance from the Comeunity Neighbourhood Management programme in terms of securing

funding etc. However, this group does not operate as a recognised body in its own right in terms of its ability to bid for funding, in the same way as the Market Roads Community Group. However, a grant of £1000 was secured from the police, in order to assist with buying plants etc.

It was felt that in order to fully develop the green space, this would not be possible until all the issues relating to the surrounding area had been fully addressed. As these have only recently been addressed to the satisfaction of the community, it is likely that the work on the green space will continue for some time. It is therefore difficult to discuss issues around sustainability of this aspect of the space at this time. The planting itself was partly destroyed during the digging up of the pavement, and therefore it is not possible to comment fully on how this would have been sustained had this not happened.

However, an example of the community involvement, and maintained interest, in the area is highlighted by the response of residents to an incident of vandalism in the area. It was suspected that some children playing in the area had broken some of the branches on the young tree that had been planted in the middle of the new green space. The residents repaired the tree by taping some of the branches together, and have taken on the responsibility of 'policing' the tree to ensure that any further damage is minimised.

There are identified individuals in the area, whom the majority of residents in the area are likely to know, and are more likely to show an interest in being involved in sustaining the site if they are encouraged by a known member of the community. The Community Development worker continues to facilitate this process with the aim of sustaining levels of involvement in the Fox's Passage site. This is particularly important as green issues were not given priority in the development of the site, until the present time. With the spring of 2009 approaching this would be an ideal time for the green space aspect of the project to be further developed.

Figure 7: Fox's Passage tree and green space (January 2009)



Fewer responses were received from residents in the Fox's Passage area during the follow up consultation process. Several people who answered their doors as part of the door-knocking exercise did not really comment on their views on the scheme. However from those residents who were aware of the

project, the general view was that the area had improved as a result of the Grey 2 Green scheme.

"I think that it looks better than before"

Residents spoke of respect for the area being key in terms of the sustainability and maintenance. Again, residents highlighted that a small number of community members were involved in the scheme, with others not seeming to mind about what was done in the area.

The level of resident involvement in the Fox's Passage scheme has been very high, especially highlighted by the number of technical issues arising with the scheme, but due to the small sample this is not fully reflected in the residents comments during the most recent consultation.

On a positive note, residents in this survey felt that they had been kept informed of developments through letters and updates, and also by other local residents who were central to the scheme. Several residents also expressed an interest in maintaining their involvement, and those who had not been involved still reported that they were interested in the scheme.

3.3 Peggotty Road

The green space identified at Peggotty Road was part of the garden area at the existing Community Centre. The green space was previously inaccessible due to gates and fencing, and one of the first priorities was to ensure that access to the green area was improved.

Figure 8: Peggotty Road Community Centre green space (January 2009)



Within the actual implementation of the scheme, a number of young people were involved in the planting day. Residents consultations held in the immediate area have highlighted concerns around antisocial behaviour in the area, but there has to date been notable lack of vandalism within the green space. A specific issue was raised as a concern by a local resident, regarding the bench which was installed as part of the development. It was feared that this would encourage anti social behaviour, but this has not materialised to this point. The resident in question has a good relationship with the

Community Development Worker who highlighted that the issue has not been raised in their conversations. The large log which acts as focal point within the space has also not encountered any notable difficulties.

Figure 9: Peggotty Road (January 2008)



This lack of vandalism may be partly attributable to the fact that the young people were so involved in the actual planting process. It should also be acknowledged that the caretaker for the community centre (who carries out this role on a voluntary basis) is recognised as having a very good relationship with the young people who use the centre and the adjacent play area. The caretaker has been involved in re-planting the area, again the species of plants chosen in consultation with the Technical Officer have minimised the need for constant maintenance. This had enabled the area to be largely left alone to grow, with the need for minimal maintenance. It was highlighted that regular litter picks are carried out in the area. The caretaker also has a major role within the Community Association which operates in the area, and also takes on a degree of responsibility for maintaining the site.

Because the planting in the Peggotty Road area was completed at a later date to the other two schemes it is not as clear as to how this will develop during the coming months. There is perhaps a reliance on the caretaker at the centre, and perhaps if this good relationship with the local young people did not exist, then there may be more potential issues with the site. Residents in this area were much more likely to raise concerns about the behaviour of young people in the area than with the other green spaces.

Again, the issue of relying on the goodwill of individual volunteers could limit the impact of communities having full ownership of the spaces themselves, but for the foreseeable future within this area at least, this is less likely to be of major concern.

Overall, residents who were interviewed in January 2009 felt that the scheme had been a success, particularly in terms of the area being more widely used by young people. One resident also commented that they:

“use the area more now because of the seating”

One resident reported that there was a greater sense of community as a result of the space:

“sit in area and meet people, take part in events / barbeques”

Other residents felt that the appearance of the area had greatly improved, and that local people were proud of the area. It was felt that those involved in the project had done “a good job”

“I think it looks nice around the community centre now”

However, some residents felt that there is still vandalism in the area surrounding the community centre, and that the development of the green space had not reduced this. This resident also felt that the space was not

used by the community and felt the scheme was a “*waste of time*”. However, these views seem to be a minority based on the sample of local residents who were involved in the research.

In terms of sustainability, residents did feel that there would need to be more security on the site in order that the appearance of the site could be maintained. One resident reported that they had heard that people had been pulling up trees, and playing football within the green space. Residents acknowledged that local people could become more involved in the upkeep of the area, and some residents expressed their view that they would be interested in doing so. One resident highlighted that the maintaining the site, would be an ideal project to involve children and families, and this is perhaps something that could be further developed, particularly as some residents have highlighted some concerns around young peoples behaviour in the area.

4. Conclusion

All three Grey 2 Green schemes within the first phase of the project have provided excellent examples of community involvement in the planning, and implementation of the green spaces (as highlighted in previous reports) This report highlights the success of the overall approach has had in continuing the communities level of involvement in terms of sustaining the green spaces.

The role of the Comeunity programme has been to use the designated funding to support residents in taking a degree of ownership of the projects, and to encourage and support residents in maintaining their involvement after the implementation phase. To date this has been successfully achieved, but the challenge still exists to maintain a level of community involvement at a time when less resources are available, particularly in terms of staffing hours. This will also be potentially reduced by the development of new schemes as part of the next phase of the Grey 2 Green project.

In terms of the sites themselves, residents concerns around vandalism have largely proved to be unfounded, except for isolated incidents. Photographs taken in January 2009 provide further photographic evidence that the spaces have been well maintained.

It should be acknowledged that the careful choice of planting has meant that the need for sustaining and maintaining the planted areas has been relatively limited. It is unsure how the project would have worked had their been the need for constant maintenance. The communities within the first schemes have acknowledged the need for easy maintenance planting, but there is perhaps the potential for residents in future schemes to place an emphasis on plants they would like rather than those which would be easier to maintain. It shows the success of the working relationship between the Technical Officer and the community members that this has not arisen as an issue within the first three schemes.

As with all schemes involving a high level of community involvement and participation, there will always be a number of potential limitations which may or may not be realised. These are often to do with the willingness of the community members to engage with the project, and the ability of those working with the community to maintain these levels of interest and engagement. Through the support given to local residents, both on an individual basis, and through supporting community groups, the Grey 2 Green scheme has seen a continued high level of community involvement. The challenge for the future is to look at ways of increasing community involvement and ownership of the projects, whilst identifying contingency should key community members decide to end or limit their involvement with the project. As the Grey 2 Green Environmental Specialist highlights:

“Although there were tremendous achievements in engaging the residents in the decision making processes this could not have happened without the constant support from brokering role that community development had in bringing people from technical / professional roles and local residents together”

The level of residents’ involvement in the schemes has been high, and has also assisted to a greater understanding of grass roots issues from the statutory sector. As the Grey 2 Green Environmental Specialist commented:

“over the course of the project these (bureaucratic tensions) were resolved which enabled professionals to gain a deeper level of understanding about the environment where people live, from the local residents perception”

It should also be acknowledged that the schemes have also assisted a greater understanding of processes that have to be followed at a grass roots level. Although the community should have a voice in developing the area, it is also important for residents to be aware of the processes and procedures which have to be followed, and which sometime mean that developments do not happen as quickly as residents may wish. There may be the need for

increased clarity of information to be passed down to residents, to keep them fully informed and updated about the projects.

The Grey 2 Green Environmental Specialist commented that the schemes should be considered as a success, especially taking into account that:

“the notion of people at grass roots level as experts is so new”

At the time of writing, active community groups are involved with the sustainability of all three of the first phase green spaces to different degrees. This will hopefully lead to increased social capital, and increased capacity of these groups to continue to work effectively with reducing levels support from community workers.

To summarise, the following points have been raised as part of the research process. They should not to be seen as recommendations as such, but are possible issues that may arise, and limit the level of community involvement in the first phase, and future, Grey 2 Green schemes:

- To look at ways to maximise awareness of the green spaces – and the ethos of Grey 2 Green - to all residents – there is a relatively high transient population, and people new to the area may not be fully aware of the development of the green spaces, and therefore not be as interested
- To continue to support community groups in terms of capacity building – but without over-reliance on support from community workers
- To acknowledge that there may be some residents who choose to be involved in their own way – and not necessarily as part of a wider consultation / involvement process
- To acknowledge that although there are key residents within each scheme, that it may not be possible to rely on individuals to maintain their levels of involvement in the longer term

- To continue to consult with residents to ensure that issues arising are resolved, or to guide residents as to how they can resolve them themselves
- To continue to facilitate the process of residents working together with statutory partners, to increase levels of clarity of information, and to ensure accountability for all parties

Future developments

A further six schemes were in the process of being developed at the time of writing, within the Neighbourhood Management area. These have been identified at grey spaces in:

- West Street
- Victoria Place
- Louise Close
- Artillery Square
- Patterson Close
- Runham Vauxhall

The Neighbourhood Officer who came into post during 2008 will oversee the Grey 2 Green schemes from this point, and this will have the effect of increasing the level of co-ordination. The fact that the Neighbourhood Officer is employed by Great Yarmouth Borough Council will also assist in ensuring there are clear links between the Neighbourhood Management programme, local residents and the Council. This should help to alleviate some of the issues which have affected schemes in the first phase of the project.

5. Acknowledgements

Grey 2 Green has been an ambitious and challenging programme, developed from a concept that meaningful community engagement in neighbourhood improvement projects can have long and lasting results. The methodology in trialling different approaches to community engagement and in ensuring schemes are community-led is now widely accepted as the right approach to empowerment and has become widely adopted by local service providers.

Special thanks to all those partners involved in Grey 2 Green including Norfolk County Council, GYB Services, South Yarmouth Safer Neighbourhood Team, and the wider Norfolk Constabulary, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Community Connections and Priory Research Services.

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Rob Gregory
Neighbourhood Manager
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