

Community Partnership Project

Final Report

Executive Summary



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Exeter
City Council



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Background

The Community Partnership Project was a year-long collaboration between the University of Exeter, Exeter City Council, and Exeter City Futures, a community interest company which aims to make Exeter congestion-free and energy-independent by 2025. The core aims of the Partnership were to connect partners, create opportunities and drive impact, focussing on the themes central to Exeter City Futures' goals. This final report discusses the benefits of tackling societal issues through a multi-stakeholder partnership, and describes the Community Partnership Heavitree Project, which piloted the delivery of a community engagement programme and aimed to mobilise a local community to find innovative solutions towards reducing congestion.

Key messages

- Engaging in a multiple stakeholder partnership requires time and investment but can lead to mutually beneficial impacts and developments;
- Taking a community-led, collaborative approach to tackling societal problems can help equip communities with the skills to bring about change;
- The Community Partnership has helped the Partner organisations reflect upon and understand their roles with communities and the city, and we hope that the learning and contribution from the Partnership and the legacy of relationship brokerage will lead to long-term, city-wide benefits and greater co-operation in solving grass roots, societal issues.

Partnership Structure and Governance

The Partnership was managed on a day-to-day basis, by Lindsey Anderson, Impact and Partnership Development Manager (IPDM) – Communities, based at the University of Exeter, with hot-desking at Exeter City Futures and Exeter City Council. Along with the University, the core personnel active within the project on behalf of the Partnership were Kerry Deacon, Education and Engagement, Exeter City Futures and Dawn Rivers, Programme Manager – Communities at Exeter City Council. The project was overseen by a Steering Group which met quarterly.

Key Activities

Understanding, complementing and facilitate existing community engagement activities in Exeter

The IPDM created a map of University energy- and transport-related research and relationships with external stakeholders. The map will help identify relevant academics and key partners in anticipation of future projects and grant proposals.

The IPDM and the University's Engaged Research Manager (Grace Williams) are helping to deliver the first Community Engagement Strategy for the University of Exeter which is an important development in underpinning the University's commitment to future community engagement activities. Partner organisations will be invited to inform this process.

Facilitating sharing of Community Engagement expertise across the partners

All members of the Partnership have benefited from working with colleagues with a diverse experience of engaging with communities and external partners, and from attending internal workshops and external conferences on engaged research and public and community engagement.

Gathering best practice from national and international comparator cities

A review of different Community University Partnerships (CUPs) in the UK and overseas was undertaken which will help shape the future relationship between the University and its civil society. Through attending national and international meetings, Partnership members have met key experts in community and civic engagement and we hope to develop these relationships as we pursue funding opportunities to enable our local engagement activities to continue.

Promoting the uptake of University of Exeter research in the delivery of solutions to Partners

Links have been made between Partner organisations and academics working in the areas of sustainability, health and wellbeing and sports science. All Partners continue to benefit from the brokering of relationships which has led to collaborative working.

Creating sustainable, mutually beneficial partnerships

The project will leave a legacy of a network of relationships between the Partner organisations and local groups, communities and academics who are linked to Exeter City Futures' objectives.

Mobilising communities to take an active role in defining solutions relating to the Exeter City Futures themes

A delivery approach for engaging with community groups with a self-identified energy- or transport-related challenge was developed and refined through the Community Partnership Project in Heavitree. This approach is designed to create relationships with and within communities, to build capacity and provide them with the tools to continue creating and funding solutions beyond the life of the project. It is intended that the approach is replicable in other wards of Exeter.

Amplifying the value of data in order to promote positive change for communities

The approach piloted in Heavitree, supported the community to collect existing and new data to help understand the cause of the traffic challenges, and to facilitate the development of data-driven solutions. The concept of using data to provide evidence and enable change has been well received by community members.

Box 1: Case Study

Community Partnership Heavitree Project

A place-based project which is seeking to understand and co-create solutions to local traffic-related challenges.

- Six weeks' local listening and engagement activities
- Community-led prioritisation and challenge definition process to generate two Challenge Questions:
 - How can we motivate and incentivise parents and staff who currently drive to school to use alternative modes of travel?
 - How can we enable and encourage the use of sustainable and attractive alternative modes of transport to reduce the number of cars driving through Heavitree?
- Two community-led working groups collecting data to evidence the problem and co-creating practical solution(s) with the support of students and academics.