North Ayrshire

A focus piece showing how North Aryshire Council have used the Place Standard tool for planning at Settlement Scale.

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INTRODUCTION

This series of case studies from Architecture and Design Scotland illustrates how the Place Standard tool has been used in a wide variety of ways and at a range of scales for the purpose of informing spatial planning, community planning, design and development.

The practitioners and organisations featured explain their reasons for using the tool, the methods they applied when doing so, their approach to empowering local communities and the impact that this has had. They also share their perceptions of the tool, the knowledge gained in using it, as well any valuable lessons learned and worth sharing with others.

PLACE STANDARD - NORTH AYRSHIRE FOCUS

Two officers from North Ayrshire Council share their experiences of using the Place Standard tool to involve local communities in setting the strategic priorities of new Locality Partnerships for six North Ayrshire localities (Arran, Garnock, Irvine, Kilwinning, North Coast & Cumbraes and The Three Towns). This initial strategic, area-wide approach then led to a more place-based focus at settlement scale for Kilwinning and the Three Towns of Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston.

It shows a sequential, iterative process and highlights the influence that priority-setting in this way has had on the Council, community planning partner organisations and local communities.

The initiative in North Ayrshire was part of an award-winning programme of engagement, developed with the Consultation Institute, to co-produce Locality Partnerships and their priorities and action plans.

A&DS key learning points

•   The tool was used successfully and widely endorsed for setting high-level priorities to address inequalities

•   The iterative use and re-use of the tool progressively focussed attention on hyper-local community issues

•   The prioritisation exercise was useful as a prelude to focus at settlement scale, including providing briefing for design charettes

•   The quantitative perceptual data gathered complimented the use of quantitative data such as Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), health and crime data

•   Impacts have been systemic, including: achieving buy-in at senior management and political level; incorporation in plans, policy and actions; setting up an annually repeating process and highlighting tangible projects and initiatives for the Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) to deliver.

NORTH AYRSHIRE

Planning Stage	Locality Plan Design Charrette
Leadership	North Ayrshire Council Three Towns Locality Planning Partnership
Participants	Initially 100 across 6 localities working in groups of 6-8. Then around 30 for each locality during charrettes.

PLACE STANDARD - NORTH AYRSHIRE FOCUS

What were you trying to achieve by using the Place Standard?

We used the Place Standard to compile data on local perceptions, alongside other forms of data gathering. The structure of the tool fitted with our need to assess local issues that linked to national strategic plans. It was a fun activity that engaged people in needs assessment without being too difficult to understand.

The tool captures perception data well, and is lively and inclusive. It captured range of issues we were already considering and has a useful IT interface to produce the spider diagram.

This in turn informed the priority-setting and action plans of Locality Partnerships. By collating the individual comments, we arrived at the aggregated view of how the participants viewed their community. The perception data gathered sits well with Community Planning Partnership (CPP) data sets, so this was very much a blended approach.

How was the tool applied?

We began with priority-setting workshop events advertised via social media, the CPP website, newspapers, libraries, digital signage and word of mouth. The National Standards for Community Engagement were used in conjunction with the tool and our Community Learning and Development Team were all involved in planning the event.

We held events using the tool for six separate localities across North Ayrshire. The first step involved a rapid appraisal of a locality or a neighbourhood by local community participants, producing compass diagrams with the on-line tool.

For each event we created our own large-scale 'bullseye' posters and a talking wall to capture dialogue from groups as they moved around the room. We simplified scoring by asking the community participants to allocate sticky dots to their priorities on the 'bullseye' poster – the closer to the bullseye, the higher the priority; the closer to the outer ring the lower the priority.

It was a rapid assessment looking at the locality and focused on commonalities, with differences taken out as issues for a talking wall (e.g. car parking was an issue in Largs but not in Skelmorlie, so it was added to the talking wall for a follow-up discussion).

We then undertook a group-based assessment of the Place Standard results in relation to the outcomes of the Health & Social Care Partnership priorities, findings within the Areas of Family Resilience profiles, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data and Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) data, for example Housing Land Supply or digital infrastructure.

In this way, we used the outcome of the Place Standard to test and challenge perceived community need against 'real' need identified

through statistical analysis. We then identified the local priorities to be addressed (linked to SIMD data and Health & Social Care Partnership priorities). Following the triangulation of the findings against other plans and statistics, the Locality Planning Partnerships felt they had a good basis for making decisions on how to address key local needs.

We collated all of the target data and used the online tool to present visual spider diagrams for feedback.

What influence did the work have and how is it being followed up?

The process has helped to catalyse the work of a range of local groups who are collaborating on spatial development and community regeneration.

We issued the data to the Locality Partnership members and made a presentation of findings, prior to discussion to agree the final priorities for approval. Councillors in some areas challenged the outcome, but after reflection, agreed that the findings were by and large reflective of local opinion. The spider diagrams are all publicly available on the Locality Partnership's website.

Further meetings and events were held to develop the learning and explore action planning and priority setting. This was within the planned Locality Planning Partnerships, which led to a sequential development of Locality Plans. These are being delivered through local partnerships with the assistance of the North Ayrshire Council's £3.164 million Community Investment Fund and external funding.

The output also supported spatial planning and informed briefing for a design charrette in the Three Towns, which concluded in early Jan 2018, with its findings embedded in the Three Towns' Locality Plan. The outputs assisted LDP2 preparation, with each of the Locality Partnership's priorities forming an integral part.

We have made good progress to date and are lucky to have the support of some Council investment funding to begin linking right through from the Place Standard outcomes to funded initiatives.

We plan to revisit the process regularly, using the Place Standard as a baseline against which we can measure progress in future. Some communities are carrying out their own Place Standard reviews, for example Irvine completed a review in 2018 and

added 'Sense of Influence and Control' to their Locality priorities as a result.

What lessons would you wish to share?

"The Place Standard tool adds to a rich picture of perception and reality. However, it depends on who is in the room and is only perception, so is sometimes not borne out by the hard data.

It helps to take contentious and all-absorbing local issues out onto a talking wall to avoid groups getting bogged down in the detail. However, these issues also have to be captured and addressed in some way.

The Place Standard has been helpful in a number of ways, providing positive outcomes for community engagement and empowerment, for corporate dialogue and decision making and shaping spatial policy in LDP2."

Rhona Arthur, Senior Manager (Information & Culture), North Ayrshire Council

"Whilst we initially used the tool on a fairly large scale, we have also begun to use it to drill down to more local neighbourhoods, for example Irvine.

Councillors, on reflection with other partners, did accept that, as their view was formed around a small number of constituents raising issues and complaints, the wider consensus would be more accurate."

James McHarg, Senior Manager, Participation and Empowerment, North Ayrshire Council

Find out more online

www.northayrshire.community/working-together/our-priorities

www.northayrshire.community/your-community/north-coast-cumbrae/our-local-priorities

www.northayrshire.community/your-community/kilwinning/our-local-priorities/

www.northayrshire.community/your-community/three-towns/our-local-priorities

"The sheer energy and level of debate exceeded expectations. We created our own large scale charts and a talking wall to capture the dialogue and then used the online tool to provide visual spider diagram for feedback."

Rhona Arthur
Senior Manager (Information & Culture) –
North Ayrshire Council

"Above all, the [Place Standard] process is fun and engaging, and encourages open discussion around a range of themes. The themes are readily understood by local people and the outcome of the process was widely accepted as being representative of local feeling. It also allows us to drill down to a more local neighbourhood level to get a sense of hyper-local issues and needs."

James McHarg
Senior Manager, Participation and Empowerment -
North Ayrshire Council