Training Course Tool Review

Public Engagement Tools

TABLES Project 2012: Mini reviews	
Guidance	*Using your experience and expertise, consider the following tasks in relation to the tool. It may not be possible to complete all tasks for each tool due to a lack of available information, the task not applying to the tool, etc. **Please note where this is the case by writing in the reason in the space provided**. Please use a maximum of 6 pages of A4 (excluding diagrams and appendices). **Your responses are required in the white spaces**.*
Task 1: Basic information	
Name of the tool	Connecting Communities Module (Community Champions Course)
Type of tool (list all that apply)	Learning and skills; Participatory
Group members	1. Michael Hardman
	2. Alister Scott
Please provide a brief synopsis of the tool	The Connecting Communities project was commissioned by Cannock Chase District Council in 2010 with the intentions of improving a troublesome ward – Etchinghill and the Heath – which was under their jurisdiction. Birmingham City University approached the task by creating a module in-which participants would be able to air their grievances and pursue projects: gaining knowledge from key players from within the local authority and thus providing the participants with the information to further their projects. The building of capacity and social capital was a key goal of this community driven learning experience. . These participants were to become 'community champions': volunteers who give up time to guide their community. The module was developed with the champions, essentially resulting in a course designed by those undertaking it: they were able to choose the guest speakers and recommend other visitors who they would like to visit in future sessions. Visiting speakers ranged from local authority planners, who spoke about their role in enabling projects, to councillors and other organisations who could speak about their own roles within the community. The array of visitors ultimately enabled the participants to realise how the local authority operated, and how they could approach these individuals to propel their projects forward.

The module has much wider implications, with the champions acting as a tool in their own right. The champions are individuals who can motivate collective action (Shortall, 2004). The richness of the tool lies here, with the champions able to act as motivation for others to take up a particular cause or initiative (Larkham *et al*, 2012). The creation of this role enabled community members |

to have the authority to make things happen and engage with players to push along projects. The role breaks down traditional barriers and creates a sense of greater community engagement in the decision making process.

There are various champion roles similar to the one seen in Cannock, these have been used in a variety of other similar initiatives across the West Midlands, from Birmingham's 'Community Health Champions' (see Fresh Winds, 2012) to student community champions (see BCSU, 2012). The champion is fairly similar in each context: a member of the public who has been trained to motivate and drive community action.

Task 2: Use of the tool

Position / Use	Stage	Currently used	Could be used
*If you can, please indicate which **stage(s) of the decision / policy making process** your tool is / could be used in (these stages were identified in the specification document)*	Ideas	Y	Y
	Survey	Y	Y
	Assess	Y	Y
	Policy / decision	Partly	Y
	Implement	Partly	Y
	Evaluate	N	Y
	Please add any further comments here:		

Task 3: Existing literature about the tool

Are you aware of any KEY policy and / or academic literature evaluating your tool?	Author & Date	Title Vol pages	Web link (if available)
	Larkham *et al*., (2011) Building a Bigger Society: Going Beyond the 'Usual Suspects' in Local Training Programme		
	Larkham *et al.,* (2012) Building a bigger society? The 'ups and downs' of a capacity-building programme for "community champions" in the English Midlands		
	Larkham *et al.,* (forthcoming) Building a Bigger Society: Going Beyond the 'Usual Suspects' in a Local Training Programme		
	Alcock, P. (2010) 'Building the big society: a new policy environment for the third sector in England', *Voluntary Sector Review* vol. 1 no. 3 pp. 379-389		
	Cameron, D. (2010) 'Big society' speech in Liverpool http://www.number10.gov.uk/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/07/big-society-speech-53527		
	Kisby, B. (2010) 'The big society: power to the people?', *The Political Quarterly* vol. issue 4 pp. 484-491		
	Please add any further comments here:		

Task 4: Your experience of working on the tool

Have you done any research/consultancy work on this tool in terms	The BCU team has experience developing this tool and transforming its original focus from that of an unpaid role administered for the local authority, to that of a

of its development, testing and/or evaluation? *If so, please provide an outline.*	critical friend, which works with, but also critiques the authority. The tool was tested over a 2 year period, with successful outcomes both environmentally, socially and economically. The tool has yet to be tested outside of Cannock.
Guidance	For Tasks 5-7, please also try to consider the **future** development and application of this tool in the TABLES project in your answers.

Task 5: Incorporating the ecosystem approach (EA) and ecosystem services (ES)
Please refer to the summary text about ES for concept clarification at the end of this template (appendix)

Using examples (from practice, research or consultancy), explain how EA and/or ES are currently incorporated in/by the tool	In its current for, only certain elements f EA and ES are incorporated: the champions become the tool themselves and thus drive the motivation and need for change. A recent attempt by a champion to raise awareness about a forgotten beauty spot, Etching Hill, holds clear evidence that ES have been improved. This individual attempted to embed the idea of visitor payback into the much-visited space and regenerate the area through awareness. This proved successful with the spot being transformed with new paths and signs to guide visitors on their journey.
How <u>could</u> the ecosystem approach and/or ecosystem services be (further) incorporated within the existing tool?	Since this is a learning tool, it would be relatively easy to concentrate efforts on the concepts: putting them across in a meaningful manner to those involved. Participant's projects could focus specifically on this angle for instance. Those involved on the course could practically maintain and enhance local ecosystems through their schemes. Champions could be trained to recognise the need and value of the approaches: acting as a 'vessel' to motivate others and pass on the message. The role of champion becomes particularly important in translating the abstract and alien concepts of the Ecosystem Approach and Ecosystem Services to a particular sector. The champion as a tool is rarely recognised in the literature.

Task 6: Situating the tool within priority questions/criteria arising from the scoping interviews

Explain how the tool can be situated within the priority questions/criteria that arose in the scoping interviews	**Priority question/criteria**	**Does your tool address/implement this question/criteria? Or does it have the potential if it was better integrated with an EA/ES approach?**
	Language and communication	
	1. Contribution to aiding the development of shared vocabulary within which principles of EA and ES can be shared with multiple stakeholders across built and/or natural environment	This could prove a strong element of the tool: the learning centric approach offers potential for embedding EA and ES thinking in with the module. The role of the champion, an individual usually at the heart of a community, allows for the transfer of knowledge in a meaningful manner.
	2. Capacity of the tool to develop shared understandings of the many identities and values of places from the perspectives of multiple visitors, residents and	If the concepts could be put across in an appropriate manner, this is perhaps the strongest element of this tool. The tool relies on local residents from multiple backgrounds and therefore offers a forum for

		businesses	embedding this thinking in the public domain.
	3.	Capacity of the tool to improve or enable engagement across different publics so avoiding the usual suspect problem	If an approach was taken to incorporate EA and ES, this tool could be very useful in engaging those usually out of touch. The creation of a champion role will almost certainly enable engagement with those who would not be classed as the usual suspects. However this will depend on the recruitment role and could inadvertently lead to the same usual suspects. In Cannock we specifically recruited outside the usual suspects.
	Learning from experience/pedagogy		
	4.	Capacity of the tool to help reveal and value 'hidden' assets that are not recognised by communities or publics that use them	The education angle of this tool holds huge potential. There is the opportunity to directly influence both key figures and members of the public throughout the module. Course content can be designed for maximum impact. The champion role itself also offers potential, predominantly through getting ideas to audiences in their own field. The Cannock example allowed hidden assets to become incorporated into community led projects.
	5.	Extent to which tool is building on other tools or EA/ES progress	The tool is effectively putting into practise what has been preached: research transitions to reality through the projects.
	6.	Extent to which tool is locally derived or grounded or can be adjusted to closely reflect 'local' context. Is the tool suitable for an open source approach?	This tool is entirely flexible, with the programme constructed around the locale. For instance, in this context there was a specific focus on the ward: attempted to improve the area through the actions of the participants in partnership with the key service providers where appropriate. .
	7.	Extent to which the tool is open to interpretation and application in a variety of forms (that reflect 'cultural' differences)	Flexibility is the key attribute of this tool: the module can be arranged to reflect a variety of cultures. This module then impacts on the champion's views and how they can better inform their communities.
	Developing and selecting tools		
	8.	Is the tool dependent on a specific funding source? How onerous is the application procedure? What are the chances of success?	This tool was dependant on a government scheme, which was approximately £20,000 - £50,000 worth of funding. Nevertheless, there are many funding pots encouraging this direct engagement with the public. Universities have the potential to develop such modules as part of wider adult education. The role of the Ecosystem Knowledge Network is important here.
	9.	Does skills development (essential or optional?) and support exist for the tool or is there a body to ensure the optimal and correct use of it?	The correct use of the tool is monitored by the institute or module leaders. There is no 'official' correct use of this tool: incarnations of this tool will vary significantly from locale to locale.

	10. Extent to which current statutory hooks can be exploited by the tool or will benefit the quality or application of the tool (e.g. NNPF's duty to cooperate, SUDS, ecol. networks)	The Duty to Cooperate; the need to recognise the value of ecosystem services; Localism all provide hooks that a course can use to draw participants from both community and agencies. It is this symbiosis that made the Cannock tool so powerful.

Informing resultant policies effectively

	11. Extent to which the tool informs or improves policies/decisions. What does the tool cover? (full range of positive and negative economic, social and environment impacts / tradeoffs?)	The capacity building component rom the perspective of the community and the decision makers working together is potent. Using selected community priorities improved understandings and conflict management was enhanced in a spirit of cooperation that was markedly absent from the start.
	12. How does the tool link into the planning system (applications and processes). At what cost / extra burden?	The module approach allows local communities to engage better with planning processes. For example the champions were used in a focus group to help the local planning authority to test new supplementary planning guidance. They are equally able to build on direct communication lines through key local councillors who helped interface with them as part of the module learning experience. This builds resilience for future public consultation events.

Delivering management objectives

	13. Suitability or capacity of the tool to assist with managing visitor needs and pressures within protected areas / the considered area? How?	This is entirely dependent on the project chosen by the participants. Champions can be used in this role depending on the locale and nature of the issues. Participant projects can provide a powerful learning experience and opportunity space. One participant has significantly improved the recreation value of a local beauty spot which was subjected to dumping and drugs.

Local ownership/new governance

	14. To what extent can the tool assist in developing statutory plans (local and management plans) and improve ownership and use by publics?	The tool can be used as a forum to distribute such information to the champions. Champions can then take an active role in the development of such plans. The participants from the Cannock course have assumed much more confidence and ability to engage with decision makers and help bring about some change.
	15. To what extent does/could the tool contribute to a new form of community governance in management of the environment?	The tool has huge potential here: there is the opportunity for direct input from public members towards the management of the environment. The champion role is key: it offers the opportunity of a different style of environmental management.

Improved tools: understanding flows, interconnections and spatial issues	
16. Capacity to improve spatial understandings of the flows and interactions of various ecosystem services between sectors and at different scales	Champions can be told about the value of these concepts; however this would have to be put across in an approachable manner: participants are generally from non-academic backgrounds or those not familiar with such terminology.
17. Capacity of the tool to reconcile assessments of options and benefits across different scales (and sectors)	There is potential for this. The module allowed the champions to see the different influences across scales on their community. Understanding this picture was key to them thinking about how to work on their particular project.
18. Extent to which the tools is capable or can be manipulated to work across sectoral and administrative boundaries	The tool can breakdown boundaries amongst its participants: getting individuals from a variety of cultures and classes to liaise and help one another. Similarly, the champion role eventually adopted could see these individuals working together in a more meaningful manner, across boundaries previously not crossed.
19. Extent to which the tool can handle data shortages and gaps (or is effectiveness considerably compromised?)	A strong emphasis is needed on understanding the locale's issues before this tool can be implemented. This will help frame the module and thus the champion roles created.
20. To what extent has/could the tool put landscape/nature conservation and designated species/sites on the radar (positively or resulting in resentment?)	This is again entirely project dependent; the tool's flexibility could take this into account. The champion role offers huge potential here: positively impacting on the landscape, such as the situation described earlier with the Etching Hill beauty spot.

Please add any further comments here:

Task 7: A SWOT analysis of the tool	
Referring back to the relevant policy and academic literature (listed in Task 3), plus your own expertise (listed in Task 4) and the way in which the tool is situated within the priority questions/criteria (listed in Task 6), please complete a summary SWOT analysis ensuring that each point is well justified	**Strengths** *(of the tool in delivering intended outcomes)* • Encourages members of the public to communicate with organisations and the local authority. • A stand alone module designed from the bottom up and using decision makers as part of it can help build capacity, confidence and mutual understanding. • Explicit involvement of decision makers in a course as experts but also implicit role as learners achieves major benefits. • Promotes community ownership of issues affecting their locale: including environmental issues and public input into the management of the environment. • The champion role creates a sense of greater community ownership and engagement. • Champions are able to communicate meaningfully to community members, which could prove crucial for concepts such as EA and ES. • This tool, depending on its interpretation, could produce multiple benefits. • The Cannock model engaged a range of age groups and social backgrounds maximising overall transferability across the community.
	Weaknesses *(factors that detract from the tool's ability to deliver intended outcomes)* • The design of the module is crucial. • Research required prior to the tools implementation. • Staff time delivering the module. • Difficulty recruiting members of the public for a module. Incentives needed (i.e. academic outputs in the form of qualifications). • Recruiting the correct people for the champion role: there is no use having a reclusive member of a community occupying this position for instance; equally just using the usual suspects will limit applicability to those hard to reach groups.
	Opportunities *(consider opportunities for application of the ecosystem approach and services)* • Huge opportunity to embed the EA and ES concepts within the public domain: the tool could focus specifically on translating these elements into participant led projects. . • It may be possible to directly involve the champions in assessments, in effect getting them 'hands on' with the concepts. • Massive potential to improve schemes and start new projects which could directly impact on the locale's environments.

Threats *(factors which negatively affect the tool and its outcomes)*

Classify these by their "seriousness" and "probability of occurrence" in the table below, and pay particular attention to the threats associated with potential use of ecosystem approach/ecosystem services.

Threat	Seriousness (high, medium, low)	Probability of occurrence (high, medium, low)
Cost of staff and time, could disrupt programme.	High	High
Public interest diminishing over time	High	Medium
Lack of engagement from local authority	Medium	Medium

Please add further comments here:

Guidance	*Please now use the remainder of the document (box below) to make any general comments, observations or analyses of the tool*
Further comments	

| **Appendix** | | | |
| Summary text to provide conceptual clarification on Ecosystem Services | | | |

Etching Hill Project Timetable

Wk No.	Date	Session 1 (19:00 – 20:00)	Session 2 (20:00 – 21:00)
1	06/10/10	Introductions and welcome by the academic team • *Virtual tour around the ward using a 'Planning for Real' exercise.* • *Identification of issues through a respondent-led narrative.*	What is a community champion? (Explore the differing interpretations) • *Identification of individual projects and tutors.* • *BCU Resource Pack and presentation of documentary research about issues in the ward.*
2	13/10/10	Governance of Etching Hill and the Heath • *Use the concept of a family tree to capture the groups, agencies, meetings and documents that affect the ward.*	Key players/organisations in the community • *Identify people in the ward that the participants would like to speak to about their roles/responsibilities in the community.* • *Participants are to present their own experiences with organisations/people.*
3	20/10/10	Understanding the principal public authority, institutions and associated meetings that affect the ward and community cohesion • *Community strategy presentation.* • *LDF Core Strategy presentation.* • *Community Forum.*	Understanding document influence and preparation for week 4 • *Review documents with views as to how they can influence communities.* • *Brief on week 4 question time and preparation of questions.*

4	27/10/10	Question time 1
		
		  • Five members on the panel:
		  ➢ Local Councillor
		  ➢ AONB Officer
		  ➢ Police Representative
		  ➢ CVS Representative
		  ➢ County Council Principal Economic Research Officer	

5	03/11/10	Question time 2
		
		• Three members on the panel:
		  ➢ Staffordshire County Council Partnership's Manager
		  ➢ The District's LSP manager
		  ➢ Community Safety Partnership manager	

neat.ecosystemsknowledge.net

6	17/11/10	Developing community projects and application forms • *Partnerships.* • *Changing role of grants: CVS and local authority.* • *Examples forms and experiences from the academic team/CVS.*	The community toolkit • *General explanation of the toolkit.* • *Work through points 1-5 in groups.*	
7	24/11/10	Community toolkit continued • *Review points 1-5 from previous session.* • *Talk through point 6-10.* • *County Council Partnerships Manager to explain funding, evidence needed etc.*		
8	01/12/10	What makes an initiative successful? • *The example of Todmorden, visiting speaker to direct group.* • *Visiting speaker from Buriton to talk about their initiative.*	Assessment • *Assessment 1 and 2 to be presented to participants.*	
9	08/12/10	Snow glorious snow CANCELLED		
10	15/12/10	Learning from experience • *Former Groundwork employee to talk about previous experiences with community champion projects.* • *What went right and what failed.*	Assessment consultation *Participants to review assessments and make any suggestions on how it could be altered.*	
11	22/12/10	Assessment 1 PARTICIPANT LED workshop with remote staff support. • *Participants to liaise with one another and complete the toolkit.*		
12	05/01/11	Presentation preparation • *BCU student support representative to brief participants on good presentation skills.* • *Academic team to give further guidance on presentations.*	Discussion • *BCU team to discuss exit strategy with participants.* • *Questions and answer session in relation to presentations and exit strategy.*	
13	12/01/11	Presentations to Steering group, academic team and other participants • *Participants have 10 minutes to present their projects.* • *The community toolkit to be handed in.*		

neat.ecosystemsknowledge.net