

‘Big-up’ your high street – local economy and enterprise visit

Friday 20th May 2016 11am to 4pm, Open Market, London Road, Brighton

Introduction

What makes regeneration interventions work in some areas, but not others. What do local business people think? How to avoid simply gentrifying an area. What lessons can we learn and what pitfalls can be avoided.

This event was for people from Big Local areas to visit a thriving area of Brighton, its acclaimed Open Market and find out how an ex-Portas pilot area [London Road, Brighton](#) has started to overcome issues similar to their own.

Speakers included:

- Alan Buck, Major Projects Manager, Brighton and Hove City Council
- Sarah Lord Soares, Community 21, University of Brighton
- Judith Burns and Trevor Long, Pacta Now (market stall holders)

This short report covers the main features and outputs of the day. However, to get a fuller flavour of the event, please click on the link to www.community21.org to view an online and interactive map created after the event.

Event description and highlights

London Road Regeneration – an overview – Alan Buck, Major Projects Manager, Brighton and Hove City Council

The event started with a scene setting talk from Alan who is a land-use planner employed by the city council and has overseen the Master Plan and subsequent regeneration of the London Road area. He described some of the challenges of the area including the number of charity and £ shops but also the triumphs such as the new small park created near St Bartholomew’s Church which includes free public wi-fi access, and the new landscaping and skate park on the nearby Levels park. During these times of public sector austerity one of the most effective measures has been de-cluttering the high street, simply removing the railings and other redundant street furniture such as old phone boxes to give a much more open and pedestrian friendly feel. This has been relatively cheap but changed the whole mood of the street scene.

Small independent traders have come in and invested in the area including entrepreneurs from the Brighton Lanes. There is a very active Area Action Team which is a partnership between the police, traders, the council and local churches amongst others. The area has become a ‘destination’ for specialist and budget goods with even the charity shops serving a need. While the area started out with empty shops and wanted to secure temporary use, rather than none at all, this is now no longer an issue. Other key initiatives have been opening up an east/west access from the railway station which intersects with the London Road and has really helped to increase footfall. Parking surprisingly has not proven the biggest issue with a new multi-story car park seldom full – the area is really well served by public transport and there is a lot of cycle parking. Marketing has also played a big part with most of the £80k from the Portas Pilot going on this. Other innovations included – when consulting on their master plan – taking an empty



shop unit next to the Co-op for an exhibition that was attended by 1000 people over 3 days. They also used walkabouts with key stakeholders to identify issues and develop solutions. They had no overall/overarching stakeholder group but lots of project teams on transport, environment and planning – but talking to each other. It wasn't big money – it was done on the cheap – but they were lucky to have two universities, digital and other entrepreneurs and everywhere else [in Brighton] was full!

The first year/s in business – triumphs and frustrations – Judith Burns and Trevor Long, [Pacta Now](#), Open Market stall-holders

Judith and Trevor gave a talk about their experience and insights into running a business in the area. The Open Market is a real mix of 100 year-old businesses and others that aren't even a year old. There is a mix and competition ie two fruit and veg – one traditional, the other organic. They have had to deal with negativity about the area but on the other hand they have been welcomed as a 'high-end' retailer with their specialist Eastern European wines retailing at up to £45 a bottle as well as cheaper wines and delicatessen specialities. Some days they retail £0.00 so they have to have faith.

A big frustration is the hours – 9am to 5pm weekdays and 10am to 4pm on Saturdays and some shops don't open on a Sunday. They feel the market should be open from 7am until 7pm to cater for commuters on the way to and from the station but there is a conflict with the residents in nearby flats. Other ideas include free wi-fi – customers expect that. Having said that they had a very successful Cultural Day of Diversity on 19th May and other events that bring footfall but they avoid holding these on Saturdays which are always busy anyway. Even opening one evening a week would be a big boost. Other tips:

- Competition is OK (two green grocers, two butchers) as it increases choice.
- Social media is very important: Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest.
- Competitions that bring people in (on social media)
- People (traders) help each other. Older ones with experience, newer ones with technology.
- Banter is great and don't get rid of older traders as people will come in to buy eggs as well as wines!
- Ideally open later or only on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday and outside normal shop hours. Opening on Sundays has allowed them to cater for restaurants.
- Beware not opening consistently.

www.community21.org – a tool for asset mapping and more - Sarah Lord-Soares, Project Manager, University of Brighton

The latter half of the day was to be a walk-about or asset mapping exercise. Sarah described how the information that was found out could be displayed on-line using digital mapping tools. The tools were originally designed to enable communities to manage the seven stages of developing a Neighbourhood Development Plan in collaboration with Action in Rural Sussex (AIRS) but has been developed into a map to show any type of community project. Colour coded dots on a map are linked to photos, links and information. They have tapped into the technology to engage young people in community led planning and development. Software enables children to 'age' and then to imagine what the challenges of older people might be in their community. Workshops in Lewes involved 100 children over four days and involved them using Minecraft to redesign their community building virtual MacDonalds and skate parks.





An introduction to asset mapping and briefing for walk-about – Nick Wates, Author and Community Planning Consultant

Participants were divided up into groups of three or four. Each group was provided with a clipboard with maps of the area and a worksheet with three headings:

- Things that make you happy
- Things that make you sad
- Things you will take back to your own neighbourhood.

Groups were allocated different areas to cover and encouraged to walk slowly around the area and discuss ‘what you see and learn as you complete the worksheet’, and to take photos and video clips for sharing.

Their results are listed here:

		
Old bank made into a café	Poundland	Turning old bank into a café
Ecclectic	Crossing the road	Independent shop alongside chains
Independent ethical supermarket	Homeless people	Increasing footfall by having chains
Hardly any vacant shops/bustling	Empty shops	Discounts for students
Get anything in this street	Planning allowed unattractive buildings to be built	Wide pavements
Street art	Fall out from street drinkers and drugs	Decluttering
Buzzy	Litter/dirty	Small independent retailers
Independent pubs (freehouse)	Vacant units boarded up	Mix of businesses
Open spaces – space to do stuff		Funky premises
Playground		
St Ann’s Park/Providence Place	Litter in Providence Place	Information posts
Street art	Tagging	Table tennis tables
Mixture of old and new	Empty market spaces	Pop up gallery





😊	☹️	💡
Information post	Shops closed	
Space all being used	Air quality	
Niche products	All but one unit closed (for lunch?)	Produce – sausages and cheese!
Table tennis in centre	Constraints on traders	Pacta Connect (visit)
£5 per stall per day	Cold and windy in market	Progression for young/all traders
Adjacent park (the Level)	Unused stalls	

Afterwards we combined the smaller into larger groups to discuss and prioritise their top 5 items in each category.

Feedback and actions from workshops and tours

😊 **HAPPY**

1. Graffiti + Art
2. Turning negatives to positives
(creatives uses + being adaptable)
3. Decluttering / open spaces / Businesses
room on footbox
4. Mix National + Independent traders.
5. All AGES / Busy / Busting / Mix of people.

☹️ **Sad**

1. Homeless / Empty accommodation / street
Drinkers
2. Vacant units boarded up / not dressed.
3. Grubby / Heavy traffic
4. Betting shops / charity shop.
5. Unattractive buildings / planning rules

📦 To take home.....

1. Maps
2. Street Decluttering
3. Mix of chains + independents
4. Wider pavements / cycle lanes
5. Fun / Funky / ART / Trees /
Changes of use Bank → Cafe!
Church → theatre.





GROUP 4

LIKES	DISLIKES
St Ann's Park	LITTER
STREET ART	TAGGING
SPACES ALL BEING USED	EMPTY MARKET SPACES
MIXTURE OF Old + NEW	MARKET STALLS THAT WERE EMPTY
INFORMATION POSTS TABLE TENNIS Cheap Trial stalls Green spaces	Air Quality CLOSED

Other ideas/observations on the day:

- Spruce up squad for empty shops (Eastbourne)
- Creative workshops closed and disconnect with market traders – different conditions and different hours.
- Central stalls have progressed to shops around the edge.
- Maybe stay in original groups rather than mixing people up for the walkabout.
- Give more time for the walkabouts.
- More involvement [interaction] with café owners.
- Have the man back from the Council [Alan] back in the afternoon.
- Invite speaker from Business Improvement District over to Eastbourne.
- [Need] warts and all – conflicts are glossed over.

Evaluation of the event

HOW DO YOU RATE THE DAY?

SPEAKERS - 1 ————— 5 +

FACILITATORS - 1 ————— 5 +
(JIM + NICK)

LUNCH - 1 ————— 5 +

WALK ABOUT - 1 ————— 5 +

TABLETOP WORKSHOP - 1 ————— 5 +

OVERALL - 1 ————— 5 +

COMMENTS / IDEAS FOR FUTURE - POST IT!

STICK MONA





A big thank you to all the speakers and participants

Speakers' biographies

Alan Buck works as a Major Projects Manager for Brighton & Hove City Council, helping to deliver a range a regeneration projects in the city. He is also a chartered town planner and has over 27 years' experience working in the field of planning , at various times managing teams engaged on local plans, structure plans and waste plans; leading work on a range of policy documents, planning briefs and masterplans and working with the community in delivering local area improvements.

Nick Wates is a leading authority on community involvement in planning and architecture. As an independent writer and practitioner he has participated in, and chronicled, its development for over 25 years. Managing Director of Nick Wates Associates Limited, Community Planning Consultants. Publisher and Site Editor of Communityplanning.net. Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. Chair of Hastings Trust.

Judith Burns and Trevor Long, the partners behind specialist wine import company Pacta Connect, were one of the last of the retail units to arrive at Brighton Open Market. Alongside handmade wines that they source personally from Central & Eastern Europe and then wholesale to high-end restaurants and independent wine merchants across the UK, they also sell artisan dried goods and deli produce that they find locally, around Britain and on their travels in Europe. Judith and Trevor will talk about the triumphs and frustrations of their first 18 months in business at Brighton Open Market.

Sarah Lord Soares, Community 21 Project Manager, University of Brighton

She has been managing the Community21 project for the University of Brighton since March 2014 providing a broad range of services to groups such as Wealden District Council and Health Projects in East Sussex. Over the last 20 years, Sarah has worked in the third sector in London with a focus on capacity building organisations use of technology. Loving the benefits that technology and digital bring to the sector she has volunteered for many projects near her home village, training, sharing and implementing tech tools.

Participant list:

Name	Big Local Area, Group or organisation
1. Alan Buck	Brighton and Hove City Council
2. Ann Cuthbert	Ramsey Million Big Local
3. Carl Kroon	Chatham Arches Big Local (Chatham)
4. Carolyn Perry	Wormolt and White City Big Local
5. Heidi Lane	Devonshire West Big Local (Eastbourne)
6. Helen Walker	Planning School, University of Brighton
7. Jaine Jolly	Brighton and Hove City Council





8. Jim Boot	Big Local Rep and Co-facilitator
9. Keith Ridley	Eastbourne Business Improvement District
10. Kumaran Palaniandry	Wormolt and White City Big Local
11. Lindsay Robinson	Arches Big Local (Chatham)
12. Luke Johnson	Eastbourne Chamber
13. Mazhar Ellahi	Greenmoor Big Local (Bradford)
14. Nick Wates	North East Hastings Big Local (Co-facilitator)
15. Nicky Woolard	Devonshire West Big Local (Eastbourne)
16. Rebecca Luff	Unltd/Star People Assessor
17. Renae Laybourn	Grays Big Local (Essex)
18. Rob Groves	Grays Big Local (Essex)
19. Saki Shiira	University of Brighton
20. Sarah Lord Soares	University of Brighton (Community 21)
21. Simon Vincent	Plaistow South Big Local (East London)
22. Steve Perez	Arches Big Local (Chatham)
23. Toyah Banghelli	Wormolt and White City Big Local
24. Jane Freund	North East Hastings Big Local (Assistant facilitator)

