

planning for real



Planning for Real® (PFR) is a technique, developed originally by the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation (NIF), is designed to provide a hands-on, non-threatening experience to community members. Participants take part in a workshop setting using a 3D model of the planning area (often constructed by the participants themselves from cardboard and polystyrene) on which they put cards or other symbols representing issues, problems or suggestions for actions that they would like to see. Group meetings can follow this with the community to sort out and prioritise the suggestions so that a profile of community needs can be drawn up. When used fully, 'Planning for Real' is a complete process of community involvement containing many of the elements needed to facilitate effective capacity building in local communities. 'Forests for Real' is an adaptation of PFR using options cards specifically related to forestry issues and was developed by forest staff in Fort Augustus Forest District.

Resources & requirements

Skills

- Organisers need the ability to generate interest among the community to attend and to allow people to lead the event.
- A member of the community who is not associated with staff can be a good leader.
- Active listening techniques and meeting facilitation skills are important.

Equipment

- The PFR session is built around a version of a clear model of the planning area.
- A neutral location, e.g. a public meeting space, is preferable.
- 'Planning for Real' pack (available from NIF) provides information and materials.

Time

- The meeting itself may take a few hours.
- Preparation to ensure that people will participate and follow-up may involve considerable time.
- Responding to the ideas generated and providing direct feedback often involves additional meetings.

Costs

- Generally between £500 (covering venue and materials) and £15,000 (covering a trained facilitator for 2–3 months prior to the event) (Source: New Economics Foundation, 1998).

Useful sources of information

Books

- Participation works! 21 techniques of community participation for the 21st century. New Economics Foundation (1998). CD-Rom edition 1999. Available from: www.neweconomics.org/gen/z_sys_publications.aspx

Web

- The Guide to Effective Participation by David Wilcox: www.partnerships.org.uk/guide

Training

- NIF: tel. 01952 590 777 or www.nif.co.uk/index.html
- The Prince's Foundation: 020 7613 8500 or www.princes-foundation.org/news/on.html

Case study

- Staff at Fort Augustus Forest District have conducted these exercises with good experience. Ae Forest District and Thames Chase Community Forest (East Anglia Forest District) have tried similar events.

LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT

- INFORMING: ★
 CONSULTING: ★★★
 INVOLVING: ★★
 PARTNERSHIP:

STRENGTHS

- A model is much more easily understood than a map.
- Using suggestion cards means that ideas can be put forward without needing to be articulate or self-confident.
- Vocal or articulate people are prevented from dominating the input.
- The technique helps to increase the feeling of ownership in any outcomes among the community members.
- Appeals to people of all ages.

WEAKNESSES

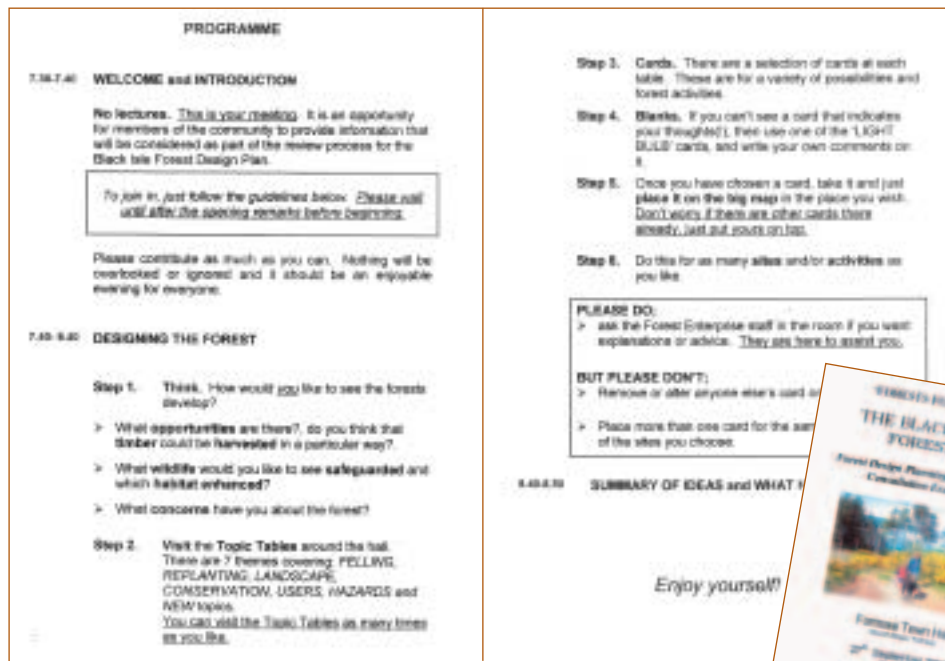
- A reasonable amount of preparation time is needed to ensure efficient attendance.
- Meeting organisers may need exercise restraint to allow all community members to participate fully.
- PFR done poorly can raise expectations beyond the level at which outcomes can be delivered.
- Many more than 50 participants in any one session can be unworkable.

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 ment can have
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 validity. It will
 require periodic
 review, in the
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A programme leaflet for a 'Forests for Real' event (Inverness Forest District).



Suggestion cards placed on a standard FE stock map during a Forest for Real event (Lochaber Forest District).

