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| Name of project/group |
| Historic Towns Forum (HTF) |
| Type of project |
| Community empowerment |
| Location |
| National |
| Who was involved |
| The Historic Towns Forum recognised a need among its membership, and wider interested communities, for understanding the historic environment in the context of the changes brought about by Localism and the Big Society. It has worked with partners and members (Lawyers, Local Government, Planners and Historic Specialists, who donated their expertise and time) to provide a series of ongoing dissemination events and guidance documents explaining what the effects of the Localism Bill could be for community heritage. In particular, the HTF has worked to explain the implications of Neighbourhood Forums, Neighbourhood Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders, Community Assets and Community Right to Buy. |
| Achievements |
| <p>Without this ongoing programme many interested parties would not have had access to the advice of legal, government, conservation and heritage professionals in such an easily accessible format. This has equipped several civic and voluntary groups, as well as interested individuals, with the knowledge and appetite to be more fully involved with the Localism agenda as it will affect them and their communities.</p> <p>It is currently difficult to say what the programme's direct impact/difference will be as it is ongoing and the legislation not yet passed. It has however shown that communities, societies, and interested individuals have differing levels of knowledge and understanding of the incoming legislation and its implications; that there is a clear need for accessible guidance on the issues and that HTF and its partners have provided a service which will enable communities to become better engaged with their local heritage.</p> |
| Future plans |
| It is planned that as legislation develops and becomes law the programme will devolve into smaller community-based workshops focusing on particular community-heritage affected by the Bill and related issues (assets, right to buy, Neighbourhood Development Plans and so on) to develop the capacity of community groups and other interested parties. It is envisaged that this capacity building will lead to improvements in the conservation and understanding of local areas' built heritage, and in the ability of communities to have a say in how their heritage issues are handled. |
| Lessons Learnt |
| <p>The main lessons learned are:</p> <p>To start at the beginning – understand that groups being given guidance will have different levels of knowledge and appreciate having things explained to them in clear and practical terms. Legalise and legislation can be full of unfamiliar terminology, and groups will want guidance that relates directly to their own experience and heritage.</p> <p>Be positive – ultimately groups will want to engage with the Big Society – this is an opportunity for communities - give them the tools to engage and succeed with enthusiasm, while being honest about the potential difficulties of the process.</p> |
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