



Annual review

2009-2010



Planning Aid provides free, independent and professional planning advice to community organisations and individuals who cannot afford professional fees so that they can engage effectively with the planning system.

Planning Aid is not part of central or local government, but is an independent source of advice and information which complements the assistance given by Local Authorities.

In addition to its **Advice Service**, Planning Aid provides a **Community Planning** service which aims to raise awareness and increase understanding about the planning system within disadvantaged communities, thus helping groups and individuals to influence the future development of their local area.

Yorkshire Planning Aid (YPA) covers the Yorkshire and Humber Region, and is one of nine regional services operating in England, all of which are part of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), a registered charity.

2

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Chair's review

This year has been a very good vintage as far as Yorkshire Planning Aid is concerned. As the rest of this Annual Report reveals, 2009-10 has been a very active one for us all – whether our small but dynamic staff team, very ably led by Jacqui, or the much larger cohort of volunteers. Working very well together we have achieved most of our challenging targets.

We have also worked hard with many of the region's Local Authorities, a number of whom are still engaged with their new Local Development Framework documents.

Yorkshire Planning Aid would not be able to survive without the support of all those volunteers who dedicate their valuable time and expertise to help our clients. Some volunteers are able to assist with cases or community planning events on a regular basis, others may only be able to help a couple of times per year, but every contribution is welcome. A downturn in my professional work load has meant I had more time to give to Planning Aid last year, both community planning and casework. In one instance I dealt with a planning enforcement case in Lincolnshire, something I was asked to assist our East Midlands Planning Aid colleagues with – a good example of Planning Aid services working together.

YPA doesn't live in a vacuum, of course; we are affected, as everyone else is, by the ongoing economic difficulties, although some economic indicators are beginning to show a positive trend. Clearly the financial situation both nationally and internationally is very strained at the moment and we can expect cuts in public sector expenditure. What opportunities there are for Planning Aid we do not know but 'hope springs eternal'. What is clear is that the need for Planning Aid will not diminish and could even increase; communities and individuals around the region will continue to need our support and guidance in engaging with the planning system.

I finish then, as last year, with a very big thank you to the staff team, and in particular to all the YPA volunteers, for delivering a high quality Planning Aid service which is much valued by its customers.

Ken Burley
Chair, Yorkshire Planning Aid



Who's who



Staff

Jacqui Baines, Regional Manager
Amanda Cartwright, Administrator
Mike Dando, Community Planner
Jim Rogers, Planning Advisor
Andy Wood, Planning & Community Advisor

Planning for BME Communities Project staff

Lynsey Brownnutt, Community Planner (to 31 March 2010)
Debbie Holland, Community Planner (maternity cover 1 November 2008 – 31 October 2009)

YPA Regional Advisory Panel

Ten of YPA's volunteers are part of an Advisory Panel for the service, providing support and advice for the staff team about the delivery of the service in the region and the development of local initiatives. Three of these volunteers also sit on the RTPi Yorkshire Regional Activities Committee, which helps to provide a link between YPA's work and the wider RTPi membership in the region. The Advisory Panel meets at the Leeds office in an evening every three months. Further places are available on the Advisory Panel if any representatives of partner organisations feel they have skills or knowledge which will help the service to meet its objectives.

Regional Advisory Panel 2009-10

Ken Burley (Chair)

Ken Burley & Associates

Edward Wills (Vice Chair)

Retired

Richard Borrows

Ward Associates

Alan Mitchell

Retired

Bob Pritchard (to March 2010)

Pinsent Masons LLP

Harvey Pritchard

Pritchard Associates/Leeds Metropolitan University

Yasin Raja

Government Office for Yorkshire & the Humber

Jillian Rann

Leeds City Council

Tony Ray

Hon Sec RTPi Yorkshire

Margaret Whewell

Burnley Metropolitan Borough Council



Clockwise from top left: Amanda Cartwright, Mike Dando, Jacqui Baines, Andy Wood, Jim Rogers.



Lynsey Brownnutt



Debbie Holland



Ken Burley



Volunteers

Yorkshire Planning Aid volunteers are vital in assisting the service to meet its objectives, and the number of volunteers in the Yorkshire and Humber region has increased yet again. 53 new volunteers signed up with YPA in 2008-09, against a target of 11, which gives a total of 161 registered volunteers across the region as at 31 March 2010.

YPA's volunteers have a wide range of skills, experience and expertise that staff members can draw on to support their work. All corporate RTPI members who are registered with Planning Aid can give advice to clients, no matter what their employment status. Those who are licentiate members, non RTPI members, or student planners assist with casework research. And everyone can help with community planning activities – volunteers are assigned roles at events according to their skills and experience.

Over the year we have relied on volunteer support at most of our community events, and in several cases volunteers have led and delivered sessions without a staff presence at all. At some of the larger events we have required a small army of volunteers to facilitate group discussions, take notes, or be available to guide participants on how to make comments. We are grateful for the support and commitment of our volunteers, and we are glad to read from their feedback that they enjoy their involvement in our work and that it helps them to improve their understanding of community engagement.

4

“ I enjoyed interacting with the public and hearing their views on planning.

“ I liked working with young people and the challenge of gaining and maintaining their attention, it forced me to think about how the plan is relevant to their lives and experiences.

“ It was interesting to hear the views of people with disabilities and others representing them.

“ While I expected some of the issues raised, others surprised me. I think that the event has given me a valuable insight into the way planning policies, particularly some well-intentioned contemporary ideas, can affect these groups of people.

“ Great to see how the group realised that planning affected them and for them to get really interested in the case study exercise.

Volunteer training

Volunteers have benefited from a number of training opportunities throughout the year aimed at improving their skills and knowledge in current planning issues or community engagement.

In April seven volunteers accompanied YPA staff to the National Planning Aid Conference in Edinburgh. Volunteer **Morgan Stringer** wrote the report below...



Morgan (far right) plus other YPA staff and volunteers

“I was lucky enough to attend the 2 day Planning Aid annual conference in Edinburgh 6-7 April 2009. The theme of the conference was to explore the role that Planning Aid can play in helping to build the sustainable communities of the future. Planning Aid volunteers and staff came together from across the UK, bringing a variety of experience and knowledge to the event. Delegates included members from the private sector, local and central government, charities, students and retired professionals, who still give generously of their time.

**What our
volunteers
said...**

“There were many interesting speakers from academia, The Planning Inspectorate and Communities and Local Government, plus two Scottish MPs. The debates during the conference were interesting and varied looking at issues such as local food sourcing, Eco Towns and mediation in planning. There were also updates from Planning Aid Scotland, Wales and London on the exciting work they are currently involved with in their areas.

“Of course the location of the conference was fantastic, being just at the edge of the city, directly under the imposing Arthur’s Seat. We were also treated to a wonderful evening meal in the magnificent Playfair Library - an historic building of the University of Edinburgh. This was a wonderfully social event and a fantastic opportunity for any volunteer, offering insight into the role of Planning Aid across the UK, and a chance to share experiences with a broad variety of professionals. Get your names down for next year!”



Volunteers at Facilitation Skills training

Other training sessions during the year included:

- **Facilitation Skills** | A review of the basic tools for facilitating discussion groups, but particularly looking at the ways to engage young people in discussions about their local area.
- **Regional Planning** – led by Harriet Fisher from Local Government Yorkshire & the Humber | A chance to explore the links between the RSS and LDFs/Planning Applications, and the role YPA might play in helping local communities engage with planning at this level.
- **National Policy Statements** and the new system for dealing with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects | This session was led by Sue Manns, new National Planner within the National Planning Aid for England team.
- **Lessons learned through the BME Project** | An evening session to share the experiences of YPA’s Planning for BME Communities Project.

We also held our inaugural Annual Review meeting this year. We invited YPA volunteers, planners from across the region, and community organisations to hear about the work we had done over the year. We also had an excellent presentation from Paul O’Neill, an Investigator from the Local Government Ombudsman office in York.



Planning advice

Key achievements for the service for 2009-10...

- Planning Advisors, Jim Rogers and Andy Wood, dealt with **379** enquiries, an increase of over 10% from last year.
- **193** of our enquiries were eligible for the full Planning Aid service, compared to 182 last year. There is still work to be done to highlight the availability of the service amongst our target client groups, and publicity campaigns during 2010-11 aim to improve awareness amongst those groups.
- **84** cases were dealt with by YPA volunteers, often with two or three volunteers working together, and some of the cases requiring support over several weeks or months. Again, this is an increase of volunteer involvement compared with last year.

Case studies

Some of the recurring issues dealt with by the Advice Service over the year are similar to last year:

- Concerns about planning applications for wind turbines and waste sites;
- Community groups anxious to find ways to protect open space;
- Enquiries from members of Gypsy and Traveller communities about planning applications or enforcement issues.

However, there has been a wide range of other queries, including helping sports groups to apply for planning permission for a variety of sporting facilities; a community radio station needing advice about regulations for a new antenna; and several residents groups wanting to make representations about supermarket developments. Three cases are explained in more detail on these pages.

CASE STUDY

Unauthorised development

We took on the case of a disabled man who wanted to object to unauthorised development overlooking his home. A developer had started to build houses that would give views from windows and balconies into the rear windows of our client's house, and overlook his back garden. Being disabled, our client was very reliant on the amenity space around his dwelling. The plans as approved by the Council had not taken account of underground services and the buildings were being constructed without planning permission in a revised position. The impact on our client's home had been increased as a result of the land being raised and three storey dwellings being built. A revised plan proposed different house types, but the only changes that the clients could see were insertion of frosted glass screens on the balconies.

Our volunteer supported the client for almost a year. He met the family on site and helped in discussions with a Ward Councillor and the MP. He contacted the relevant planning officer and wrote to the Council on behalf of the clients. During this time the building was completed, but the application for retrospective planning permission was unsuccessful. Our client and volunteer are awaiting notice of what the house builder will do to rectify the problem and whether the Council will take enforcement action.

CASE STUDY

Installation of ticket barriers

York Environment Forum approached us for advice in relation to an application for installation of modern ticket barriers within York station. The station is a Grade II* listed building from the Victorian period located within a conservation area. The Forum had done a good amount of research themselves, but needed advice from two YPA volunteers on the relevant planning policies and planning law to enable them to make an objection to the application. The application was refused, and the historic nature of the station has been retained. YPA volunteers also helped the group to comment on an emerging Planning Policy Statement on Heritage, thereby contributing to future government policy on such issues.

CASE STUDY

Nursing home change of use

The story continues...

This case was highlighted in last year's report, but further support was needed by the residents' group during the past year.

The group wanted advice as to how it could continue its objection to the use of a nursing home for the care and rehabilitation of people with mental health problems. The nursing home had previously been used as an old people's home, and the council had issued enforcement notices in relation to the changed use. However, the operator of the nursing home had successfully challenged these, and it was likely they would apply for a Certificate of Lawful Use.

During the past year the operator had offered to meet with representatives of the community group to try to resolve issues and improve relations. The community group was worried that if they attended a meeting it could be construed that they were accepting that the use could remain.

YPA volunteers advised this would not prejudice their position should an application for a certificate of lawful use be submitted, and that it might help to resolve some of the concerns, for example the use of mirrored windows in the building which allowed patients to see out but not people outside to see in, and parking issues. YPA volunteers will continue to support the community group as the discussions progress.

YPA in the witness box

We were pleased to be invited to participate in Leeds City Council's Scrutiny Inquiry regarding publicity and consultation on planning applications.

Planning Advisor Jim Rogers prepared a report for the Scrutiny Board highlighting issues raised by YPA clients across the region. For example, many of our clients have limited access or knowledge of IT and so are unable to get information on planning applications that way. We also highlighted the fact that third parties are often unhappy that they don't receive information about amendments to plans. Another issue was around pre-application consultations – people are unsure whether their involvement in these might prejudice their representation on an application.

The evidence compiled by Jim will be relevant to other local authorities, as the cases highlighted did not just relate to Leeds. Hence we will look to use this in our future partnership work with planning teams across the region, to improve the quality of public involvement.



“ Thank you for your offer of further assistance. It's good to know that I can come to you again as this seems likely to be a long drawn out fight.

“ Jim Rogers was excellent, he knew his subject matter initially, but then followed it up with further information by way of e-mail.

“ Very helpful and informative for those involved in a case who have no access to information regarding Planning Law and for cases where Legal Aid is not available.

“ Helpful advice, taking account of my existing knowledge. Proactive in offering further advice.

“ Very helpful, thorough and useful – thanks.

**What our
clients
said...**

Community planning

Our targets were amended half way through the year, with the training targets increasing and the community planning event target decreasing! This resulted in us over-achieving on the community planning events, but not meeting the targeted number of training events. Our training events are often delivered to very small group numbers, but as delegates are usually representatives of residents groups or disability groups the hope is that they will pass on their new knowledge to a much wider audience.

Local Development Frameworks

- Community Planner Mike Dando and volunteers were involved in several consultation sessions over in **Rotherham** during the summer to help people to respond to proposals in the **Core Strategy**. One session involved young people from the **Youth Forum**, another was for members of the **Tenants & Residents Federation**. "I have enjoyed every aspect of today," commented one participant, "it is important that we are involved in these discussions."
- Sessions were also held for residents in areas of the borough where a high level of housing development is proposed. One event saw almost 500 people attend in the course of the day, far more than was envisaged, and people had to queue to get in the venue. More details are given in the case study on page 10.
- **Barnsley's Core Strategy** was also out for consultation over the summer, and again YPA staff and volunteers were out and about, this time getting views from the **Disability and Access Group** and from the **Barnsley Youth Forum**. Planning & Community Advisor Andy Wood led a lively debate amongst the young people at the Youth Forum, who were particularly interested in the policies on design and climate change.
- We also followed up work from earlier in the year with the next stage of the **Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham Joint Strategic Waste DPD**. We attended two events in areas where waste treatment facilities are proposed, one in Rotherham and one in Doncaster, to help residents to understand the plans and make comments on them. See the case study below.

OUTPUTS	Target	Achieved
Planning training and education events and activities	30	20
Community planning events and activities	50	88
Partnership working and raising awareness events and activities	15	36
Number of participants – planning training and education events	750	183
Number of participants - community planning events	1100	2397



A Yorkshire Planning Aid volunteer works with young people at Leeds Youth Council

- Engagement activities with young people kept us busy later in the year. Students at **Leeds College of Building** learnt about the **Leeds Natural Resources & Waste DPD**. They supported the need for recycling and reusing materials, and were surprised to hear how much waste goes to landfill. They had a good knowledge of renewable energy sources, but had concerns about the impact of wind turbines.
- In December **Leeds Youth Council** members discussed proposals in the latest version of the **Leeds Core Strategy** – see case study for more details.
- Meanwhile similar discussions were held with young people in Hull – members of **Hull Youth Council** and students at **Hull College** – regarding the **Core Strategy** for their area.
- Other groups involved in the Leeds and Hull consultations have included the **Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind**, the **Leeds Tenants' Federation** and **Age Concern in Hull**.

CASE STUDY

Joint Waste DPD

Barnsley, Doncaster & Rotherham Joint Waste DPD – Wath & Hatfield community consultations

These were two-part consultation events in July and September around proposed strategic waste sites within the DPD, combining afternoon drop-ins with an evening meeting consisting of presentations and Question & Answer sessions. YPA participated in the events at the invitation of Rotherham and Doncaster councils, with the aim of us providing independent expert help to attendees and acting as an independent summariser/facilitator/chair at the evening sessions.

Both events took place in former mining areas and concerned sites in existing industrial locations on the edge of/within sight of existing residential areas/communities. Both areas fell within the worst 20% Super Output Areas nationally. YPA assisted in the development of the format for the events and in the preparation of the powerpoint presentations for the evening sessions. In the afternoon sessions of both events YPA personnel either staffed a dedicated YPA table/stand and/or provided roving assistance to those requiring it in the vicinity of council exhibitions.

For the evening sessions, in Wath YPA delivered powerpoint slides covering the facts of waste planning nationally/regionally and the role of YPA at the event. YPA also provided a summary of key community concerns as articulated during the meeting via comments & questions. In Hatfield YPA introduced the evening and acted as independent Chair throughout, ensuring that questioning was conducted in an orderly/fair manner, that questions were properly answered and that officers were able to give their answers. In both cases, enquiries which needed further response were noted and taken away to be passed on to the YPA caseworker.

Over 150 people attended the two events (120 in Wath; 30 plus in Hatfield), and subsequent assistance was given to the local action group at Hatfield as result of event. The value of the links between Planning Aid services was emphasised through the involvement of a volunteer with waste planning expertise from the East Midlands region.

CASE STUDY

Core Strategy: Leeds

Leeds Core Strategy – Preferred Approach consultation with Leeds Youth Council

The aim of the event was to elicit the views of young people on the Leeds Core Strategy Preferred Approach document in a 1 hour and 15 minute workshop session which formed part of the Youth Council meeting. The Leeds Youth Council is part of the UK Youth Parliament, and the 34 young people who attended were confident individuals who sought to represent the views of young people and other formal and informal young people's groups from their own areas. Youth Council members were involved at a previous consultation stage regarding the document, and comments from that event were highlighted to ensure continuity of consultation.

YPA developed the format of the event in liaison with the youth workers from the Youth Council, and this consisted of a powerpoint presentation and a series of small group workshops, followed by a question and answer session with the Leeds planner responsible for the Core Strategy.

There were three youth workers present and eight YPA volunteers who worked as both scribes (writing down the comments of the young people verbatim) and as facilitators. There was a great deal of surprise amongst the young people about the high levels of new housing required.

After discussion the young people accepted that there would have to be development in greenfield areas to meet the housing targets, but they felt that more derelict buildings should be re-developed first. They also debated policies on housing mix, transport and affordable housing. Their comments were written up and submitted to the Leeds planning team as part of the official consultation on the plan.

Rotherham Core Strategy Revised Options – Bassingthorpe Farm Urban Extension

A programme of drop-in consultation sessions were organised with the aim of engaging a range of diverse deprived communities in early discussion on a substantial proposed urban extension on green belt land, put forward as an option within a revised options Core Strategy document. The programme was part of ongoing work on the Rotherham LDF initiated as part of YPA's LDF outreach approach to the 'top ten' most deprived councils within the region. The work was carried out in partnership with Rotherham Environment & Development Services. The project focussed on the largely white urban communities of Thornhill, Wingfield, Greasbrough and Rawmarsh enveloping an area of green belt/green wedge identified as Bassingthorpe Farm. The communities are situated on the north west side of Rotherham town centre and constitute an area of past mining/current farming and informal recreational activity with local nature conservation value.

We worked with Rotherham council staff to agree a programme of four community drop-in events, including advice on the event format; means/detail of promotion; dates/times/ locations etc. We designed interactive aerial photo table-top displays and wall-mounted questionnaires for use in the consultation. The drop-ins were attended by nearly 700 local people – initial events attended by just 13 and then 30 people, but increased to 130 and nearly 500 for subsequent events. YPA staff and volunteers analysed & processed the results of wall & table-top displays, wrote up a detailed report of consultation for submission to council officers. We also followed up on the programme by attending & addressing, by invitation, a public meeting of some 150 people organised by an action group in Rawmarsh, and a subsequent public meeting was attended by a YPA volunteer who again explained the consultation process and answered questions.

This was the first time we had been involved in Core Strategy 'Alternative Options' work at a local level involving a number of communities affected by a strategic growth (urban extension) proposal – up to 3,600 new homes, and it followed on from similar work with a single community in Bradford (Holme Wood).

Although it is not possible to gauge any outcomes until the Core Strategy reaches its Preferred Options stage later in 2010, the events have resulted in formation of a now very active & high profile Save Our Green Belt Action Group, based in Rawmarsh, with its own website.

CASE STUDY

Core Strategy: Rotherham

Training

Training sessions have been delivered to a number of groups over the year, and are always well received:

“Liked the real experience of the presenters. This gave authenticity.

“Good clear presentation – excellent question and answer session.

“Facts shown in a way that was interesting.

“Mike was enthusiastic on the subject. I learnt a lot about the strategic issues of planning nationally and regionally.

“Positive opportunity to share understanding around key issues – well constructed and facilitated event.

“Great opportunity to be heard and understood – good mix of expertise at event.

Sessions we have delivered included:

- Impact Residents' Network in Harehills, Leeds, wanted to understand how they could influence various planning proposals for their neighbourhood.
- Staff and volunteers guided 60 parish and town councillors through a planning application workshop at one of their regional gatherings to help with their understanding of material considerations – see further details below.
- Planning for non planners sessions were delivered to members of York Independent Living Network, to Leeds Disability and Access Forum, and to voluntary organisations in Goole.
- And members of the Community Empowerment Network in Bradford learnt about planning policy and how they can make comments on development plans.

Mike also delivered a session on community planning techniques at an event co-ordinated by Action for Market Towns (AMT) and Integreat Yorkshire. 'Making the Connections' aimed to help those involved in developing community plans for their towns to enhance their skills in undertaking these, and to better understand the links with statutory plans such as Local Development

Frameworks. Mike and YPA volunteer Tony Ray also contributed to an accompanying Guide: 'Making the Connections – How Communities can achieve influence through community-led planning.' This report is available on the AMT website – www.towns.org.uk

Community Plans

The **New Wortley Community Plan** was formally launched by local MP Rt Hon Hilary Benn at an event at the local Community Centre in September. The event was attended by residents and representatives of the many agencies who had been involved in supporting the community to produce their own vision for the future of their estate.

YPA staff and volunteers spent several months helping the community to develop their plan using the Planning for Real® technique. 153 people attended the main community planning day in April, making over 700 suggestions on a scale model of the estate built largely by pupils at Castleton Primary School and local residents. There were then further sessions during the next few weeks involving smaller numbers of residents to filter those suggestions into a realistic Action Plan, and a final public event to check that the right priorities had been chosen took place at the end of May 2009.

Residents now have a clear statement of the community's aspirations, and are determined to use the Community Plan to influence future developments on the estate. Mike Powell, Vice-Chair of the Residents' Association at the time, commented: "We trust the Community Plan will go a long way in helping to make New Wortley a thriving community and a place we can all be proud of."



Enjoyed learning about the legal implications of the planning system and the variety and importance of policies.



Lively presentation of a potentially boring topic.



Good to have an opportunity to work on a 'real' planning application.

CASE STUDY

Material considerations



Scarborough YLCA Annual Conference Workshop – Material Considerations: The Black Art of Planning

This was a 90 minute practical workshop session for town and parish councillors with the aim of raising awareness and building capacity in respect of the theory and practical application of material considerations in relation to the determination of planning applications. The workshop was run at the request of Yorkshire Local Councils Association, East Riding & North Lincolnshire Local Councils Association and the Yorkshire & Humber Regional Training Partnership. The conference attracted delegates from all parts of the region, taking in both rural and urban councils.

After an introductory presentation on YPA and our role, the 60 plus attendees were split into seven smaller working groups. Each group was provided with paperwork relating to a historical planning application – an infill housing proposal on land ostensibly outside a village development envelope but within an area of existing residential development. Each group was asked to determine the application, giving reasons to justify their decision, together with any conditions relating to a recommended approval. Each group completed a flip-chart sized pro-forma detailing their decision – these were displayed for all groups to see. A YPA volunteer set out how he would have approached the application and the decision he would have reached, commenting on the group pro-formas and answering questions from the floor in the process. A YPA staff member then revealed the actual outcome. The workshop concluded with a short presentation from a YPA volunteer on the process of determining applications, focussing in particular on what do/don't constitute material considerations, in particular the adopted development plan and emerging plans.

Delegate feedback was excellent, and the success of the event has led to requests for both repeat sessions and a follow-on session focussing on planning policy and development plans.



Projects

Planning for Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities Project

Yorkshire Planning Aid staff and volunteers joined planning colleagues from across the region on 20 October 2009 to mark the end of YPA's two year 'Planning for BME Communities' project, funded by Integreat Yorkshire, Yorkshire Forward's Regional Centre of Excellence for regeneration, renaissance and place making skills for Yorkshire and the Humber.

The main part of the conference was an opportunity for project workers Debbie Holland and Lynsey Brownnutt to explain some of the activities they had undertaken and to feedback the lessons learnt.

The two-year project featured training, consultation events, workshops, activities to build local capacity, and opportunities for residents to engage with the planning system in six council areas. Debbie and Lynsey highlighted the importance of engaging with communities at the most local level. The input of 35 YPA volunteers, who had attended training on issues such as faith awareness, had been invaluable in enabling the project to reach out to these grassroots groups.

Shahed Mayet, community centre manager at Milen Care, a day centre for Asian elders in Batley, told delegates of the centre's experience of awareness-raising sessions related to the Kirklees Core Strategy. "The sessions provided an understanding of the issues planners face, which forges links and reduces the 'them and us' culture between planners and lay people," he said.

Mr Mayet said 98 per cent of participants in the sessions had had no previous involvement in planning. He highlighted the potential barriers caused by language, especially jargon, and stressed the importance of providing culturally and religiously sensitive services. Feedback to community members on consultations should also be improved, in his view, so people could see where they had influenced plans.

Debbie and Lynsey also highlighted activities they had undertaken in Bradford. Nine group workshops were held at local community centres and youth clubs as part of the consultation on Bradford's Core Strategy and Area Action Plan. The council's willingness to be flexible about deadlines gave the project workers extra time to get more people involved in consultations. The council also ran a 'consultation log' to show people how their views had been responded to.

Another significant achievement of the project was the development and delivery of planning education within secondary schools. The sessions linked well into the school curriculum, but more significantly they enabled students to interact with planning professionals and to give their views on real planning issues through linking the sessions with current or imminent LDF consultations.

The overall message was that there is real value in carrying on the core work of the project in relation to capacity building and tailored consultation events. Plus there is real scope to develop the education work to roll this out to other schools in the region, at both secondary and primary levels, and not just those in BME communities.





Above: Participants at In-House Training, Ravenshorpe, Dewsbury
Below: Students at Rhodesway School, Bradford




The full project report is available on the Yorkshire pages of the Planning Aid website, or you can contact the Leeds office for a copy.

Beyond the project

Following the official end of the project, we managed to maintain Lynsey's post to continue the work to the end of March 2010, in particular to deliver further education sessions.

Sessions were delivered at **Moor End Technology College** in **Huddersfield** with a year 8 humanities class, at **Winifred Holtby High School** in **Hull** with year 9, 10 and 11 geography students, and at Hull College.

The pupils learnt about local planning in their area and gave their views on Huddersfield town centre and Hull. These will influence the Huddersfield Area Action Plan and Hull Core Strategy. They also learnt about how planners can help achieve sustainable development and they came up with their own ideas which they used in designing their ideal sustainable model town.

 *The session we had was fun because we did lots of different activities.*

In 2010-11 we will be working hard to find ways of continuing our focused engagement work with people from BME communities, and developing our programme of education sessions.

Supported by





Planning Aid

Yorkshire

Engaging Communities in Planning

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**Would you like to know more about Yorkshire Planning
Aid and how we might help your organisation?**

We would be happy to come and speak at local meetings and events, or to have an informal discussion with you. In the first instance, please contact the Regional Manager at the address below.

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