

WHAT IS COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING?

Capacity Building is recognised as an essential component in the process of community development – and in ensuring that communities fully engage with local and regional regeneration initiatives:

‘The process of supporting individuals and community organisations to help them better identify and meet the needs of their areas. It involves building on the existing skills, providing opportunities for people to learn through experience and increasing people’s awareness and confidence to enable them to participate more fully in society.’

Capacity is then the ‘ways and means needed to do what has to be done’. It is more than ‘simply skills, people and plans’ and includes the following components:

- people who are willing to be involved
- skills, knowledge and abilities
- community cohesion
- ability to identify and access opportunities
- motivation and the experience to carry out initiatives
- community organisations, supportive institutions and physical resources
- leadership and the structures needed for participation
- economic and financial resources
- enabling policies and systems

Community development is dependent upon a certain level of capacity within the community so that they can lead and fully participate in the renewal process and both manage and deliver projects and programmes.

Characteristics of community capacity building

Community capacity building is a planned and systematic approach which is often linked with a specific programme or project, and which usually has a timescale associated with it. Any process of community capacity building should recognise value and build on the existing skills, knowledge and talents that people already have and can contribute.

Community capacity building can involve:

- Developing skills, knowledge and confidence through learning and training opportunities. These can range from informal to very formal and may or may not be accredited.
- Networking and participation in different support forums, residentials, best-practice visits and exchanges.
- Developing organisational structures, systems and mechanisms for managing projects, staff, buildings, etc.

Recent Capacity Building Activities in North Perth include:

- Support to the North Perth Community Partnership
- Community engagement undertaken throughout Fairfield and Letham – ‘door knocking’
- Support to community members to form a Community Council
- Community groups and organisations supported with funding advice, project ideas
- Constituting active community groups and promoting their activities through film
- Family Club activities
- Allotments Association supported to successfully apply for major funding
- Community Asset mapping in North Muirton – taking over green spaces
- Setting up local groups to deliver community gala events