

EVALUATION OF THE IN-BLOOM COMMUNITY PROJECT-MARCH 2006

CAPTURING THE COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

Final report submitted by:

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1. INTRODUCTION

The following report is an evaluation of the In-Bloom Community Project in Seedley and Langworthy. The focus of the evaluation was to capture some perspective from the Seedley and Langworthy community towards the project, gaining an insight into what impact the project has made within the area and the future aspirations for the project.

The Seedley and Langworthy In Bloom Community Project originated in 2003 through a steering group of SRB5 and City Council officers, local residents, and partner agencies. Since then the project has achieved a number of milestones and currently remains a community-supported project.

The Seedley and Langworthy Trust (SALT) undertook the evaluation activity on behalf of the In-Bloom Steering Group through their Research & Development consultancy, Social Research & Development (SRD). SRD has delivered a number of research projects in Seedley and Langworthy as part of the SRB5 Regeneration Programme.

1.1 Purpose of the research

Identified in the research brief for this evaluation was a need to:-

- Assess the current impact, positive or negative in relation to the Seedley and Langworthy In Bloom project
- Assess the community's aspirations for the project – e.g. does the community support the project and see it as benefiting them individually and as wider community
- Assess and indicate potential future community involvement and participation in the design, plan and coordination of the cleaner, greener, safer agenda attached to the In Bloom project

1.2 Number of participants involved in the evaluation

A total of 250 people participated in the evaluation project through various consultation methods, mainly, a community questionnaire along with participatory appraisals (using comment boards/sheets) and a focus group discussion comprising of members from the In-Bloom Steering Group.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Community Questionnaire – capturing local perspectives

The major method used to gather information to assess the current impact along with indications of the future aspirations for the project from community members was the community questionnaire (see Appendix 1).

The focus of the first part of the questionnaire was to assess current impact by exploring a number of key themes and issues with the community such as:-

- **Attitudes** – has the project made them feel more positive about the area?
- **Appearance** – has the project improved the look of their street?
- **Cohesion** – has the project helped bring the community closer together?
- **Safety** – has the project made the area feel safer?
- **Value** – has the project proved to be value for money?
- **Health** - has the project improved their health and/or well being?
- **Integration** – has the project helped children & young people to get involved in their area?

The second part of the questionnaire centred upon the future aspirations for the project and featured themes and issues related to:-

- **Current & future involvement** – are you currently involved in the Seedley & Langworthy In-Bloom project? / would you like to be more involved in the project in the future?
- **Cost** – would you be prepared to pay towards the project in the future?
- **Ownership** – do you feel the project could become a community run project?

2.2 Participatory Appraisal

In addition to the main questionnaire, a number of additional questions were asked on interactive comment boards/sheets at a community event:-

- What has the Seedley & Langworthy In-Bloom project meant to you?
- What effects has the project had on the Regeneration in the area?
- What role could it play in the future?

The intention of using this particular method of consultation was to give people the opportunity to express their views and give comments that would try and “qualify” what the project meant to them.

2.3 Focus group discussion – Community Impact Mapping with the In-Bloom Steering Group

A final key element to the evaluation process was to meet with the project group themselves. The purpose of this being to: - (key themes)

- Capture the key developments of the project from its inception
- Discuss the effects and impacts it has made
- Highlight the lessons learnt
- Explore what’s next for the project

Key questions

- Describe your community, what did you plan to do, what did you want to achieve, what was your vision?
- What resources were needed to achieve this vision?
- What did you do with the resources, the activities that took place?
- What happened immediately because of your activities, were there any additional activities added to the project?
- What difference did your activities make to your community?

What have you learnt?

- Was the activity effective? Did it create the impact you intended?
- Did the activity have any negative effects?
- Do you need to do any other things alongside your current activities to have the intended impact?

The following section outlines the major results to these questions, themes and issues.

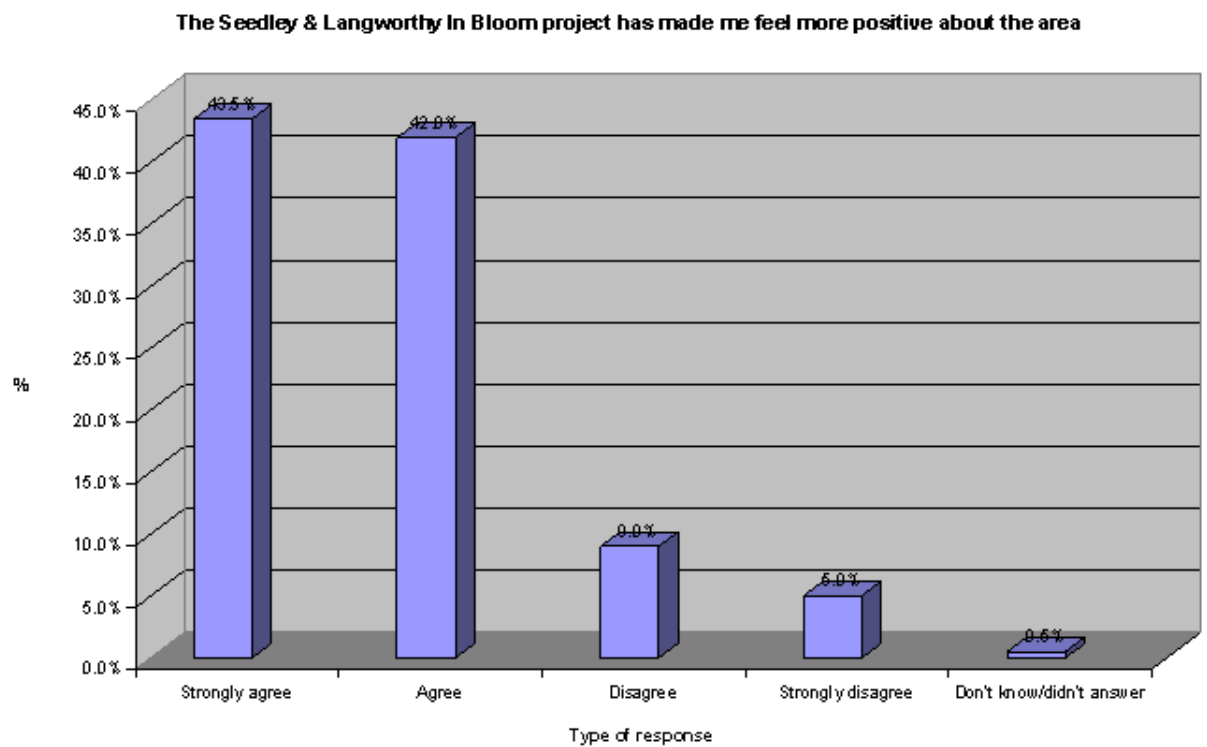
3. FINDINGS

3.1 Community Questionnaire – assessing the current impact

The following results are taken from 200 completed and returned questionnaires.

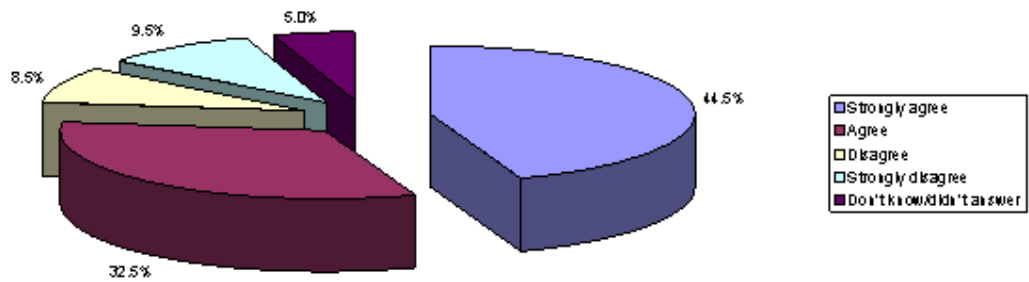
PART 1

Q.1)



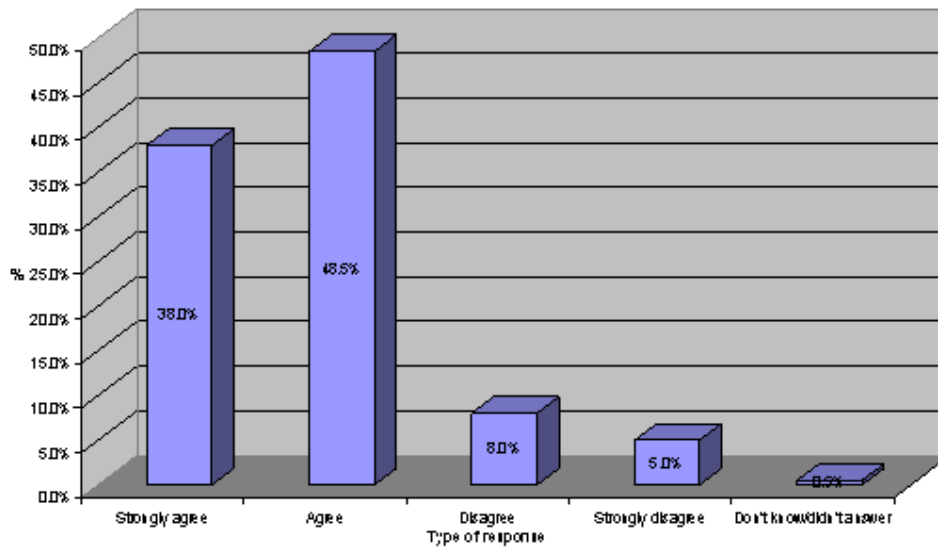
Q.2)

The Seedley & Langworthy In Bloom project has improved the look of my street



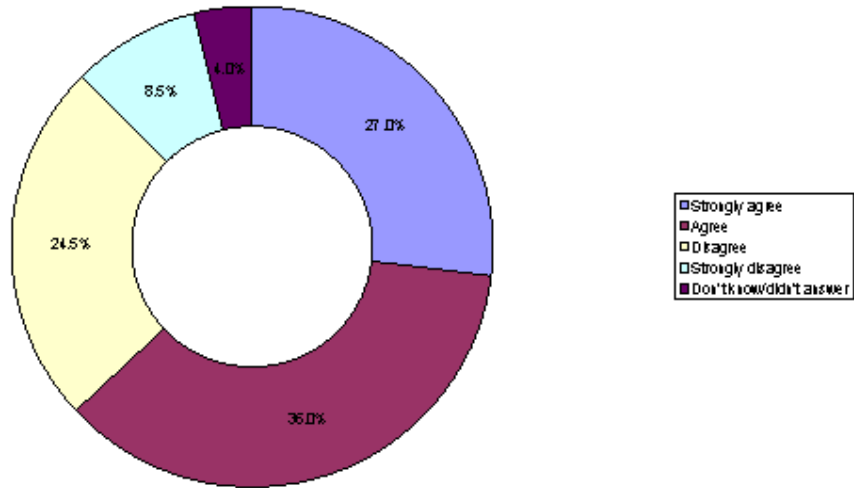
Q.3)

The Seedley & Langworthy In Bloom project has helped bring people together



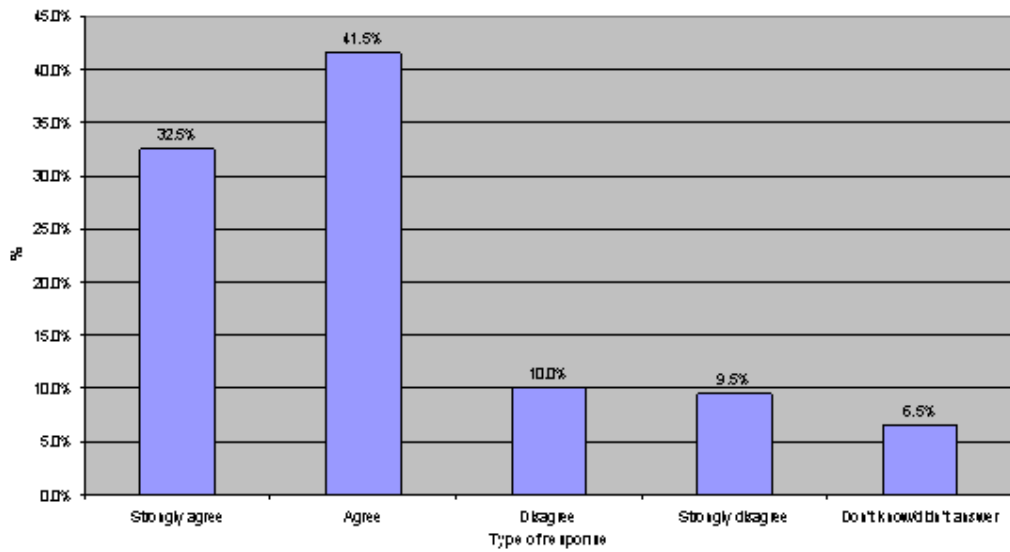
Q.4)

The Seedley & Langworthy In Bloom project has made the area feel safer



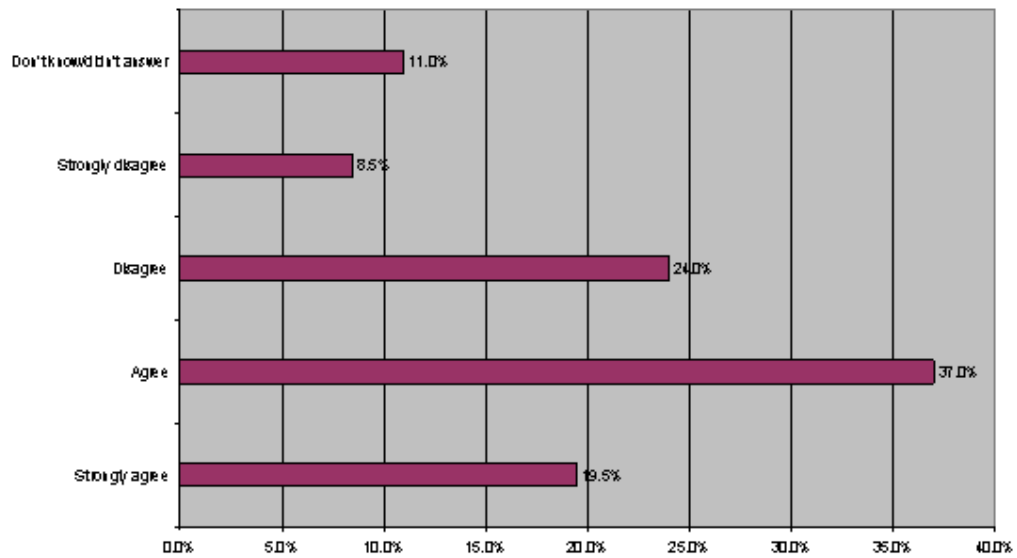
Q.5)

The Seedley & Langworthy In Bloom project has proved to be value for money



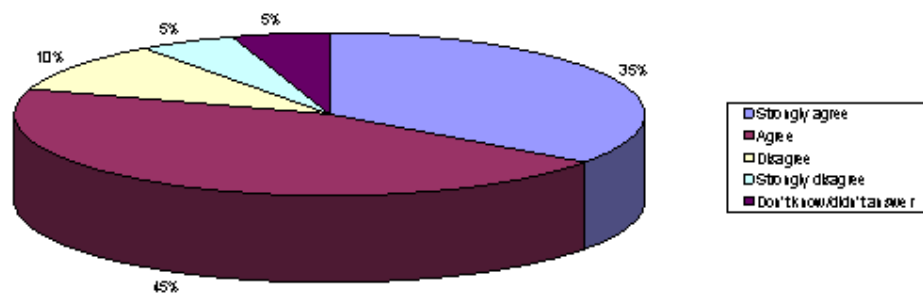
Q.6)

Taking part in the Seedley & Langworthy In Bloom project has improved my health and/or wellbeing



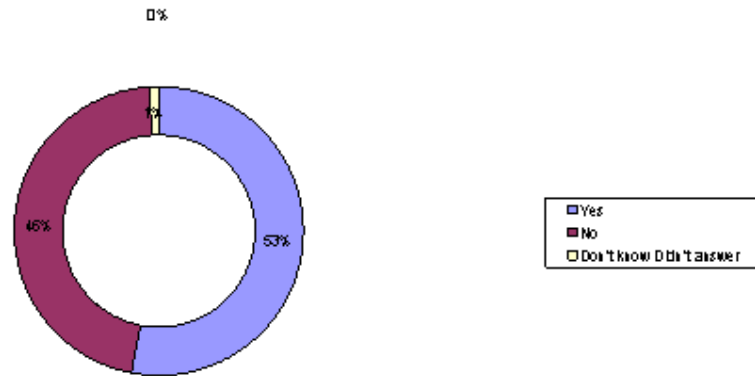
Q.7)

The Seedley & Langworthy In Bloom project has helped children & young people to get involved in their area



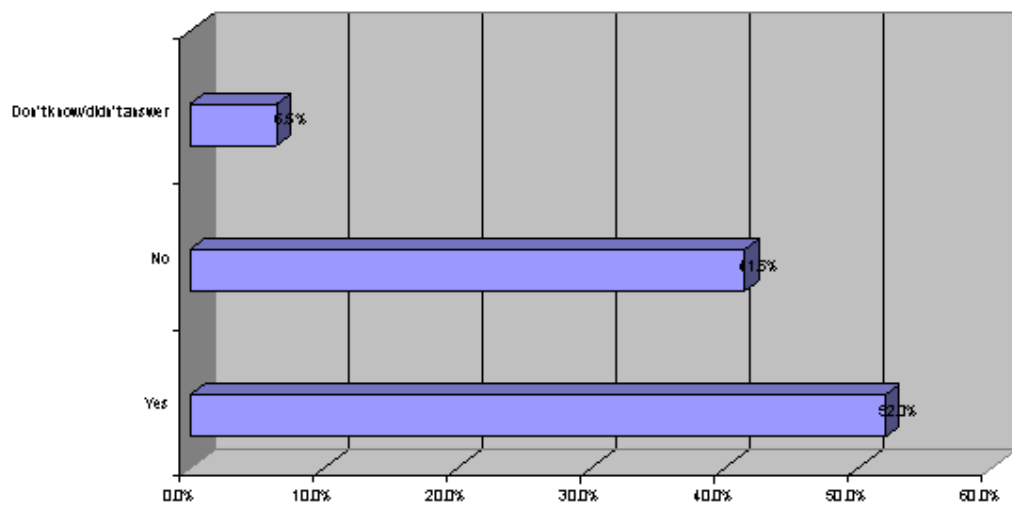
Part 2
Q.8)

Are you currently involved in the Seedley & Langworthy In Bloom project ?



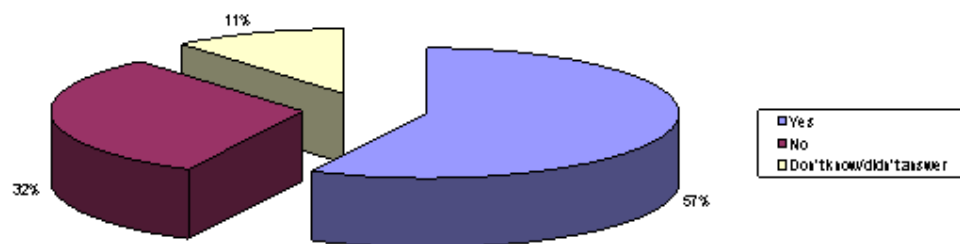
Q.9)

Would you like to be more involved in the Seedley & Langworthy In Bloom project in the future?



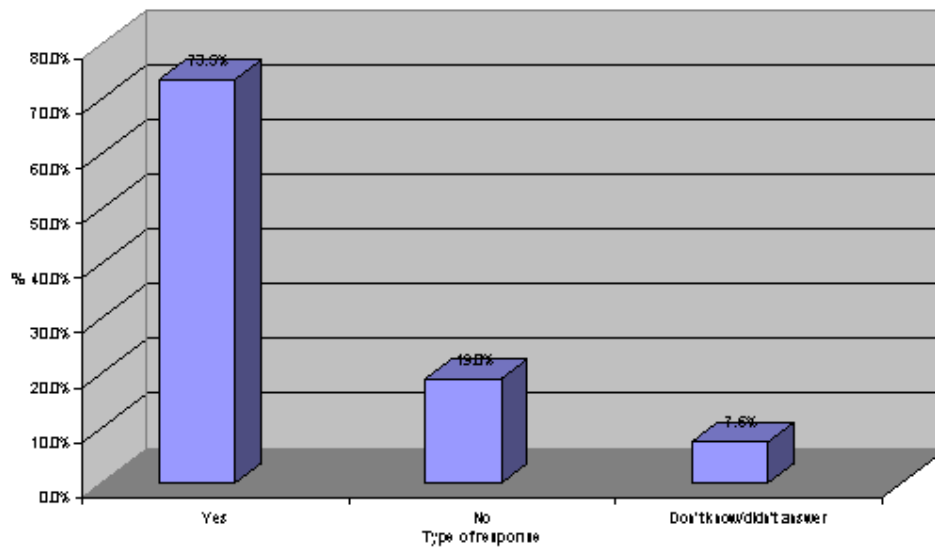
Q.10)

Would you be prepared to pay towards the Seedley & Langworthy In Bloom project in the future?

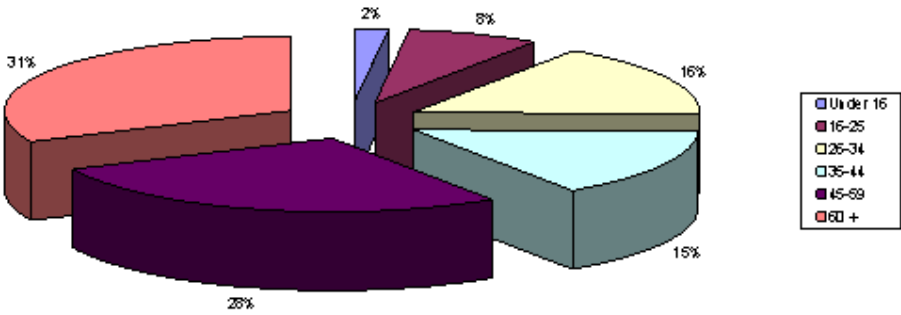


Q.11)

Do you feel the Seedley & Langworthy In Bloom project could become a community run project?



Age breakdown of participants



3.2 Participatory Appraisal – perceptions of the project

There were a number of statements made in relation to these particular questions, with the majority showing a deeply positive view towards the project.

Individual perceptions

1) What has the Seedley & Langworthy In-Bloom project meant to you?

Some of the responses to the above question are shown below:-

“Showed what can be achieved through hard work and determination”

“Hard work but very pleasing results”

“Provided a real opportunity to bring the community together again”

The overriding themes from peoples comments here centred around:-

- **Collective action**
- **Community spirit**
- **Positive action**

2) What effects has the project had on the Regeneration in the area?

Shown below are some comments around peoples thoughts on the impact the project’s had within the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB5) programme of regeneration for Seedley & Langworthy:-

“Re-kindled community spirit”

“Has made the area brighter”

“Created positive press about the area has to offer”

Again, some of the major themes related to comments from this question where:-

- **Created a “feel-good” factor within the community**
- **Cleaner environment**
- **Raised the profile of the area**

3) What role could the project play in the future?

“It should continue to form a major part of the area’s regeneration programme”

“It can go from strength to strength – but the community must stay involved”

“It should be used as an example of good practice to other communities”

The main themes from this final question centred around:-

- **Community ownership**
- **Marketability**

3.3 – Focus group – telling the story of the project

The focus group discussion with the steering group highlighted the journey that the project had made since its introduction in 2003. Shown below is an overview of the journey the project has taken:-

| Starting out Describe your community, what did you plan to do, what did you want to achieve, what was your vision? | Resources What resources were needed to achieve this vision? | Action What did you do with the resources, the activities that took place? | Result What happened immediately because of your activities, were there any additional activities added to the project? | Impact What difference did your activities make to your community |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| <p>Background – community divided & disheartened</p> <p>Initial vision – need to support and bring the community back together</p> | <p>Human – committed group of SRB5 & City Council officers, up to 30 residents, and 50 partner agencies</p> <p>Financial – Funding contributions from the SRB5, PCT, Police, LA Community Committee & Scarman Trust</p> | <p>The purchase and logistics of hundreds of baskets, thousands of plants, tons of compost</p> <p>The purchase and installation of “municipal” style baskets for lampposts and roadside barriers along the area’s busy through road</p> <p>Successfully organised several mass community planting events with several hundred people attending in total</p> | <p>The mass mobilisation of schools, churches, youth groups, mainstream departments, partner agencies, community groups, youth offending team, etc...over 50 in total</p> | <p>Restored civic pride in the area</p> <p>Raised positive profile for the area – won regional & national awards</p> <p>Developed a greater sense of community spirit & activity</p> |

What have you learnt? (Group reflection)

1) Was this activity effective? Did it create the impact you intended?

The group all agreed that the project had been effective and achieved a great deal in a relatively short period of time. They thought that the project had made a significant impact (more than they'd originally anticipated) in the area, and had created some really satisfying "spin-offs", such as the raising of the profile of the area through the success of winning regional and national awards. (See Appendix 2)

2) Did the activity have any negative effects?

Because of the on-going nature of the project the group identified some challenges to its future success, the main one being the development and ownership of the project. The group felt that it was crucial to trust them with the management and organisation of the project, as one of the key elements to making it successful in the first place was the passion, enthusiasm and involvement shown by the community to "make it happen".

3) Do you need to do any other things alongside your current activities to have the intended impact?

The group identified a need to continually "market" the project throughout the community and highlighted the way in which it actively encourages residents to get involved with the project. There was also an appreciation and acceptance that this marketing could and should extend right throughout the city, as interest has been shown from other communities as to "how they did it?"

4. DISCUSSION

Assessing the current impact of the project (Part 1)

The community questionnaire revealed a number of interesting findings from each of the key themed questions. In terms of the community's **attitudes** towards the project, (section 3.1 - question 1) – the majority of respondents, (85.5%) agreed that the project has made them feel more positive about the area. This also appeared to be the case through the participatory appraisal research (section 3.2 – question 2) where participants highlighted a “feel-good” factor created by the project and impacting positively on the wider regeneration programme for the area.

In terms of **appearance**, (section 3.1 – question 2) – (77%) felt that the project has improved the look of their street, placing a greater sense of pride and ownership to contribute towards a cleaner environment.

With regards to **cohesion**, (section 3.1 – question 3) (86.5%) felt the project has helped bring people together. This message is reinforced further in relation to individual perceptions of the project through the participatory appraisal research (section 3.2 – question 1) where the overriding themes from people's comments when asked, “what has the Seedley & Langworthy In-Bloom project meant to you?” revealed that the project had stimulated:-

- **Collective action**
- **Community spirit**
- **Positive action**

The issue of community cohesion was also highlighted through the focus group discussion with the In-Bloom Steering Group (section 3.3) – that referred to the number and diversity of local groups and partner agencies that've assisted in the planning and delivery of the project. This “mass mobilisation” was seen as a key ingredient to having:-

- **Restored civic pride in the area**
- **Raised positive profile for the area**
- **Developed a greater sense of community spirit & activity**

In terms of **safety**, (section 3.1-question 4) over half of respondents (63%) stated that they felt the project had made the area feel safer. Although the remaining (37%) questioned, either didn't agree, know or comment, this has to be put into context with the general perceptions and attitudes towards community safety and crime. Personal experiences of crime or anti-social behaviour can often have long-term negative effects on people that contribute towards creating a climate of fear and apprehension – even if, in general terms, the reality might be quite different.

On the issue of **value**, (section 3.1 – question 5) (74%) of people thought that the project has proved to be value for money. The Steering group (section 3.3)

acknowledged the important financial contribution that various organisations have made in order for equipment and materials to be bought but also it is the effective use of human resources, in particular the community, that have allowed the project to “happen.”

In response to the issue of **health**, (section 3.1 – question 6) just over half, (56.5%) of participants felt that the project has made a positive contribution to their health and/or wellbeing. The creation of the “feel-good” factor as identified previously (section 3.2 – question 2) would appear to account for these positive responses.

Finally, within this part of the community questionnaire on the subject of **integration**, (section 3.1 – question 7) (80%) supported the view that the project has helped children & young people to get involved in their area. The supportive efforts of local schools and other child and youth centred agencies, as highlighted in the focus group discussion (section 3.3), appears to have encouraged some valuable intergenerational community development work to happen.

Part 2 – Assessing current and future involvement along with future aspirations for the project

In relation to **current & future involvement** in the project, (section 3.1 – questions 8 & 9) (53%) indicated current involvement in the project in some capacity with (52%) expressing an interest to be more involved in the project in the future. Although (41.5%) indicated they didn’t want to be more involved in the project in the future, this is possibly quite relative to peoples’ current commitments and lifestyles and could change possibly in the future to allow greater involvement and participation in the project to happen.

With regards to the issue of **cost**, (section 3.1 – question 10) (57%) commented that they would be prepared to pay towards the project in the future compared to (32%) that wouldn’t. This again needs to be put into context in the sense that people who are involved in the project are currently contributing towards some of the costs of the project.

Finally, on the issue of **ownership**, (section 3.1 – question 11) (73.5%) of participants felt the project could become a community run project. This view was also echoed through the participatory appraisal research (section 3.2 – question 3) and focus group discussion (section 3.3 – question 2) where community ownership was identified as a key element of the “forward strategy” of the project.

In terms of the “forward strategy” for the project (section 3.3 – question 3), the group identified a need to further market the project across the community but also across the city. The need to consolidate the project, especially considering the period of transition the Seedley & Langworthy area faces in the near future in terms of regeneration and future funding, means the project may have to look at ways of becoming more sustainable in order to retain its value and levels of impact within its community.

KEY MESSAGES

The evaluation has provided evidence to suggest that the project is going some way towards creating a positive impact within the area through favourable responses on key themes and issues related to **attitudes, appearance, cohesion, safety, value, health & integration** that were discussed through the community questionnaire

The project appears to have played an important role in the social regeneration of the area – in particular with regards to **community cohesion** and encouraging and stimulating – **collective action, community spirit & positive action**

This message was consistent right across the evaluation activity were the “added-value” aspect to the project was expressed and mobilised in terms of the partnership working that has generated a positive impact on **restoring civic pride in the area, raising the profile of the area & developing a greater sense of community spirit & activity**

The community generally expressed a desire to be involved in the project in the future – showing a willingness to contribute to future costs (if/where appropriate/applicable) and for the project to be run and owned by the community. This willingness and commitment will no doubt become even more important in the short-term due to the uncertainty around funding and future direction of the project

The project needs continued support from partner agencies to develop an effective “forward strategy” in order to consolidate and maintain the momentum that has been achieved throughout the project.