

Exe Valley Plan

A Market and Coastal Towns initiative

Great achievements emerge
from small beginnings

The beginning

September 2004

Venue: Heathcoat Community Centre, Tiverton

Group:

- Chair & Vice Chair of the Chamber of Commerce (TCC);
- Chair and Secretary of Tiverton Civic Society (TCS);
- One Tiverton Town Councillor (not representing TTC);
- MCTiA facilitator

Purpose: To discuss the conditions under which Tiverton could participate in the Market and Coastal Towns initiative

The First Struggle

Weak Support

- The facilitator left the MCTiA days after the meeting.
- The Vice Chair of TCC soon stopped attending meetings.
- The Town Mayor opposed the initiative.
- The district council did not take the group seriously.

Funding

March 2005.

- The group persisted and demanded to see the Chief Executive of the District Council who failed to emerge from his office.
- Despite this, the regeneration officer took the group seriously.
- With the support of DCC and MDDC, funding of £58,080 was granted.

A Myriad of tasks

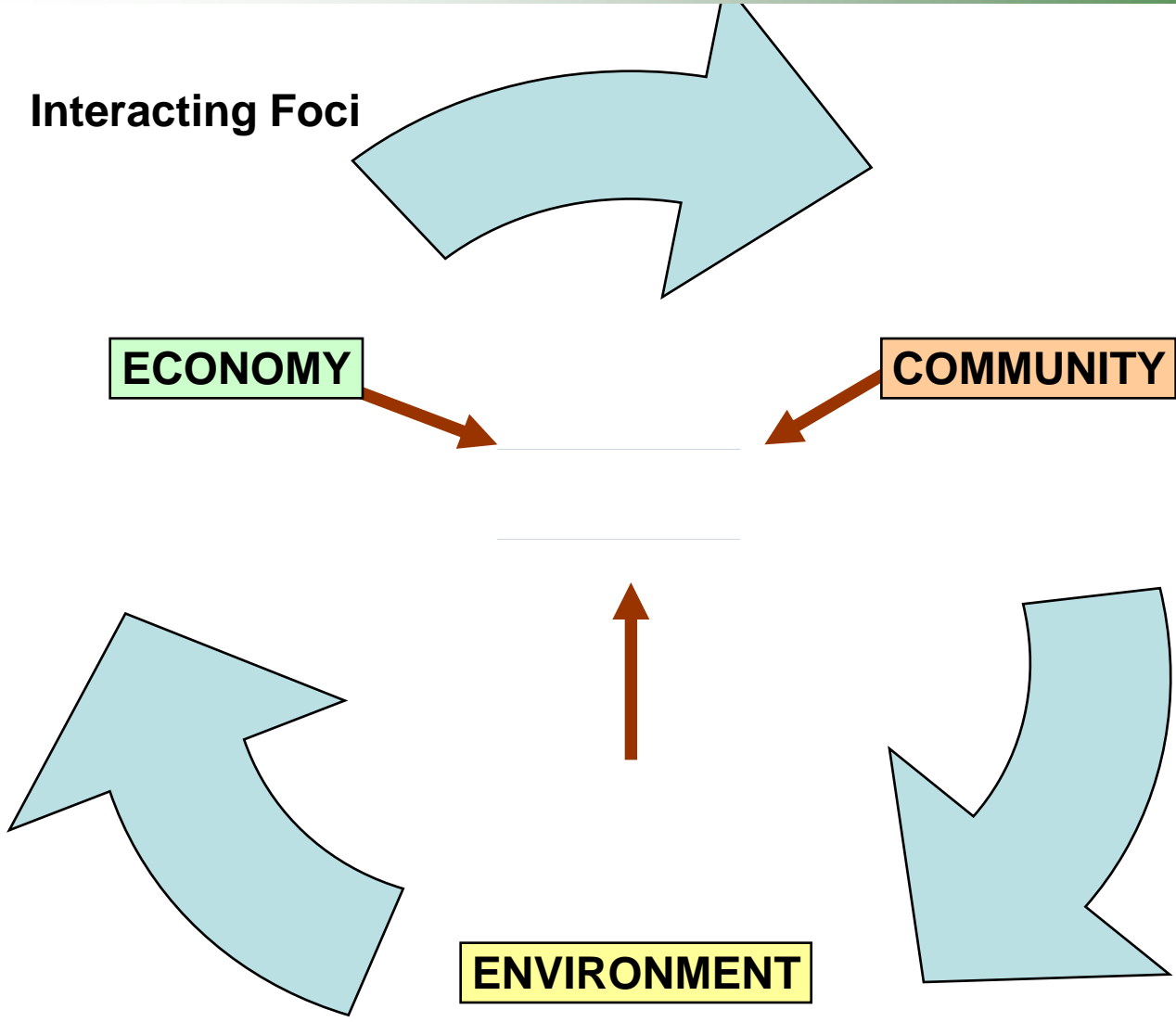
These included:

- Finding and establishing an office
- Establishing a practical budgeting process.
- Attending training courses
- Preparing for parish meetings and the community launch
- Establishing a database of contacts covering all councillors, major organisations, business organisations and societies.
- Developing a website and publicity.

Getting started

- The group started to meet fortnightly as an *ad hoc* Steering group.
- Dr. John Blewitt from the University of Exeter became involved and gave advice.
- The group were introduced to the green guide, *Re:Sourcebook*, written especially for the exercise.
- They met the author, Alan Caldwell.
- A new MCTiA facilitator was appointed and guided the group.
- The Co-ordinator developed the structure for the organisation.

Interacting Foci





Developing a logo

The Launch

17th September 2005

Crystal Suite, Tiverton Hotel

This was a very successful event with 85 interested members of the community attending.

It included:

- Presentations
- Workshops
- Refreshments

It was followed up by a very positive press report in the Gazette.

The Second Struggle

A successful launch needs planned follow up.

Strategies included a training session for the new Focus group leaders to cover:

- The MCTi process
- Preparing for and chairing meetings
- Methodology for reporting on meetings
- Community leadership
- Skills awareness

Training in specific areas has continued in a series of Focus Group Leaders meetings during 2006 on project profiling, project funding and planning.

Vision, Goals and Projects

The discussions in the Steering Group and Focus groups revealed:

- Vision
- Goals
- Principles
- Values
- Strategies to achieve the vision
- Projects embodying the strategies

Publicity

Newsletter: 3 editions of our newsletter *Exe Valley Horizons*

December 2005; June 2006 and February 2007

1st and 2nd newsletters had short informative articles describing what we were doing, the progress that was made and the projects that were emerging.

They featured individuals and groups involved, including schoolchildren.

3rd newsletter functions as a summary of the Exe Valley Plan

Publicity

- Website

Help with websites is available from SW Chambers

- Press

Essential to keep the initiative in the public eye and for notifying the public of AGMs

- Communications Plan

This should be part of the early planning

The AGM

This was organised by the Governance subcommittee and was attended by 65 members of the public.

Good Governance involves:

- Establishing Terms of Reference
- Agreeing the Terms of Reference
- Calling an AGM

This requires:

- Professional advice
- Training
- Attention to legal requirements
- Attention to practicalities

Devon Towns Forum put on helpful training seminars

Projects – the third struggle

The projects vary enormously in their:

- Orientation: Commercial / Community
- Scale: Small / large
- Timespan: 'Quick win' / long term

Project development requires an ability to:

- Provide project profiles
- Provide business plans
- Provide evidence of need and opportunities
- Understand and negotiate the complexity of project funding

Consultations – Summer - Autumn 2006

Focus on the proposed projects in the Plan through:

- Publication of *Exe Valley Horizons 2*, which features a middle page spread on projects
- Parish meetings for councillors and community leaders
- ‘Stickies vote’ stalls at public shows:
Mid Devon Show, Silverton Street Market, Family Festival, Bampton Fair, Tiverton Pannier Market

Plan Publication

Exe Valley Plan was published and launched on 24th
February 2007

Implemented by the Project Planning subcommittee

Important aspects to consider are:

- Uses
- Users
- Presentation
- Graphics
- Community input
- Contents

Contents of the Plan

includes:

- Introduction: vision, goals, principles and values
- Outline of the Exe Valley Plan process, personnel and timeline
- Project tables and Focus Group reports
- Views on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats from town & rural parishes & families with school age children
- Development of Exe Valley Enterprises Ltd, a social enterprises company tasked with facilitating the projects
- Evidence base - Snapshot of the Exe Valley today and thematic surveys

Community Support

Community support for venture like this is all important.

It requires:

An enthusiastic Steering Group

Encouraging other members of the community to get involved through

word of mouth and good publicity

Tips

- Always try to involve local councillors
- Encourage other community leaders to take you seriously and participate, involving their groups
- Always make invitations to events open to the public even though the venue has limited accommodation
- Devise an effective communications plan
- Consult effectively – the ‘Stickies Vote’ proved a simple, easily understood way for the public to enter into the spirit of the initiative
- Share the workload as broadly as possible
- Take advantage of training opportunities offered

Evaluation

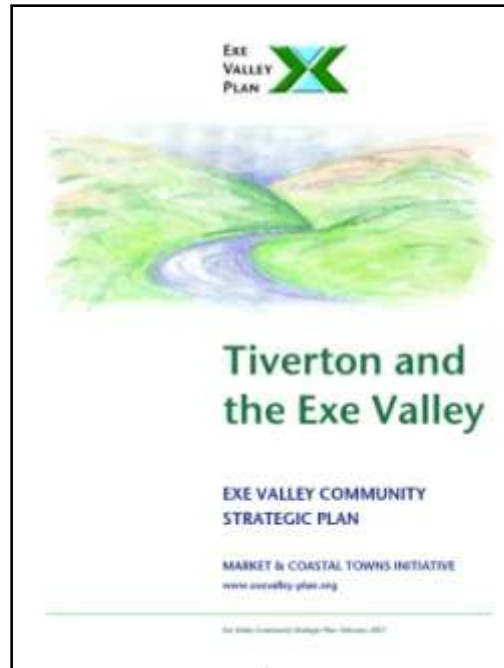
Strengths:

- Broad interest of the public;
- Leaders with key skills who saw the initiative through
- Willingness to learn new ways of doing things
- Creativity and initiative

Weaknesses:

- Small town politics at the beginning;
- Failure to implement a communications plan consistently and make the best of a good website.
- Variable effectiveness in achieving surveys
- Uneven distribution of workload

Thank you for listening



Good luck with your initiative