

Introduction

The Living Places Programme is supported by seven partner organisations (i.e. Arts Council England, CABE, English Heritage, MLA Council, Sport England, DCMS, and CLG) who form a National Partner Group (NPG), and five Priority Place Partnerships supported by Living Places (Corby, Pennine Lancashire, Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH), Thames Gateway and South West).

Whilst the Living Places Programme comes to an end in 2011, culture and sport will continue to have a vital role in the development and regeneration of sustainable and prosperous places where people want to live. The current policy and delivery environment is markedly different to the context in which Living Places was originally developed in 2006, but it remains the case that identifying the main drivers for success, and using them to inform the thinking of all professionals involved and engaged in ensuring that culture and sport contributes to communities will be vital as new ways of working become clear. **The insights gained from the Living Places Programmes should serve to inform thinking in central and local government, and also amongst sector professionals.**

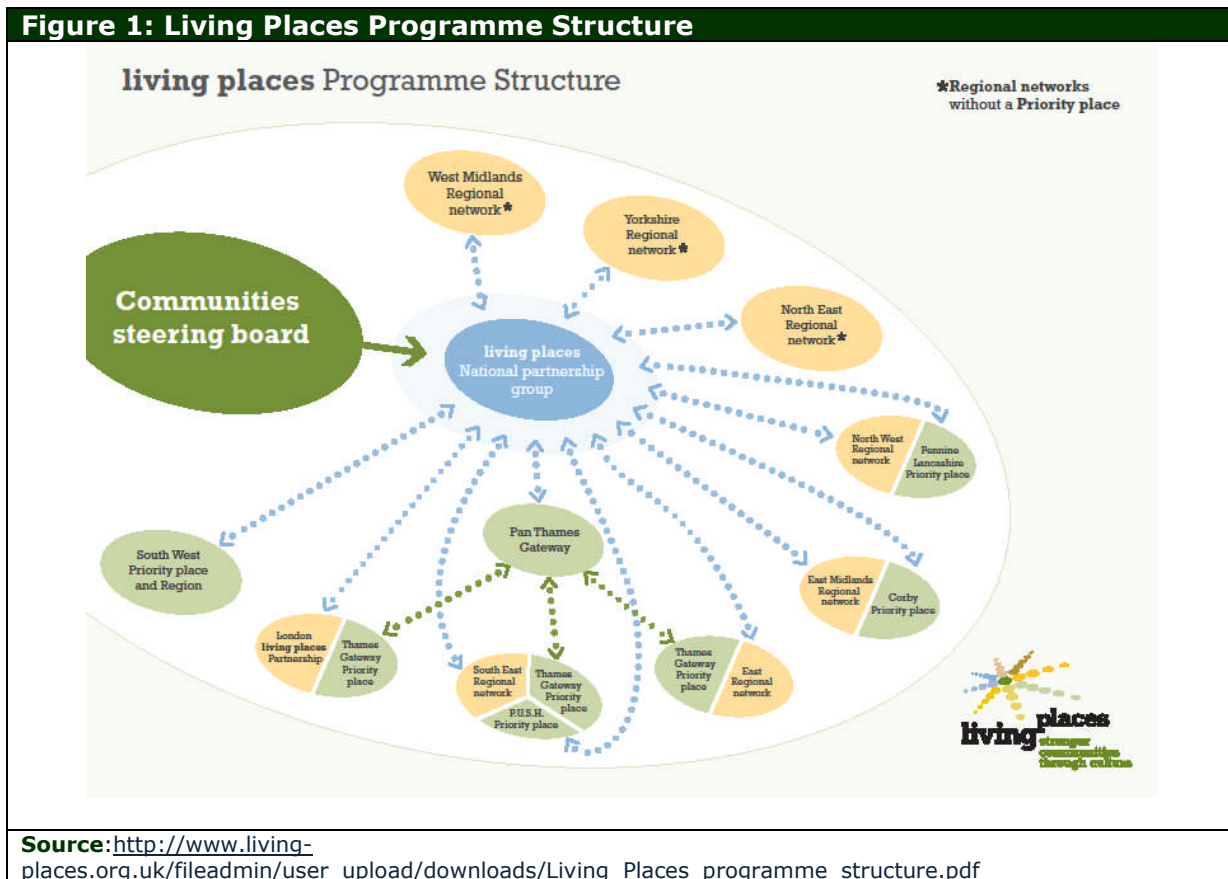
The focus of this paper is on the partnership lessons drawn from the Year 1 and Year 2 Evaluations of Living Places carried out by DC Research in 2009 and 2010. In particular the paper considers the lessons from Living Places that are relevant to other place-shaping initiatives, especially on the issues surrounding collaborative working / partnership working. The key success drivers for effective collaborative working and the key facilitators and enabling conditions that support and assist such initiatives are identified and discussed.

The three aims of the Living Places Programme are to:

- Align investment from the sporting and cultural sector across organisational boundaries so it can be used more efficiently for people and places.
- Provide information, advice and support on the use of culture and sport in sustainable communities to people working in local government, housing, property development, planning and a host of other fields who take the day-to-day decisions that shape communities of the future.
- Build the capacity of communities themselves so people can be empowered to bring cultural and sporting activity and infrastructure to their communities.

Figure 1 overleaf provides an overview of the structure of the Programme in Years 1 and 2.

Figure 1: Living Places Programme Structure



Source: http://www.living-places.org.uk/fileadmin/user_upload/downloads/Living_Places_programme_structure.pdf

Models of Partnership - Summary

This section of the paper provides an overview of the relevant 'models' of partnership working that allow the lessons around partnership from Living Places to be considered.

Models of partnership working received significant attention in literature (especially in a regeneration context) in the late 1990's and early 2000's. Much of this literature considered what was actually meant by partnership working (beyond the notion that it is a good thing in and of itself). This included distinguishing between different organisations and types of partnerships as **structures of partnership**, as well as giving consideration to the principle of **partnership working as a process**.

Alongside these issues, a key focus was on the development of **models of partnership**, which dealt with both structural models of partnership and partnership working as a process, which the latter leaning more towards identifying the potential motivations and added value of working in partnership.

In the context of this paper, there is no need to dwell upon the various approaches to defining partnership, but a definition used by the Audit Commission (1998) identifies the main elements, and explains partnership as being: *"joint working arrangements where the partners: are otherwise independent bodies; agree to co-operate to achieve a common goal; create a new organisational structure or process to achieve this goal, separate from their own organisations; plan and implement a jointly agreed programme, often with joint staff or resources; share relevant information; and pool risks and rewards."*

In terms of structures of partnership, whilst this is not regarded as a key consideration for Living Places (as most Living Places Partnerships, at the national regional or Priority

Place level, are more or less of the same type structure – towards the less formal end of the spectrum) it is worth noting where they sit in the wider spectrum.

The National Audit Office (2001) identified three types of partnership organisation: Realigning organisational boundaries (bringing together the whole or parts of two or more organisations to create a new organisation; Formal partnerships (working together by contract, protocol or framework agreement); and Informal partnerships (working together by liaison, consultation or unwritten mutual agreement). Along similar lines, the Audit Commission (1998) identified 4 types of partnership: separate organisation; 'virtual' organisation; co-locating staff from partner organisations; steering group without dedicated staff resources.

These structural models of partnership can be used to identify and point towards a focus on informal partnerships and steering group without dedicated staff resources are more relevant for Living Places, notwithstanding some of the approaches that have been taken in Priority Places (and at the national level) to develop staff resources to support the implementation of Living Places.

Given the aims of, and the underpinning rationale for, the Living Places Programme, the consideration of models of partnership that relate to the process of partnership working rather than partnership structures is more relevant, and it is therefore the models of partnership that consider the potential motivations and added value of working in partnership that are presented below.

These models are based upon the main motivations and benefits that underpin organisations' involvement in partnership working. However, models of partnership are merely 'simplifications or partial formalisations of the different processes at work within partnerships'¹. As such, actual examples of partnership working, such as Living Places, will involve a combination of the models outlined below.

In each case the summary of the model includes reference to both what occurs during the process of partnership working itself, and the anticipated outcome of such partnership working.

In addition, to the models of partnership, one further consideration about partnership working is around the **partnership life cycle**. The partnership life cycle is often presented as a series of stages and identifies the key stages of development and success (or failure) for a partnership. The partnership life cycle can also be used to help a partnership assess the extent to which it need to evolve and adapt to a changing internal and external environment.

The models summarised in Table 1 cover the main motivations for, or benefits that can be gained from, working in partnership. The lessons from Living Places about partnership working are considered with relevant reference to these models where appropriate, throughout the rest of this paper.

¹ Mackintosh, 1992, p.213. Papers by Mackintosh (1992) and Hastings (1996) are the main sources used for the partnership models outlined in this paper. Full references: Mackintosh M (1992) "Partnerships: Issues of Policy and Negotiation" in Local Economy, Vol.7, No.3 pp.210-224; Hastings A (1996) "Unravelling the Process of 'Partnership' in Urban Regeneration Policy" in Urban Studies, Vol.33 No.2 pp253-268.

| Table 1: Summary of Process and Outcome from Models of Partnership | | |
|--|---|--|
| Model | Process | Outcome/Benefit |
| Policy Synergy | Joint approach developed through combining the different perspectives of each partner | New perspectives/ innovative solutions created. Original differences in culture and objectives between partners maintained. |
| Resource Synergy | Co-operation and co-ordination over the spending of resources | Added value from resources spent; increased effectiveness or efficiency |
| Budget Enlargement | Co-ordination and co-operation between partners to develop a bid/ application for funding to an external funding body with the aim of securing additional financial resources | Added value of larger level of resources available. Increased financial inputs. |
| Uni-Directional Transformation | One or more partners struggle to modify or to change another partner in their own image. Partners do not accept the need to change themselves | One or more partners change their organisational culture or objectives to become more similar to those of another partner. The transforming partner retains its original style or objectives |
| Mutual Transformation | Reciprocal challenges made to the pre-existing culture and objectives of partners, who seek to learn as well as aspire to teach. | All partners involved in the process change to some extent. New sets of objectives, operational styles are developed. Differences between partners are reduced. |
| Empowerment of local communities | Involvement of local community (or representatives of local community) in the decision-making processes for local economic regeneration policy design and implementation | Empowerment of local communities. Sense of ownership, building of trust, strengthening of the community |
| Shared Knowledge | Sharing of knowledge, information between partners | Greater shared stock of knowledge/information, better understanding of what other partners do |
| Source: DC Research, adapted from Mackintosh (1992) and Hastings (1996) | | |

Partnership approaches at the Priority Place level

Evidence from the Year 1 Evaluation suggested that those Priority Places nested in pre-existing regeneration partnerships (such as Corby, Pennine Lancashire and PUSH) tended to have clearer leadership and partnership arrangements, benefitting from being part of a wider local agenda with established governance.

Survey evidence also highlighted that **the majority of partners involved had worked together prior to Living Places in other structures**, again suggesting that in most cases the partnership working is built upon either previous partnership structures or pre-existing partnership arrangements.

The **engagement of local authorities is seen as a critical element of partnership effectiveness for the Priority Places**. In particular, Corby, PUSH and the Thames Gateway areas of London and North Kent seem to benefit from the levels of direct engagement with local authorities.

More recently, partnership working in the Priority Places in Year 2 took a range of approaches that were appropriate to the circumstances and priorities of each place:

- In **Corby**, partners do not meet frequently as a Priority Place Partnership, but there is a range of ongoing related activity that was progressed through mainstream and project activity in Year 2.
- In **Pennine Lancashire**, at the sub-regional level, the Priority Place is now represented on the sub group of the Pennine Lancashire Leaders and Chief Executives (PLLACE) dealing with Culture, Leisure and Sport and this will be the key sub regional forum going forward. Also, partners in Pennine Lancashire have created a Living Places Manager post, providing the partnership with a dedicated resource to help drive forward the Living Places agenda.
- As a partnership, **PUSH** is well established as a wider partnership of south Hampshire local authorities, with the Quality Places Panel (one of five PUSH delivery panels, the others being Economic Development, Housing & Planning, Sustainability & Community Infrastructure and External Funding & Resources) fulfilling the function of the Priority Place Partnership. PUSH provides Living Places with clear evidence and experience of place shaping in a wider context.
- Throughout the Year 1 and 2 Evaluations, the notion of the **Thames Gateway** as a Priority Place has been complex, and activity is focuses in its constituent areas of East London, North Kent and South Essex with little Pan Gateway coordination. However, the development of a Kent-Essex² Local Economic Partnership proposal suggests there is a continued appetite to progress a Thames Gateway approach.
 - The **London Partnership** has focussed on supporting places at the masterplanning level, with activity being focussed on Canning Town, Raynham, Woolwich, Deptford and the five host 2012 Olympic London Boroughs (for which funding has been levered from LDA).
 - **Thames Gateway North Kent** is seen by many consultees as having made good progress in Year 2. The Partnership is managing its own destiny, and is clear that North Kent will attract investment from the cultural agencies moving forwards. The partnership has moved away from using the Living Places brand, and has become much more locally owned, with a much more even and balanced negotiation of activity from the cultural agencies and local authorities.
 - In **South Essex**, partners have successfully engaged Southend in the context of Living Places and place shaping, but have been less successful in engaging other South Essex partners in place shaping discussions. Indeed, cultural agency engagement in South Essex is often focussed on specific projects, not necessarily involving all Living Places partners in an across the board approach to place shaping.
- The **South West** has been problematic for Living Places both as a Priority Place and in regional partnership terms. In essence, there seems to be little regional cohesion in terms of the role culture and sport in place shaping, and in retrospect it would have been much better to have had a focus on a specific place (such as Taunton, where work taken forward as Living Places activity is well regarded).

Models of Partnership at work in the Priority Places

As noted previously, the models of partnership in Table 1 are acknowledged as being 'simplifications or partial formalisations of the different processes at work within partnerships'. As such, the actual partnership working taking place in Priority Places involves a combination of the models outlined.

² covering Essex County Council and Districts, Southend-on-Sea Council, Thurrock Council and Kent County Council, Canterbury City Council, Dover District Council, Shepway District Council, and Thanet District Council

The Priority Place Partnerships exhibit characteristics relating to the majority of the partnership models outline earlier in this paper, with those relating to **empowerment of local communities** and **uni-directional transformation** being less in evidence based on the findings from the Year 1 and Year 2 Evaluations. This (lack of these two models) is unsurprising given the aims and focus of the Living Places Programme, and the remaining five models are those that most closely fit the underlying rationale of Living Places.

Each of the five main partnership models are considered below, with examples from across the Priority Places provided to show where these models have operated. Please note that these are presented as examples, rather than an assessment of each Priority Place against each of the models. As such, not mentioning a Priority Place within a particular model does not mean this type of partnership does not exist within that partnership, merely that other examples are better recognised.

In terms of **policy synergy**, most of the Priority Places have shown examples of this type of partnership working, through the early Living Places plans and strategies (i.e. First and Second Stage Offers) as well as through the development of wider place specific strategies and plans in some Places (e.g. the recent development of the Cultural Investment Plan in Pennine Lancashire, cultural strategy developments in London, and the inclusion of culture and sport related priorities in Multi Area Agreements in PUSH and Pennine Lancashire).

The two models that relate to the use of resources, namely **resource synergy** and **budget enlargement** can be considered together. Whilst they relate, respectively, to the different aspects of the use of existing resources and the securing of additional resources, examples from the Priority Places tend to blur the boundaries between this type of working as both tend to exist in close alignment with partners using existing resources (and achieving resource synergy) alongside and in support of bids for additional funding (i.e. budget enlargement). Examples of this include the creation of the Living Places Manager post in Pennine Lancashire, and the PUSH Quality Places Delivery Manager, both of which have created an additional partnership resource to support the delivery and achievement of the aims of Living Places that would otherwise not have happened.

Further examples of resource synergy and budget enlargement include a range of in kind and in cash contributions made by partners to Priority Place activity, as well as the commissioning of evidence and research that the Priority Places have been involved in (e.g. the Cultural Mapping carried out for both Pennine Lancashire and Corby, the Community Archives studies, and the commissioning of Cultural Facilities Research by PUSH).

The type of approach that most partners have taken to Living Places is evidenced in the **mutual transformation** model of partnership working, where partners across the five Priority Places have (to varying degrees of commitment and subsequent success) been willing to learn and change their way of working and collaborating in order to work towards the aims of Living Places. For example, the PUSH Quality Places Panel brings together a range of partners with a clear focus on delivering better quality places in the areas of urban South Hampshire that will be the focus for growth. Similarly, Corby has brought together a range of partners and stakeholders to deliver a range culture and sport facilities (such as the 50 metre Corby Pool and the Corby Cube) that might not have been achievable without such mutual partnership approach.

Finally, all Priority Places have shown evidence of achieving **shared knowledge** whereby there has been a sharing of knowledge and information between partner within each Priority Place, leading to better understanding of what other partners do, and also a

greater stock of knowledge, information and evidence about the contribution of culture and sport to the building and sustaining of prosperous communities.

Living Places Partnership approaches at the regional level

In Year 1, the structure of the programme at the regional level varied across regions, with a focus towards addressing the outcomes of the regional arrangements and the alterations to regional agency collaborative working as opposed to specific Living Places activity and partnership working at the regional level.

The Year 2 Evaluation captured a range of views as to how Living Places works, and how it should work, at the regional level. Across England, all the regional partnership approaches are different, as regional partnerships recognised that they had to be flexible enough to allow locality partnerships to deliver and take opportunities. For example, MLA Council as the lead cultural agency for Living Places has not been prescriptive as to regional partnership approaches, requiring only that the Priority Places and eco-towns were supported.

A number of regional place shaping partnerships aspired to be the first port of call for any activity related to place shaping and culture. Therefore, at the end of Year 2, in most regions there is either a place shaping partnership, or an another group with a place shaping remit, with links to Priority Places as appropriate:

- **East Midlands:** The East Midlands has a Place Shaping Group which, following the Culture and Sport Planning Toolkit CSPT seminars, is developing a broader role. Membership of the group is limited to the four cultural agencies and Regeneration East Midlands, and in addition to Living Places and Place Shaping, the group discusses Sea Change, the Lincolnshire eco-town, and wider place based activity.
- **East of England:** In the East of England, Create, the regional cultural partnership involves the cultural agencies, Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Screen East and the Government Office. Reporting to Create, discussions have covered CSPT, eco-towns (Rackheath and Northstowe) and the development of activities across three specific places (Basildon, Peterborough and Thurrock). Despite this, place shaping partnership work in the East of England has to contend with a low appetite for Living Places in the region amongst key partners.
- **London:** There is strong commitment to the London Living Places Partnership, with the Mayor's Office investing £10,000. The partnership focuses on developing a Pan London product, with focus on specific places, and the draft Mayor of London Cultural Strategy contained substantial Living Places content. The Living Places pamphlet produced jointly with the Mayor's office has been an effective advocacy tool.
- **North West:** Regional place shaping partnership work has been developed from the core of the cultural agencies and other regional bodies (such as the RDA) that were on the Pennine Lancashire Priority Place partnership expanding the outlook across the region, and now providing support to a range of priority localities in the region.
- **South East:** The South East Living Places Partnership (SELP) sits underneath the South-East Cultural Partnership and leads on place shaping in the region. Membership includes Government Office, Screen East and Tourism South East. Other organisations and partners are invited to attend as and when necessary (this approach is not especially formal, but is done a case by case basis).
- **South West:** Please see the Priority Place discussion above.
- **West Midlands:** In the West Midlands Living Places is in effect the umbrella branding for policy approaches designed to improve people's lives through the use of culture and sport. West Midlands cultural agency's officers group is the regional forum that discusses Living Places (as a standing item), and is the West Midlands

Living Places/place shaping group. This group is chaired by English Heritage, and sits underneath DAWM (DCMS Agencies of the West Midlands), with membership comprising the cultural agencies plus the WM Regional Observatory, GOWM and Advantage West Midlands.

- **Yorkshire & The Humber:** Living Places in Yorkshire & The Humber is led by Arts Council England, who have chaired the regional Living Places group since 2008. Membership is comprised of the cultural agencies, plus the Government Office and Yorkshire Forward. From November 2009 onwards, the group evolved into the regional place shaping sub group of the regional cultural arrangements (Yorkshire Cultural Agencies Partnership). Regional arrangements in Yorkshire appear to work well, and are founded on good relationships between the cultural agencies that predate Living Places.

In summary, the regional partnerships have taken forward the mainstreaming of Living Places activity beyond the five Priority Places. In many of the regions this has involved progressing the Living Places / place shaping agenda, where appropriate, through pre-existing partnership structures and arrangements.

A general lesson from the approach at the regional level is that the use of pre-existing partnership structures to encapsulate the aims and agenda of Living Places has enabled a more efficient approach to be adopted, and has enabled the NDPBs to provide, where relevant, joined up support to the place shaping priorities of localities.

The approach at the national level – the National Partner Group

The Living Places partnership at the national level is the National Partners Group, and it is through this Group that the five cultural agencies, DCMS and CLG are engaged at the operational level, with each partner organisation being represented by a senior officer.

In Year 1, evaluation evidence suggested that the development of the National Partner Group, and its appropriate positioning to influence future policy and strategy, and act as an advocate for culture and sport with relevant key (national) policy developers was a significant achievement. It concluded that the **Living Places Programme represented an early and tangible example of DCMS and the cultural agencies working together in partnership**, and in Year 1 the National Partner Group was starting to get involved in influencing and informing policy development.

In Year 2, National Partners were more successful in meaningfully engaging with CLG and HCA, tactically developing a task based approach. This allowed HCA and CLG to engage in appropriate Living Places debates (such as eco-towns, Community Infrastructure Levy, business planning etc) on their terms, and not expecting their involvement in process or culture and sport specific discussions.

National Partner Group is unique in terms of being an operational forum between the cultural agencies, as unlike the regional partnerships, there was no alternative in terms of a mainstream group that could capture National Partner Group's remit in Years 1 and 2 of the Programme. Indeed Living Places seems to have benefited from enhanced understanding between cultural agencies at the national level, with members stating that agencies understand each other much better as a result of the work of this Group.

Summary

In summary, at the end of Year 2 of the Programme, **Living Places has clearly played an active role in influencing thinking about culture and sport in place shaping**, and has delivered much through the five Priority Places (to varying degrees), and through regional partnership arrangements.

From a Priority Place perspective, the Living Places NDPB's have delivered a higher level of time and resource-based investment than might otherwise not have occurred, as well as convincing wider national partners as to the value of cultural investment in development and regeneration.

In terms of lessons and learning, Living Places demonstrates the importance of pragmatism in terms of place based culture and sport partnership working. In short, there is no 'one size fits all' approach, and flexibility is essential for any locality in developing arrangements. Further partnership related lessons include:

- The experience of Priority Places strongly suggests that building on / developing existing partnership arrangements where possible has been a key success factor in the more successful Priority Places.
- Evaluation evidence also suggests that good engagement and relationships with the local authorities in Priority Places is vital in the success of Priority Places, particularly with planners and with economic development and regeneration professionals.
- The leadership of the partnership needs to be a senior and convincing advocate of the role of culture and sport in regeneration and development. Corby, Pennine Lancashire and PUSH all benefited from key individuals driving the Living Places agenda in a development and regeneration context.
- Thames Gateway and The South West provide a particular lesson for Living Places in terms of scale, as being a region-wide or pan-regional Priority Places creates additional challenges. It is clear that meaningful engagement with place based regeneration partnerships and with local authorities (identified as two of the success factors for effective partnership working) is more difficult at the higher spatial level, and this suggests that local or sub regional approaches are more effective.
- A general lesson from the approach at the regional level is that the use of pre-existing partnership structures to encapsulate the aims and agenda of Living Places has enabled a more efficient approach to be adopted, and has enabled the NDPBs to provide, where relevant, joined up support to the place shaping priorities of localities.