A TOOLKIT FOR CONSULTATION

A TOOLKIT FOR CONSULTATION

Contents

This toolkit is based on the methodology used to undertake research for the Listed Places of Worship at Risk initiative (LPoW@R) by *Living Stones:* The

Church and Community Trust to find out more about the issues facing congregations in maintaining their listed building and the role of places of worship in communities.

1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this toolkit is to provide a basic methodology for the consultation process. It is based on the methodology used by *Living Stones:* The Church and Community Trust to undertake research into the issues facing the Trustees and congregations of listed places of worship and the role of places of worship in communities. This research was undertaken as part of the Places of Worship at Risk initiative (PoW@R).

Although designed to be used in various venues across the country, this methodology could be used equally well for smaller area consultation, for example:

- Where a Place of Worship (PoW) is considering extending the use of the building for community activities or delivery of community services. This methodology could be used to establish what else is happening in the area and what other PoW or community groups are planning for the future.
- Where a PoW is looking for partners in new ventures or new ways of working, to find out whether there are others with complementary plans.
- Or even as small as just within the immediate community to consult over, say, re-ordering the PoW or the desirability of a car park.

The toolkit provides an easy to follow step-by-step process for undertaking consultation looking at:

- Finding your target audience
- Hints in designing questionnaires
- How to run seminars, from choosing a venue to the tasks that need staffing to capturing information and the usefulness of feedback
- Analysing data and reporting.

Irrespective of the scale of your consultation these steps need to be worked through.

If your consultation is being undertaken as, say, the first step in extending the use of your building, it is invaluable if you later have to apply for funding. A well-thought through, well documented consultation speaks volumes about the organisation applying for funding – it says that you are committed and understand what funders need to know - it says that you are professional.

2. FINDING A TARGET AUDIENCE

2.1 How to get people interested in participating

A most important thing to remember when you are undertaking a consultation exercise is that *you* need people to consult. Yes, it is obvious but put yourself in the shoes of the people you hope to consult:

- Why should they give their valuable time to you?
- What's in it for them?

So before you even decide who you are going to approach, give some thought as to how you will "sell" the idea, what are the benefits to those whom you hope to consult?

Clearly you will be consulting only those for whom your issue should be of interest to them – but it may not be the top of their list of priorities. If you can offer the opportunity to influence future plans, especially if this has ramifications for funding this may encourage people to attend. Also having more than one issue "on the menu" could interest a wider number of people.

In reality one of the major benefits from the seminars is the opportunity to discuss with others problems experienced and solutions found, and the benefit of this to members should not be underestimated.

2.2 Identifying a target audience

This will depend on what is the focus of the consultation. For example, if it is about the number of Baptist churches that have been re-ordered in North-East England, the target audience is pretty well defined. However if the research is to cover say, all faith groups using listed buildings for worship and community use then the task of establishing a target audience is far more difficult. There is no one directory that will give you this information. The Anglican Church has a hierarchy – it is organised into dioceses, which hold contact information for every Anglican Church in the country. There is also a website www.achurchnearyou.com which is very useful. The Roman Catholic Church is organised in a similar manner. The Methodist church is less hierarchical but information is fairly easy to find. However once you start to move away from the more mainstream faiths, it becomes increasingly more difficult to even find a contact for each faith building. Independent churches are just that – independent! Try "googling" the name of the Place of Worship this often leads you there but sometimes the only way to find out who is responsible for a building is to visit it and ask!

If you are trying to reach the non-mainstream faiths it can be a very time-consuming exercise for the reasons explained above.

If you are interested in the issues facing places of worship that are listed you may find that some of the listed buildings which appear on the English Heritage register as Places of Worship are no longer owned by a faith group. For example, the Deutsche Evangelische Kirche in Bradford, whilst still being used by that church, is actually owned by an Arts organisation and the church rents the space for worship.

If you are interested in places of worship being used for secular activity there is no national register available, very few Anglican dioceses hold this sort of information, it is really a case of contacting places of worship and asking.

2.3 Contacting your target audience

Have identified who you wish to contact, contact them by telephone to establish their willingness to participate. Letters and e-mails are easy to ignore, a telephone call gets results.

However, "cold calling" is never easy. It helps to have a "script" prepared prior to the telephone call which contains:

- A clear statement about the nature of the consultation, who is undertaking it and why.
- An explanation of why you would like them to be involved and what the benefit is to them
- An explanation of the sort of people you wish to be involved, for example, is it the view of the faith leaders you are seeking or that of the congregation.
- The form that the consultation will take (questionnaire / one to one meeting/ seminar)

Be prepared to answer questions about the work.

Establish that they are willing to participate – if they are not interested it isn't worth sending out the paperwork. So

- Actually re-iterate, "So you are willing to take part?" You are asking for commitment.
- Tell them what happens next (sending out questionnaires / arranging meeting / date of seminar / overall timescale).

Always thank people even if they have not been very helpful – it is *you* who have taken up *their* time!

You can spend a lot of time on the 'phone on this stage of the process but it is time well spent and as people feel that by agreeing to take part they are entering into a commitment. Generally contact by e-mail is not as successful as the approach by 'phone.

3. QUESTIONNAIRES

3.1 Designing questionnaires

Questionnaires are a useful part of a consultation event. They can give you an indication of the scale of an issue (e.g. whether 25% or 90% agree with a statement) and can put the views of “dominant” consultation members in a wider context. It is also useful to have numerical or quantitative information to hand when you are applying for funding or making the case for a particular programme.

The more complicated the questionnaire, the less likely it is to be filled in, so keep it simple. Do as much as possible with multi-choice questions and tick boxes. Where yes/no answers require an explanation, say so:

“If no, then explain why”

And leave a box big enough for a handwritten response.

Where a topic is unsuitable for reply by tick boxes, ask open questions.

Make sure that questions are unambiguous. Get someone who is not connected with the consultation to try to fill in the questionnaire – this should bring to light any ambiguities or questions that were difficult to understand. Avoid using jargon at all costs.

If you would like to know who a particular questionnaire response belongs to, customise each questionnaire with the name of the place of worship or group you have sent the questionnaire to. In rural areas most clergy are responsible for more than one PoW. Also it is amazing how many respondents forget to fill this in if a blank box is supplied. To enable following-up the answers supplied, ask for contact details and a time when it is convenient to contact.

However if you are asking more sensitive questions such as on customer service, it is best not to ask for names, people are more likely to be honest if it is anonymous.

Design your questionnaire so that it can be sent out by e-mail and filled in and returned by e-mail.

After asking others to check your questionnaire for errors and ambiguities, if you subsequently alter questions, recheck that you haven't added in more confusion.

For example when the question
"Do you think maintaining your building should be your responsibility? YES/NO"
was subsequently extended to
"Do you think maintaining your building should be your responsibility?
Would you rather it was looked after by another organisation? YES/NO"
To which question are you answering "YES/NO"?
Luckily the whole question was
"Do you think maintaining your building should be your responsibility?
Would you rather it was looked after by another organisation? YES/NO
If yes, who do you think should be responsible?"

And all of the answers were clear who the respondent felt should maintain the building and why, BUT it illustrates how easy it is to make mistakes on questionnaires! See the sample questionnaire, which was set up to find out what people thought about their listed place of worship -plus comments on what could be better- in Appendix B.

3.2 Context

Answers only make sense if you know the context in which they were written. A question may be answered very differently by an inner city black independent church and a very rural Anglican church just because of the location, but you need to know this. Whilst you may have some idea of the geography of a place, you need to know the demography and, maybe, other things in order to understand the context of the response. You could ask for this information as part of a questionnaire or send out a separate "Context Statement" to be completed (see Appendix A).

3.3 Sending out questionnaires

When you send questionnaires through the post include a covering letter which repeats the "script" discussed in paragraph 2.3. Whilst the consultation may be *your* main piece of work, to the recipient it is merely one of many things they may have dropping through the letter box. Include clear instructions about returning questionnaires and the expected timescale for return. Always include a stamped addressed envelope. For those participating in the consultation it saves time, it saves money and it ensures that the return address is correct!

Keep a list of where you have sent questionnaires / invitations so that you can chase people up!

4. SEMINARS

By following up questionnaires with a seminar you have the opportunity to discuss the questionnaire topics in more depth and across a wider audience, enabling:

- Debate between those being consulted
- Raising awareness of issues and different solutions.

To get the most out of this approach you need to have enough people to be able to do this especially if you want to use break-out groups to focus on specific topics.

Most people get a lot out of hearing about the experience of others and the networking opportunities that a seminar offers, especially the opportunity to meet people with whom they would not usually have contact, for example, local authority conservation officers. For example the presence of a conservation officer or a community development worker could enable discussion at the end of the seminar resulting in better understanding of a way forward for specific problems. The answers given on the questionnaires can be "fleshed out" far more at the seminars.

4.1 Where? Seminar location

Pick a seminar location that is accessible by public transport. Not only is that environmentally friendly, remember that older people may have bus passes that they wish to use. Make sure that your venue has full disabled access – your participants may need this and, especially if you are holding a seminar in a listed building, disabled access should not be assumed.

Check that the venue can supply all of the facilities that you need, which could include any of the following:

- Data projectors and screens - set up and ready to use
- Flipchart boards
- Flexible seating arrangement
- "Break-out" rooms for small group discussions
- Tea / coffee facilities
- Catering
- Car parking
- Easy entry!

The better the venue, the more it is used and availability may be limited, so book early.

"Conference facilities" appear to mean different things to different people and the amount being charged does not always reflect the level of accommodation, the facilities being offered or the helpfulness of the staff. If at all possible visit potential venues before booking them. This gives you the opportunity to check the venue and the ease of access and to discuss your requirements with the person who will be there on the day.

4.2 When? Timing and lead-in time

The longer the lead-in time the more likely that people are able to attend – that sounds logical but experience does not support it! Inviting people four to six weeks before the event is ideal but not guaranteed to bring results –the longer the lead time, the more time for other events to take precedence! Remember that whilst the seminar is very important to *you,* it may not be the number one priority for those attending.

Remember that with a multi-faith target audience you need to work around holy days of *all* faiths.

If your target audience is mainly Christian then try to avoid the weeks leading up to Christmas and the weeks during Lent – a lot of groups run Lent courses and hold weekly mid-week communions throughout the period.

Members of a faith group may feel that they cannot attend an event if the faith leader is unable to attend because they may feel unprepared to speak on behalf of the group and, certainly, unwilling to speak on behalf of the minister.

For the seminars we ran, we decided to do them during the day. This makes it difficult for some people to attend, especially volunteers from the places of worship who are in employment or are carers, but it did mean we could get local authority officers along. It also meant we were not expecting people to attend on a cold winter's night. You should think about who you would most like to attend when deciding on a time.

4.3 How? Structure

The reason for the seminar is to *gather* information - very specific information – so the seminar should have structure around the various types of information you require.

Start with a brief introduction:

- Of yourselves – the people facilitating the session
- Of the session, how it will be structured, the topics covered and what you are trying to get out of the session
- Any "housekeeping" (location of WC's, procedure in case of fire, turning off mobile 'phones etc)

Then get the attendees to introduce themselves and the organisation they represent.

Introduce each section with some background to get people thinking about how they fit into it, then ask specific questions or raise specific issues for wide discussion. It is a good idea to limit the length of response – some people can go on forever! If, at the start of the day, a time limit is set, no-one can be offended if they are asked to stop. Don't be afraid to interject if an answer needs amplification or further explanation.

If your audience is large it may be better to have discussion in "break out" groups as these will be smaller and more manageable. Whichever method you employ be sure that someone is capturing the responses.

Have stops for refreshments, it breaks up the day and allows for networking and continuation of discussion so be there to hear what is said.

Finish with a plenary session to draw conclusions and to mop up anything that has not been addressed. Remember to tell your audience what happens next, for example, you will send a copy of your report when it is complete, and to thank them for their time.

4.4 Who? Staffing

The minimum number of people to run a seminar is two, the more you can get to help the easier it is. You need people for the following tasks:

- Meeting and greeting, ticking people off your attendees list, amending names if substitutes have been sent. Make sure the "meet-er and greeter" knows where the WC facilities are – it's usually the first thing people want to know!
- To present / facilitate each session
- To document each session. This could be scribing ideas onto a flipchart or capturing people's remarks made in open discussion sessions or even adding up a show of hands –but it is so much easier if the presenter / facilitator has an "assistant" to do this
- To facilitate break-out groups, one person per group ideally
- To hand out feedback forms at the end of the day and to make sure that they are completed and handed in
- To make and serve refreshments at pre-agreed times throughout the day. Ideally this service should be provided by the venue – the venue staff should know where everything is kept and be familiar with the kitchen equipment.

Clearly some of these tasks can be undertaken by the same person.

4.5 What did they say? Capturing information

Probably the easiest way to capture everything that is said is to user an audio recorder, but at the end of the day someone will have to listen to a day's worth of recording in order to analyse it. If you have someone taking notes, the likelihood is that they will only record that of value / interest, making analysis much easier.

Using both recording and a scribe ensures that nothing is lost. Analysis of discussions can be undertaken using written comments in the knowledge that the actual dialogue could be checked if necessary.

3.6 How did it go? Feedback

Whenever feedback forms are mentioned everyone groans! It seems that every event you attend wants your feedback and that is because it is so useful. When you are planning to run a series of similar events then the feedback from every event can inform subsequent ones. Make the feedback form easy to fill in, ask the questions that are important to you but not too many – these folks want to get away! The most basic questions are:

- How was the day for you? Was it useful? If everyone though it was awful you'd better change it
- How could it have been made better? See if you can address any of the points raised
- What could have been left out? This helps you check whether you're pitching it right
- What was the most important thing you learned from the seminar? A check on whether the right message is getting across!

From many seminars the most important thing that most people gained from the seminar was

"Listening to the experience of others and gaining new insights"

Whilst this may not have been the reason for the day, by getting people to share their "stories" the information that was required for the consultation was imparted and discussed, making the experience worthwhile for all those attending.

5. DATA HANDLING AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Types of data

You will probably be dealing with two types of data; results from the questionnaire and findings from the seminar:

5.2 Results from the questionnaire

There are two types of information which you will get from the questionnaire:

- Closed ended question data, that is, answers which are clearly defined, "yes/no" or select from the following list all that apply. These are answers that can be totalled. For example, 95% thought that the responsibility for church buildings should remain with the owners of the buildings.
- Open ended questions where the answers are not a "yes/no" answer and where the answer could be so varied that a list of all possibilities is not feasible. For example, "What impact does the building being listed make on worship and any other faith activities which take place? Please explain your answer" will give rise to various replies.

5.2.1 Analysing closed ended question data

Answers from close ended questions can be loaded into a spreadsheet and a block of colour placed in the relevant box. See example below:

This is part of the LPoW@R project spreadsheet for responses from congregational members

LINCOLN			RESPONDENTS : CONGREGATION					
LPoW REF *	DENOM/ FAITH	AWARE yes	LISTED no	KNOW yes	WHY no	FAMILIAR yes	WITH unsure	LISTING no
A	CofE							
A	CofE							
B	CofE							
B	CofE							
C	CofE							
D	CofE							
D	CofE							
E	Methodist							
E	Methodist							
F	Quaker							
F	Quaker							
G	C of E							
H	C of E							
H	C of E				*		*	

By using colour blocks it is very easy to see the patterns. In this example 100% of the respondents knew that their Place of Worship was listed and only 14% (2 out of 14 replies) did not know why the building was listed or what listing meant.

5.2.2. Analysing open ended questions from the questionnaire

Where data is of open ended every reply has to be examined and categorised against the other replies. Such as in the example below:

LPoW REF	**Do you think maintaining your building should be your responsibility? Would you rather it was looked after by another organisation? If yes, who do you think should be responsible?**
Ai	Another organisation
Aii	A professional body, e.g. English Heritage
Bi	No, certainly not
Bii	
Ci	No. Central government assistance is probably essential in the long term but the ultimate responsibility must remain with the church council
Cii	
Di	As the church belongs to the village maybe the rates should be adjusted to pay the quota leaving us money to maintain the church
Dii	
Ei	We would be happy to accept the responsibility if we had the finance/ human resource to implement, sharing with other organisations / bodies would be acceptable
Eii	
Fi	No. Strongly opposed to giving up local Quaker Meeting responsibility for our building. View greater state control with horror
Fii	
Gi	Yes- saves us endless fundraising, no- we would loose control
Gii	
Hi	Yes if it saved us money, but no if we lost control
Hii	
Ji	
Jii	
Ki	

Here the answers differ because they have been written by different people, but it is clear to see that whilst some people thought it would be good for others to have the financial responsibility, no-one was prepared to go down that route if it meant relinquishing control.

5.3 Follow-up

Where there is deviation from the majority of replies then it is a good idea to follow up that reply. It could be that the respondent has misunderstood the question; it could be that there is more behind the answer that you should know. For example, to the sample question in paragraph 5.3, if someone had replied that they thought that state control of the fabric of listed PoW was the best answer, but had omitted to say why, then you would need to follow up this response. Maybe the respondent had experience of state help being beneficial in another country and that would be useful input to your consultation.

Follow up is also needed why you have asked for explanation of a reply and people have failed to give one!

5.4 Analysing the seminar results

After the seminar has finished, talk to your partner about what you thought the key messages are. It can be helpful to think thematically, for example issues around getting consent for change, the role of the PoW in the local community, how to widen their role in the community. The findings and messages that stand out in both your minds will be the most important ones. The seminar is also a good place to record case studies which highlight or add colour to the results from the survey.

6. REPORTING

Having gathered your responses together from both the questionnaire and seminar, followed up missing data and analysed the data, it is time to draw your conclusions. It is usual to produce a report of the findings of a consultation. Whatever the length of your report, make sure it starts with an executive summary – many people will not read more than this! It is good practice to include an acknowledgement of all those who were consulted. Often a short report -the background to the consultation, the executive summary and broad brush results - is also produced as something that is cheap to send out or easily down-loadable from a website.

And remember to send a copy of the report to all who took part in the consultation.

Appendix A: Context Statement (Page 19)
Appendix B: Questionnaire for Trustees of Listed PoW (Page 21)

Note: To assist legibility of the forms within this document, the response boxes have been truncated.

LISTED BUILDINGS: BLESSINGS OR BURDENS?

CONTEXT STATEMENT

Name of Place of Worship: St Thomas, Aslockton

This building is listed Grade II

Have you ever applied to English Heritage for a grant? Yes/No

Was your application successful? Yes/No

How would you describe the area in which you are situated? (ring the best description)

City centre/ inner city/ town centre/ suburban/ village/ hamlet

What best describes the area served by your Place of Worship? (ring the best description)

Size: < 500 / 500-2000 / 2000-10,000 / >10,000

Age group: Mostly elderly retired/ mostly young families/ students /mixed

Ethnicity: White: British/ Irish, Asian or Asian British: Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi/Other,
Black or Black British: Caribbean/African, Chinese, Mixed

Which of the following amenities are present in your area? (please ring all that apply)

Public transport/ shops/ health centre/ primary school/ secondary school/ leisure centre/ community centre

CONTEXT STATEMENT continued

Is the building used for anything other than worship? Yes/No

If yes, please list who else uses the building

……….

……….

……….

……….

Where is the place of worship in relation to the community it serves?

(e.g. central, on the edge of the area, divided from most of the are by a major road)

……….

……….

Thank you for completing this statement, your help is appreciated.

Our comments on how well the questions worked are in red

LISTED BUILDINGS: BLESSINGS OR BURDENS?
QUESTIONNAIRE (for Trustees of listed buildings)

Name of Place of Worship: **This building is listed Grade II**
What does the the fact that your Place of Worship is listed mean to you? A very open question and many people found it difficult to give in-depth answers to this question What impact does that make on worship and any other faith activities which take place? Does the listing "add value" to that activity? Yes/No Please explain your answer Although the question was specifically to do with the listing, people answered 'yes' to 'adds value', they then explained their answer with phrases like ' continuing witness in the same place'. 'an aura of peace', 'special atmosphere' - actually nothing to do with listing. .This shows the value of asking for explanation!
Has the fact that your Place of Worship is listed ever prevent you from doing things you would like to do? Yes/No (For example, a more modern expression of worship or secular activity or it takes up time that I'd rather spend on other things) Please explain your answer In this question 'community activity' would have been more easily understood than 'secular activity'
Does the fact that your Place of Worship is listed as being of architectural or historic importance enable you to use it in ways which otherwise you might not do?
Do you get more support / recognition from the local community (i.e. non-worshipping community) because the building is historic? Yes/No

LISTED BUILDINGS: BLESSINGS OR BURDENS?

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Do you use your building for any activities other than worship? Yes/no</td></tr>
<tr><td>If yes, please list other uses.
……………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………</td><td>Have you considered using your building for other activities?
If no, please give the reason
This question is not well written, it should have said
"If no, (to the main question), have you ever
considered using your buildings for other activities?
If no, please give the reason
…………………………………………………………………
If yes, did you achieve this?
Explain what happened.
If yes, why did you not achieve this?
……………………………………………………………</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Is there enough help available to enable secular activities to be developed in Places of Worship? Yes/No
If no, please say who you think should be providing this help</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">What makes buildings sustainable?
This question would be better if it said 'What do you think makes buildings sustainable?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">What do you see happening to this building in the future?</td></tr>
</table>

Maintenance of the building

Who is responsible for it?

Who pays for it?

What level of insurance do you hold?

Do you have regular building inspections? Yes/No

What are the skills needed to maintain your building?

A better question would be 'What do you think are the skills needed to maintain your building?'

Do you have access to these skills? Yes/No

Do you think that there is enough support and guidance available to help you maintain your listed building? Yes/No

If no, please say who you think should help (e.g. Local authority/central government/English Heritage/other)

What would make the biggest difference to your ability to maintain your listed building? (ring all that apply)

Funding / greater involvement of local community / better facilities / skills training / greater freedom / other

If other, please list

What issues will you face in the future in terms of maintenance? (Please list)	What procedures do you adopt if you want to make changes to your building? (Please describe)

Do you think that maintaining your building should be your responsibility or would you rather it were looked by another organisation? (For example, the French government pays for the upkeep of its PoW) Yes/no

If yes, who do you think should be responsible?

Completed by (name)... Position...

Contact details... Best time to contact.................................

(Please use BLOCK CAPITALS, thank you)

Thank you for completing this questionnaire, your help is appreciated. Please send this back in the s.a.e. provided. Page 3

If you would like this document in a different format, please contact our Customer Services department:
Telephone: 0870 333 1181
Fax: 01793 414926
Textphone: 01793 414878
E-mail: customers@english-heritage.org.uk