New Conversations 2.0
LGA guide to engagement

💬 Story: hearing the full range of regen perspectives, in York

Faced with major regeneration projects, City of York council wanted types of engagement that would appeal to as wide a range of people as possible. As such, over the past two years York has fundamentally rewritten how it engages residents on these big regeneration projects.

The new approach to public engagement was developed with local group My Future York. Different engagement techniques were trialled through the 'My Castle Gateway' consultation. This helped the council to develop a master plan for this part of the city, which was universally accepted by people with very different perspectives. This included many who had not previously engaged with traditional council consultations.

Following on from this the council used the same techniques in the 'Bootham Park' consultation. An integrated approach across multiple channels was used, including walking tours on site and resident and business drop-in events. Social media played a key role in the engagement process and conversations were created between people from different backgrounds and with different views. An online survey allowed for more in-depth views to be captured.

Applying these different engagement techniques uncovered issues, promoted compromise and, as a result, sped up delivery. Key factors in reaching a wider audience included an emphasis on governance, a focus on early engagement, and a stress on the importance of open and ongoing conversations.

Using a variety of formats and channels was also essential York Council supplemented traditional methods, with a range of less conventional engagement approaches. Key principles underpinning this included:

• getting onto 'resident's turf', physically or digitally, to generate conversations rather than simply expecting people to engage on the council's terms

• using the local expertise of the council's communities and engagement teams, ward members and others at the engagement planning stage

• creating engaging digital content, promoted through existing place-based community groups and boosted via social media advertising

• deploying different themes and emphases, to engage different audiences and attract different demographics to the conversation.