

2.5 Public participation

Public participation is a key element in preparing most plans and projects, whether for a local development framework, an action plan for an area or a masterplan for a proposed development. The graphics tools for participation relate to the three categories or steps in the process:

- i) initial engagement
- ii) workshops
- iii) preliminary proposals.

Each requires a different graphic design treatment.

Graphics support for public participation has to help attract attention, stimulate interest and encourage involvement. Contextual studies should have identified the diversity of the community of interest, the level of existing knowledge of the project and the level of support or antipathy to the overall objective. All of these will influence the choice of graphical presentation.

High quality production can help establish authority and commitment to the project, but can distance the team from the community. Impromptu advertising can be eye-catching, but is not usually sufficient to stimulate wide interest. A selection of techniques with an overall identity, perhaps a project logo, gives the best chance of capturing a wide audience.

2.5.1 The initial engagement

Whatever techniques are used, the material must express issues, choice and flexibility and not, at this stage, solutions. A certain softness is required, not hard-edged precision that might imply decisions have already been made. The graphics will be for posters and flyers advertising the event, for information on the nature of the area and possibly the main choices involved.



Improvised graphics have immediacy and are eye-catching.



Using the project logo to identify team members and facilitators is a good idea – badges or T-shirts are usually sufficient. Over-elaborate efforts could appear extravagant and be counter-productive.



Publicity posters in local shops increase local awareness and emphasise local commitment.