

# Putting People in the Lead through Quality Participatory Budgeting

Project Evaluation 2022

Reflections on the activities, impacts and learning  
from the Putting People in the Lead through  
Quality Participatory Budgeting project delivered  
between January 2020 and September 2022

Community  
Places



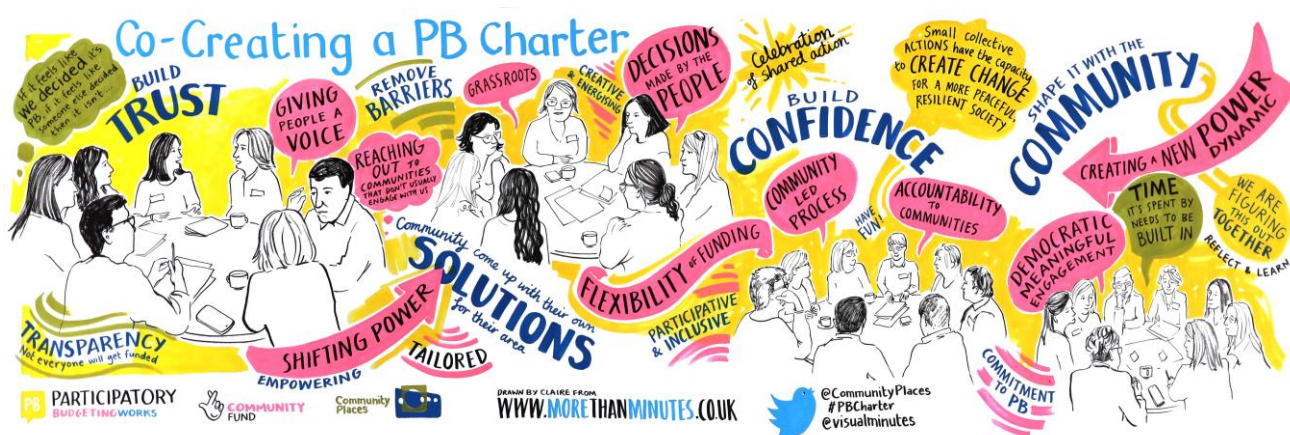
PB **PARTICIPATORY**  
BUDGETING WORKS

 **COMMUNITY**  
FUND

## Putting People in the Lead through Quality PB

In January 2020, Community Places was awarded funding to deliver *the Putting People in the Lead through Quality Participatory Budgeting (PB) project*. The project was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and set in the broader context of its Great Ideas Programme.

The aim of the project was to achieve a 'quality' locally led and tailored approach to the planning and application of PB processes through the development of a PB Charter. This advocates that every PB process should place an emphasis on planning for inclusion and participation and that community stakeholders should be involved from the outset - genuinely putting people in the lead.



## Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation examines the impact of the project by reflecting on the relationship between inputs and activities, outputs, outcomes as well as the processes of change. The impact of the *Putting People in the Lead through Quality PB project* clearly cannot be reduced to numeric metrics or outputs alone and places an emphasis on the qualitative effects of a delivery schedule that has also involved time and technical input from Community Places as well as individuals who participate voluntarily on the regional PB Works advisory group.

The evaluation will also reflect on the challenges and distinct learning from selected interventions and activities that were successfully delivered across the project delivery period. It will also present the critical reflections of 17 semi-structured interviews that were completed with a broad cross-section of stakeholders from the community and voluntary sector partners, statutory government departments, local councils, as well as direct groups that lobby for greater public participation in governmental processes. A list of these individuals and their organisation is provided in the Appendix.

Finally, the evaluation will also outline the successes of the project and provide a set of recommendations that aim to distil the learning and help shape the advancement, replication or scaling of PB processes across the region in the long term. It is important to stress from the outset how the unprecedented circumstances of COVID-19 created unforeseen impacts and challenges on the delivery schedule. Despite these, Community Places has worked innovatively and collaboratively with the National Lottery to ensure that the re-negotiated activity schedule was delivered in line with the funding criteria and outcomes set out by the Great Ideas Programme.

## Project Delivery Model

The Putting People in the Lead through Quality PB delivery model has involved substantive input by Community Places which was responsible for all contractual matters including the management of staff, the project budget as well as the implementation of the key deliverables. This included the co-design of a bespoke and regional PB Charter, the delivery of four workshops which have aimed to build PB capacity as well as share knowledge and practice, the lobbying of statutory departments and local authorities to mainstream PB processes as well as an offer of information sessions to individuals or groups working to advance their own PB processes.

The delivery model also drew on outputs and work completed from the previous Participatory Budgeting Works Project, which was a collaborative effort to raise awareness of and advocate for PB across the region. A positive legacy of this previous initiative was the formation of PB Works advisory group, which is also co-ordinated by Community Places and includes representation from a broad cross-section of organisations, largely from the community and voluntary sector who are committed to supporting PB processes and strengthening the regional enabling environment.

## Project Management

Community Places was responsible for the management of the budget, and the table below provides a breakdown of the final expenditure across five separate budget lines. The expenditure profile was ratified by the funder (The National Lottery Community Fund) and was reflective of the operational changes made to the delivery schedule that were enforced by the COVID-19 restrictions. The final spend demonstrates an efficient form of delivery, especially given the range of activity, the mixed mode of working (face to face, online, range of partners), the level of experimentation (through the diverse methods, delivery and engagement), and again the response to the wider unforeseen challenges created by COVID-19. This demonstrated sound and innovative project management from Community Places which also worked effectively alongside the project funder from inception to completion.

Putting People in the Lead through Quality PB budget line	Expenditure (£)
Project Management	11,137
Project Co-ordination, Support and Delivery	80,021
Finance and Administrative Support	11,811
Contribution to Organisational Overheads	10,961
Project Outputs, Activities and Direct Costs	11,280
<b>Total Project Expenditure</b>	<b>£125,210</b>

To support delivery, Community Places drew on the expertise of relevant collaborators, particularly in the delivery of the workshops. These included Scottish Government Officials, the New Gorbals Housing Association, the Gorbals Ideas Fund, North Ayrshire Council, MorayTSI, the Democratic Society and Development Trusts NI. Such involvement created additionality and helped to explore how best PB could connect with community-led activity but also emerging domestic policy areas such as Community Wealth Building. The project also received in-kind support from members of the PB Works advisory group who continue to share their experience, skills, knowledge and enthusiasm to help champion the development of PB processes at both the local and regional level.

# Project Outputs and Activities

This section presents the outputs and key activities delivered during the Putting People in the Lead through Quality PB project from its inception in January 2020 to its completion in September 2022. It shows how these activities have worked to advance aims of the Great Ideas Programme, specifically by improving the lives of people and communities but also in contributing to putting people in the lead. How this was achieved will be explored in more detail (later in the report) in an effort to reflect on the impact from the different outputs and activities summarised below and in detail from pages 4 to 10:

**Co-Design of a PB Charter** The project has co-designed and launched a bespoke PB Charter. Its development is significant and provides a clear model for what we mean by quality PB and has direct relevance as it has been shaped by local input and learning experiences from across the region.



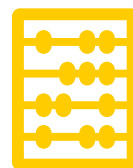
**Development of a PB Route Map** The project has developed a PB Route Map which contains five key asks that communicates how and why PB should be mainstreamed and the benefits it can deliver for communities. These include a core programme of technical support, increasing cross-party PB support for a 1% allocation of public expenditure via PB, establishment of a regional PB advisory group led by Department for Communities and Department of Finance and the development of the Open Government Action Plan to outline a commitment to PB as part of a healthy participative democracy.



**Learning Workshops** The project has delivered a series of relevant learning workshops around four different themes which included the Role of PB in the COVID-19 response, Digital PB, Community Led PB and Community Wealth Building and PB. The workshops were delivered online in response to the restrictions enforced by COVID-19 to an aggregated audience of 180 attendees. These representatives were cross-sectoral and included: community and voluntary sector workers, public officials, academics and citizens interested in advancing PB processes on behalf of their own communities.



**Lobbying and Consultation** Through adoption of the Route Map the project has worked in effective partnership with other stakeholders (e.g. Community Foundation Northern Ireland and Involve) to advocate for the mainstreaming of PB across the region. This strand of activity has involved the submission of several comprehensive consultation responses to emerging policy programmes like PEACEPLUS and the Programme for Government (PFG). It has also involved engagement with all political parties as well as public officials, including the Minister for Communities Deirdre Hargey to showcase the potential of PB and its relevance in emerging government initiatives such as the NI Executive's New Decade New Approach document.



**Information Sessions** The project has delivered five online information sessions to help support PB projects directly at the point of need but also to build the capacity of locally based PB practitioners, especially those working across the community and voluntary sector. This has included social enterprises, development trusts, housing associations or grassroots collectives (e.g., the Join the Dots project) that are motivated to engage more effectively with local communities via PB processes.



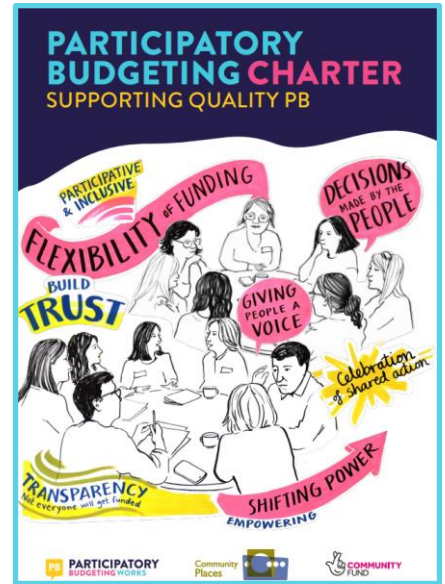
**Sustaining and Growing the PB Network** The project has scaled the regional PB network by developing a host of new resources, including a series of Vox Pops that have been shared via the PB Works website. This has helped to circulate relevant information on PB practice, grow the local membership base and provide technical guidance and support for prospective as well as active PB projects across the region.





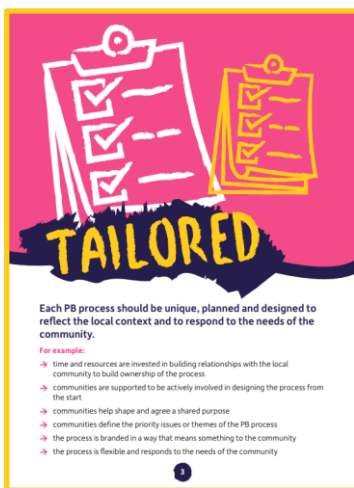
## What is the PB Charter?

During the spring and summer 2022 the project co-designed its very own PB Charter. It has been developed to ensure that local communities are at the heart of every PB process and to provide clarity on what quality PB looks like in practice. The Charter also offers additional support for the planning and design of PB processes and has drawn on the experiences of local PB practitioners to ensure that it best reflects the wider regional context. The Charter is aimed at anyone who is involved in designing, supporting or taking part in a PB process from across the community and voluntary sector or public officials working in a local council or department. It was launched at a dedicated event on 27 September 2022 which welcomed attendance from the funder, community and sector representatives, public officials, academics and also a number of citizens who were interested in advancing PB work to help address issues in their own local communities.



## Who has been involved in the design and how will it help?

The Charter has been co-designed by engagement with different groups and individuals who have been provided with multiple opportunities to input and feedback their own learning from carrying out PB work. This is critical, as in order to facilitate mainstreaming the Charter must be reflective of the wider regional context and but also its decision-making structures, especially if it is to create tangible change for local communities. The Charter has also been influenced by the positive discourse that has been created with the current DfC Minister Deirdre Hargey and relevant officials throughout the project who have been supportive of PB despite the wider challenges created by a weak regulatory environment.

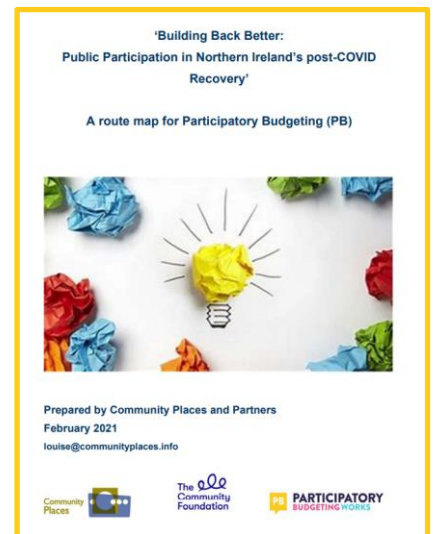


Ultimately the Charter will set the standards for what is expected from PB practice and the focus on practical support or additional guidance and use of learning examples could be developed. Moving forward its scale needs to increase but this will require financial resources to help build PB from the ground up and react to the grassroots demand which is clearly evident. Additional work will also be required by PB practitioners to help future proof the Charter and embed mainstreaming processes across the region. This activity will also require additional resourcing and funded support.

# Project Activities: Route Map Design + Lobbying Activities

## Development of a PB Route Map

The project developed and presented a PB Route Map to the Department for Communities, Minister Hargey and other public officials. PB Works Advisory Group Members outlined three key asks drawn from the PB Route Map: 1) To increase the level of political support to endorse PB as part of a healthy participative democracy; 2) To support and champion PB as part of the delivery of Community Wealth Building, especially in terms of mainstreaming but also to develop scale and make public service delivery more responsive to local priorities; 3) Leadership from the Department for Communities to deliver a large scale demonstration project that would involve the development of a cross-sector working group but also a commitment to allocate a percentage of public resources via PB. Along with the Charter, the Route Map represents an important document in mapping a way forward for the PB lobby across the region and will also help to enhance the accountability of both central and local government bodies in relation to their commitments towards PB.



## Input into Consultation Processes

The lobbying strand of the project also submitted several responses to key consultation processes that has included the Programme for Government Framework as well as the forthcoming PeacePlus programme. The ask of these responses has been to deliver a commitment from central and local government to genuinely share power with communities by embedding and mainstreaming PB into existing resource allocation and decision-making processes. If successful this has the potential to empower communities to deliver positive outcomes and allow them to have a more meaningful stake in local investment decisions in various delivery areas including young people and community development.



## Widening the PB lobby

Community Places has completed several joint lobbying activities with Community Foundation NI and Involve. This advocacy and policy development work has resulted in a continued effort to support greater community voice, particularly in the context of the Building Back Better Route Map and the commitments for 'Structured Civic Engagement' in the New Decade New Approach document. It has also involved briefing The Executive Committee in June 2021, which underlined the role and the potential value of Participatory Budgeting as a tool to help genuinely empower local communities in the post COVID-19 renewal period. Some of this advocacy work and other project activities were consolidated in the preparation for a blog that was published by The National Lottery Community Fund in April 2021.



# Project Activities: Workshops

## Workshop 1: PB and the COVID-19 Recovery

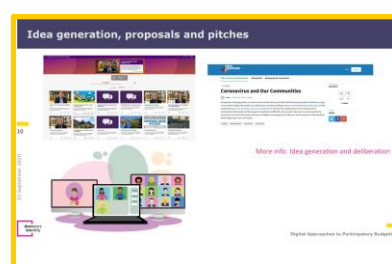
The first workshop delivered in June 2020, attracted 43 attendees and explored the application of PB processes in the COVID-19 recovery and how it might help transform and improve people's lives. In adherence with the broader COVID-19 regulations it was hosted online and welcomed input from Department for Community officials. PB practitioners from Armoy Community Association and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council were also invited to share their own recent local PB learning experiences. Jez Hall – a PB advocate working to instill PB processes across England then facilitated an open discussion which explored how PB could be best utilised during the COVID-19 response. This included its application as a potential method for allocating the COVID-19 recovery funds or how it might align with community planning partnerships working on similar issues. Given the practical challenges of completing face-to-face activity, the discussion also explored ways to maintain PB activities despite the ongoing restrictions. This involved exploring what type of support was required, the technical resources needed to facilitate a transition to online delivery but also how to manage digital exclusion challenges and ensure participation from all members of the community.



*“The online presence of the project and the workshops in response to the COVID pandemic has actually broadened the reach and connected with new groups and officials willing to learn more about and practice of PB”*

## Workshop 2: Digital PB

The second workshop delivered in September 2020 focused on the planning and online delivery of digital PB processes. This activity was not part of the initial delivery schedule, but the onset of COVID-19 and the restrictions on face-to-face activities, prompted Community Places to design a workshop that could support groups that wished to continue delivering PB activities throughout the pandemic. The workshop was attended by 38 individuals and involved input from Kelly McBride of the Democratic Society who had experience in the application of digital PB approaches. Drawing on recent case studies and relevant examples, the workshop explored these approaches in more depth but also introduced different software packages that could be adopted to make the online facilitation of PB a possibility. This included the use of live voting or hybrid practices as well as what type of technical support was readily available to help support delivery. Collaboration for Change a group from the local community and voluntary sector acted on this learning and with additional support from the project successfully delivered its very own digital online PB exercise called ‘Join the Dots’.





# Project Activities: Workshops

## Workshop 3: Community-led PB

In the third workshop delivered in June 2021, the Gorbals Ideas Fund and the New Gorbals Housing Association shared their collective experiences of working to deliver community-led PB activity in the Gorbals area of Glasgow. In this context, PB processes have been developed through a community budgeting initiative that has worked to secure a positive regeneration legacy for communities impacted by the 2014 Commonwealth Games. This has involved the appointment of a community budgeting officer, which was shown to help increase the participation of the Gorbals community throughout the budgetary decision-making processes. The additional appointment of a community panel made up of 12 residents has ensured that PB processes remain community driven and reflective of the local need, especially in terms of providing opportunities for young people. In addition to this key learning on community-led PB practice from Glasgow the online workshop also provided space for a series of breakout sessions which allowed the attendees to reflect on some of the key challenges and opportunities for advancing PB across the region, as well as debate on what we really mean by good quality PB. In total 24 attended the workshop and 91% of these stated that they found it 'Very Useful'. This workshop was important as it demonstrated the flexibility of PB and how it can be tailored to reflect local issues and place-based challenges. It also challenged the assumption that PB is more than just about allocating small grants and should also be used as an effective tool for setting local budgetary priorities.



*“The workshops were a really effective way to build learning and understanding around PB but also a platform to make connections across the different councils to better understand how PB processes can be advanced internally or mainstream the work into existing or emerging programmes”*

## Workshop 4: Community Wealth Building and PB

In the final workshop delivered in November 2021, Community Places worked with Development Trusts NI (DTNI) to explore how PB methods or approaches could be developed in the context of Community Wealth Building. The online session was attended by 75 individuals and welcomed input from practitioners and government officials from Scotland who are championing a way forward for mainstreaming PB. This includes a government commitment to allocate 1% of public expenditure via PB accompanied by an overarching strategic framework. The workshop hosted DfC officials who outlined how they were currently working up policy solutions for Community Wealth Building. This involves looking closely at social value clauses in the procurement of public contracts and how these can potentially create wealth building opportunities, especially for some of the poorer more deprived communities. The workshop co-host DTNI recognised how PB processes could certainly feature in this process, especially in the work of local commissioning groups, but this needs to be carefully thought out and resourced appropriately. Councillor Joe Cullinane from North Ayrshire Council also demonstrated how the community wealth building work of this Scottish local authority has been supported by a Community Investment Fund worth £3 million. Assembled through underspends from both capital and revenue budgets, PB in North Ayrshire has been used to consult with the local community and prioritise how this budget could be re-spent to benefit the work of local community groups and projects.



# Project Activities: Information Sessions

## What was the aim of the Sessions and the Workshops?

Community Places delivered an impactful series of information sessions and support workshops to several community-led PB processes. This tailored planning and design support focused on ensuring that people and communities that wished to organise a PB process were more confident but also had a greater capacity to deliver high quality and inclusive PB. This involved using methods that worked to support participation from the outset and reduce barriers that could potentially prevent individuals from engaging with the process. A summary of the five information sessions and participants is provided below:



Beneficiaries	Date	Focus of workshop
Collaboration for Change	April 2021	Workshop delivered to Collaboration for Change members introducing the concept of PB which resulted in the planning and delivery of an online digital PB project called 'Join the Dots'.
Communities in Transition Programme	June 2021	Workshop delivered as part of a Capacity Building Programme delivered by Ashton Centre to explore how PB could fit in approaches aimed at tackling paramilitarism and strengthening engagement with local young people.
Connswater Homes Housing Association and The Larder	September 2021	Workshop delivered to explore how PB could be used to support the delivery activities of Inner East Kitty PB, East Belfast
St Columb's Park House	October 2021	Workshop delivered to explore how PB could be used to help support community development approaches in the interface areas of Tullyalley and Curryrierin.
Ulster University	November 2021	Workshop delivered to post-graduate students at Ulster University as part of Inclusive Engagement Methods programme to explore how PB can be used across the region to empower communities

## Information Sessions and Workshop Impact

A real strength of the workshops were that they were flexible and responsive to the individual PB needs and objectives of the target beneficiaries. For example, the COVID-19 restrictions prevented Collaboration for Change from delivering a PB process face to face, so it was tasked with developing a digital alternative hosted online. The workshop support helped the group to raise awareness about PB but also source the appropriate technology by linking directly with an Icelandic group called the Citizens Foundation, which was then able to advise on technical issues. Another positive outcome of this process was that the same online infrastructure can now be utilised by other groups across the region and there is invaluable learning on how to deliver high quality digital PB. The interviews also demonstrated how the workshop content, delivery and aftercare support was well received and there is a clear appetite for this type of support model moving forward, especially for groups in the community and voluntary sector that operate on limited resource budgets or rely on voluntary input.

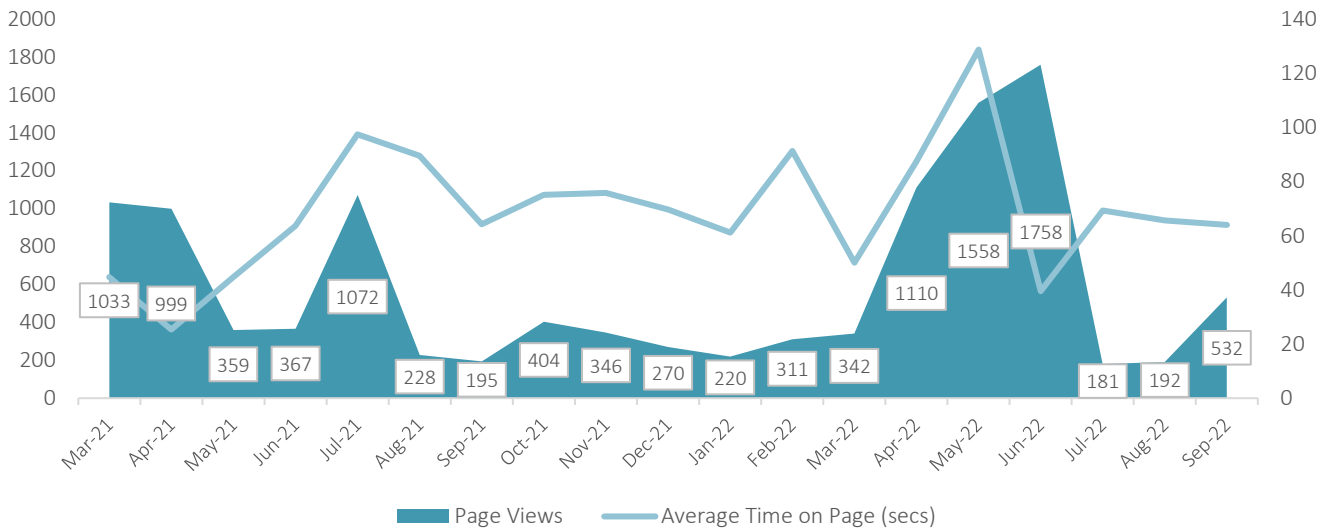
*"Today's session was very informative and had a lot of information"*

*"Very useful, I feel more confident about taking the information back to our community and getting them excited about the process"*

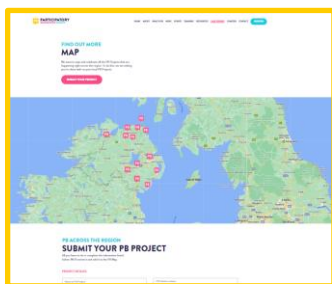
*"More confident and more aware"*

# Project Activities: Networked Support

The project has utilised other ways to help grow and sustain the regional PB network. This has involved the use of the regional Participatory Budgeting Works website to share relevant information past projects (specifically via the PB Vox Pops), grow the local membership base as well as provide a learning offering for prospective or active PB projects across the region. It has also been used effectively to advertise project activity by sharing the time, date and locations of the workshops, which in turn has helped to broaden the reach and increase the number of attendees. This project awareness raising strategy was reinforced by regular newsletter updates via Mailchimp, email circulation to existing PB Works members and promotional work shared via Community Places' own social media channels.



The chart above provides a breakdown of the website traffic from March 2021 to the completion of the project in September 2022. In total, 5821 people visited the PB Works website during this period and the average number of monthly views was 604. The aggregated total of views was 11477 and the average duration of each site visit was 69 seconds. The figures demonstrate a steady influx of online visitors accessing the website since March 2021, with a peak of number of visitors (938) and views (1758) in June 2022. This evidences the growing interest across the region of those looking to learn more about PB processes and feedback from the interviewees would suggest the PB Works website represents a critical platform for sharing relevant technical resources and accessing training support.



The website has also grown to represent a forum that via the case studies facilitates peer to peer learning and provides working solidarity for PB practitioners working across the various localities. This is increasingly important as it offers PB practitioners (both new and existing) the confidence to explore how PB might be applied and best used in the context of their own communities or programme delivery work. Moving forward, beyond this project it will be important that the PB Works website remains resourced so it can be regularly updated to share important documents such as the PB Charter and its appended support items. This will be important in terms of growing the PB membership base and connect with new audiences across the region from both the policy arena as well as the community and voluntary sector.

# Project Activities: PB Charter Launch Event

## Showcasing the Charter

Community Places closed the project with a dedicated event to reflect on the project learning but also to launch the PB Charter. Voluntary members of the PB Works advisory group were on hand to explain the different elements of the Charter and to emphasise to attendees the different hallmarks of quality PB delivery. These can be summarised below:

- **Tailored** - Each PB process should be unique, planned and designed to reflect the local context and to respond to the needs of the community.
- **Supported** - People are supported to get and stay involved in the PB process.
- **Inclusive** - All voices can have their say and be heard on how public resources are spent.
- **Transparent** - Information and processes are clear and open helping to build trust in the process.
- **Building Relationships** - Spaces are created to bring people together to share ideas, to discuss what is important to their community and to decide together how best to spend resources.
- **Empowering** - People in the community make key decisions about the process. The final decision on how the resource is allocated is always made by people in the community.
- **Celebration of Shared Action** - Through shared experience and community action something real is produced which responds to local needs and invigorates a sense of connection. You can see, sense or touch it.
- **Reflect and Learn** - People learn from and reflect throughout the process, sharing with others to refine PB practice.
- **Commitment** - Leadership and commitment from local and central government embeds PB as part of investing in a healthy participative democracy.



## Sharing the Learning and Moving Forward

In addition to the launch of the Charter, a short summary of this evaluation report was presented and there was also a final opportunity for attendees to have their say on what actions could help to advance or support PB processes across the region moving forward. Some of these suggestions are included in the recommendations section, and in keeping with the development of the Charter, the process represented a genuine effort from Community Places to facilitate a co-production process that welcomed input from the community and voluntary sector partners, central and local government officials, academics as well as those with a stake in advancing participative methods. It was also promising to see that the launch event was attended by several individuals who were new to the PB process, who were interested in exploring its transformative potential in the context of their own communities.

## Showcasing PB and its Potential

This project has been hugely successful in articulating what PB is and highlighting its region-wide application. It has also demonstrated its ambitions as well as its strengths in comparison to other alternative participatory forms of governance like citizens assemblies. The project has also effectively built on previous work covered in the ILAB that was hosted by the Department for Communities (DfC) in 2019 and helped raise awareness across the community and voluntary sector as well as participation from across local council areas by connecting directly with individual officers. This activity has brokered spin-off involvement from DfC which has also supported PB processes across local councils such as Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon through in-kind contributions.



*“It has been really positive to see new faces and groups picking up PB and ultimately citizens themselves getting involved in PB processes. It is also very interesting to see how PB can start conversations across communities around simple initiatives (e.g. a knitting group) but then explore how these connect to broader issues such as loneliness and isolation”.*

## The Value of an Advocacy Partner

Lobbying work with DfC during the project was very targeted and yielded positive discussions but there is yet to be as much cross-departmental engagement. Consulted civil servants remain positive around the benefits of PB but are still fundamentally constrained by a weak regulatory environment which highlights the clear institutional barriers facing PB in comparison to other places like Scotland. Here, the introduction of the Community Empowerment Act has represented a useful lever for mainstreaming PB activity and clearly emphasises the practical value of stronger legislation at the institutional level. Despite these barriers, a range of impactful spin-off PB activity has emerged and also led by communities themselves. As a result, participating individuals or groups have learnt a lot from this experience, particularly from an operational perspective and developed an appreciation for the amount of time and resources required to deliver quality PB. In lieu of these local successes, the need for an advocacy partner is still highly relevant and progressing the Charter offers great potential for the mainstreaming of PB across different contexts and local structures. Road testing the Charter, especially across local councils will represent a critical next step to supporting this process.



# Project Outcomes and Impacts

## Provision of Timely and Relevant Support

Both the digital workshops and the project information sessions administered relevant PB support at the point of need to various PB practitioners working across the community and voluntary sector. The assistance focussed on designing, managing and evaluating PB processes as well as creating space to reflect and showcase outcomes and opportunities through final events. The timing of this support was critical, especially during the lead in period to a PB process and stressed the importance of brokering relationships with the right partners, establishing working groups but also understanding timeframes and what resources are necessary to facilitate a high quality PB process. The local focus of the approach worked well in terms of increasing the capacity and confidence levels of the PB practitioners that took part. Moving forward there is a clear need for this type of support in helping to mainstream PB processes (along with the Charter) but will require resourcing.



## Catalysing Local PB Working and Partnerships

The workshops proved to be a highly effective tool to building and sharing learning around PB practice but also acting as a platform for attendees to make their own connections and better understand how PB processes can be advanced internally or mainstreamed into existing policy fields or emerging programmes of work. The project has also helped to build new or consolidate existing PB working groups which are critical to the advancement of local PB activity, especially when representation is cross-sectoral and has members from statutory agencies who can broker additional support or resources from government.

*“The technical support and assistance provided by the Community Places team has been excellent and a great support to embedding PB processes across our locality”*

*“The delivery of the project was clearly evident and it has helped to facilitate effective PB connections at the local authority level, especially in the context of community planning”.*

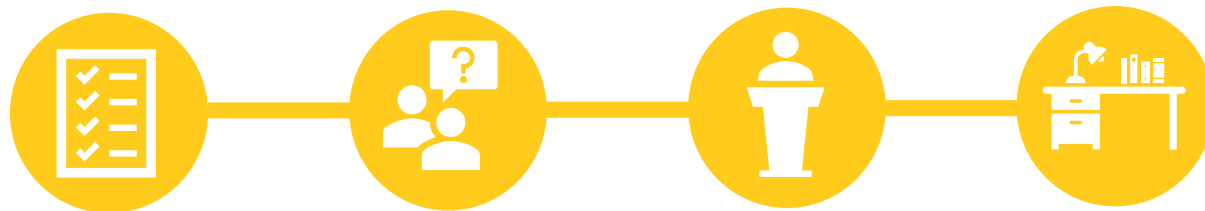
## Growing the PB Community

Both the development of the Route Map and the recently launched PB Charter have helped to reinvigorate the support around PB across the region. It has been really positive that new individuals (from both government and CVS sector) have inputted and citizens themselves are seemingly participating more frequently in PB processes located at the grassroots level. This growth of the broader PB community has also been shown to be well reflected online via regular use of the PB Works website, which represents an increasingly integral resource for building the evidence base, sharing examples of domestic learning and signposting site users to relevant and best PB practice unfolding elsewhere.



# Learning and Recommendations

This final section pulls together the key learning experiences of the Putting People in the Lead through Quality PB project as outlined by the 17 stakeholders who made themselves available for interview (again see appendix for full list). It will also draw implications from this learning and provide recommendations to guide future Participatory Budgeting activity organised across the four pillars presented below:



Policy + Programmes	Capacity Building + Support	Lobbying + Development	Research + Analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ A range of examples including local council capital grant schemes, PCSPs, the work of Housing Associations and local Health Trusts.</li><li>▪ Clear linkages with Anti-Poverty Strategies (e.g., NRA), the Community Wealth Building Agenda and the Rural Development Programme but must have resources attached to be impactful at the point of need.</li><li>▪ Innovative applications across PEACEPLUS.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Technical financial guidance from Audit Office NI to guide budget administrators and finance personnel.</li><li>▪ Securing effective resourcing of inputs to support PB activity and associated delivery costs.</li><li>▪ Growing existing and new local PB delivery networks made up of cross-sectoral representation.</li><li>▪ Developing further strategic and operational guidance drawing on local learning experiences through the PB Charter.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Lobbying to strengthen the wider regulatory environment for PB.</li><li>▪ Advancing the five asks set out in the PB Route Map to help mainstream PB as a tool for setting budgetary priorities and allocating resources at all government levels.</li><li>▪ Strengthening cross-party political support for the advancement of PB.</li><li>▪ Enhancing the level of technical support for PB practitioners working in the CV sector but also for public sector officials.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Continue to build and share the evidence base of local PB practice across the region through showcasing events.</li><li>▪ Identify new policy or programme areas to embed PB, potentially in the local youth sector or even as a citizen political education tool.</li><li>▪ Explore new ways of showcasing the blended value created by PB processes and their impacts on communities to enhance its value proposition.</li></ul>

## Policy and Programmes

- The project has highlighted the potential fit for PB and its application across the work carried out by Police and Community Safety Partnerships, local Health Trusts and Housing Associations. Triangle Housing Association is a positive example of a local organisation that is using PB processes across its regional service delivery but has clearly benefited from strong leadership and personnel that are experienced and proficient in the delivery of well planned and quality PB methods.
- Some local councils raised the potential of PB in the context of physical capital projects and to use it as a tool to help local communities set budgetary priorities. However, this process is cyclical and would be highly dependent on when capital budgets are set. But nevertheless there is potential to embed PB as a tool to help strengthen community involvement in budgetary processes.
- PB practice across the region is gradually becoming embedded in more deprived communities. The learning from Tullyalley and Currynierin shows how in this context PB does not only represent an effective engagement tool but also a progressive approach to building community capacity, particularly in how residents can solve local issues or leverage resources that might enable further action from local elected representatives or statutory agencies like the Housing Executive.
- The project workshops also showcased strong policy alignment with the Community Wealth Building agenda. But clear thought needs to be given to how this is realised in terms of service design and delivery and through existing procurement practices, possibly by developing the relationship between PB and local commissioning groups.

## Learning and Recommendations (2)

- Lessons from North Ayrshire Council demonstrated how its community wealth building agenda has been supported by a Community Investment Fund worth £3 million. Assembled through underspends from council capital and revenue budgets, PB in North Ayrshire has been used to engage with the local community and prioritise how this budget could be re-spent to benefit local groups and projects.
- Clearly there is scope of local council officials across the region to complete their own internal audits to identify budgetary underspends. This might create more spaces for PB work that would allow the public to input in how these underspent funds might be prioritised and allocated across the locality.
- North Ayrshire Council has also demonstrated how PB can be used to set the priorities of the annual ground maintenance budget, thus connecting the process to the procurement pillar of the council's own community wealth building agenda.
- CFNI is exploring the feasibility of utilising PB in a housing and homelessness project which also has clear linkages with anti-poverty work and is highly relevant given the prevalence of housing demand and stress and the growing pressures on temporary accommodation services.
- The Rural Development and Neighbourhood Renewal Programme (the latter currently under review) both have potential to integrate PB as an engagement tool and allocation method, but in order to be impactful, must have monetary resources attached to them.
- PB could be aligned with the forthcoming PEACEPLUS programme and the substantive consultation response submitted during this project details how this could be achieved. Learning could be used from Triangle Housing Association which has recently used PB in the delivery of T:BUC initiatives which like PEACE delivery has also focussed on building positive relations.

### Capacity Building and Technical Support

- Learning from PB delivery across the region has so far emphasised the value of local advisory or working groups that have multi-disciplinary skills and cross-sectoral membership. This mix of government and non-governmental representation needs to be encouraged as it has been critical to leveraging additional resources (i.e., growing a PB funding pot), brokering participation from grassroots communities and in particular working to integrate PB across existing or emerging policy initiatives.
- The formation of the Glens Healthy Places advisory group, the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon PB working group and the linkages forged by Newry Mourne and Down Council with local DEA coordinators, are positive examples of how local cross-sectoral networks can advance and deliver PB processes in deliberative and effective ways.
- The Northern Ireland Audit Office has previously provided verbal support for advancing and mainstreaming PB processes, however unlike its counterparts in Scotland has yet to publish any clear direction or technical guidance on how this might be achieved in practice.
- The development of appropriate guidance material directly from the NI Audit Office would be critical to 'de-risking' PB, especially for public officials working in local councils who at times, find it extremely challenging to broker a wider and sustained commitment towards PB delivery, largely due to the inflexibility of internal budgetary processes and financial systems.
- The PB Works website has developed into a critical resource for consolidating and sharing local PB learning experiences from the region as well as other relevant contexts like Scotland. Maintaining this online platform in the future will be critical, and the website analytics demonstrate the swell of new PB practitioners who have benefited from this free resource but also the technical assistance provided by the Community Places team via this project during the information sessions.

## Learning and Recommendations (3)

- The PB Charter will help to consolidate some of this local support offering through the development of operational and strategic guidance appended to the PB Charter document. However, to ensure high quality PB (which is clearly advocated by the new Charter), adequate resources must be assigned to reflect the level of inputs and resources required to undertake impactful and inclusive PB processes.

### Lobbying and Consultation

- To develop a stronger regulatory environment for PB, there must also be political support (across all parties and levels) to support an investment into the development of more participative and deliberative forms of democratic processes.
- DTNI and its work to develop a Community Rights Act could represent an additional opportunity to engage in further joint lobbying activities that would help develop the regulatory environment and support the regional advancement or mainstreaming of PB processes.
- The project has worked collaboratively with Community Foundation NI and Involve to lobby various levels of government to advocate for the mainstreaming of PB processes. The outcomes of this effort and related activities, especially at the strategic and departmental level have been mixed with limited traction outside the Department for Communities and The Executive Office.
- There has been a swell in the number of PB processes activated across local council areas, primarily through community planning partnerships. Despite their successes to date, PB practitioners working in these contexts operate in relative isolation with limited resources or guidance (apart from PB Works). They also highlight the challenges they face when delivering PB, especially when looking to broker further support from internal finance departments or other community planning partners (CPP).
- Targeted awareness raising and direct lobbying of existing CPP representatives (potentially through the Charter) across the different council areas could be one way of supporting PB practitioners as well as mainstreaming practice at the local level through community planning structures.
- Interviewees stressed how PB needs to be promoted further as a tool for setting public budgets and local funding priorities. This work should look to build on some of the current PB practice where it is being predominantly activated as a vehicle to allocate small grants in partnership with the local community and voluntary sector. At the same time, it is important not to discount this work but rather advocate the different applications of PB and the importance of increasing the scope for public engagement in budgetary decision making.
- Leadership from the Department of Finance and Department for Communities to deliver a large-scale demonstration project that would involve the development of a cross-sector working group but also a commitment to allocate a percentage of public resources via PB.

### Research and Analysis

- The communication of best practice examples, (especially via the PB Vox Pops) was important to various audiences that have engaged with the project, initially online and then face to face when COVID-19 restrictions were lifted. Local PB examples have been shown to inspire others and catalyse the organisation of spin-off PB activity across the region, thus increasing local participation rates.
- In the short term, it will be important to keep growing the PB evidence base and provide relevant examples that can clearly communicate the advantages of PB processes, particularly in comparison to other existing budgetary decision-making and community engagement processes.



## Learning and Recommendations (3)

- In order to challenge the understanding that PB is sometimes viewed as input heavy and resource intensive, it is critical to explore new ways that can fully understand the additionality and blended value created by PB processes. It would also be important to explore the embeddedness of existing PB networks across the region to evaluate what type of skills, routines or resources are currently in place.
- The use of a range of metrics around return on investment might help to frame or better evidence the effects of some (not all) PB projects, especially where the activities can have potential to leverage additional investment or create monetary savings around issues linked to health, social care, education and employability.
- These metrics or frameworks (e.g., SROI), of course, need to be used with care as not everything is reducible to financial metrics and simple input-output calculations, but they might represent an alternative option that can help to unpack the value proposition of PB.
- Guided by the development of the PB Route Map, the project has worked effectively to identify and strategically align PB with emerging policy areas such as Community Wealth Building or PEACEPLUS. Moving forward this work must continue and the PB lobby should maintain its collaborative working with Involve and Community Foundation NI which are advancing interesting and relevant work around deliberative democracy.
- Further research could help to identify other new policy or other emerging programme areas and the interviews highlighted the synergies with the youth sector. For example, PB could be piloted in the school system and would offer young people a voice in the design of budgets and how resources from the Education Authority are allocated.
- Drawing on the learning experiences of communities currently involved in local PB processes, there is also potential to utilise PB as a citizen political education programme that can help educate individuals about the importance of democracy and the workings of the political process.
- Capitalising on the impact of the PB workshops delivered during this project, the organisation of a recurring annual summit or series of seminar events might be one way of consolidating the growing regional PB network and to showcase the contrasting applications of PB methodologies.

A full list of participants by name and organisation who were interviewed and inputted their feedback into this evaluation is provided in the table below:

<b>Interviewee Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Lauren McMenamy	PB Works / Communities Leading Change
Noeleen Diver	PB Works / Join the Dots
Gemma McCaughley	PB Works / Community Foundation NI
Cara McLoughlin	Tullyalley/ Currynierin
Becca Bor	Tullyalley/ Currynierin
Tammy Rountree	Inner East Kitty
Marian Farrell	Join the Dots
Roisin McLaughlin	Join the Dots
Jennie Dunlop	TAKE 500, ABC
Sorcha Hassay	Department for Communities
Simon Sloan	Department for Communities
Charlie Fisher	DTNI – Joint workshop CWB and PB
Karin Eyben	PB processes in CCGBC with NACN
Louise Scullion	PB processes in CCGBC with NACN
Breige Conway	PB processes in CCGBC with NACN
Paul Braithwaite	Open Government Partnership
Rebekah McCabe	Involve

