

**Name of Exercise:** Preparation of the Newcastle City Centre Action Plan

**Location:** Newcastle Upon Tyne, North East England

**Participation Exercise under which Article?** Article 7

**Purpose of Participation Exercise:**

*To obtain the views and opinions of citizens in creating the city centre action plan.*

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**Background:**

Newcastle is a European Regional Capital, the City Centre forms its heart and has a highly distinctive identity. The City Council, in recognising the importance of the City as the Regional Capital, initiated the preparation of a **CITY CENTRE ACTION PLAN**. The purpose of the Plan is to identify objectives and actions representing the highest commitment to a healthy, attractive and sustainable City Centre. The ideas and actions of the Plan were a result of extensive work by the City Council and its partners, including a wide ranging public consultation and participation exercise.

The Plan focuses on every aspect of the City Centre. This includes the built environment, future development proposals, open space, public facilities, public transport, accessibility, employment, education, retailing and housing.

**The Council's vision for Newcastle:**

*"We want to develop the City as a major Regional Capital of international significance. We want to develop a City which is bold and innovative, offering a range of activities and services for all its customers. Consultation with, and participation of local people, businesses, users and other partners is key to the Plan's success".*

**Why prepare the Plan?**

There were two main reasons.

- To retain and develop the City's role as the Regional Capital for retailing, entertainment, culture and employment.
- To ensure that its regional capital status and associated cultural facilities are relevant to and provide opportunities for low income and unemployed residents.

**Purpose of participation exercise:**

There were several aims for the public participation. These included:

- The City Council is a publicly accountable body. It is committed to community participation and involvement in decision making. This is one of the guiding principles of the whole City Council and has been adopted as Council policy;
- To find out the priorities and concerns of City Centre users;
- To identify major issues facing Newcastle which would form the basis for the Consultation Draft of the City Centre Action Plan;
- To receive comments on the issues and actions identified in the Consultation Draft City Centre Action Plan : 'Tell us Your Views, Have we got it right?';
- To form partnerships for the implementation of Actions in the final City Centre Action Plan.

**Who participated?**

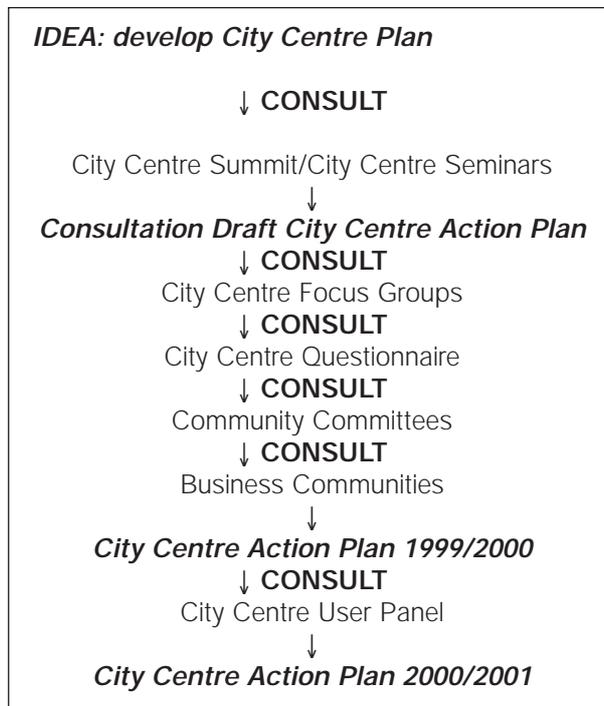
- All residents in Newcastle upon Tyne (City Centre and outskirts)
- All businesses in Newcastle City Centre

- All service providers (eg regeneration agencies, major landlords, bus companies)
- All City Centre users (leisure, education, workers)
- Institutions (Universities, College, Church)
- Developers and Agents
- Voluntary Organisations
- Minority groups

**Stages at which the public participated in the process**

The City Centre Action Plan will be updated each year. 'Longer Term' action points will be brought forward to 'Year 1 Action Points' and new actions will be identified. Public consultation will be an ongoing process.

Public participation in the Plan's preparation was started at an early stage:



**What information was made available**

The aims and objectives of the Plan were made clear from the start (i.e. 'why are we doing this; what do we want to achieve'). The process began with a 'blank piece of paper' - the aim was to develop a Plan that would ensure that the City's role as a Regional Capital was retained and enhanced, not present the Council's solution on how this should be done.

All information was freely available. No information was withheld. The information made available was intended to encourage ideas and identify the current state of the City. This included:

STAGE	INFORMATION AVAILABLE
Summit/Seminars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation</li> <li>• Professional advisors on specific topics (eg Retail market, Office sector)</li> <li>• City Council staff available to answer questions</li> </ul>
City Centre Action Plan (CONSULTATION DRAFT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video</li> <li>• Presentation</li> <li>• Suggested Actions</li> <li>• Invitation to write in with comments, arrange meeting with officers, phone in ideas, e-mail</li> </ul>
City Centre Questionnaire	Questionnaire in local newspapers: responses were free to send to back to the council by post
City Centre Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video</li> <li>• Discussion based on set questions</li> </ul>
City Centre Users Panel City	Council staff to provide information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actions completed</li> <li>• Problems experienced</li> <li>• New ideas</li> </ul>

What was the outcome of the participation exercise?

Participation exercise	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summit and seminars</li> </ul>	Comments/Ideas/Issues were used as the basis for the Consultation Draft City Centre Action Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Committees</li> <li>• Resident meetings</li> </ul>	Comments/Ideas/Issues identified were used to define Actions for final plan and to identify partnerships to implement Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letters received; meetings; phonecalls</li> </ul>	Comments/Ideas/Issues identified were used to define Actions for final plan and to identify partnerships to implement Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Centre Questionnaire</li> </ul>	Identify likes/dislikes of the City Centre and % support for an Idea/Action: fed into Final Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Groups</li> </ul>	Identify issues for particular groups (eg visually impaired, students, ethnic minorities, etc)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Centre User Panels</li> </ul>	To be arranged: Purpose is to identify Actions to be brought forward and new actions for next year's plan (Action Plan 2000/2001)

### Comments of participants in the process: FEEDBACK

There has been only a limited amount of feedback so far. This has been via Community Committees. However, the purpose of the User Panels (which will be established soon) is to obtain feedback on both the process (has it been successful; what else do we need to do) and the content of the current Plan and the content of future Plans.

### Newcastle City Council's view on the Participation Exercises

- It contacted the widest possible audience;
- It was an 'open' participation exercise (it started with a blank piece of paper);
- It is an on-going process: User Panels to be established and will be ongoing;
- It is time consuming;
- Sufficient resources must be allocated.

**Comparison with the requirements of Article 7 of the Convention:**

ARTICLE 7 requirement	Process undertaken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make appropriate practical and/or other provisions for the public to participate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Video; Presentation; City Council staff present; freepost for return of questionnaire; targeted focus groups; accessible venues; translated into 8 different languages; used local venues</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparent and fair framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Blank piece of paper : what are the issues?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reasonable and fair timetables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ March 1998 – April 1999 : 1 year to complete</li> <li>✓ Ongoing process</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early public participation: when options are open</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Before draft Plan was prepared</li> <li>✓ Blank piece of paper</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due account is taken of outcome of the exercise</li> <li>• Provided necessary information to the public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Draft Plan Vs Final Plan 1999/2000: significant changes</li> </ul>

**The Next Stages:**

- City Centre Action Team: September 1999: Implementation of Year 1 Actions. Identify Longer Term Actions to be brought forward
- City Centre Seminars and Summit: February /March 2000: Feedback and Consultation
- City Centre User Panel: April 2000 – ongoing: Consultation and Feedback
- Report back and Review: April – July
- City Centre Action Plan 2000/2001

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