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outcomes + impacts

a report on the experience of the rapid development programme





We are gaining a better understanding of the key change issues and new ways of delivering the sustainable change that is so urgently required.

introduction

This report outlines some of the learning outcomes and early impacts of the rapid development programme, specifically its early work with over 20 parishes and 1,000 participants. We have introduced the programme, outlined our key learning points, the outcomes and potential impacts achieved. We then present several examples of the “project concept” outputs produced from the early years of the programme.

The rapid development programme (rpd) starts from assumptions of a radically changed community and cultural context and the need for rapid and radical change as the current ‘business as usual’ model is not sustainable. It does not use conventional Church of England language or approaches.

It seeks to challenge in order to achieve a rapid and transformative shift in thinking and confidence in the potential for engagement by parishes and deaneries with their community, and, through this engagement, to achieve growth. It is about achieving both church and community renewal. We have a chronic lack of investment in facilities, brand, offer, engagement and mission that now must be overcome.

Our **key findings** are that in the early rdp programmes we had a 92%

success rate with the parishes that we worked with and that we have tracked (n=12) and a 97% satisfaction rate amongst the programme participants. The programme has achieved 85% of the potential programme outcomes. In addition to the new £4,000,000 proposed developments based on rdp options, there was a monetised net initial programme impact of £2,854,000 (or £238,000 per parish) and a further £6,300,000 of potential medium and longer-term impacts, or an average of £525,000 per parish.

Perhaps more importantly we are collecting new ideas and examples and continue to refine the programme, based on the on-going learning from the parishes and in the deaneries where we have worked. We are gaining a better understanding of the key change issues and new ways of delivering the sustainable change that is so urgently required.



// Clarification of needs, stimulation of potential, enabled greater congregation/parish/community involvement. //

objectives and outcomes

rdp is designed as a focussed, short and quick (rapid) parish/deanery workshop programme to help parishes/deaneries make quick shifts in their thinking, ambition and understanding of the opportunities for growth through a better understanding of and engagement with their community.

We have to be realistic about what two days of workshops, one site visit, a parish “session” and a prospectus report can achieve (also see our indicators of parish renewal). That said, we have been surprised (pleasantly) and excited by the radical shift that has occurred in almost all of the parishes that we have worked with locally and beyond. Our objectives for rdp are to:

1. Encourage parishes and deaneries to develop a positive understanding of the dynamics and opportunities for growth and impact in their community.
2. Identify the specific elements of mission that are needed to align and proactively reposition themselves within their local community, bringing sustainable and high-profile community benefits.
3. Present clearly and positively their vision and their ambitions and identify new resources to help realise them.

Our parish outcomes for the rdp programme are for each parish to have:

1. a stronger sense and vision of its role and its potential for impact in its community.
2. identified the key local opportunities for growth.
3. a viable project or plan to proceed with engagement.
4. saved resources on its original plans and/or have identified potential new resources.
5. a wider set of delivery and/or design options.

These are ambitious outcomes for the rdp programme and in most cases they have been achieved. Realistically we cannot assist all participating parishes or deaneries in then delivering their engagement or development project and we have developed a follow-up workshop and suite of follow-up resources.

After presenting some of our key learning, we have outlined below our assessment of the achievement of these outcomes in some of the parishes that we have worked with. We have also presented the emerging medium and longer-term impacts.



There are in all communities specific local dynamics and opportunities for parish growth.

learning

The majority of parishes and deaneries have chronic issues of a lack of investment in facilities, brand, offer, engagement and mission. Few parishes or deaneries that we have worked with are resourcing a good web presence (or one that is not about heritage or sounds like a PCC meeting); none were using social networking and none were investing in any sort of market research, marketing or innovation. Most did not have clear or attractive ways of communicating with their community (as it is) and none had a systematic understanding of their community and its dynamics or the priorities and resources for growth. Finally, none had a clear plan for identifying or growing resources and income to sustain their presence and impact.

The key learning points from our programme experience to date include:

- The programme has provided useful positive prompts and tools for understanding the extent and depth of the local social and cultural change.
- Many parishes have experienced a collapse of confidence and morale and are not confidently or effectively engaging with their community or selling their offer.
- The programme has been successful at identifying local market dynamics and opportunities that have not been methodically identified before.
- Parishes are nowhere near as conservative as they have been made out to be – and there is high level of latent and expressed demand for positive change.
- The team approach and smaller parish workshops encourage a wider set of views and experiences being expressed, and this has helped promote parish level change in most cases. It has also helped build a team-based approach.
- As the result of the programme, participants are better able to identify clear and salient priorities for growth and making substantial shifts in their approach, confidence and 'pitch'.
- The competencies to develop and deliver (re)development projects are almost non-existent in many parishes (even when they think they are). The same also applies to many non-building projects in the majority of parishes and deaneries.



“ A perspective on how resources must serve the mission objective, vision and project development, especially when the community rather than the church becomes the context that we work in. ”

- It is clear that many parishes are, at best, being taken advantage of by local built environment professionals and contractors (we have uncovered several examples of potentially illegal practice).
- Many of the original ideas for a (re)development or parish growth were based on obsolete thinking. In many cases the proposed (re)development or other project was unnecessary and would not achieve their (usually unstated) objectives.
- The programme has achieved a significant change in the vision and options for physical (re)development and communications/engagement amongst the participating parishes (saving several millions). The (re) development options and ideas about engagement that parishes have ended up with, as a result of rdp, have excited and inspired congregations, local communities and stakeholders.
- There are in all communities specific local dynamics and opportunities for parish growth.
- There are also significant new income generation opportunities available as new growth opportunities are identified. For many, there is significant

potential to release assets and generate income and for a virtuous cycle of making money from doing good, to invest more in doing more good.

While some participants (and facilitators) have underestimated the extent of the required re-engineering and change that is required by some parishes, it is clear that providing an [outside] facilitator, time out, challenge, a fresh look and creative ideas has been a unique opportunity for many parishes to think about their role and offer in their changing local community.

Almost all the parishes have rethought, or even abandoned, their original ideas and what has emerged in almost all cases is a set of innovative and exciting ideas for engagement and for animating the parish.

Our experience and feedback (see below) has shown that the programme is significantly differentiated from other current Church programmes, as it provides:

1. An independent source of challenge and expertise (it's not “from the Diocese”).
2. A consensus for change and a focus on growth.



We are building a unique and exciting body of experience and knowledge.

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3. An outward looking and structured analysis of local dynamics and opportunities for engagement and impact.
 4. A focus on reaching new ('unchurched') people, specific to the dynamics of each community.
 5. An outward looking based approach to identifying new additional resources for engagement.
 6. Permission for innovation and radical change.
 7. An emphasis on identifying sustainable social business models (new income sources).

We have received much feedback as the programme has progressed and we have also run learning and follow-up workshops.

Some of the key comments received about the impact of the programme include:

"Focus on our mission objectives, look at how we respond in a sustainable way, an examination of current facilities and how they need to change to sustain and grow our mission."

"A perspective on how human, buildings and financial resources

must serve the mission objective, vision and project development, especially when the community rather than the church becomes the context that we work in."

"Clarification of needs, stimulation of potential, enabled greater congregation/parish/community involvement."

"A sense of worth in the role of a parish church. An understanding of the value of the 'offer' that partnership with us might contain."

"A realistic vision, to think outside the box, be more creative, to really examine who are the marginalised."

"It generated excitement and holy impatience about possibilities beyond what we have always done."

We make no excuses; we have learned more as we progressed. That is the nature of a new programme.

We continue to learn from the parishes and deaneries. We have learnt new ways of identifying the real issues (i.e. not just the presenting issues) that they are confronted with and we have identified a wider range of engagement-based solutions for achieving growth. We are building a unique and exciting body of experience and knowledge.



“ A realistic vision, to think outside the box, be more creative, to really examine who are the marginalised. ”

programme impacts

There are a range of potential impact measurements that can be used to give us an estimate of the impact of the rdp programme to date.

The key tangible potential programme impacts include:

- new additional resources identified
- saved resources
- resources and assets released
- better ideas about how to manage their existing resources
- more sustainable business models (new income sources)

There are a range of intangible (but still measureable) impacts from rdp, and in some cases, these are more important for parish and deanery development. These include:

- stronger vision for growth
- no longer accept decline as inevitable

- new knowledge and systematic understanding about their context
- new engagement ideas and models
- better able to articulate and sell their local contribution
- a commitment to an outward looking approach and engagement
- more confidence
- permission for innovation and new thinking
- strengthened (retained) change agents

These intangible impacts are generally best captured through qualitative methods and some of the feedback received from the programme participants is presented above.

The table presented below is an attempt to track outcomes achieved and this is followed by the next impacts table which is an attempt to give a monetary value to the more easily quantifiable initial and potential medium and longer-term programme impacts.



“ This has really helped me to get a perspective on where we should be heading and what we should be doing. ”

rdp parish outcomes achieved

parish	socio-economic profile	vision for growth	viable product	better delivery/ design options	resources saved, released & new	more outward looking
I	urban very disadvantaged	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
II	peripheral very disadvantaged	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
III	urban very disadvantaged	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IV	urban very disadvantaged	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
V	urban disadvantaged	✓	x	x	x	✓
VI	village socially mixed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
VII	peripheral pockets of disadvantage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
VIII	town centre socially mixed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IX	peripheral disadvantaged	x	x	✓	x	x
X	peripheral disadvantaged	✓	n.a.	✓	x	✓
XI	peripheral socially mixed	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
XII	village socially mixed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Total	85% (50/59) of the potential outcomes were achieved	11/12	9/11	11/12	8/12	11/12



The Church of England has an amazing offer, which is especially relevant and very timely.

rdp impacts

impact	baseline	outcome	estimated value
Released parish resources and resources from other sources (e.g. University).	Parishes were sitting on cash reserves or assets (for a rainy day) that could fund short-term activities and development activities. Partners were looking for local projects to support their development.	Parishes have sold or are releasing assets and have released assets and reserves. New cash and in-kind resources have been attracted from third parties (to date) to assist in parish development and engagement projects.	£604,000
Abandoned the existing planned development project (project savings) in 3 parishes.	Parishes which thought they needed a redevelopment in order to reach new people (young people in all cases – when asked).	Realised that existing facilities with re-visioning and investment were appropriate (more so!) for engagement and mission work with young people. Issue was the need to invest in engagement and making their offer attractive to young people.	£2,250,000
Released assets for reinvestment in planned development and mission (value of assets released) in 4 parishes.	Parishes were holding on to assets, that were no longer assets and quickly becoming liabilities. Plans for redevelopment were not based around engagement, mission or growth opportunities.	All agreed to release their assets either core (church site) and/or others (property portfolio, satellite sites etc.) for consideration of any redevelopment, repositioning and renewal of their presence and offer.	£3,800,000
Rethought proposals for development (savings on original plans from new development option).	Parishes were planning redevelopments that would not add any value to the current offer or assist in the repositioning of the church within their community. Plans were unsustainable (outside the current unsustainable business model).	New development options were developed and in most cases saving large amounts of resources on original plans. In two cases development plans were not in place or ambitious enough and new options have been developed (these were given a negative cash value in the total cash calculation).	£2,500,000



“ This has to be the future of churches... It reaches to the very heart of who we are and what it means to be church. ”

conclusion

The Church of England has an amazing offer, which is especially relevant and very timely. Parishes and deaneries are committed organisations with a unique message, albeit with a poorly envisaged built/mission legacy, that is located at the heart of all our communities. We should be successful!

As we know, you reap what you sow! We need to move out of the decline and survival mode of thinking, as this approach will guarantee that our vital local presence will soon cease. Our experience is that rdp is proving to be a promising approach to facilitating a shift in thinking, approach and delivery.

It was very clear that there has to be a rethink from first principles, about the purpose, mission and offer of these parishes and deaneries to their local community and wider markets. We have taken a positive approach to change and in the programme and we have not shied away from strong and challenging messages. With the incredible possibilities of a life and world transforming message, local goodwill, high potential new relationships and access to new and creative resources, both church and community can be renewed.



appendix 1 project examples

In the coming pages we have outlined several examples of project concepts. These outputs have been developed over the early life of the programme. They are largely focussed on (re) development projects as these are often the easiest to represent visually (see our postcard series and website for the less buildings related images).

Again a key learning point from the programme is that a building project is never actually about the building, rather it's about developing a successful (re)development and/or a new and contemporary approach to mission. It is not primarily a technical exercise, but rather it is a process of rethinking, reengaging, repositioning and reenergising our unique offer.

In fact, as the programme has been rolled out more widely it is very clear that the key issues, whatever the focus for future activity and investment, are ones of engagement; developing new and mutually beneficial relationships and generating new ways of communication and more dynamic offers (see our introduction and change documents on the website). The later and new

programmes have been much more focussed on the issues of engagement and 'communication'.

The several examples presented below reflect the need to link better with or local communities, develop a more attractive and exciting offer (including our spaces) and animating and re-energising our mission.

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opening up underutilised assets

Many churches have crypts, lofts or other poorly used spaces that, with creative thinking and targeted investment, we can create amazing new facilities and re-energise our offer.



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centres of community life

Relocating, building a new church (after selling the old one!) and thinking about what the community really needs (loves) is going to allow us, in some scenarios, to make a leap and enable more contemporary mission.



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rethinking all of our spaces

Many churches think that they have to invest in developing expensive new community facilities when they have existing congregational spaces that are not being utilised for much of the week. We have to think creatively about all of our spaces.



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animating our offer for young people

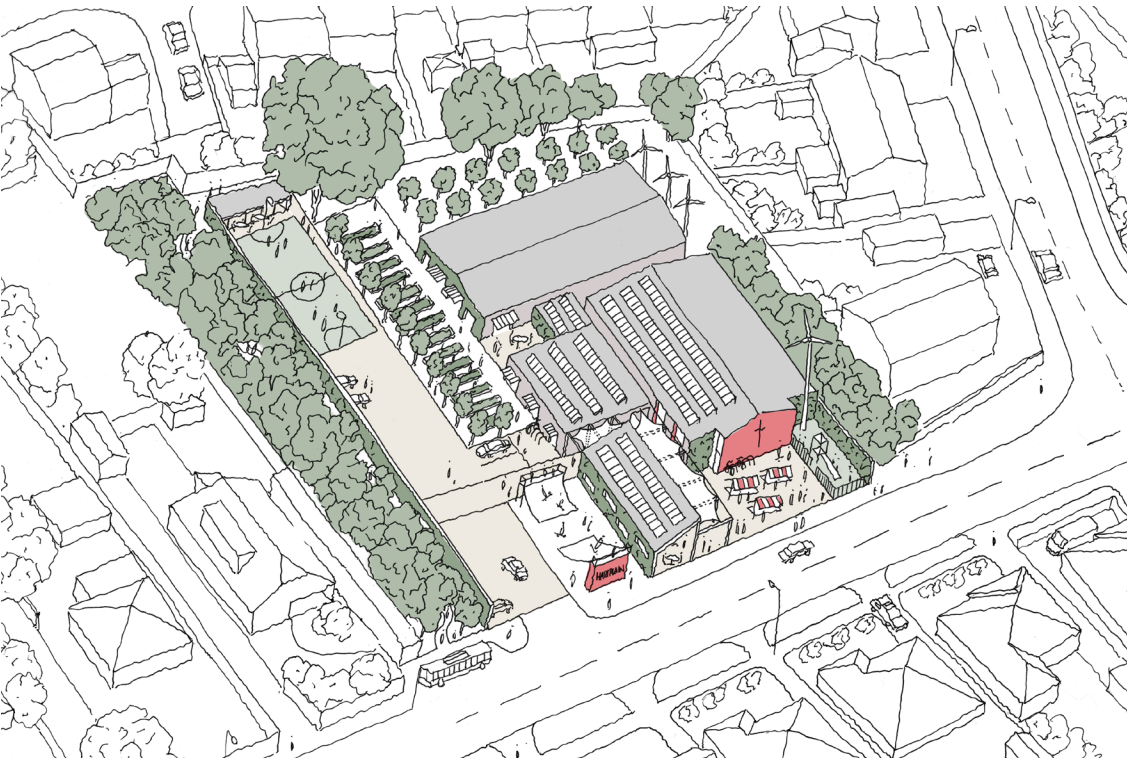
We've worked in two communities which have a large proportion of young people - how can we energise our spaces and offer so that it is attractive to young people?



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raising our profile

Our buildings are isolated, surrounded by dead space. We have to go green, reconnect with the street, raise our profile and create a more animating and inspiring offer.



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