

Beaver Housing – St.Mary’s Community Website

Positive Outcomes:

The community website that was run by the community under the name of Woolwich Heritage Development Project, was successfully established. The focus of this group is not just on training and employment but also on local heritage and promoting Woolwich as a place. This group grew out of the website development group which Beaver was facilitating.

1. The Less Positive Outcomes:

Lack of community ownership in its early development. The project was top heavy with input from beaver, Greenwich Council and a private consultant. However, the initial attempts to involve residents only produced limited interest.

2. Inadequate vetting/control of partner organisations.

The Society was approached by a community based organisation called ‘Rhythms’ offering to lead the development of the website and provide training on the use of the software. Given the problems set out in (1) Beaver was eager to take advantage. It is apparent that from the outset Rhythms were not delivering on their promises. It is alleged that they disguised this by fabricating performance information. Their failure to deliver a website ultimately forced Beaver to intervene with the Council’s help. There are numerous allegations of malpractice on the part of Rhythms from using the equipment to carryout a private business to vandalism. Ultimately, the Society recovered the equipment, however much had been stolen and damaged. Clearly the level of supervision from us was not adequate and a more rigorous vetting process needed to be employed before entrusting such valuable resources to a third party. Thought they were engaged with the best of intentions, ultimately they delivered little of lasting value.

3. Lack of permanent base.

It appears that eh project was required to move on several occasions with short notice. This not only disrupted the process of the work but also meant the equipment got lost and damaged as part of this process.

4. Insufficient Security.

The computers became a target for thieves. Whilst we had what we thought were secure offices, we were the victims of break-ins that resulted in a lot of equipment being stolen.

5. Targets and Evaluation.

I suspect that many of the problems could have been avoided if the project had been reviewed regularly against realistic targets. This would have drawn senior management’s attention to the problems at an earlier stage and enabled more effective intervention.

