



GREEN LIGHT IN THE CITY

TOOLKIT FOR POP-UP COMMUNITY SPACES

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PURPOSE OF THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is a reflective case study based on our experiences running a ‘pop-up’ community space over four months in Nottingham city centre. The team wanted to share the lessons we learned in setting up and operating such a ‘pop-up’ space. We hope through this toolkit to provide an inspiration for other organisations, local authorities and groups who wish to explore innovative ways of engaging with communities effectively around the issues that a community may be facing.

This tool kit explores the dos and don'ts of running such a space, offering advice and information based on our journey.

This material is based solely on our experience of ‘meanwhile use’ and anyone thinking of undertaking such an activity should ensure they seek professional advice before signing any contracts.



SCENARIO AND CONTEXT

The Green Light in the City Project is a new partnership across Nottingham city to develop ‘pop-up’ community spaces (e.g. in empty premises in shopping areas) and events which provide a focus for creativity and engagement with key local issues. It offers a model for new ways of using physical spaces in the future and is aimed at all ages and groups.

The group’s first pop-up space focused on climate change from 13th November 2021 to 4th February 2022 with an emphasis on green issues, sustainability and helping Nottingham achieve its ambition to be carbon neutral by 2028. It coincided with COP26, the United Nations’ key climate change conference held in Glasgow in November 2021.

This first pop-up was sited at a retail premises on Bridlesmith Gate in Nottingham City Centre.

Project Aims:

- To raise awareness, promotion, and engagement with green issues and how they affect us individually and locally
- To encourage community and creative partnerships to get involved and create opportunities for workshops, events, and talks
- To consider ideas of how we can live differently in the future
- To highlight inspiring work that is happening locally to tackle the climate crisis

To achieve this, we wanted a space that was:

- Appealing for all members of the community to visit
- Located in the town centre with a reasonable footfall so was easy to access for a wide range of people
- Engaging, with permanent, interactive activities for all ages during core opening hours
- Informative, with a programme of further interactive activities and workshops from our organisations aimed at the public and addressing a wide variety of climate and environmental research e.g. clean air, water, travel, food etc.
- Free at the point of use, providing opportunities for already established community groups and creative practitioners to use the space for running relevant events
- Contributing to local skills, providing volunteers and students with valuable experience in public engagement
- Designed by relevant local groups and creatives who were commissioned to do this
- Providing a legacy for the city, centred on window displays and activities that grew as communities add their input

In this way we would:

- Experiment with new forms of engagement, testing an idea over a shorter time scale
- Build new partnerships & networks across different parts of the community
- Focus on issues that concern a wide range of citizens
- Be creative
- Start conversations
- Take risks

BEFORE YOU START

Consider the following questions:

- What is your vision for the project?
- What will success look like and how will you measure it?
- Who are your partners or stakeholders – do you have all partners you need, or could other groups get involved?
- Who are the people you need to contact and the procedures you need to develop?
- Who will be responsible for decisions and day to day management?
- What is your proposed budget and how will you get the funding you need?

We set up a steering group who met weekly to check progress and make quick decisions on direction and operational matters.



PARTNERS

WHAT SORT OF PARTNERS COULD GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR PROJECT?

Our core group spanned the local council, local universities and colleges, local development projects, groups organising local festivals and events, creative groups and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

Our lead partner was Ignite! They are a Nottingham-based registered charity actively engaged in promoting and developing creativity and curiosity through working with schools, youth groups and communities.

Our partnership therefore comprised of Ignite!, Nottingham City Council, The University of Nottingham, Nottingham Trent University, and members representing the Nottingham Festival of Science and Curiosity, ChalleNGe, Green Hustle, Nottingham STEM City partnership and a diverse range of creative, science and arts practitioners and groups.

Funding

Partners may have some small pots of money that can be used to further their (and your) objectives. We were awarded a City Council Economic Development grant as our work had the potential to support regeneration of the city centre following the COVID 19 pandemic.

PREMISES

Please note the following information is based on our experiences locally – it should not be taken as legal guidance. If you wish to do this sort of activity, you will need to seek advice from your local council and other professional/legal bodies about your exact situation.

In our case, we wanted to use an empty retail site as a pop-up community space for our work on citizen engagement with climate change and the Green agenda.

This is possible using a *meanwhile use* let.

WHAT IS 'MEANWHILE USE'?

This is a government backed scheme (set up in 2009) where a temporary lease is granted to tenants such as local voluntary or charitable groups. This allows the use of a vacant business property temporarily for a non-commercial purpose, while explicitly recognising that the landlord is looking for a tenant that will take a commercial lease of the premises.

The property owner gets business rate relief for the period of the lease. We had a three-month lease. Leases for periods of six months to several years are also possible – but if the owner finds a commercial tenant, then you can be asked to leave at short notice and this needs to be part of your planning and agreed in the terms of the lease (our agreement was 7 days' notice). You should seek professional advice about the lease.

Guidance says you are not liable to pay any rent, premium, service charge or buildings insurance (with agreement, the landlord will cover the tenant's proportion of the service charge and insurance premium), but as tenant you will be responsible for the cost of the supply of utilities to the property. The service charge element is something you need to negotiate about and do be careful to check the lease before you sign it. You also need to consider whether you need contents &/or public liability insurance (see later).

Technically if using a property that was liable for business rates you could be asked to pay these – *but if you are a charity then your liability for business rates can be reduced to zero in certain circumstances.* With our local council, the charity can be asked to pay up to 20% of the business rate. However, in our case as the Green Light in the City project closely aligned to the City's key strategic goals, the council agreed to waive all business rate charges for our project. NB a member of your project must have charitable status for this to be possible and they must be the lease holder.

Template leases and other guidance are available through the government and the Meanwhile Foundation – which was set up to support groups to do this – they say “*We create socio-economic value from vacant property. We are a membership organisation providing online guidance to the Meanwhile use industry.*” – E.g. toolkits and case studies, risk management training, legal templates for leases as well as insurance, (see insurance section).

PROCESS

1. What do I need to consider first when looking for premises?

- Locations that will work for the project
- What scale and type of space is needed?
- What can be delivered in that sort of space?
- What costs can you afford?
- Identify who will be the lease holder. If this is a charity, they need to check that their trustees are happy with the level of risk involved with the lease before sign off.

2. Getting started

Once you have answers to some of this, you need to approach the owners of the vacant premises, you can do this through a local property agent directly. We found it invaluable to work with our local council, Nottingham City Council, to help us set this up. It helped in our case that staff from the City Council already had good working relationships with property agents and knew what sort of property might suit our project.

3. Who can help at your local council?

Start with the Economic Development service in your Local Government Authority (LGA). They typically have a role in “*Place Making*” – i.e. supporting activities that add to a sense of community and place and are close to citizens’ hearts.

4. Once you have identified a suitable premises

This is where negotiation really matters, as you need to get the property owner on board as you will be using the premises rent free. You need to sell the benefits (e.g. of rate relief). For example, if a property had an annual business rate of £100k per year to pay on an empty shop then a 3-month lease saves them 25% or £25K. In addition, if a charity takes a lease for up to 12 months the owner is then liable to pay void rates only after another 3 months, i.e. they pay no rates for 15 months. This is a significant benefit to both parties.

There are other benefits to the owner. The project can enliven the area and bring further footfall. It can fulfil other people’s agendas, both partners and externally, and it could also attract other business to the area.

You should read the lease carefully for what your obligations are. If the council is a partner, you can approach their property conveyancing team for advice. Universities and other public bodies have expertise in this area you may be able to tap into.



5. Other costs

Make sure you check the position on service charges. This will depend on the property. With managed properties there may be some other charges e.g. for security. You will need to pay for utilities. You can take out a contract with a supplier of your choice (do check if there is existing one) but note the length of the term of the lease can affect this.

Allow a contingency fund in your budget for making good any dilapidations that have occurred **as you will be expected to make good the property afterwards** –so you should allow time to do repairs before the lease ends.

6. What can help the process?

Develop an understanding of the business rates system; this is essential as you can use this to your advantage to demonstrate mutual benefit to the leaseholder/owner.

We recommend you have a clearly defined project and a project lead.

7. What can hinder process?

Don't overstretch yourselves. Practically, a bigger unit leads to higher costs and needs more resources to make useable and attractive. Be realistic in terms of scale you can operate at and find suitable premises to match that.



OPERATIONAL ASPECTS

1. Overview

Setting up a shared Google drive to hold and share key info and documents such as staff rotas, events calendar, risk assessments, insurance documents etc was incredibly useful. It was important we chose a platform all partners could access.

2. Staffing and programme contributions

Initially partners were staffing the space, while we recruited a co-ordinator. University of Nottingham HEIF funding paid for engagement assistants (posts taken by students). This was important for continuity and taking responsibility of the space and its safe operation. It's also important to get beyond 'good will' which was amazing in this project but can only take you so far.

Based on our experience we recommend you appoint a programme /space coordinator before you open. We had volunteer helpers, a lot of these were partners' staff and University students. If you have a university in your area do ask about their community volunteering schemes which could support these activities. Also contact the local council for details of other community groups with interests in this area.

Ideally, always have a minimum of two people on duty, to ensure staff safety and management of any incidents.

We used a basic Microsoft Forms file feeding into an Excel sheet on our Google drive to ask for volunteers and activity providers; this was circulated to all partners and then to their contacts. (A copy of this form is in Appendix 1).

3. Insurance

The activities being carried will affect what insurance you need to have. This will vary from simply using premises as a base to running activities for the public in the premises. As we were going to be having members of public on the premises, we needed public liability insurance. You may need contents insurance as well.

We became a member of the Meanwhile Foundation (currently costs £60 a year) because membership gave us instant access to public liability insurance policy providing members with indemnity of £5 million which is available immediately upon joining. They also provide other useful advice such as toolkits and case studies, risk management training and legal templates for leases etc.

4. Using the Space

Numbers of staff & visitors - Check the capacity of the space in terms of number of people permitted to be in it at one time due to fire regulations and think about how you will manage that.

Fitting out the space - For a shorter-term project, you may have limited budget to buy furniture and exhibition stands. We borrowed /had on loan a lot of materials e.g. reading materials from libraries, creative and community groups. Furniture was mostly borrowed. We also had exhibition materials from universities & research groups as part of the displays. Make sure exhibitors/activity leads know what facilities you can offer (and what you can't)!

For the space initially we planned what would go where based on what we knew we were being offered/had on hand. Later however we recognised that a better use of space with better flow could be used and was adopted – so don't be afraid to change things and evolve over time.

Before you open - Set up processes

- Check if the space needs any remedial work
- Get the utilities connected so you have heat and power
- Does the water need testing for legionella etc.? The owner should have processes for this.
- Power sockets – are there enough, do you need extensions, what adaptations can you and the owner agree on?
- Who will have access to space /keys /security codes?
- Fire safety - procedures/extinguishers /fire blankets/exit routes & assembly points
- First aid kits – do you have any qualified first aiders available?

N.B. Fire extinguishers need to be current and suitable for the space. We purchased a P50 model which can be used in all fires and did not need to be serviced.



5. Day-to-day operations

Keep a folder in the space with all key contacts and protocols available so whoever is on duty can immediately access all the information they need for normal operations and minor issues. Things included were:

- Risk assessments
- Health and Safety policy
- Safeguarding and child protection policy
- Insurance documents
- Key contacts
- Training materials for equipment
- Staff induction -see below
- Plan of the space
- A daily checklist/log sheet with completed forms kept in the folder as a record.

N.B. Our form was used for both logging who is on duty/visitor numbers/activities held/operational issues as well as interesting outcomes and feedback. It also provided prompts of daily and weekly tasks in order to maintain the space and keeping it looking attractive. (Template in Appendix 2)

6. Staff training/induction

Any staff (or volunteers) will need an induction. This should be signed by the individual once complete. The sort of areas this can include are:

- The purposes of the project
- What approach to take to visitors
- How to record queries or questions (including that you don't expect them to know all the answers)
- How the space works
- Health & Safety policy
- Operational risk assessment for the project and its operation.
- An induction to the space and its protocols (keeping everyone safe)
 - Fire safety (extinguishers/exit routes /assembly points)
 - First aid
 - Toilets and kitchen
 - Lights/power
 - Opening/closing routines
 - Checklist and tasks
 - How to setup and use any equipment or technology with visitors
 - Lifting and manual handling
 - Safe working – security and anti-social behaviour
 - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
 - Safeguarding and child protection policy
 - Health protection measurers – such as COVID 19
 - Open door policy (if applicable)

It is likely that the lead charity and other partners will have examples of processes and protocols that can be adapted to the use of your space and project. The current copies of all policies should be signed and available on site (with backup copies on shared drive).

7. Health & Safety

You will need a Health and Safety Policy which covers general policy and arrangements for use of the space. You should also obtain and display required posters /leaflets for staff areas. (See HSE web site for details and advice.) Our policy covered aspects such as COVID 19 compliance; accident prevention & safe working; provision of clear instructions and information to employees (and volunteers); emergency procedures and maintaining safe working conditions. There needs to be a responsible person for each aspect and agreed actions and arrangements.

We included the following:

- Risk assessments
- Fire safety
- Staff induction and training
- Accident reporting
- Security of staff and public
- Emergency contacts – a list of who is responsible for the space & activities and for staff to contact e.g. in case of public disorder
- Handling enquiries
- First aid

8. Risk assessment

These can follow a standard protocol or template – we took advice from a partner experienced in running exhibits for the public.

N.B. you will need to develop an assessment relevant to your project, space and set of risks.

Our General Principles for Risk Assessment (RA)

“Although Green Light staff team (including volunteers) will be leading activity within the space, any supervising adults are responsible for behaviour management of children and young people in their care at all times on-site. Green Light WILL NOT operate in loco parentis.

In the first instance, responsible supervising adults are also asked to administer First Aid to the visiting adults and children in their group. Should a Green Light staff member (including volunteers) administer First Aid or become involved in an incident, this will be recorded in the Green Light Accident Book, located in the kitchenette of the shop site.”

The sections in our risk assessment included the following

- Operation, issues, hazards of the space
- Staffing and competencies
- Site set-up
- Visitors
- Toilets and facilities
- Fire
- COVID 19

Each of section of the risk assessment used the following headings -

Nature of the hazard	Groups at risk	Current precautions	Estimation of risk	Potential additional precautions/ interventions
			Severity of hazard Likelihood of event Adequacy of controls	

9. Accident reporting

You need a system to record accidents or near misses. This can be as simple as a basic exercise book or an online form.

Typically the information recorded should include:

- Date and time of accident/near miss
- Who was injured (staff/visitor etc.)
- Nature of the injury
- Cause of the accident
- Names of any witnesses
- Person recording the accident, date & time filled out
- Are there any obvious steps that could be taken to avoid future accidents?

The person recording the accident must then inform the organising body of any accident as soon as possible so that the risk assessments and operating procedures can be revised as soon as possible.



PROGRAMMING

THINK CREATIVELY HERE – what is the intended outcome of your project and who can do what types of activities?

Ideally have your broad outline programme of events planned out before you open. Assign someone to coordinate this and curate the activities. They need authority to accept or reject offers of activities.

It is also important to allow capacity to add new elements as experience develops over time. You want room to be creative and take a few risks. Creating a set of opening hours does not remove the option to have booked workshops outside of these regular hours.

We recommend a ‘core offer’ that is available throughout and a weekly theme for activities. This needs to be accompanied by a marketing plan.



GREEN LIGHT IN THE CITY

December Workshops Programme *

Sat 11	Badge Making & Protest Workshop with the National Justice Museum *
Sun 12	Badge Making & Protest Workshop with the National Justice Museum *
Sat 18	Global Music Making with BeatFeet and Festive Printing with Sara Mahmood
Sun 19	Festive Art Making with Honey Williams

All workshops running 12-3pm
No booking required - just pop in!

Example taken from our December offer

Marketing and the media

It is important to create a communications strategy and plan before you open the doors.

- *What is your marketing & media strategy?* Have you anyone in your project with expertise in this area or know someone who does?
- We designed a logo, signage and information and had a poster printed for the outside of the shop window. You can have a launch event to attract attention and promote your objectives.
- Think about how you can generate content that will reach out and attract VIP visitors. We hosted visits from local MPs and a shadow government minister. Do you have a local Mayor that could ‘open’ the space?
- For media, – decide which platform(s) you will use and who will manage this? We set up social media channels on Facebook and Twitter gathering a good following, take advice on best way to do this.
- We set up a WhatsApp group for our steering group members which became a really useful tool for helping us to manage the space and activities, to solve problems and to get help at short notice.
- Make as much use as possible of your partner organisations especially if some of whom already have large social media followings as an easy way to increase your reach.
- As we were still developing aspects of the programme as we went along this did affect our initial approach so again having the majority of programme sorted before opening can help your marketing messages and strategies. Having said that, do expect to revise ‘the plan’ once underway.

- Look for opportunities to promote through local and community media and to piggy-back on other local events.
- For example, the local Nottingham community paper LeftLion did an article about the project and that helped raise our profile. We also have a local TV channel NottsTV – they covered our final night, which was part of the city-wide ‘Light Night’ event: <https://nottstv.com/programme/ey-up-notts-monday-7th-february/>

CLEAR UP

You will need time to clear and repair the space – this is your responsibility so allow for it in your budget & planning.

Things to consider:

- Who can get access to the space and when?
- Do you have use of a van and suitable people?
- Parking access- i.e. are there local restrictions for deliveries etc. at the premises?
- Who will dismantle exhibits and displays?
- Who needs to collect what and when?
- What will you need to do to make good, e.g. fill in any holes in walls from posters/exhibits, paint the walls.

EVALUATION

This needs planning as part of project and some budget if you want more extensive data. How can you collect feedback? Who collects feedback? What data can you collect to monitor progress and outcomes? What does success look like?

Some things can be easy to measure, e.g. visitor numbers and residence time in the space. Individual workshops can have evaluation sheets as well.

Given our theme, we also wanted to look at people's concerns and areas where advice was wanted on climate change and green issues. We had paper fish, that people could use to ask questions anonymously and also a note-book for people to provide suggestions and ideas of activities we could do/they could offer. Whilst we did not have a process to follow up on the impact of activities /project on individuals, the conversations and comments in the shop showed some impact. Expect some of your evidence to be more qualitative and anecdotal in nature.

For more advice and ideas on evaluation and measuring impact, there are organisations such as the New Economics Foundation (NEF) who support people from communities who are working for change and combine this with rigorous research to fight for change at the top. They can provide advice and case studies on evaluation and impact of interventions.

Normally for projects, they advise there are three things that can be measured:

1. *Inputs* typically the resources (money and time) spent by the project on different activities intended to achieve a particular goal. For example, time spent to foster the ability of community group workers to raise funds.
2. *Outputs* refer to the project activities/deliverables achieved using the resources (inputs). This would include training of community group workers to foster their ability to raise funds.
3. *Outcomes* refer to the impacts or effects of the project activities. Quality matters as well as quantity– not just how much training was there, but also, how good was it? Measuring outcomes would mean the effect of the training on community workers. How far has their ability and confidence to raise funds increased?

For more info see the NEF report “Prove it! - Measuring the effect of neighbourhood renewal on local people”.

Appendix 1: Expression of interest form - Greenlight project

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST - GREENLIGHT PROJECT

The GreenLight Project offers an exciting community engagement opportunity for a wide range of groups to bring their perspective on climate change to the wider community of Nottingham during the international conference (COP26) being held in Glasgow on climate change and beyond.

The City Council, University of Nottingham, Nottingham Trent University, Ignite! and a diverse consortium of interested organisations are working together and have secured a city centre premises from 10th November (during COP26) until end of December where we can offer opportunities for outreach and community engagement.

The aim is to provide a welcoming space where a wide range of people and groups can learn more about what climate change, discover what the Universities and the City are doing to help address this challenge and to help each person explore what they can do to make a difference in their daily lives - we call this "COP - so what?"

The shop will have core opening hours of 12-3pm, Wednesday-Sunday. There will be permanent displays and activities available during these times. In addition to these permanent activities, we are seeking ideas and suggestions for events of all types, to take place outside of these core opening hours, which people can book onto.

You can:

- Contribute creative activities that help people consider climate change
- Join partners in providing a welcome for visitors and helping them with activities in the shop at different times from November
- Share ideas with the public, explain and discuss, help and support (especially those who may be anxious about the climate change)
- Develop social media content to tell the story of the Greenlight project

Please complete the following form to express your interest in taking part.

For more information, email greenlight2028@gmail.com.

Use of this data- In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 and the Data Protection Act 2018, we will look after all the personal information collected and used and make sure it is done so appropriately, correctly and safely.

Continues...

Expression of interest form - Greenlight project

*Required

1. Your name*

.....

2. Your organisation*

.....

3. Your email address *

.....

4. Please state which area(s) of activity you would like to take part in? (Please tick as many areas as you want to.) *

Tick all that apply.

- Contribute creative activities that help people consider climate change?
- Help provide a welcome for visitors and help them with activities in shop?
- Share ideas with the public, explain and discuss actions we can take?
- Help with social media campaign?

Other:

.....

5. How much time could you contribute to the project?

Tick only one box.

- A few half days across Nov and Dec
- A half-day per week
- Providing a display or activity that could run over several weeks in shop
- Running a one-off event. (Please give details below)

Other:

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6. What can you offer as a proposed event or activity?*

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7. Please give details of your event/activity. Proposed duration of your event? Preferred slot? Something that can run outside of the core shop opening hours of 12-3pm, Wednesday-Sunday? NB The shop can be made available for an event pre or post regular opening times and on different days of the week. You would need to staff this event. *

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Expression of interest form - Greenlight project

8. Is your activity aimed at a particular audience? (e.g. young people, adults, family groups?) *

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9. Please let us know if you require any equipment in order to deliver your activity (e.g. power, display screens, tables and chairs, basic materials such as pens & paper etc) *

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10. Anything else we should know?
Please let us know here *

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Appendix 2: Green Light in the City daily checklist

Date	
People on shift	
Any incidents to report	
Any handover information	
Estimate number of visitors	
Details of any workshop activity	
Any quotes/case studies from the day	

Daily tasks

Floor swept	
Toilets checked and cleaned	
Ipads on charge	
VR cleaned and on charge	
Window lights off	

Weekly tasks

Floor mopped	
Plants watered	
Fire alarm checked	
Windows cleaned	
Resources checked	

GREEN LIGHT IN THE CITY

TOOLKIT FOR POP-UP COMMUNITY SPACES

Acknowledgements

Toolkit co-published by Green Light in the City and the Institute for Policy and Engagement, University of Nottingham

Main author Dr Karen Moss, Nottingham Trent University

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