



Encouraging citizen participation

- **Involving ordinary citizens in development planning and regeneration presents a major challenge.** There is growing recognition of the importance of this, not just to improve the sustainability of development proposals by securing local input, but in recognition that people's attitudes to democratic processes at all levels is based on their experience of 'being involved' locally.
- Paid professionals and politicians are easier to involve; **extending the opportunity for participation to citizens of different backgrounds requires innovative mechanisms that go beyond just holding meetings.** This is especially true in low-income neighbourhoods and in neighbourhoods with a high proportion of recent immigrant households - a situation typical of many waterfront communities around the North Sea
- **Both citizen and professional participation are closely linked to achieving quality in the final development.** Creating a competitive situation for ideas and standards through architectural competitions and the process of critically assessing and incorporating competing viewpoints, all contribute to improved quality.
- There are many participation mechanisms or tools such as expert panels, citizens fora, academic advisory panels, focus groups and scenario building using a design charrette. Above all, **participation needs to be carefully tailored to both the potential audience and local circumstances.**
- In mounting participation exercises, **it is important to make clear at the outset what decisions can be influenced by the participation process** and what decisions have already been taken or will be decided in another context. Lack of clarity about this can discredit participation.
- It is also important to recognise the need to rectify a natural tension between **participation focused on a small, or 'sample' audience, such as an expert or community panel, and participation which is open to large numbers** of people.