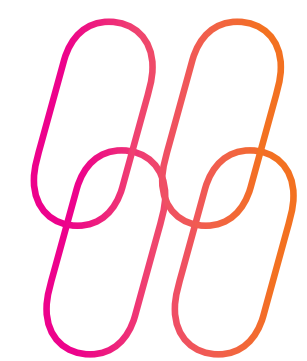# Active Withernsea: a community development project in a hyper-local place with a systems thinking focus

El Wilkinson-Cunningham (They/Them)
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
El.Wilkinson-Cunningham@eastiring.gov.uk

Joe Brooks (He/Him)
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Joseph.Brooks@eastriding.gov.uk

Active Withernsea

"Working together to create a happier, healthier, more Active Withernsea".

One of 12 Sport England Original Place Partners, led by East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

A small community development team working on the ground to increase physical activity, with the support of consultants.

How the System previously looked

- Lack of trust
- Unconnected
- Lot of community groups/individually working in a combative nature rather than collaboratively
- Feelings of isolation
- "Withernsea Vs the World"
- Negative perceptions, particularly around physical activity
- Lack of connection to wider East Riding System

Systems Approaches used Throughout the Journey

- Boundary Critique used to identify parameters to work in re line of sight to Physical activity
- Rich Pictures to explore the initial state of physical activity within the town
- Social Network Analysis used to map the systems and identify key enablers/barriers
- Collection and evaluation of systems changes
- Stakeholder Analysis to develop Participatory Theory of Change
- Critical Systems Heuristics used to develop PACE

Boundary Critique → Systemic Strategy Process → Stakeholder Analysis → Participative Theory of Change → Evaluation

What is PACE

- Physical Activity and Community Engagement Network
- Previous structure was top down, complex with multi partners and director, very traditional reporting in the style fostered around a defensive impression management culture
- Through structured critical back-casting workshops with the AW board emerged the Physical Activity and Community Engagement (PACE) network, an innovative new governance structure
- The aim of this new structure is to foster a culture genuinely favouring the collaborative exploration of challenges
- Moving away from mere oversight of what AW is doing to a collaborative network of partners and residents working with AW, laying the path for a sustainable network beyond the project's end in 2025

Critical Systems Heuristics (Ulrich, 1983, 1994)

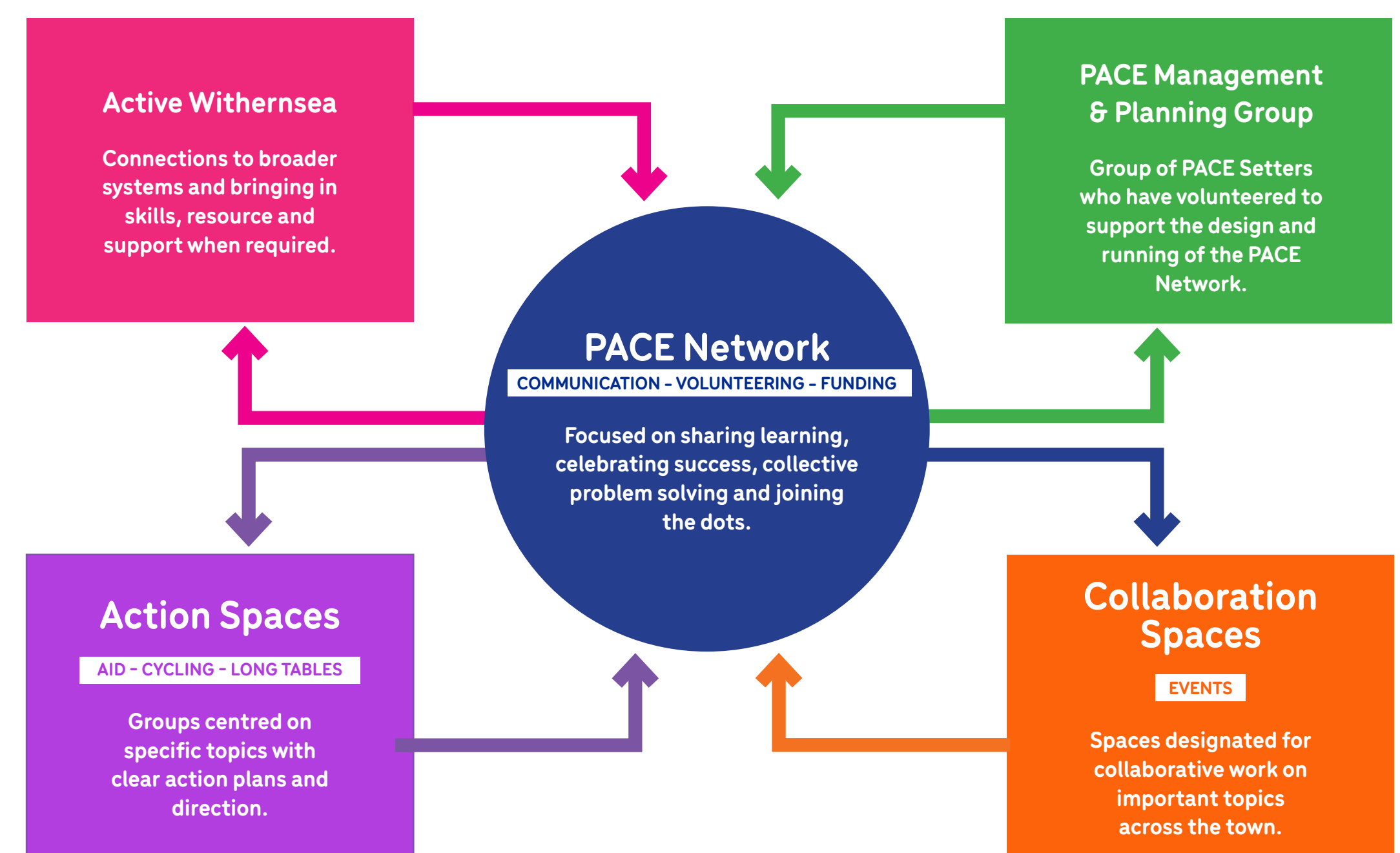| Motivation	Control	Expertise	Legitimacy
• Who should benefit? • What should be the purposes? • What should be the measures of success?	• Who should be a decision maker? • What should the decision makers control? • What should they not control?	• Who else should be involved, and in what roles? • What should count as expertise? • What key factors will enhance the likelihood of success?	• Who could be affected but is not involved, and should they be? • Should those affected be free to opt out? • What should be core values and assumptions?

Systems Change Governance

May 2022 Time to rethink Active Withernsea's governance structure
July 2022 PACE network launched, development of PACE way via Triz Exercise
Regular PACE workshops
January 2023 Sticky Issue subgroups
October 2023 PACE workshop – The Journey towards Sustainability
January 2024 Governance structure developed by PACE member and shared with Network
Summer 2024 Utopia mapping used to re-establish momentum and develop a future plan based on how the network see PACE and AW in the future
The future intention: The PACE Network will evolve and exist beyond AW enabling the members/community to continue to lead physical activity into the future
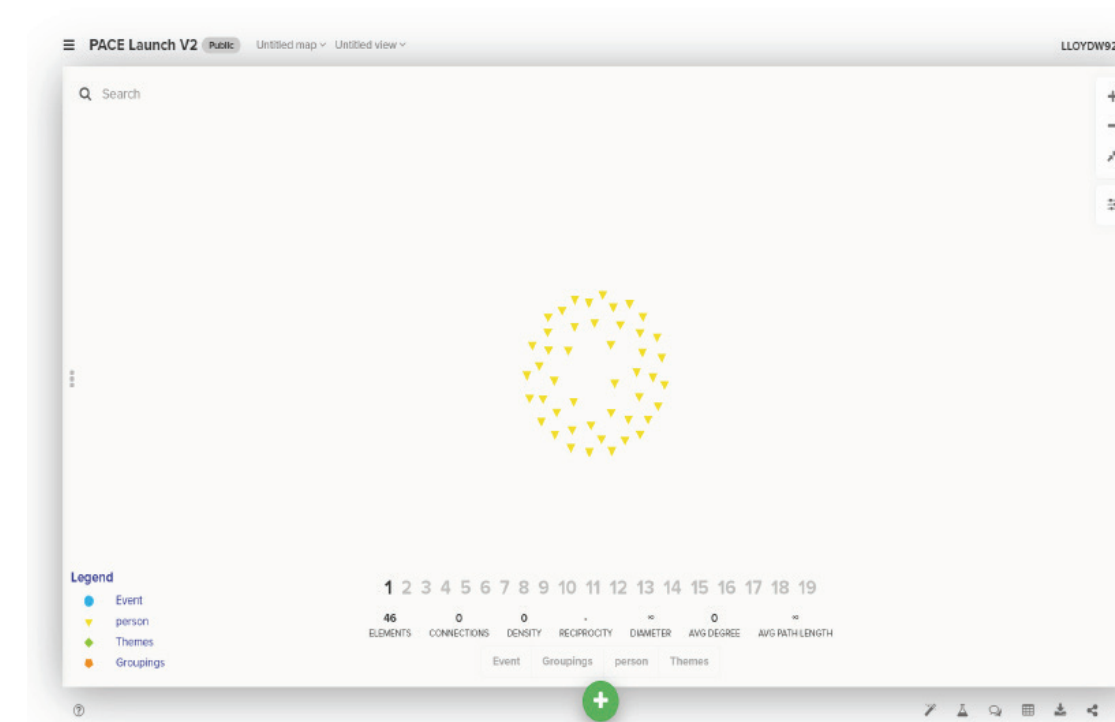
Building Community Momentum

- Distributed and community leadership
- Connected to wider systems
- Creating feedback loops to influence behaviours
- Using SNA to identify and upskill community members to be leaders
- Structure designed by PACE member and agreed by network as a way of governing itself
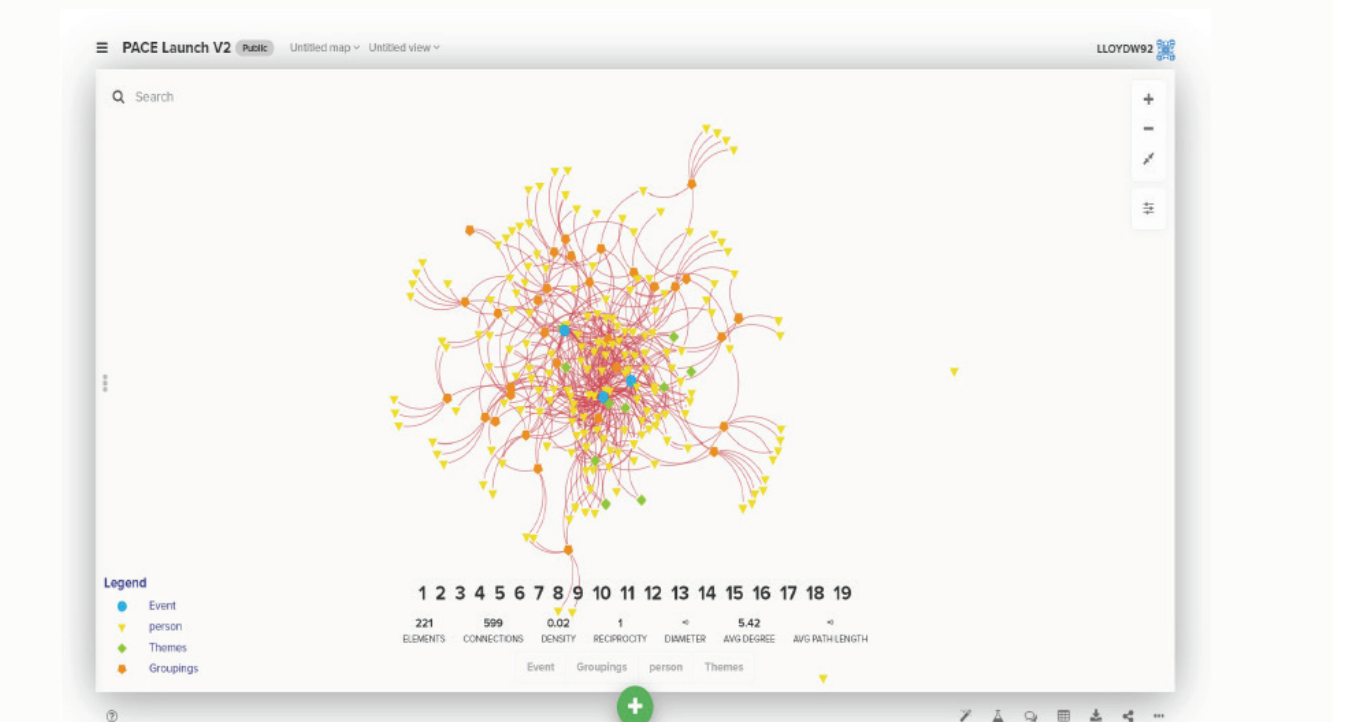- Utopia mapping used to plan the next steps together

PACE Withernsea Structure

Active Withernsea — Connections to broader systems and bringing in skills, resource and support when required.

PACE Management & Planning Group — Group of PACE Setters who have volunteered to support the design and running of the PACE Network.

PACE Network — COMMUNICATION – VOLUNTEERING – FUNDING — Focused on sharing learning, celebrating success, collective problem solving and joining the dots.

Action Spaces — AID – CYCLING – LONG TABLES — Groups centred on specific topics with clear action plans and direction.

Collaboration Spaces — EVENTS — Spaces designated for collaborative work on important topics across the town.

Kumu of PACE launch

SNA 2 years in

Impact of PACE

- Development of Informal Walking Booklet, a volunteering and communication plan for the town
- Expanding the system by bringing in new partners to the town
- Creating a more connected Withernsea
- Increased community leadership
- Increase collaboration within and across organisations
- Accessibility training for network members

Impact of AW

- Strengthening the VCSE sector within the town- Local groups accessing funding and support for the first time – 17 get going grants (11 organisations, 3 groups, 3 individuals).
- AW, Withernsea High & SSP co-funding the trial of a hybrid teacher post. This is now funded soley though school and other schools in the area are looking to take on the model
- Creating a insight-led culture
- Reducing inequalities though increasing opportunities for those with accessibility needs
- Improving opportunities for young people via high school and capital investment
- Reducing inactivity and increasing activity

Physical activity in the Town disadvantaged	2019	2024
Inactive (30 minutes or less per week)	32%	19%
Fairly Active (30-149)	11%	28%
Very Active (150+)	32%	58%

Physical activity in the Town	2019	2024
Inactive (30 minutes or less per week)	44%	15%
Fairly Active (30-149)	10%	22%
Very Active (150+)	44%	62%

Physical activity in the Town disability	2019	2024
Inactive (30 minutes or less per week)	52%	28%
Fairly Active (30-149)	10%	28%
Very Active (150+)	38%	44%

Next Steps

- Adapting the PACE structure to be a VSM to allow for sustainability
- Expanding of the work to other areas, convening and understanding the system in these areas
- Systems training with senior leaders and council members to expand the learning and approach to wider ERYC and partners
- Using of systems thinking in public health strategy and policies