

LOCALISM

SLIDE 1 THEN ...

"In a period of great change, when huge unrepresentative organisations seem to control the lives of individuals and restrict personal freedom, people might be tempted to give up as a bad job the effort to master these impersonal forces. If they yielded, the loss would be irreparable. In this situation, local self-government should be a crucial influence. It should represent the citizen and be the means whereby he brings his views to bear on those public problems that touch most nearly his personal and domestic life. If local self-government withers the roots of democracy grow dry. If it is genuinely alive, it nourishes the reality of democratic freedom".

(Rt Hon Lord Redcliffe Maud Local Government Reform – Summary, 1969)

SLIDE 2 ... MORE RECENTLY

- Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on Councils to prepare a Community Strategy (community planning process).
- Commitment to improved community involvement in planning (ODPM Paper 2001).
- Policy Statement *Sustainable Communities – Delivering through Planning* (2002).
- Planning & Compensation Act 2004 placed a duty on Councils to prepare a Local Development Framework (spatial planning process).

SLIDE 3 ... & NOW

- Localism Act 2011 places a requirement on LPAs to facilitate the community planning process (community planning process ... again)

“The new role given by neighbourhood planning to communities in the planning and development of their areas will see them becoming proponents of growth – particularly when allied with a range of incentives that will ensure they receive a greater share in the benefits of growth rather than just the costs. This is a community owned planning process and therefore it will be for members of the local community to decide, in a referendum, if neighbourhood development plans or orders can come into force”

(Paragraph 23 Localism Act 2011 Consultation Paper)

SLIDE 4 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Prior to 1850 “private interest” the dominant environmental ideology.
- 1940 – 1980 “public interest” became the dominant paradigm.
- 1980 – 2011 – emphasis on business and management efficiency and shift in emphasis towards partnership with the “private interest”
- The “public interest” went into partnership with the “private interest” – worked against “public participation” but helped to legitimate planning decisions?

- The 2011 Localism Act ... will it legitimate or transform decision making (i.e. enable communities to have a *real* say in place making and planning their communities?

SLIDE 5 LOCALISM ACT 2011

- Duty to cooperate – across two (or more) areas and decision making tiers.
- Neighbourhood Forum.
- Community Assets.
- Neighbourhood Plan – may be across clusters of parishes.
- Independent check - may recommend changes.
- Community referendum on any plan or order that meets the basic standards.
- Community assets, right to build and right to challenge.

Notes: no set format for a Neighbourhood Development Plan but might include planning objectives for a neighbourhood, proposed sites for new development, guidance on design, key neighbourhood projects and infrastructure priorities; community referendum on any plan or order that meets the basic standards – more than 50% of people voting in the referendum then LPA must bring it into force.

SLIDE 6 WHO DECIDES

- *“Neighbourhood plans provide an exciting opportunity for communities to have a real say in the detailed planning of their areas, in the context of national priorities” (Paragraph 22 Consultation Paper).*
- *“In the meantime, local communities may in any event want to participate in the production of development plan documents and other development proposals that affect them”.*

Notes: Neighbourhood planning will be additional to – and not a replacement for – the existing planning system in England; need to be in line with local and national planning policies and other legislation; cannot use neighbourhood planning to block development but can influence the type, design, location and mix of new development.

SLIDE 7 ROLE OF LPA

- Decide status of neighbourhood forum – is it sufficiently representative?
- Approve the Neighbourhood Plan’s boundaries.
- Support the Forum in its plan preparation.
- Organise its examination.
- Organise (if required) a public vote to take it forward.
- If vote is positive, LPA has a duty to adopt the plan.

SLIDE 8 BUDGETS AND DELIVERY

- As neighbourhood devolution progresses, the opportunity is there for ward councillors (non-executive councillors) to increasingly take on responsibilities that mirror if not scale, those of their colleagues on the executive and to bring *“a full knowledge of what their local communities need and want”* to the council’s decision making processes

- Funding – opportunities to use New Homes Bonus, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106 apyments.

- Funding:
 - ✓ Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) replace RDAs and will be used to administer funding from central government and the European Union.
 - ✓ How is localism – and effective councillor representation - built into the new funding opportunities through LEP, LIP and CIL?
 - ✓ Neighbourhood Community Budgets.

Note: Backbench councillors are left to liaise with their wards and raise pressing issues with portfolio holders but may not be on Planning Committee. Thus the power of the LPA has been concentrated into the hands of the Executive or Cabinet with – it could be argued - little effective scrutiny (O & S can call Executive to account but no powers to make Executive change course); ward member role potentially very valuable in neighbourhood management – engaging with and on behalf of their communities, influencing, communicating, negotiating and brokering, partnership working, representation, etc.. Furthermore, the power of “wellbeing” enables CEO to sit on local bodies with an interest in

planning so fettering independence to form a dispassionate view on major planning applications Those partners supporting business interests exert more influence than non-executive members of the LPA particularly as individuals within partnerships cannot be held to account and as schemes may be tied in with government funding; alongside this is the attraction of financial rewards to localities to encourage development – use of behavioural economics rather than regulation or public intervention to influence decisions.

SLIDE 9 NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITY BUDGETS

- DCLG received 45 bids from town, district and county councils to pilot the NCB scheme.
- 24 interviewed and Ilfracombe Town Council along with 9 others chosen to be pilot projects.
- Inaugural NCB meeting took place 20th. January 2012 with DCLG and partner organisations.
- ITC to work up a NCBH programme to start April 2013.
- May take up to two years before operational.

SLIDE 10 CHALLENGES

- Challenge to reduce public debt but also to maximise growth.

- Powers that are both broad and vague driven by a stated commitment to 'localism' - which means divestment of government responsibility for any activity which could potentially be undertaken by individuals or "communities" (Conservative Party, 2009).
- Spatial planning has a critical role in facilitating market-led development by coordinating the provision of land and infrastructure – activities not directly engaged with the market and subservient to economic growth as the prime objective of public policy.
- Requires a holistic approach to the economic, social and environmental dimensions – economic development is more than property development with crucial elements such as labour markets, supply chains, transport links, and social fabric having a sub-regional or regional dimension.
- Requires a holistic multi-tiered approach in which subsidiarity is the key to understanding these relationships.

Note: For example, SMEs are drivers of growth; in order to grow to a significant size, such industries need supplier, housing and labour markets on a sufficient scale with the range of skills and services in local labour markets, institutions and supply chains in local concentrations ("clusters") with a high quality of life as an attractor – these 'softer' factors such as social fabric, environment and culture are also critical to economic success and are beyond the capacity of businesses to provide – but are central to the purposes of spatial planning – however, LPA's role is being squeezed out. While more coherence between aspects of spatial policy depends partly upon devolution to local levels, this is a necessary, not a sufficient condition.

Optimistically, could be seen as the creation of chaos as the prelude to reconstitution in a completely new and different form ... so opportunity with enthusiasm for localism, greater local responsibility is key to the joined-up, holistic planning response that is necessary to economic regeneration.

SLIDE 10 WHERE NEXT?

He had bought a large map representing the sea,

Without the least vestige of land:

And the crew were much pleased when they found it to be

A map they could all understand

Fit The Second The Bellman's Speech from The Hunting of the Snark,
Lewis Carroll

SLIDE 11 REFERENCES

- Communities and Local Government: A plain English guide to the Localism Act
- <http://services.parliament.uk/Acts/2010-11/localism.html>
- <http://www.communities.gov.uk/decentralisationguide>
- CABE 'Spaceshaper. A user's guide' (2007)

➤ TCPA Your Plan Your Place