

# LOCALISE WEST MIDLANDS

## Annual Report

1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015



*Localising prosperity for a more just and sustainable economy*

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# 1. Introduction and mission statement

LWM works towards more localised approaches to supply chains, ownership and decision-making for a more just and sustainable economy. We see localisation and decentralising capitalism as key to progressing gently radical economic change.

We do this by:

- bringing people and organisations together to explore ideas and take action;
- providing information and inspiration;
- researching, advising and challenging.

## History

LWM was set up in 2002 by a group of individuals keen to propose solutions as a constructive response to the problems of mainstream economics. Our West Midlands focus is intended to make use of the region's geographical balance of urban and rural. We also look beyond the region, seeking to catalyse ideas across the UK and to make links with the many organisations working on a similar agenda across the world. We have developed as a consultancy and are able to support organisations in their efforts to maximise social value and ownership of the economy in a range of sectors and cross-sector areas.



Past work has included co-creating the business plan for Birmingham Energy Savers based on developing local supply chains, work on sustainable procurement, research into tackling fuel poverty through the Green Deal, reviewing Friends of the Earth's environmental rights empowerment activities, evaluation of the West Midlands LEPs' proposals on sustainable development and localisation criteria and, more recently, completing/undertaking research into mainstreaming community economic development.

## 2. Activities over the year - 2014-15

### Mainstreaming Community Economic Development - Localising Prosperity

This Barrow Cadbury funded strand of work began in October 2013 and ended in September 2014. The aim was to build on their 2012-13 research findings to generate practical outcomes:

- **Engaging and discussing the opportunities** of Mainstreaming Community Economic Development with project managers, policy makers and politicians
- **Developing an informal learning network** of practitioners to provide the opportunity for shared learning and wider implementation
- **Working with partners to mainstream community economic development** by testing its feasibility and ease of implementation in the West Midlands
- **Monitoring and evaluating the impact** of the mainstreaming community economic development approach and the implications for future learning and implementation

The Barrow Cadbury funded strand of work included case study research and practical work with organisations from the private, social and public sectors around using the MCEd approach to improve their local social and economic performance and to maximise local economic benefits. The project team consisted of Karen Leach, Sarah Longlands, Conrad Parke and Jon Morris. [Reports from the work can be found on our website](#). The main areas of work and achievements were:

- Worked on linking health spending and regeneration in Sandwell, in particular:
  - LWM produced for Right Care Right Here's regeneration working group a set of proposals for delivering local benefit, based on the results of a local multiplier study that RCRH commissioned from the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES).
  - Wrote additions to the Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospital Trust (SWBHT) procurement strategy on increasing local procurement for social inclusion with some practical steps for strategic action, which went to the Trust's Board for approval, and a more detailed action plan of short, medium and long term actions on localising prosperity
  - Facilitated collaboration between Sandwell Council and NHS Supply Chain to run an event for Sandwell based businesses to learn how to become NHS suppliers - the first time NHS Supply Chain had run such an event in partnership with a Local Authority.
- Developed a model which could be used by SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises) to collaborate with the aim of gaining market share from remotely-owned corporations, achieving greater local economic growth and social inclusion. This followed on from our previous contacts with a number of SMEs in the housing retrofit sector. Facilitated by LWM the group developed a terms of



reference, charter and basic business model. As well as supporting the businesses the charter committed them to supporting the local economy and addressing social exclusion – something of which the involved businesses are fully supportive. Members explored the potential of funding through the LEPs and met with some potential providers of clients. Unfortunately recent local and national barriers to the retrofit agenda may have prevented this from developing further.

- Developed better communications, and established a separate website outlining the Localising Prosperity approach clearly with guidance, case studies, checklists and evidence, to help us communicate the Mainstreaming Community Economic Development project to wider audiences.
- Ran three workshops in September 2014 with Find It In Birmingham on the Birmingham Business Charter for Social Responsibility, for social enterprises and non-profits, to learn how the charter can help them win and deliver business with Birmingham City Council.
- Contributed to a New Weather paper on ‘Ultramicroeconomics’, David Boyle’s project to explore how new economists can better propose and communicate in a way that the Treasury finds helpful.
- Several events, including a MCED workshop at Futureshift Festival (a social innovation /economy initiative) in June 2014; a presentation to the West Midlands Economics Forum, a business-led group, September 2014; and a joint event with Compass on how we shape a better (sustainable, socially just) economy in the West Midlands – [A Future Beyond Growth](#), in July 2014.

Thanks to further Barrow Cadbury funding after the end of this financial year, the project is entering its third stage from August 2015. See section 3 for details.

### West Midlands Local Currencies

In March 2015, Karen Leach and the University of Birmingham’s Joanna Gray - professor of financial law and regulation – brought together a group of people potentially interested in the idea of starting local currencies in the West Midlands on a similar model to the Bristol, Brixton and Totnes Pounds. This ‘transition’ model of local currency is effectively locally branded sterling, in digital and paper form, that can only be traded with or between locally owned businesses, keeping more spending power locally and communicating powerfully the idea of local money circulation. A new wave of these currencies is starting up in towns and cities across the UK.

The idea instantly got coverage in the [Birmingham Mail](#) and has proved popular on social media. A working group chaired by Karen and with an excellent mix of relevant expertise, enthusiasm and initiative, is now exploring the feasibility of



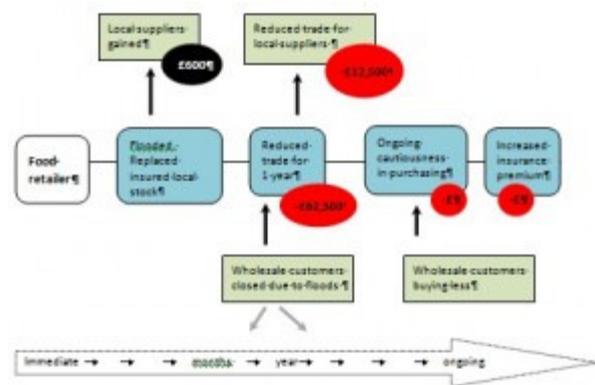
*Image reprinted courtesy of the Birmingham Mail*

the Birmingham Pound, with interest also in a Wolverhampton Pound. The group is very keen that the currency delivers social justice and becomes something the whole city feels they can use. A briefing has been drafted and the next step is to ensure the commitment of the city council and other key organisations.

**Cumulative economic impacts of flooding in the Upper Calder Valley**

Over the autumn and winter of 2014, LWM coordinator Karen Leach worked on a study for Calderdale Council to provide greater understanding of the scale, reach and complexity of the economic impacts of flooding and flood risk in the Upper Calder Valley and how this relates to community economic resilience.

Funded through the [DEFRA Flood Resilience Community Pathfinder](#) programme, the study investigated impacts of the major floods that hit the Calder Valley in June and July 2012, firstly on a ‘first tier’ of flood-affected businesses and then the impacts on their suppliers, customers and employees in the area, to give a sense of the collective ‘multiplied’ economic impact of flooding and flood risk.



The assumption can sometimes be made that the UK economy gains from flooding, for example because flooded businesses have to spend on replacement stock and refurbishment. The results demonstrated the variability of these impacts and how they interconnect, giving a sense of the complexity and scale and showing both losses and gains to the local economy – but with negative impacts significantly outweighing the positive.

**RUFkit: “Your flexible guide for dicing with better participatory dialogue”**

LWM is a partner in Alister Scott’s latest innovative project at Birmingham City University’s Centre for Environment and Society Research. The RUFkit started out as RUFopoly, an interactive game created by Alister and partners that enables the player to journey through a fictitious “rural-urban fringe” landscape tackling typical problems caused by the conflicting pressures around development, environmental governance and growing populations. It helps players to understand the value conflicts more clearly and potentially to step out of the role they have traditionally played and understand others’ perspectives.

The team have been revising and adapting the original game format, guidance and questions, created in a previous project, into a highly adaptable web resource under the name RUFkit. This works with different landscape types and scales, and is being tested with diverse groups from planning students to community groups to Local Enterprise Partnership members.

## Effectiveness of Green Energy Equipment

LWM member Phil Beardmore led a study on the effectiveness of Green Energy Equipment for Birmingham City Council. This involved interviewing and collecting data from those who have had green energy and water saving measures installed in their homes by the City Council over the last few years, identifying successes and problems and making recommendations for improvement. The report is not publicly available.

## Northfield Warm Homes evaluation for Northfield Ecocentre

Phil Beardmore also recently undertook an evaluation of the Northfield Warm Homes project for [Northfield Ecocentre](#). The evidence of Northfield Warm Homes showed the reality of a daily struggle to keep warm and put food on the table for many households in South Birmingham.

The project was shown to provide a vital crisis management and energy advice service for households forced to cope with cold, damp homes. The evaluation also illustrates the failure of schemes like ECO and Green Deal to provide solutions to fuel poverty, and makes recommendations for strengthening community-orientated solutions. It can be read on our website at <http://www.localisewestmidlands.org.uk/activities/northfieldwarmhomes/>.

## Lessons from Community Forum

During the previous year, LWM member Jon Stevens produced a report, *Reflections on Community Forum*, evaluating the 1970s community engagement initiative Community Forum. This was put together from the reflections of those who were involved at the time. A workshop was held with the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Birmingham on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015 to use its findings to explore lessons for current times.

In the next few weeks Jon will be completing the final chapter of the report based on the conclusions of this workshop. Issues include the case for coordinated intervention to tackle Birmingham's pressing housing and related problems in its inner city areas; the importance of an overarching strategy from the City Council to shape and guide such interventions; the challenge of finding resources for this in an era of severe public expenditure restraint; and how local communities might be fully engaged in formulating and in implementing a new strategy. The report will be available on our website.

## Food & Our Future event 14th May

On 14<sup>th</sup> May 2014 we held an event on food poverty, access and health with the Lunar

### for food security and entitlement - people should

- > **have access** – able to grow or buy food, have enough money, able to reach shops stocking foods needed for health at affordable prices
- > **enjoy the choice** – able to buy food that is safe, necessary, appropriate for a healthy life and for the culture they live in
- > **be free from anxiety** - about whether they will be able to eat properly

Society, Birmingham Leadership Foundation, the Nishkam Centre and Midland Heart. There were over 80 participants. Speakers were Chris Mould, Executive Chairman of the Trussell Trust, Adrian Phillips, Director of Public Health at Birmingham City Council, and Liz Dowler, Professor of Food and Social Policy at Warwick University and a trustee of the Food Ethics Council. It was chaired by Kate Cooper of the then Birmingham Food Council, and a diverse audience led wide-ranging discussion. The event report and a blog post of salient points can be [found on our website](#).

### **Birmingham Micro Hydro Full Feasibility Study**

During the year, LWM associate Phil Beardmore worked with energy consultancy Encraft on a community hydropower feasibility study for two Birmingham sites: Witton Lakes and Sutton Park. His role was in community engagement and consultation. The schemes proved technically feasible but were prevented from coming to fruition by high capital costs.

### **Other collaborations**

LWM continues to participate in the West Midlands Regional Sustainability Forum, particularly around engagement with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPS), and in the Alliance for a Better Economy, currently operating when needed as a loose network between new economy organisations for information sharing. We held a joint event with Futures Network West Midlands on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2015 to explore how devolution should work for the West Midlands region.

Anna Watson, who worked for us on a Future Jobs Fund contract a few years ago, came back in June 2014 to do her sustainability Masters dissertation on BES and the Green Deal. One of its outputs was a policy briefing on the Green Deal: lessons from Birmingham Energy Savers, available on our website: <http://www.localisewestmidlands.org.uk/green-deal-policy-brief/>. Anna achieved a well-deserved distinction for her work.

## **3. The Future**

LWM now has funding for a two-year third stage of mainstreaming community economic development work, now under the name of Localising Prosperity, from Barrow Cadbury Trust. The longer funded timescale is enabling us to recruit a second employee to share the role of Coordinator with Karen Leach, bringing the increased capacity and variety of skills that LWM has identified it needs. During the next year we plan to develop further our work in Sandwell and West Birmingham linking the new hospital to regeneration; develop clearer Localising Prosperity agendas for local business including through Business Improvement Districts; progress local currencies in the conurbation; and seek opportunities to influence the development of Combined Authority priorities. We plan to take advantage of our

increased capacity to develop some more sustainable income generation through our consultancy activity.

The past year's work on Localising Prosperity has opened a number of doors for us since the year end, with presentations and workshops being delivered for other organisations including a joint event with New Start and the New Economics Foundation, a webinar for the [Canadian Community Economic Development Network](#), a workshop at CLES' Making Devolution Work event in Manchester, and a session for Common Purpose's Meridian course.

We are working as a community adviser on the Department for Communities and Local Government's Community Economic Development Programme with a group of organisations in East Handsworth. The process encourages communities to swiftly identify and 'business plan' for a small number of priority community enterprise opportunities that will have most impact locally. The programme is led by a consortium of New Economy organisations and it is a mutually useful learning experience that will also hopefully deliver some positive outcomes for the pilot communities, although the timescale is extremely short.

## 4. People

### Board and steering group members

Over the year the following have been Board members of Localise West Midlands:

#### **Jon Morris (Chair)**

A housing, planning and regeneration consultant who led LWM's work on Birmingham Energy Savers and contributed to MCED. Former Director of Coventry New Deal for Communities, Chair of Royal Town Planning Institute Housing Panel, Extensive experience in the fields of housing, planning and regeneration, as a practitioner, researcher and lecturer. Jon has also been a member of a number of ministerial advisory groups and an expert witness to the House of Commons Environment Select Committee.

#### **Paul Cobbing (Vice Chair)**

(Also LWM associate). Paul has worked for the last 30 years on environmental issues, from operational land management to policy development and implementation across climate change and the natural environment. He is now chief executive of the National Flood Forum, a charity that supports and represents people at risk of flooding. He has experience of developing and supporting sustainable development, climate change and environmental networks across the West Midlands, and working with them to progress strategic action. He is convenor of the West Midlands section of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and a member of the West Midlands Forestry & Woodland Advisory Committee and the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Nature Partnership.

**Jackie Milton (Treasurer)**

Jackie has run her own accounting practice for the last eight years, with a special interest in community projects and new business start-ups. She is also a Trustee of the Cwm Harry Land Trust and involved in Lightfoot Enterprises CIC (Household Energy Services), and was formerly a Trustee of Fordhall Farm Community Land Initiative.

**Phil Beardmore**

(Also LWM associate). Phil works for LWM and others as an environmental and third sector consultant specialising in thought innovation. He founded the renewable energy co-operative CoRE50. His clients include local authorities, utilities, construction companies and social enterprises. In 2010 Phil was voted one of the top 50 Green Leaders in the West Midlands, is the Third Sector Assembly Environment Network Champion and member of Birmingham's Green Commission.

**Chris Crean**

Friends of the Earth's Regional Campaigner for the West Midlands. Chris has been involved with Friends of the Earth (FOE) since the late 80s, initially as a campaigner on air pollution and transport in Birmingham and the West Midlands and now as campaigner, policy officer and spokesperson in the region. Previously he worked for an environmental consultancy specialising in contaminated land and industrial water.

**Paul Hutchens**

Paul formed Eco2Solar in 2007 to address the emerging market for renewable energy technologies, installing on commercial buildings, social housing and homes. Clients include Birmingham City Council, Sanctuary Housing and Barratt Homes. Paul also launched Eco2Energy alongside Eco2Solar which addresses the need for non-domestic buildings to reduce their energy bills by installing energy efficiency technologies. Eco2Solar won the 2012 Centre for Constructing Excellence's SME of the Year Award regionally and nationally whilst Paul has recently won Midlands Entrepreneur of the year 2013 and an IOD Director of the Year award in the environmental category. Paul sits on steering group of METNET and RESCO and is a visiting lecturer in solar technologies for the European Energy Center.

**Andrew Lydon**

Andrew was initially involved in the Labour Party, where he developed his interest in decentralisation and economic development in drafting parts of their Birmingham Council manifesto. Since 1992, when he left Labour, he has been involved in the politics of the regions as a spokesman for the West Midlands New Economics Group and later for Birmingham NHS Concern. Andrew runs the Prosperity and Inflation campaign for LWM.

**George Morran**

Involved also in the Campaign for the English Regions and the West Midlands Constitutional Convention. Formerly Senior Research Associate at Aston and Warwick University Business

Schools, Director of the West Midlands Regional Forum of Local Authorities, the West Midlands Regional Economic Consortium and Assistant Chief Executive of Dudley MBC.

### **Rose Poulter**

Rose Poulter is a Board Member and Associate of Localise West Midlands. Now a freelance consultant with a focus on securing decisions, policy development and organisational change, she was previously Director of the west midlands regional grouping of local authorities (WM Councils; WM Leaders' Board; WM Local Government Association) for fourteen years. She also spent two years on a secondment to regional development agency Advantage WM, and held various economic development posts with Birmingham City Council. Rose also works with Age UK Birmingham's Information and Advice Team on a voluntary basis.

### **Jon Stevens**

(Also LWM associate). Jon has worked in the field of community housing and neighbourhood regeneration for almost 40 years. Initially he trained as an architect and went on to work on community action in various posts over this period including Director of Birmingham Cooperative Housing Services, Community Development Worker for Birmingham Inner Area Study, Organiser of Community Forum in Birmingham, Senior Urban Renewal Officer, and Tenant and Association Support Manager for the Housing Corporation.

### **Hannah Worth**

Hannah was chair of LWM until the October 2012 AGM, and at the same time co-founder and associate of the Chamberlain Forum, a neighbourhood think-and-do tank based in Birmingham. She first came to LWM as a volunteer after completing a Masters in Global Ethics. She moved on to manage Birmingham Community Empowerment Network, facilitating community networks that aim to involve people more effectively in local decision making. Hannah now works for Renaisi in London for the Big Local Lottery programme.

### **Additional Steering Group Members and Associates**

The following have been actively involved in LWM's steering group over the year and attend and contribute to our Board meetings, or act as associates for LWM's consultancy activities – or both.

### **Barbara Panvel**

(Steering group) Barbara produces websites for eight groups, Civilisation 3000 (defence), Vested Interest in Politics, regional SME manufacturers, Fair Deal Farmers Council, New Era Network, India's CHS-Sachetan, Concerned Co-operators and the Thomas Attwood group. She has been involved in LWM since our earliest discussions.

### **Philip Davis**

(Steering group) Phil represents transport consumers nationally and regionally and has

extensive public policy experience, consumer and community engagement. A former trade union officer who specialised in lay advocacy and tribunals, he has more recently been a local authority Leader and a voluntary sector CEO. He is now a non-executive director of a number of public and community bodies and is a councillor in Birmingham.

**Pat Conaty**

(Steering group, associate) Pat Conaty is a Research Associate of the New Economics Foundation. He has produced a number of recent policy reports on local community banking, rural regeneration and community land trusts, micro-credit for small business, and affordable housing finance for low income homeowners with disrepair problems. He was formerly the Development Director of Birmingham Settlement, an inner city voluntary organisation.

**Rosemary Coyne**

(Steering group, associate) Rosemary is a chartered Landscape Architect with extensive all-sector experience in regeneration and sustainable development including the water and waste industries and construction. She coordinates the Sustainable Housing Action Partnership and works on the retrofitting agenda with the Accord Group. She has contributed to production of planning policy on various issues for Birmingham City Council and other local authorities, and led consultation exercises on sustainability and climate change issues with individuals, communities and 'leadership' groups. She has worked across the UK as well as living and working overseas including South America, India and Africa.

**Colin Hines**

(Steering group) Colin is founder and convenor of the Green New Deal group, author of 'Localization- A Global Manifesto' (Earthscan) and of the forthcoming e-book 'Protect and Thrive- the Case for Progressive Protectionism'. Before that he was the Co-ordinator of Greenpeace International's Economics Unit having worked for the organisation for 10 years. He was one of the founders of LWM.

**Conrad Parke**

(Associate) Conrad Parke is a freelance neighbourhood regeneration advisor supporting a number of regeneration initiatives across Birmingham and the Black Country. Current clients include the Black Country Consortium, Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospital NHS Trust, the Big Lottery and University of Birmingham. From 2007 to 2011 he worked for RegenWM – the regeneration centre of excellence for the West Midlands – as Head of Skills Development in Regeneration for the region. Conrad is currently working with LWM on their “Mainstreaming Community Economic Development” initiative.

**Rajeev Prakash**

(Steering group and associate) Rajeev trained as a town planner and has a background in programme and project management – gained through leading multi-agency partnerships and of successfully delivering major and holistic regeneration initiatives. Rajeev has

experience of strategic finance and budget management at the most senior level and he has particular expertise in efficiency and effectiveness reviews, strategy planning and implementation, evaluation and change management.

### **Tim Render**

(Associate) Tim has significant experience in managing major services and resources as Strategic Finance Director at Nottingham CC and previously as Head of Corporate Finance at Birmingham CC. He has wide ranging experience of successfully managing and developing strategies. He is now active as a non-executive director of a number of public / private partnership companies, an independent member of a police authority, trustee of several advice and housing charities, governor of a secondary school and academy and chair of a FE college board.

### **Chris Williams**

(Associate) Chris has a campaigns and tactical background, having worked for Birmingham Friends of the Earth and for strategic and organisational roles in local, regional and national levels of the Green Party. He is a Councillor on Solihull Council. Chris has particular expertise in social housing and local government.

If you are interested in getting involved with the work of LWM, as part of the Board, an associate, or as an active member, please contact [Karen Leach](#) to discuss this further. We are keen to involve a much greater diversity in background, age, gender, culture and experience in the work of LWM, not least to benefit from the insights that this diversity brings. [More information on our website.](#)

### **Staff and Volunteers**

Karen Leach is LWM's coordinator, having been in this role since October 2002. She reports to the Board on its strategy, activities and systems as well as undertaking projects. She previously created the role of Campaigns Support Worker with Birmingham Friends of the Earth, and from this developed interests in planning, trade and local food. She is also on Birmingham FOE's Management Committee, responsible for the running of community environmental building The Warehouse in Digbeth - where LWM rents office space.

We are grateful for the voluntary help of Andrew Jolly of CoSec Ltd for once again kindly administering our payroll during the year, as well as for the voluntary time of all LWM members and board members.

## **5. Funding report**

During this financial year LWM was grateful to receive funding – whether charitable or contract - from:

- Barrow Cadbury Trust
- Coventry City Council
- Birmingham City Council
- Birmingham City University
- Calderdale Council
- Northfield Ecocentre.

The full financial accounts for the year can be found in Part 2 of this Annual Report.