



Localise West Midlands

Newsletter: June 2008

Welcome to the June 2008 newsletter of Localise West Midlands!

A host of factors are now demonstrating – painfully - the blindness of the ‘free trade’ economic model to the realities of resource limits: climate change, crop failure, unfair subsidies, food shortages; fuel prices, economic downturn. Localise WM does not act in isolation from this global picture and our work and communications need to take into account the way international trade policy responds to these issues.

From the debates around this week’s UN food conference, there are several potential directions. A knee-jerk reaction to the problems manifests itself as a dash for biofuels, nuclear power and GM technology, which in different ways increase both our footprint and corporate power while allowing us not to face up to either for a little longer.

A ‘fair free trade’ model would advocate abolishing agricultural subsidies in developed countries; but although fairer than the status quo, this could make developing country economies even more dependent on food exports. Given the ever-rising costs of fuel, the realities of climate change and the temptation to export rather than stockpile a country’s produce, this could trap such countries into worsening the crisis.

Alternatively as the economic downturn takes hold our governments could succumb to a dangerous national protectionism – all the worst connotations of ‘localisation’ – and after decades of encouraging other countries to supply us with cheap goods and produce, turn round and prevent their access to our markets. But perhaps our power has diminished over those who supply us with cheap goods and food, and they will simply switch their supplies to meet their own needs, cutting us off and forcing us to learn to do our own work again.

Instead, of course, we could start to build a world trade governance that takes a more aware and equitable approach to all resources and to aid/debt conditions, fostering a reduced *dependence* of developing countries on export markets and a global shift towards more sustainable, community-scale supply chains. Redistribution, decreased footprint and protected local livelihoods could all be furthered by the use of consumer, rather than export, subsidies in developing countries, stimulating local demand for local production.

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Localise WM has always had global objectives (such as equity) to its regional promotion of localisation, but they are more than ever in need of emphasis. We need to listen to the many localisation-focused groups in developing countries to ensure these global objectives are served by everything we do here. Any local action – whether a regional policy or an individual purchasing choice - needs to be matched, somehow, by action on wider trade policy. We hope to address some of this in the recommendations of our Extending Localisation project.

In this context, please read on for some brief accounts of our localisation activities in the West Midlands for global sustainability.

Karen Leach

Digbeth Community Land Trust

In our last newsletter we talked about our plans for a Community Land Trust on the land neighbouring The Warehouse in Digbeth: a small, cooperatively owned sustainable development comprising affordable housing, workspace and garden. Now, an indicative design has been drafted for the site and first steps have been *taken* to seek support within Birmingham City Council to sell us the land at a price that reflects the public benefits the scheme will bring.

To find out what local interest there is in being part of this development, whether business or residential, we have developed promotional material for display at the Birmingham Climate Change Festival on the 31st of May and the 5th of June, which has given us the beginnings of a list of interested persons to involve in more detailed plans. We will solicit more interest amongst the city's various green networks.

In a Community Land Trust, the asset (the



land) is owned by a charitable trust and 'locked' for charitable (social and environmental) benefit, but the Trust will involve a co-operative model including residential/business tenants and the involved organisations in its membership. Hopefully the interested group will start acting as a steering group as the Trust is being set up and the development planned.

Proposals for funding for a development officer will be put forward this summer to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The development worker would be responsible for the set-up of the CLT and for coordinating the

development work for the scheme.

The project has been approved as one of 11 CLT 'pioneers' in a pilot scheme being run by Community Finance Solutions and the Housing Corporation, which gives us access to advice and support from specialists on community land trust models.

The partners for this project are Localise West Midlands, Accord Housing Association, Birmingham Friends of the Earth, and Birmingham Cooperative Housing Services. For more information, please visit the *LWM website* or contact Jon Morris at 0121 706 4019 or jon.214morris@btinternet.com.

Be Birmingham Sustainable Procurement Compact

As part of this last year's work on sustainable procurement and following one of the recommendations we made to Be Birmingham (Birmingham's Strategic Partnership) in 2006, LWM has developed for Be Birmingham a Sustainable Procurement Compact, to which all its partners have signed up. The compact was successfully launched on 12th March 2008 by the chair of Be Birmingham, Cllr Paul Tilsley.

Birmingham's is the first local strategic partnership in the UK to agree a joint approach to sustainable procurement. The compact is essentially about using procurement to maximise the economic, social and environmental benefits to the communities of Birmingham and taking a responsible approach to procurement's wider impacts. It commits the partners to relevant staff training, development of policies for individual organisations, and identification of priorities for sustainable procurement.

It includes some commitment to the concept of 'whole life costing' (considering the costs of operating and disposal of a purchase), using procurement to achieve wider organisational objectives, and other such considerations that bring direct economic benefits in the medium term but are often neglected in Government interpretations of 'efficiency' in procurement.

Of course, a 'paper commitment' such as the compact is only truly valuable if delivery

follows, but Be Birmingham seems keen to progress this too and there is discussion of a sustainable procurement support post, taking this aspect of Be Birmingham's work into the mainstream rather than being conducted by 'arms' length' consultants such as ourselves. Local authorities taking a similar approach have found that the post pays for itself in savings.

There has also been local and national interest in having the principles of the compact available as a 'declaration' for sign-up by other local strategic partnerships across the region and across the country. If this idea develops we will report on this in our next newsletter.

For more information and a digital copy of the Compact, please visit www.bebirmingham.org.uk.

Fair Deal for UK Farmers

Two Fair Deal awards have been presented, and another two are being prepared for this summer. Supermarket chain Waitrose were the first of four organisations to be given an Award, - created by the Attwood Group to raise awareness of both 'fair deals' and 'unfair deals' that farmers in UK experience in the market place today.

The Fair Deal Awards are nominated by producers and given to retailers that they feel offer them a 'fair price'. Localise West Midlands coordinates the Award presentations and surrounding publicity.

The Award was presented by dairy farmer Andrew Hemmings on 13 December 2007. Andrew has been supplying milk through Dairy Crest to Waitrose for four years and while other supermarkets were offering 17p a litre, Waitrose was offering him 22p per litre. They were willing to pay extra for quality, animal welfare and environmental standards offering him the opportunity to properly care for his stock and landscape.

A second award was presented by Fordhall Farm to the general public, the people who buy directly from their farm shop or buy their produce at farmers markets. "Without them we could not survive against the power of the big retailers and corporations that increasingly dominate the global food

market". Charlotte Hollins, Tenant Farmer at Fordhall Farm explains: "If we were selling to supermarkets we would not be here today, and that is the same story for almost every other small family farm."



Fordhall farm produce

Localise West Midlands is supporting the initiative by researching and organising the publication of press releases to raise awareness of the Fair Deal Awards and to help raise awareness of the wider issues faced by farmers in the UK today. The project has been taken over from LWM associate Amy Longrigg, currently on maternity leave, by new recruit Renee van Baar, who will work on the two remaining awards and update the Fair Deal website.

LWM is also looking into the possibilities of extending its role to that of a 'signposting' organisation for domestic producer focused fair trade initiatives, investigating whether a more collaborative approach between these initiatives might be more effective.

If you would like to find out more about the wider campaign visit: www.localisewestmidlands.org.uk/fairdealawards.

Wholesaler mapping

Last year, as part of the regional Farming and Food Team's efforts towards sustainable food supply chains, LWM interviewed a number of fruit and vegetable wholesalers in the Birmingham conurbation and Shropshire to identify businesses that are willing and able to source local food for the region's public procurement. This year, the survey was extended to include Herefordshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and

Worcestershire. In addition to the 54 interested wholesalers identified last year, we identified 22 more who were willing and able to source local food for public sector contracts.

The database of wholesalers has been presented to the Government Office for the West Midlands who will circulate it to local authorities to use to identify potential suppliers. It was a sister piece of work to a database of public sector contracts available for suppliers to use, so the dots have effectively been joined and a real shift in local food will hopefully result.

Birmingham Wholesale Markets

Based on the result of this wholesaler mapping, we have just put forward to the Farming and Food Team a proposal for a scoping study investigating the potential to connect more local producers with the wholesale markets, so that the markets can become a hub for local food to supply the local public sector and beyond.



This is timely in the light of both heavily increased fuel prices and the imminent moving of the wholesale markets to a new location, which may lead to needs and opportunities that a new emphasis on local sourcing could serve.

Regional Prosperity and Inflation Agenda

A spectre is haunting the global economy, the spectre of Localisation. The powers of Globalisation have not entered into any alliance to exorcise this spectre, because

they have been mesmerised by the slow motion drama that they call the 'credit crunch'.

That pastiche of the opening of the original Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels was the opening to an agenda page article we had in the Birmingham Post on May 7. It went on to say how in the last few months, while the 'global leaders' have been fretting over their banks, the potentates of Asia have moved to keep home-grown food in their own countries in order to keep the price of food down for their own angry people. Maybe half of the world's population is currently eating on this basis.

Inflation is now the world's most fearsome economic issue, and is the way in which the crisis of climate change, peak oil and global resource limits is already erupting into the world economy. But the main way in which inflation is being tackled by the emerging economies and the emerging democracies is by blocking the export of food from their countries.

For the past 2 years we have been anticipating some such global price shift and have been looking to improve the way inflation is registered and addressed here in the UK. Our webpage on our Regional Prosperity and Inflation Framework (www.localisewestmidlands.org.uk/RPI.htm) sets out a basic proposal that, borrowing headings and methodologies from other countries, would allow us to address inflation more effectively than the UK has done for decades.

We have been talking to the Lib-Dems and the Conservatives about our proposals but we have been having difficulties getting through to the Labour government.

Our last newsletter highlighted how we were examining proposals to reform the Bank of England as part of this project. This work continues but has recently taken a back seat to this more active and immediate debate on the 'global price shift'

Andrew Lydon

If you wish to write to your MP asking them to sign an Early Day Motion (effectively a House of Commons petition) in support of better

inflation measures, a link for more information can be found at the bottom of the webpage mentioned above

Online and face-to-face interviews were carried out in March and the main recommendations from the work were:

Sustainable Constituencies

Former Eastside sustainability advisor Rosemary Coyne, briefly on our associates list before her move to Advantage West Midlands at Easter, carried out a small piece of work for Be Birmingham on sustainability in Birmingham 'Constituencies' (devolved council services across the city).

This involved a survey of staff attitudes in three pilot Constituencies (Ladywood, Edgbaston and Hall Green) to assess behaviours, attitudes and awareness towards sustainability issues. This was used to define a baseline; and to inform the content of a guidance document for constituency staff which raises awareness and provides advice on sustainability throughout constituency activities.

- Constituency Climate Change Champions to be supported (time in their workplans and training) to be more active on sustainability issues.
- Greater attention to simple quick-wins such as double sided/reused paper printing, turning off lights and electrical equipment etc.
- Increase constituency staff awareness of sustainable procurement via the compact commitments.

A leaflet was also created for constituency staff outlining the importance of sustainability and some pointers to further advice. Hopefully the recommendations will filter into Be Birmingham workplanning in the next few months.

Forthcoming events

SHOES - Sandwell Health's Other Economic Summit
Monday 7th & Tuesday 8th July 2008
9.30am - 4.00pm
at "The pUBLIC", West Bromwich

Parallel to the G8 World Leaders' summit in Tokyo, Sandwell Health are running SHOES, "Sandwell Health's Other Economic Summit", discussing how local issues can impact on world health and how global issues affect us. For the first time the conference is open to delegates from outside Sandwell. Contact shoes@sandwell-pct.nhs.uk for further information.

Sustainable Communities and Co-operative Action
Thursday 10th July 08
Elephant and Castle Conference Centre, Newtown, Powys

A conference on ideas for the implementation of the Sustainable communities act and practical action, presenting case studies of social and local enterprises in the fields of food, energy, finance and much more. Sponsored by ESRC and the Spirit Fund to enable costs to be kept low. For more information and bookings go to www.r-s-n.org.uk/conference_2008.

Changing Lifestyles
3rd-5th November 2008
Birmingham Town Hall

Changing Lifestyles is an event demonstrating some 'joined up thinking' on environmental issues, by showcasing companies and projects which are supporting the development of a sustainable regional economy. We focus on the 4 "Fs" of Food; Fashion; Fuel; Finance. Contact dmc@globallylocal.net of Globally Local for more information and bookings.

Quotes from the UN Food Summit

“It seems to me to be important to create an international group on reliability of food supply to ensure all the international institutions, all the states, all the companies, all the NGOs are going in the same direction and this group's mission would be to define a world strategy for a reliable food supply.” - *French President Nicolas Sarkozy*

“Given the urgent importance of food products and their necessity to protect human life, we put forward a number of proposals... Diverting an appropriate proportion of states' military spending to improving the production of food and subsidizing food earmarked for the poor without being obsessed with lethal weapons. It is possible to ensure security without these weapons. However, life is not possible without food.” - *Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad*

“We must admit the fact that we have reached the present situation because of decades of mistaken understanding of global development, because of a truly brazen imposition of unacceptable models on other communities and ways of life, because of unfair rules of international trade and the hypocrisy of international financial institutions, because of favouring big business at the expense of ordinary people.” - *Croatian President Stjepan Mesic*

“Genuine food security should be global, and achieved through cooperation.” - *Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva*



About LWM

Localise West Midlands is a not-for-profit thinktank, campaign group and consultancy promoting the greater use of localisation to benefit society, economic wellbeing and environmental justice. By localisation we mean local trade, decision-making and money flow.

We undertake research and projects to change policy and practice in line with this approach, and raise awareness of the benefits amongst decision makers and the general public. Our work fits mainly into the themes of finance, regeneration, local food, energy, retail and housing.

LWM was set up in 2002 by a group of individuals who were keen to propose solutions, as a positive response to what is currently going wrong in economics.

Our West Midlands focus is intended to make use the region's geographical balance of urban and rural; and also to encourage democratic accountability and a people-centred approach amongst regional bodies. However we also look beyond the region, seeking to catalyse ideas across the UK and to make links with organisations all over the world working on a similar agenda.

There are opportunities to get involved in LWM as a volunteer, an associate, a Board member or as part of the steering group. For more information see our website as below.

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