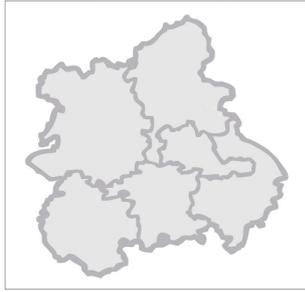


Localise



West Midlands

LWM Newsletter: Spring 2010

Local Economic Solutions for Sustainability

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Welcome to the Localise West Midlands newsletter Spring 2010!

Apologies for missing a newsletter in winter 2010, but we hope any curiosities about what we were up to you were satisfied by our website – soon to be revamped thanks to the government's Future Jobs Fund.

LWM have been making waves over the last few months with our local and regional Green New Deal agenda - including working with Birmingham City Council on a scheme described by one campaigning contact as 'Kirklees¹ with bells on'.

Meanwhile, in terms of the wider agenda, the general election is fast approaching with little to persuade us that any of the major parties will challenge economic vested interests, consumption or advocate meaningful local control. All show a lack of willingness to challenge tabloid assumptions on the need for massive public spending cuts, and a curiously incomplete commitment to 'the local'.

Whilst Labour have introduced 'localism' initiatives such as local involvement in delivering public services and Conservatives demonstrate localism in their 'open source planning' green paper, the realm of subjects seen by all except the Green Party as suitable for public engagement seems, as ever, to stop short of economic development.

Localise West Midlands is interested in developing thinking around the connections and the differences between 'localism' and 'localisation'. In the mainstream approach, economic power quietly continues its centralist trajectory behind a facade of community involvement in privatised public services.

Solutions we need to consider include re-mutualisation, exposing the influence of vested interests and a commitment to intelligent public spending.

Green New Deal Birmingham

LWM's involvement in developing and delivering a £40million renewables-retrofitting project that aims to create local jobs, training and manufacturing opportunities across Birmingham

This has probably been the most exciting project and biggest achievement for Localise WM since we began in 2002. Following on from the national Green New Deal report initiated by Colin Hines, LWM coordinated promotion and activities on regional implementation of Green New Deal ideas: namely, tackling the recession, climate change and energy prices together by using public money and new financing mechanisms to deliver energy efficiency and renewables schemes, such as retrofitting housing stock and businesses.



LWM was then commissioned, with local energy consultancy Encraft, to develop a business plan for a groundbreaking Be Birmingham GND initiative: a £40 million retrofit project starting as a pilot across four areas of Birmingham. This innovative project will offer whole house energy efficiency retrofits and solar photovoltaic installations at economic costs to private householders across the city, and is designed specifically to create jobs and business opportunities for local firms. The scheme is the first major project in the UK to use the 'feed in tariff' (a payment to householders/private operators for renewables contributions to the grid) as a mechanism to scale up installations, to enable domestic renewables across the social spectrum, and hopefully to become self-funding right across the city.

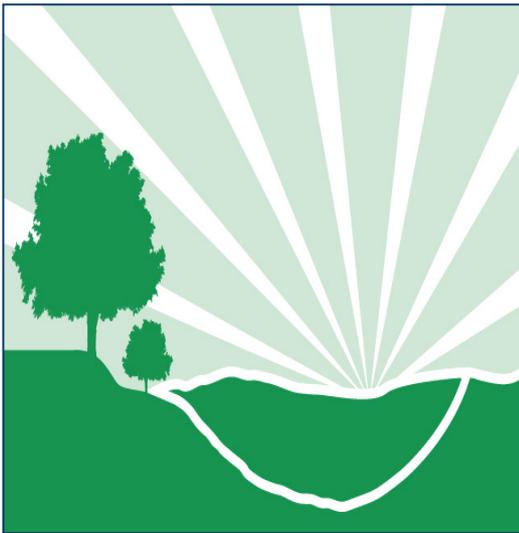


True to its roots in Localise WM and our founder Colin Hines' thinking, the Birmingham Green New Deal emphasises the development of local supply chains - fitting, supplying and manufacturing - particularly through small local businesses and social enterprises with training schemes. So there will be jobs created in local enterprise that meets local needs - good for redistribution and local economic empowerment as well as fuel poverty, energy security and low carbon economic development - a contrast to recent news such as the corporate takeover of Cadburys and to reliance on volatile inward investment.

Of course the proof of the pilot is in the delivery, and scaling up could be undermined if unimaginative central government attitudes to the use of public money as an investment for the future – even in the face of private investors queuing up to fund initiatives like this – lead to cuts in seed funding for initiatives like this or lack of political commitment to the feed-in tariff. Maintaining pressure on the political parties to acknowledge the importance of clever, responsible public spending and initiatives to harness private investment for public benefit is crucial.

GND regional...

As well as our work in Birmingham, LWM has initiated plenty of other GND activity regionally. With our input, Sustainability West Midlands held a mini-summit for economic development officers looking at opportunities to tackle worklessness and the need for CO2 cuts together. Colin Hines gave an excellent and passionate presentation, which, from the feedback, proved more exciting than many such seminars and generated a lot of interest and enthusiasm. A meeting on financing for localised energy projects was held including presentations from fund managers and energy funding specialists, and discussion with senior finance staff from local authority and housing organisations to look into the viability of these funding mechanisms. A DVD of the presentations was also produced that can be used in other areas of the UK.



We also helped instigate a regional focus group on GND under the West Midlands Economic Inclusion Panel, to discuss how climate change and the recession could be tackled together in the region. The group included representatives from housing association, local authority, regional development agency and private sector organisations. This group recommended creation of a post with the duty to identify and communicate good practice in the green economy, identify and distribute information on funding and other initiatives, and develop coordination of activity in relation to reducing worklessness. The region's low carbon task force is also addressing GND concepts with Sustainability West Midlands acting as champion on this level.

Extending Localisation

The ongoing Extending Localisation research project is revealing the true potential obtainable in relocating supply chains...

The Extending Localisation Research Project is now in rapid development, as the Future Jobs Fund has permitted the establishment of a full time Research Officer position. The project has advanced from a first stage report, published December 2008, and the trends, good practice, opportunities and recommendations identified by this initial study are being further scrutinised and developed into chapters.

The first draft of the food chapter is now almost complete. As well as identifying overarching national and regional strategies, detailed research has been conducted surrounding public food procurement, social and private enterprise, local support agencies and grassroots initiatives. This research has revealed a wealth of diverse policies and initiatives, culminating in a set of recommendations designed to roll out the benefits relocalisation across the region.

One sterling example of the overarching benefits procured from local food is the **24Carrots farmers market**, established by the residents of the Birmingham Jewellery Quarter in July 2009. The purpose of the farmers market is not only to promote local food but also community

cohesion by offering volunteering opportunities and providing an outlet for produce grown by local allotment owners and school growing projects. The eventual goal is for the market to become a fully, self-funding social enterprise, with all surpluses being re-invested back into the development of the market and the improvement of the area for the benefit of the community.



The market now boasts a directory of 41 stallholders and has a strong presence on facebook, twitter and foursquare.

Their success is proof that farmers markets can act as an important local tool in promoting sustainability and cohesion, rather than being the folly of the affluent middle classes as perceived by many. Research suggests that this community led operation is replicable by other such markets in their set up and running.

The manufacturing chapter of the project is now also well under way, again revealing that while the majority of manufacturing is based within global markets and supply chains, there is huge potential to maximise the use of local resources to meet local needs and to support sustainable enterprise globally by the shape of our regional economic development.

In past issues of this newsletter we have featured the **National Industrial**

Symbiosis Programme¹ (NISP), which identifies and uses synergies between traditionally separate industries to improve resource efficiency and minimise waste across all types of industrial resources. This concept is entering the mainstream now with commitments to 'sustainable consumption and production' for the new regional structures; but an approach that goes further to strengthen diversity and resilience in economic development is the **Distributed Economies² (DE)** model - developed by the International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics in Sweden – which networks SMEs to make use of local assets, skills and markets to create a locally relevant economy. Economies of scale are achieved through networking rather than through multinational supply chains and ownership. This approach is one of several that merit greater attention in the region.

We hope within the next few months to have updated Extending Localisation progress on our website, making it available to the wider public.

Supermarkets and Planning

As a member of **Planners Network UK**, LWM organised an event for its members and some campaigning representatives to discuss retail/supermarket planning. The objectives of the meeting were to share information on the current state of supermarket planning and campaigning, what can be done to protect local retail diversity, and what help communities and campaign groups need; and to identify how PNUK members can help: advise, influence teaching programmes, help with independent impact assessment, research, policy work.

¹ <http://www.nisp.org.uk/>

² <http://www.delabs.org/>

The meeting produced a list of potential research topics for PhDs and other academic use, including retail and job impacts of supermarkets which are rarely tracked after a store opens; definitions of competition; and analysis of supply chain elements to support economic diversity. PNUK's academic members have circulated these to students and colleagues whilst participants from a campaigning background have been developing materials to help communities use local development frameworks and the new retail planning policies to influence better local retail planning.

LWM is keen to develop activities on the planning agenda, particularly in the light of recent and future changes to the planning system and the sad demise last year of the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation which delivered 'Planning For

Real' for decades, helping people to understand and be involved in decisions in their communities. Our involvement in



FOE's exemplary "Power Up" training event has reinforced our understanding of planning's role in community power and social and environmental justice. We will be identifying our own role in pursuing a better planning system during 2010.

Questioning inflation

As we approach the General Elections the main political parties are still invoking the great recession of the 1930s as the point of obvious comparison for the current economic downturn. Recently Labour commentators have reminded us of 1937, when they say the Roosevelt Administration withdrew stimulus spending too quickly. The Tories are supposedly risking the same mistake in 2010.

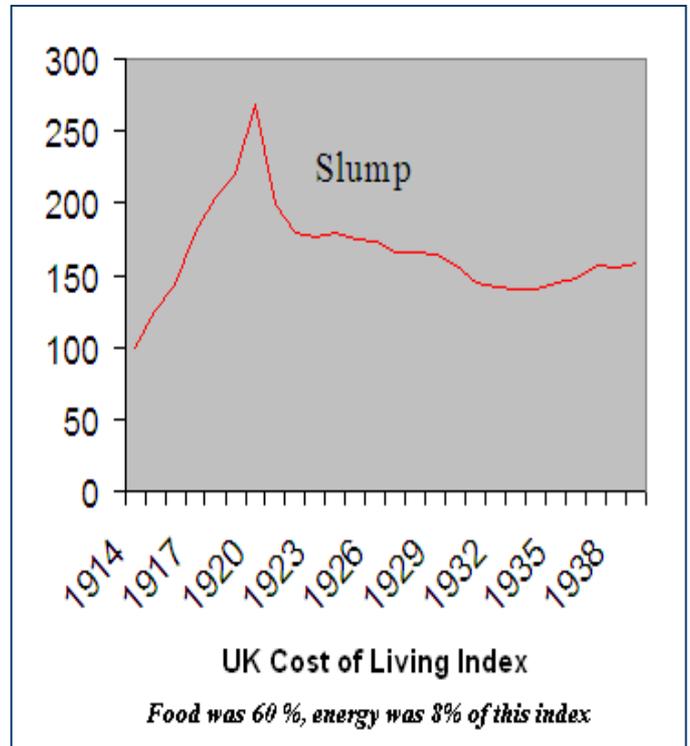
However this crisis is different to the 1930s in decisive respects. The most important is that in the 1930s we had deflation. Food and energy prices had been falling for most of the inter-war period. That had been the cause of the employers seeking to cut miners' wages at the time of the General Strike in 1926. But today food and energy prices have been edging upwards except at the most critical months of the banking crisis. Although speculation has been part of it, the main reason is that global population growth has since put huge pressure on global resources.

There is an underlying inflationary push even during the current economic downturn right across the world. As yet that push is not currently as serious as it was two years ago. But the debt crisis and its possible impact on the currencies of the countries that cannot feed themselves (like us) do have the potential to become very serious indeed. But in any event carefully gauged attempts to navigate us out of the current mess will require a careful and sustained management of inflation.



LWM has continued work on inflation during the last year. We have long argued that the UK inflation indices are probably the poorest in the G7. We have called on the UK Statistics Authority to remodel our inflation indices so that we can see how inflation is being felt in the regions and for different parts of the social spectrum. The Authority is supposed to be undertaking an initial review of inflation statistics between now and the autumn.

In 2009 we began circulating a monthly alternative inflation report that we sent to some of the interests, which we hope will work with us later in lobbying the Statistics Authority. In working on these reports we have begun to look at what an inflation index for the West Midlands would look like. We have also noted how inflation indices in other G7 countries, like the US and Germany, are showing up and could facilitate a path to fitting higher food and energy costs into household budgets while still recognisably maintaining the current standard of living. One of the most important reasons for this is that they give housing a significant weight in the inflation basket. The containment of housing inflation that this usually prompts has resulted in some room for manoeuvre that we do not have here in the UK where we almost delight in house price inflation.



In 2010, as the Statistics Authority begin their review of the inflation statistics we plan to move our campaign up through the gears.

Andrew Lydon



Digbeth Community Land Trust

All has been quiet for a few months on the Digbeth Community Land Trust for which we are working in partnership with Accord Housing, Birmingham FOE and others. In the autumn we produced a prospectus for the development detailed not only the physical proposals and design elements, but the legal and financial structures and business plan.

This follows Accord's development of a legal and financial model that allows for a mutual home ownership society as another 'tier' to the community land trust itself to ensure more of a co-ownership approach with asset locks to prevent demutualisation. On the back of this progress meetings are due shortly with the Homes & Communities Agency and Council representatives to discuss access to the land.

New faces at LWM...

Public thanks to **Audrey Miller**, who has left LWM's steering group due to other pressures on her time, and to **Michael Whithouse**, who remains on the steering group but has ended his stint as our treasurer as his understandably more exciting involvements in care farming and community projects are taking over his free time. Happily we have no fewer than four new people joining our steering group in various roles:

Jackie Milton, another certified accountant, is taking over Michael's role as our Treasurer. Jackie is also treasurer for Fordhall Farm and so has a good understanding and enthusiasm for sustainable food and farming to contribute to LWM as well as the 'nuts and bolts' of keeping an eye on our finances.

Sarah Longlands, who is director of policy at the Centre for Local Economic Strategies, is joining our steering group; her experience at CLES will be invaluable to us as will her background in economic development.

Jon Stevens, formerly of Birmingham Co-operative Housing Services, brings a hefty history of involvement in co-operatives and community organisation, and has initially taken on responsibility for our consultancy development as a way of getting to know us.

Max Krafchik is a partner in a small consultancy firm with a background in public sector children and young people's services, social policy and local employment projects in the West Midlands. He was keen to contribute something on a voluntary basis in the region and has taken on a board/coordinator liaison role for LWM

Meanwhile, thanks to the Future Jobs Fund, even LWM's 'staff body' (previously consisting of Karen!) has increased by two – a communications officer and an Extending Localisation research officer, both seconded to us by our landlord, Birmingham Friends of the Earth. They will both be with us for a maximum of six months. It's great to have new colleagues in the LWM office:

Feryal Iqbal has been recruited to work on our communications, with a remit to improve our website and other design – including future versions of this newsletter.

Anna Watson is our Research Officer and has been ploughing through the amassed Extending Localisation research to date, filling in gaps and writing up. Anna was formerly a graduate apprentice with Groundwork, conducting a voluntary placement at Dudley Council working with sustainability officers.

LWM's consultancy offer

Over the years we've had the opportunity to be involved in some brilliant projects through our consultancy – the Green New Deal, Birmingham's sustainable procurement compact and evaluating Friends of the Earth's Power Up event being obvious examples – but we felt it was time to take a closer look at what we can and could deliver to maximise the opportunities for strong local supply chains, money flow and sense of place in the region in a way that also meets public and other sector needs through a clearer consultancy offer. To do this we're assessing areas of common ground between the localisation and local government agendas, associate skills audit and recruitment, organisational priorities and promotional materials.

Putting a cap on CAP

LWM recently signed up to an exciting new European food sovereignty initiative: **‘European Food Declaration: towards a healthy, sustainable, fair and mutually supportive Common Agriculture and Food Policy’.**

The declaration outlines the beliefs of many organisations and individuals that are working towards a fairer, more inclusive and sustainable food system

In recent years a wide range of renewed activities, such as increasing local food production, local markets, local procurement, seed swaps and so on has been emerging and growing across Europe. However, grassroots activities and local movements will not be enough to create a sustainable new European farming framework, with the current Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) dominating agricultural activity.

The European Food Declaration aims to build a broad coalition of groups at the European level to challenge the current CAP and send a strong message to decision makers who are now initiating the political process towards CAP 2013. Their vision is to keep the global ‘competitiveness’ of Europe’s food industry as the chief objective of Europe’s CAP. This declaration provides a strong message that change is needed.

Presently The European Food Declaration aims to collect as many signatures within our different networks as possible.

Sign up here and partake in the food revolution!

<http://www.europeanfooddeclaration.org/who-are-we>

Guest item:

Think Local Walsall

A trend for local authority based ‘think local’ projects such as seen in Lichfield and Sandwell continues with Think Walsall...

Think Walsall is a commitment made by Walsall Council to



influence and maximise the benefits of regeneration and procurement for the people and communities of Walsall in terms of:

- Using local labour wherever possible
- Using local supply chains wherever possible
- Training and developing the local workforce

The Think Walsall team was established in November 2009 and since then have been working in a co-ordinated partnership approach on the three priorities of: economic development, protecting the environment and supporting social cohesion.

The people and communities of Walsall are assured they will receive the maximum economic, social and environmental benefits from all investment coming into the borough. Support will be offered to help deliver these priorities and add value to businesses. Commitment to these priorities is demonstrated through a Think Walsall Charter.

Over the coming weeks Think Walsall will be building communications with local businesses and partners to identify opportunities.

For more information call 01922 653246 or email: ThinkWalsall@walsall.gov.uk

Advice on Food Co-ops

Interested in setting up a food co-op or buying group as a way to address access to food; food security; food miles; health and well being; community; and fair shares for farmers and growers? Food Co-ops can help. Sustain - the Alliance for Better Food and Farming, have appointed a dedicated adviser to support the development of consumer food co-ops in the West Midlands as part of the Making Local Food Work Programme. Food Co-ops offer free advice to existing co-ops or help to establish new ones. If you want to set up a food co-op or know of any in your area, then please get in touch with Pete Norton on 07974 447905 or email pete@sustainweb.org.

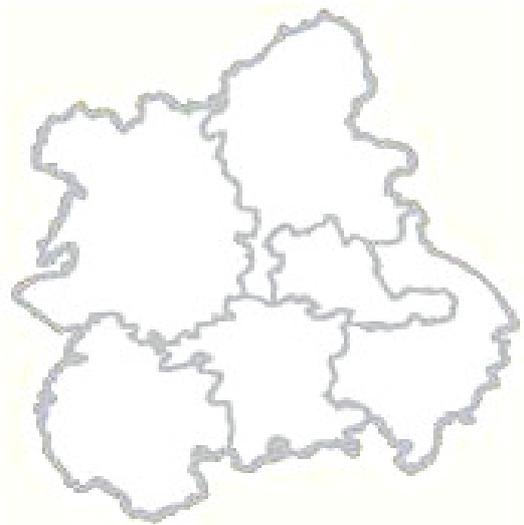
Tackling Vested Interests in Politics

An excellent new Political Cleanup campaign website has been launched following UK government failure to act on the recommendations of the Public Affairs Select Committee and pass legislation to curb corporate lobbying. Organisers say "Unless this underhand activity is more widely recognised and condemned, beneficial work will struggle for recognition in the political world and this bodes ill for the future". (Jan 2010)

<http://political-cleanup.org/>

Light relief..?

A bus, half full of bishops and half full of economists, is travelling along a windy road in some very high mountains. Suddenly the driver misjudges, disaster strikes and the bus plunges off the road, and starts its long, thundering descent over the edge of the cliff. The bishops are terrified. They are by turns panicking and praying desperately. Then they notice that the economists are sitting calmly in their seats. "Why on earth are you so calm? We're plunging to certain death at the bottom of this cliff!" the bishops say to the economists. "Well, it's obvious" say the economists, "there's such a clear need for parachutes right now that surely the market will provide them". (anon)



Would you like to join LWM as a supporter or member?

LWM is considering our core offer and structure. We'd be interested in views from those who regularly read our newsletter and are familiar with our activities: would you or your organisation be happy join LWM as a 'supporter' paying a small regular fee? What publications or resources would you like from us in return for this? If we develop a wider LWM membership structure with the ability to vote on board membership and other issues at annual general meetings, would you be interested in this? Let us know what appeals to you.

About LWM...

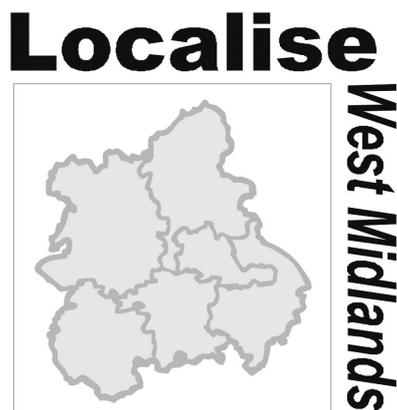
Localise West Midlands is a not-for-profit think-tank, campaign group and consultancy, which promotes localisation for social, environmental and economic benefit.

We aim to promote 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.



**Localise West Midlands
The Warehouse
54-57 Allison Street
Digbeth
Birmingham
B5 5TH**

**Tel: 0121 685 1155
Fax: 0121 643 3122
Email: info@localisewestmidlands.org.uk**

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