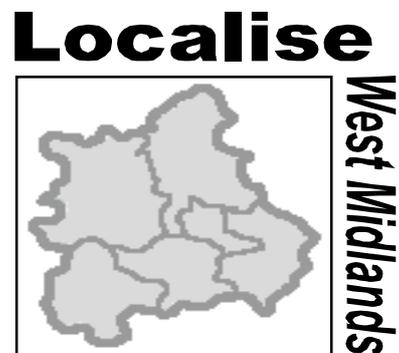


Localise West Midlands

Annual Report Part I

April 2009 - March 2010



Local economic solutions for sustainability

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Introduction

This report covers the strategy, activities and finances of Localise West Midlands over our last financial year, April 2009 to March 2010. LWM is a regional not-for-profit think-tank, campaign group and consultancy which aims to promote the social, environmental and economic benefits of local trade, money flows and decision making. We work by researching, supporting and encouraging examples demonstrating the benefits of local sourcing and local money flows and the replication of effective localisation 'pilots' so that they can become mainstream.

Mission Statement

Localise West Midlands is a not-for-profit organisation which exists to promote the environmental, social and economic benefits of:

- Local trading, using local businesses, materials and supply chains
- Linking local needs to local resources
- Development of community and local capacity
- Decentralisation of appropriate democratic and economic power
- Provision of services tailored to meet local needs.

This localisation approach makes economic development and government systems more sensitive to local autonomy, culture, well-being and the responsible use of finite resources, and is growing in popularity with people and organisations all over the world.

Localisation helps build social capital, targets regeneration to meet local needs, maximises local job creation, and reduces transport and CO2 emissions.

To promote this approach across the region LWM will:

- Bring people together with a common interest in localisation
- Provide and publicise information, ideas and examples of good practice
- Facilitate or undertake demonstration projects
- Provide consultancy and other support to groups who are developing localist approaches
- Create supportive networks for localist action
- Challenge the barriers to localisation
- Link with similar projects outside the region and worldwide.

Background

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 of the region's geographical balance of urban and rural; and also to encourage democratic accountability and a people-centred approach amongst regional (or other subnational) bodies.

We also look beyond the region, seeking to catalyse ideas across the UK and make links with organisations all over the world working on a similar agenda.

Activities – April 2009 to March 2010

I. Projects and consultancy work

Extending Localisation

With much support from Future Jobs Fund employee Anna Watson, LWM have made progress Extending Localisation this year and particularly on the food, retail and manufacturing sections of this. This has amassed a good selection of material on West Midlands trends, policy context and localisation good practice. Since the year end we have been working on the conclusions and presentation of this material and begun work on other sections, so this is progressing well with some chapters now published on our website, including retail and a special section of the finance chapter on localisation in the ownership and funding of football – which was media released in the spring.

Green New Deal – Birmingham and the West Midlands

Birmingham Energy Savers

As with the previous year, 2009-10 has been another crucial year for making the case for economic recovery to be shaped around our future energy security and other social needs, with the aim of focusing on long-term rather than short-term cost savings.

Having initiated the ideas of progressing a “Green New Deal” approach in the West Midlands over the previous year, LWM worked with energy specialist consultancy Encraft during this year to produce a business plan for a comprehensive retrofitting programme for Birmingham City Council using the Feed In Tariff mechanism that was then about to be announced. The proposals were at this point the first to be using the Feed In tariff and one objective was to capture the benefits of this income to extend the scheme to as many households as possible, and particularly less wealthy owner-occupied and private rented sectors where such schemes are trickier, in order to ensure the FIT could be used in a more redistributive way. Another strength was that the plans aimed to only offer solar or other renewable technology to householders who were prepared to have the full raft of energy efficiency measures as well, so that the energy-efficiency of the offer was maximised. meanwhile the bulk-buying capacity of the council was an important cost-saving factor and the supply chains used for scoping, fitting and manufacturing the retrofitting elements were aimed to strengthen the smaller and social enterprises in the city to maximise the local multiplier effect and local job creation. The scheme, which has the potential to become self-financing, has the council’s full commitment in such straitened times and pilot stages are being implemented now under the new name of Birmingham Energy Savers.

Sustainability West Midlands mini-summit and energy finance events

Jointly with Sustainability West Midlands and Regen WM we ran a joint GND event in summer 2009 for the region’s economic development officers looking at opportunities to tackle worklessness and the need for CO2 cuts together. Colin Hines gave an excellent and passionate presentation at this, generating a lot of interest and enthusiasm. The details of this event can be found in the events archive at SWM’s site <http://www.sustainabilitywestmidlands.org.uk>. Following this an informal dinner event was held for those with an interest in finance in the region to discuss the potential of local bonds to fund energy projects; discussions and smaller meetings on this topic have continued throughout the year including a workshop hosted by SWM that included 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 from the second event, which can be used in other areas of the UK.

LWM with Encraft also ran a workshop in spring 2010 specifically for officers from other local authorities in the region interested in adapting and replicating the Birmingham GND model in their own areas, and spoke at a number of other events on the GND theme.

Following our early discussions with the assistant director of the West Midlands Economic Inclusion Panel, a WM GND group was brought together 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. Following on from this first meeting a report has been produced that highlights the need for coordination for this approach: it recommended a post be created 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. Clearly a round of regional body abolitions has put paid to much of this work although it is possible that some of the thinking will find its way into coordinated local authority activity in the future.

Throughout this we also maintained some degree of contact and networking with other organisations around the region on GND issues.

PNUK supermarkets campaign meeting

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. This work was supported by Lush's 'Charity Pot' fund.

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. Since this event we have been investigating, with local partners, approaches to planning for sustainability and resilience in Herefordshire and elsewhere.

Prosperity and Inflation agenda

Andrew Lydon has been leading a project on the prosperity and inflation agenda, funded during this period by the Andrew Wainwright Reform Trust.

As this report is being written he is lobbying a review by the UK Statistics Authority for the adoption of more diverse inflation targets that address regional and demographic variances, from research conducted by Andrew with LWM since 2006. There has been interest from members of all main political parties and he has been involved in two Early Day Motions in the Commons.

The Statistics Authority review hopefully will result in inflation statistics in which people would have more trust, and indices which they would be able to test against their local price experience because there would be a localised version of the index. The UK can then begin to get a better grip on inflation in the UK, which is now driven by global resource issues, so that we can organise a more stable economy.

In the last year we have built on our co-operation with the Scottish government on this issue, and have begun to make some headway with bringing the TUC into the discussion.

Banking

Andrew was working on a second project emerged from the same initial work around Bank of England reform when the credit crunch climaxed in 2008.

Andrew reported on how the UK banks collapsed in late 2008, and how it was the Banks in Scotland and the regions of England that mainly collapsed. He recognised that there most have been issues of the remoteness of the London-based UK regulation involved in such a clear-cut pattern.

With the establishment of an independent Banking Commission by the new coalition government, we are looking to see if we can present our findings to them. We would argue that they support more regional management and accountability in the UK banking sector, and that this should be the basis of any moves to break up the banks into smaller units that would not be 'too big to fail', and if ever they need a future government bailout, would not be so horrendously expensive to bail out.

Webpages and blog pages have been produced on both these pages. And presentations developed over recent years for both these projects last year introducing these projects are still available to any interested groups or individuals.

Digbeth Community Land Trust

LWM have continued working in partnership with Accord Housing, Birmingham FOE and others to develop a sustainable housing and workspace development under a Community Land Trust structure on vacant land next to the Birmingham Friends of the Earth Warehouse. Over summer 2009, Accord developed 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 de-mutualisation. In autumn 2009 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. Legal testing, the next step, was carried out after the end of the financial year covered by this report. We have

also had a variety of meetings through the year with Homes & Communities Agency and Council representatives to discuss access to the land, all of which were positive, and we are hoping that our next meeting will enable us to progress this. A meeting with potential tenants was also in the diary for July by the end of the period of this review.

We were enabled in this work by funding from the Tudor Trust and Birmingham's Working Neighbourhoods Fund.

Power Up review

We had been commissioned at the end of the previous financial year to undertake a review of Friends of the Earth's exemplary Power Up event, which is an intensive weekend course to empower people from disproportionately environmentally affected areas about their planning and freedom of information rights and about how to campaign. LWM evaluated the event over the last 5 years in terms of its impact, reach and targets and found it was highly effective in terms of both FOE's specific targets and ultimate objectives of environmental justice and involving more diverse audiences. The report was completed and submitted, with options for continuing the event under a range of scenarios, in June 2010 and the event was held again this year in accordance with many of our recommendations.

Reconnecting Economic Activities to Place

We have been working with partners led by a sustainability-minded consultant at CMI consultancy in Cardiff to look at ideas for 'Reconnecting Economic Activities to Place. with a focus on small-scale low tech manufacturing. Recognising that local supply chains often come after more local relationships in terms of customer base and investment, we have been looking to develop ideas for 'community supported manufacturing'; working on ways of reconnecting with an area's financial, human and material resources but starting with the community's involvement in product design and investment. An initial meeting of interested organisations was held in February but we are still seeking funding to progress research and perhaps pilot activities.

Aston University Lifelong Learning Centre – sustainable development modules

During the year LWM joined Aston University's Sustainable Communities, Urban Regeneration and Environmental Technologies Consortium which was set up to deliver a number of Level 4 modules on this theme as part of the Lifelong Learning Centre. We were asked to develop a module on practical strategies for local food which has been developed since then during the subsequent (current) year by Jayne Bradley of Sense City working on our behalf. We have also inherited a module on engaging communities with climate change, which has been produced by Phil Beardmore formerly of Groundwork and newly an associate of LWM.

2. Promotion, networking, policy and organisational development

Over the year LWM have produced three newsletters, set up a blog and a twitter account and posted regularly to them. We also aimed to redesign our website but ill health on the part of the designer prevented this from happening during the year: this work is now being undertaken by a volunteer.

We also gave talks to Erdington Townswomens Guild and Solihull Green Party; developed stronger partnership links with SWM, attended the Trades Unions Council *Beyond Crisis* conference and the 2009 Regen WM convention; and signed up to support and promote the European Food Declaration for a more sustainable EU agricultural policy.

LWM continued during the year to participate in the West Midlands Regional Sustainability Forum, the network of sustainability-focused groups working on regional policy which had seats on the Regional Assembly and other regional bodies. We responded to Phase 3 of the Regional Spatial Strategy, engaged with the consultation and debate on the Third Sector Leaders' Board asking for wider third sector social and environmental objectives to be considered

On the organisational development level, LWM's coordinator benefited from a mentoring support programme via Birmingham Race Action Partnership; and we held steering group meetings to discuss solutions to the 'project funding' problem which gives us little financial security. This resulted in a number of proposals including the consultancy development (see below) and a potential furniture recycling project which is being further investigated now.

New associate and steering group member Jon Stevens has taken charge of a project to further develop LWM's consultancy offer. This has involved 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. Work on this started during the year; but necessarily identification of some aspects of the offer needed to wait until after the election.

3. Future work and strategy

LWM is looking forward to a number of interesting projects over the coming months, assisted in delivering these by a much strengthened team of associates. We will be delivering our modules on local food and on engaging communities in climate change, for Aston University; and continuing towards the development of the Digbeth Community Land Trust. We are hoping to work on business planning for community asset transfer with a local organisation; to develop ideas for relocalised manufacturing with partners in Wales and Cornwall, and to facilitate alternative planning with groups in Herefordshire. We will be publishing further chapters of Extending Localisation; and developing a consultancy offer that serves both our objectives and those of client organisations in straitened times. We have just obtained funding from Scottish Power Trust to undertake work on making feed-in tariffs work for the fuel poor, so this will be starting soon. We are also hoping to develop a furniture reuse project, meeting our objectives of local and efficient resource reuse but also assisting our financial security. More widely, we hope in the interesting political climate of the coalition government to increasingly promote economic localisation as a crucial element of sustainable development at local and national levels, which requires us to be more tactical and more challenging to vested interests than we have before.

Our overarching objectives for 2010 remain as follows:

- Promote the whole picture of localisation across and beyond the region
- Develop expertise, evidence and influence on specific localisation issues
- Engage with regional/local policy to bring a localisation perspective
- Develop the organisation to increase our capacity and efficiency to deliver the above.

People

Members of LWM's Board

Over the year the following have been Board members of Localise West Midlands and active participants in the organisation:

Hannah Worth (Chair)

Hannah is a freelance consultant and formerly managed the Birmingham Community Empowerment Network, facilitating community networks that aim to involve people more effectively in local decision-making. She previously volunteered for Localise West Midlands for a few months after completing a Masters in Global Ethics.

George Morran (vice chair)

Currently Director of the West Midlands Convention, former Chair and current Secretary of the Campaign for the English Regions, research associate at Aston Business School and freelance Regional Governance consultant. Formerly, Director of the WM Regional Forum of Local Authorities, Regional Economic Consortium, assistant Chief Executive of Dudley MBC.

Chris Crean

Friends of the Earth's Regional Campaigns Coordinator for the West Midlands. Chris has been involved with Friends of the Earth (FOE) for over twelve years, initially as a campaigner on air pollution and transport in Birmingham and the West Midlands. He also worked for an environmental consultancy on contaminated land and industrial water issues. Chris's responsibilities include developing regional policy, a major strand of which is to develop a solutions approach - one strand of which will be a localisation of the regional economy.

Colin Hines

Author of 'Localization- A Global Manifesto' (Earthscan) and an Associate of the International Forum on Globalisation, a San Francisco based alliance of activists, academics and economists developing alternatives to globalisation and free trade. Before that he was the Co-ordinator of Greenpeace International's Economics Unit having worked for the organisation for 10 years.

Karen Leach

Karen has been LWM's Coordinator since October 2002. Previously she worked as Campaigns and Project Worker, and Local Food and Trade campaigner, for Birmingham Friends of the Earth. In that capacity she was involved in setting up LWM. She is also a member of Birmingham Friends of the Earth Ltd's management committee, which runs the Warehouse community building where LWM are based.

Andrew Lydon

Andrew Lydon 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 latterly for Birmingham NHS Concern. Andrew leads the Prosperity and Inflation campaign for LWM.

Jon Morris

Currently housing, planning and regeneration consultant. 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.

Additional steering group members

The following are actively involved in LWM's steering group and attend and contribute to our Board meetings.

Barbara Panvel

Barbara has brought together different people, organisations and ideas on localisation during her work in both Mumbai and Birmingham, coordinates information flows on the Fair Deal for UK Farmers campaign, and has been involved in LWM since our earliest discussions.

Philip Davis

Philip 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, including chair of the West Midlands Constitutional Convention.

Pat Conaty

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. Pat remains an LWM associate and member of our steering group.

Max Krafchik

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 on a voluntary basis in the region and has taken on a board/coordinator liaison role for LWM

Michael Whithouse

Michael is a chartered accountant with a degree in rural land management, based in Shropshire. He is actively involved in various organisations including the Fordhall Community Land Trust, the Wasteless Society, the Institute of Organic Training and Advice, and the Shropshire Hills AONB advisory board. He worked on the wholesaler mapping this year. He leaves the Board to pursue a new career and other interests but remains an LWM associate and member of our steering group.

Jon Stevens

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 (bchs), Community Development Worker for Birmingham Inner Area Study, Organiser of Community Forum in Birmingham, Senior Urban Renewal Officer for Walsall MBC, Neighbourhood Office Coordinator for Birmingham CC, and Tenant and Association Support Manager for the Housing Corporation.

Staff and associates

Karen Leach has continued as Coordinator of Localise West Midlands. Thanks to the generosity of Birmingham Friends of the Earth we were seconded two Future Jobs Fund employees: Anna Watson as our research officer for Extending Localisation and Feryal Iqbal as our part-time communications officer. Feryal's main task was our web design and she did

some good work on this but due to a mixture of ill health and other factors this did not come to fruition before the end of the contract. Anna Watson carried out sterling work for us not only on Extending Localisation but on our social media presence, newsletters and any other task required. Both have now left us as their contracts have come to an end, and we wish both of them well in their next steps.

Community housing and regeneration consultant Jon Stevens joined us as an associate and steering group member during the year and has been very active in a number of project proposals as well as helping the organisation more widely with his work on our consultancy development.

Rajeev Prakash and Rosemary Foggitt have also remained associates with us during the year. We extend our thanks to them and all our associates and steering group members for their work and their efforts in seeking opportunities for LWM.

If you are interested in getting involved with the work of LWM, as part of the Board, an associate, or more informally, please contact [Karen Leach](#) to discuss this further.

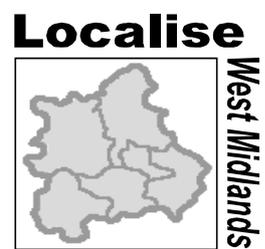
Funding Report

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Be Birmingham
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Planners Network UK
Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland
Sustainability West Midlands



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