

# Localising Power, Empowering Citizens, Building Communities

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at GSYH Open meeting

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# Three questions



- **What does decentralisation, localism, and the Big Society mean?**
- **How is power going to be decentralised to the local level?**
- **What are local people and communities going to be able to do?**

# The big picture

- The Prime Minister has been clear that the government has three priorities

## Generating growth



## Creating the Big Society



## Implementing reforms



**Voluntary and philanthropic action**

**Community empowerment**

**Public service reform**

# Localism, Decentralisation, Big Society

## Localism

### *Is the ethos...*

Doing everything at the lowest possible level and only involving central government if absolutely necessary

## Decentralisation

### *Is the process...*

Giving away power to individuals, professionals, communities and local institutions

## Big Society

### *Is the vision...*

A society where people, neighbourhoods and communities have more power and responsibility and use it to create better services and outcomes

# Why Decentralisation?

People and communities have greater control over the services in their locality

Diversity in local approaches releases innovation in public services – speed and resilience

Front line professionals respond to local preferences, with fewer constraints from the centre

People can hold local services and institutions to account more effectively than central Government

# The six essential decentralisation actions

## Big Government

1. Lift the burden of bureaucracy

2. Empower communities to do things their way

3. Increase local control of public finance

4. Diversify the supply of public services

5. Open up government to public scrutiny

6. Strengthen accountability to local people

**Big Society**

# Localism - Action taken and underway

## Lift the burden of bureaucracy

- Red Tape Challenge
- CAA/LAA/Audit Commission
- Regional strategies
- Standards Board

## Increase local control of public finance

- Removal of ring-fencing
- LG Resources Review
- Community budgets
- Social Fund

## Open up government to public scrutiny

- Transparent crime data
- DCLG and LAs spend data
- Single Data List
- SCS salary data

## Empower communities to do things their way

- General Power of Competence
- Neighbourhood Plans
- Community Right to Buy

## Diversify the supply of public services

- Academies and Free schools
- Right to challenge
- Mutuals
- GP Commissioning

## Strengthen accountability to local people

- Health and Wellbeing Boards
- Police and Crime Commissioners
- Directly elected mayors

# A powerful Right to Challenge

- Public bodies already contract out services – local government spends £42 billion a year on contracts for goods and services
- Many public bodies already make good use of the talents of voluntary and community bodies, but in some areas good ideas fall on deaf ears – only 2% of spend on public services goes to the VCS
- The Right hands the initiative to communities with good ideas about how services can be run differently or better, ensures these ideas get a fair hearing, and gives them the time they may need to prepare effective bids to run the service

## How does it work?



1. Relevant services are subject to challenge

2. Expression of interest from VCS, charity, parish, or staff



3. Relevant authority reaches a decision on the expression of interest

4. Authority either accepts, or accepts with modification and then undertakes a procurement exercise, or rejects and a reason for rejection published



# A new Community Right to ~~Buy~~ Bid

- The Community Right to Buy is a radical new community right
- The aim is to give communities a fair chance to bid to take over land and buildings that are important to them
- This will help local communities to save important community assets, tackle social need and build up resources in their neighbourhood

## How does it work?

1. Communities identify assets of community value



2. Local authorities hold and control a list of assets of community value

3. Communities get time and support to bid for assets



4. More communities take control of local assets

# Neighbourhood Planning

- Localism Act 2011 – new rights to allow communities to shape development by coming together to prepare neighbourhood development plans, neighbourhood development orders or Community Right to Build orders
- DCLG has set out factors that local authorities must have regard to when designating Neighbourhood Forums eg. inclusiveness, how purpose reflects character
- Planning always supposed to give local communities a say but in practise communities often found it hard to have a meaningful say
- Neighbourhood Planning is **optional**
- <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1985896.pdf>

# Neighbourhood Planning



**Community Right to Build**

**An Opportunity in the Making**

The Government is planning to give citizens more rights to decide what is built in their communities, including housing, local shops and community facilities.

Proposals for the Community Right to Build are currently before Parliament as part of the neighbourhood planning framework in the Localism Bill. If the Bill becomes law any successful proposal will need to be:

- from a community group such as a community interest company or a community land trust, etc
- independently assessed to see whether the proposals meet specific key criteria; and
- supported by more than half of the community that vote in a referendum.

If you're interested in a community-led development you should talk to your neighbours to get an idea about what sort of development the whole community would want to see. You may also want to talk to your local council, housing association or other community groups. You may also find it useful to get advice from people who already have experience of taking forward community-led schemes.

To find out more about the Community Right to Build visit:  
[www.communities.gov.uk/righttobuild](http://www.communities.gov.uk/righttobuild) for further information.

If your community group is interested in using the Community Right to Build and wants to be kept in touch, tell us about your plans at:  
[righttobuild@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:righttobuild@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

For information on community led developments, visit:

*Community Land Trust Network* – [www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk](http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk)

*Locality* – [www.locality.org.uk](http://www.locality.org.uk)

*UK Cohousing Network* – [www.cohousing.org.uk](http://www.cohousing.org.uk)

*Action with Communities in Rural England* – [www.acre.org.uk/our-work/community-led-planning](http://www.acre.org.uk/our-work/community-led-planning)

*Confederation of Co-operative Housing* – [www.cch.coop](http://www.cch.coop)

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- Communities can take forward developments for new homes, shops and facilities in their area
- Community organisations can go ahead with developments which have overwhelming community support, without the need for planning permission

# Community Right to Reclaim

The new Right comprises two elements:

- Improved transparency by giving citizens online access to information
- Improved accountability by reforming the Public Request to Order Disposal (PROD)

DCLG shall also be seeking to agree a protocol with various public bodies and others that, for whatever reason, cannot be included in Schedule 16.

# Meanwhile Leases

- The main aim of the meanwhile lease for land is to support community groups who want to get access to land for a range of purposes, including community food growing schemes, community parks, gardens or other green spaces.
- It could encourage those who own land that has been earmarked for development, but subsequently delayed, to lease that land on a temporary basis to community groups.
- Meanwhile documents
  - Meanwhile Growing lease for land
  - Meanwhile Playing field Lease for Land
  - Meanwhile Farm lease
  - Available at <http://www.meanwhile.org.uk/useful-info/view/legal>
- DCLG and Locality keen to encourage the use of these leases amongst community groups and appreciate feedback on:
  - How easy to use
  - What difficulties have been encountered

# Open Public Services

- The Open Services White Paper 5 principles:
  - Wherever possible we should increase choice by giving people direct control over the services they use
  - Power should be decentralised to the lowest appropriate level
  - Public Services should be open to a range of providers competing to offer a better service
  - The state's role is to deliver fair access, fair funding and fair competition; and
  - Public services should be accountable to users and to taxpayers.

# Breaking down the barriers

- Government has extended an offer to any individual, community group or council experiencing government barriers to taking local action to contact DCLG in writing, over the phone, or online
- DCLG then works with colleagues across Government to try to tackle the barrier if possible
- As of 9 June the team had 340 requests, 35% are about policy, legislation or regulation; 50% are local issues, about 15% want information or funding



- The barrier to action imposed by Criminal Record checks has been raised a number of times
- Government recognised this and has responded with a review addressing the issues raised, streamlining the procedure, and enabling transferability in the same sector
- Barrier busting is part of a wider systemic change in the way government operates. Instead of only being focused upwards on providing advice to Ministers, Whitehall is now putting those resources at the service of communities

# Community Organisers

- The Community Organiser programme is about stimulating and supporting greater social action, especially in England's communities that have lower levels of activity. It encourages individuals and groups to say 'I can do this / we can do this'
- It is about people willing to do things to improve the quality of life locally through small projects, starting small businesses, working closely with others, and challenging services
- The government is training 5,000 Community Organisers



## How does it work?



1. Government has appointed Locality to train and support the organisers

2. Locality has identified a number of kickstart areas which are 'ready to go'



3. Community Organisers will undergo a one year training programme.

4. Community Organisers work in communities



# “How To...” guides

## – Community Orchards

- Aimed at helping community groups conserve or create community orchards
- Potential funding for community green spaces
- Get the Green Space you want
- Case studies available

## – Space for Food Growing

# Central Government Finance & Grants

- Big Society Capital
- Supporting Communities and Neighbourhoods in Planning project
- Giving White Paper
- Community First

# Big Society ~~Bank~~ Capital

- The Government has committed to setting up a Big Society Bank to give social enterprises, charities and voluntary organisations access to greater resources.
- The *Big Society Bank* will play a crucial part in catalysing the development of the social investment market
- Bank will be capitalised from our largest banks and dormant accounts



- Big Society Bank will be:

Independent

A wholesaler

Transparent

Self-sufficient

- Government is currently working to secure the state aid approvals that we need to direct dormant accounts money to an independent Big Society Bank.

# Supporting Communities and Neighbourhoods in Planning project

- Set up to ensure communities have the right support and advice to meet their own aspirations
- Communities can choose to take up free advice
- Support includes free impartial advice, practical workshops with local authorities and community groups, tailored on-line resources, networking tools and telephone advice lines
- 4 organisations will share a £3.2m fund
  - Campaign to Protect Rural England and NALC - £620k
  - Royal Town Planning Institute - £1m
  - Locality - £814.5k
  - Prince's Foundation for Built Environment - £800k

# Giving White Paper

- Published in May 2011
- Set out a number of policies to support both giving of time and money
- Two funds set up to support this agenda
  - **The Social Action Fund**
    - £20+ million to support established models of social action that can be scaled up and boost levels of volunteering or charitable giving
  - **Innovation in Giving Fund**
    - £10 million fund will award grants of between £50k-£150k to the most promising and innovative ideas that have the potential to deliver a significant increase in the giving and exchange of time, assets, skills, resources and money.
    - It has two basic strands:
      - Game changers
      - Local platforms

# Community First

- Consists of two elements
  - **Neighbourhood Matched Fund Programme**
    - £30 million
    - provide financial support for to provide financial support for community-led projects
    - in targeted neighbourhoods of England with low social capital and significant deprivation.
  - **Endowment Match Challenge**
    - available throughout England
    - need a clear priority to build local endowments
    - in the long run these endowments should create a sustainable source of grants for neighbourhood projects.

The Matched funding figures and wards have been published and every top tier LA has been informed

# Other policies... ...Housing

Housing Strategy published 21 November

- Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England
  - recognises importance of good quality green space for delivering social and environmental benefits
  - Specific mention of Green Flag Award as nationally recognised accreditation scheme
- Green Infrastructure Partnership
  - looks at improving the quality of the environment in the most deprived communities
- Neighbourhoods Green good practice guide
  - Source of advice on benchmarking quality of public open spaces in a social housing context

# Other policies... ...Environment

National Environment White Paper published 7 June

- The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature
  - Places the value of nature at the centre of the choices our nation must make to enhance our environment, economic growth and personal well-being.
  - Implementing 92 commitments in NEWP
  - Published a strategy to protect England's biodiversity
  - Invited applications for
    - Local Nature Partnerships (LNP's)
    - Nature improvement Areas (NIA's)
    - Biodiversity offset pilots
  - Launched Green Infrastructure Partnership and Ecosystem Market Task Force
  - Natural Environment White Paper Implementation Update – highlights progress  
<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/documents/newp-imp-update-111013.pdf>

# Other policies... ...Planning

## National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- Proposals for a Local Green Space designation which will enable local communities to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them through local and neighbourhood plans
- By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development (other than in very special circumstances)
- Designation could be used where a green area holds a particular local significance
  - Beauty
  - Historic importance
  - Recreational value
  - Tranquillity
  - Richness of wildlife
- DCLG currently considering the 1000's of responses received
- Ministers committed to publishing final version by end March 2012