



Centre for Charity Effectiveness

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Whose Localism? A thought piece

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This thought piece is addressed principally to Chief Executives, senior managers and Board members in the third sector. It offers a personal perspective around what localism means for the third sector based on available evidence, current debates around localism, and personal insights gained through consultancy practice. This article focuses on localism in England.

Localism has been actively promoted by sufficiently disparate players to lead me to question whether the same things are meant and the different interests can be reconciled. Localism has become a major theme for many parts of the third sector as organisations consider future direction and strategy, and what funders and external stakeholders require of them.

Third Sector Foresight summarises the focus of localism as emphasising ‘the value of local, small scale activities as opposed to those on a national or global scale.’¹ Common interpretations of localism appear attractive to the sector:

- As an expression of getting nearer to the service user, client or customer and their needs – important human scale drivers within the sector for change;
- In emphasising the importance of place for the people/beneficiaries that the sector works with;
- In facilitating economic and social renewal through better engaging more disadvantaged people and communities;
- There is a widespread belief that local solutions are more effective, and local decision making is more efficient and leads to better allocation of resources;
- The opportunity to re-invigorate local roots, encourage voluntary and community action and civic engagement, and tap the insights and experience of the many within the sector;
- Freeing initiative in the sector from the ‘dead hand’ of bureaucrats and inspectors, and top down regulation.

But do the hoped for benefits above provide sufficient fertile ground for the development of the third sector, given the context of other changes taking place?

Are there disadvantages as well as possible advantages for the role and development of the sector in the way that localism is being conceived and implemented by the Coalition Government?

¹ Localism, Third Sector Foresight, accessed 19 February 2011

What is meant by localism?

'We think that the best means of strengthening society is not for central government to try and seize all the power and responsibility for itself. It is to help people and their locally elected representatives to achieve their own ambitions. This is the essence of the Big Society.'²

Greg Clark MP, Minister for Decentralisation

Localism is hardly a new idea. Settlements could be seen as one of the earliest expressions of localism. Professor Sir Peter Hall's notions of localism were said to have inspired Michael Heseltine's model of enterprise zones in inner city areas in the 1980s. John Major's Government championed the ideas of subsidiarity in the 1990s. The last Labour Government said that 'power remains too centralised and too concentrated in government hands'.³

The wider case for localism was built around the argument that Central Government was stifling innovation, that local public service agencies should be able to find local responses to local challenges and that joint working should be fostered by different service areas to deal with complex needs. Advocates of localism argued that performance measurement by Central Government produced distorted and sometimes perverse incentives in different service areas, and required an army of civil servants and QANGO-crats to police.

Localism is not one set of ideas. Before it took office, in a seminal Green Paper, the Conservative Party described localism as 'the need to devolve power to a more local level'. The Conservative Party then went on to state: 'Our vision of localism is one where power is decentralised to the lowest possible level.'⁴

With obvious parallels to Big Society, localism has nevertheless been described by a local government expert Professor John Stewart as 'a bit obscure'.⁵ The Deloitte report on localism noted real uncertainty about localism would lead to - 'There isn't a broad consensus across the public sector on how localism, decentralisation and the Big Society will work in a systematic fashion across local government.'⁶

Some of the seeming lack of clarity may lie in localism being an -ism, a set of ideological convictions and beliefs rather than a more humble and concrete set of

² Foreword to 'A Plain English Guide to the Localism Bill', CLG 2011

³ Ministry of Justice – Governance of Britain Green Paper, 2007

⁴ Both quotations are from Conservative Party – Control Shift: Returning Power to Local Communities, Green Paper, 2008

⁵ Professor John Stewart giving evidence to the Localism Bill Committee, 27 January 2011

⁶ Deloitte – A Little Local Difficulty, 2011

plans. For many of its advocates, localism not only carries a presumption in favour of the local, but often a very negative message about national decision making. In flowing rhetoric, Charteris, Donnelly, Swann and Houghton describe a localist future as 'a radically altered democratic settlement in which:

- The relationship between central and local government is reformed, empowering local authorities and their partners to set priorities, take decisions and deliver services that meet the needs and expectations of local people, and where
- there is an equally profound shift in the relationship between local government and local people, changing the way local democracy works so that priorities and decisions flow up from people and
- individuals and communities are empowered to shape the places in which they live.⁷

The Localism Bill: flagship for localism

'There's the efficiency argument – that in huge hierarchies, money gets spent on bureaucracy instead of the frontline. There is the fairness argument – that centralised national blueprints don't allow for local solutions to major social problems. And there is the political argument – that centralisation creates a great distance in our democracy between the government and the governed.'⁸

David Cameron MP, the Prime Minister, presenting his rationales for localism

Big claims are made for the Localism Bill, and it is substantial piece of legislation running to 208 clauses. There was no Localism White Paper to facilitate wider discussion. Clifford Chance, the City of London solicitors, commented that 'the speed at which this mammoth 400 page document has been drafted and laid before Parliament heightens concern about whether such a major new raft of planning reform will be subject to sufficient critical scrutiny and debate.'⁹

Greg Clark has said that the Bill will 'provide the enduring legislative foundation for a new decentralised Britain, where power is returned to the people to which it belongs.'

⁷ Sue Charteris, Katy Donnelly, Phil Swann and John Houghton – Delivering A Localist Future: A Route Map For Change, 2010

⁸ The Observer, 12 September 2010

⁹ Clifford Chance LLP - Localism Bill: Heraldng Fundamental Planning Reform, Client Briefing, December 2010

Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government, said that this Bill 'lays the foundations for Big Society.'¹⁰

Of wide interest across the third sector, the Bill includes:

- **General power of competence** clause – the Government has said that this gives local authorities the legal capacity to do anything that an individual can do that is not specifically banned by other laws. However, the Bill does provide the Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government with the power to prevent local authorities from doing whatever he says, as part of their general power of competence. The Treasury apparently insisted on this provision.¹¹
- **Competitive challenge:** this gives third sector organisations and others the right to challenge Councils to let others deliver public services – Government has spoken of Councils giving 'reasonable consideration' to proposals from the third sector. Greg Clark claimed that the Bill would make it easier for 'virtual communities', such as people with disabilities, to deliver services.¹² Children's centres, social care services and improving transport links have been specifically cited by Government as examples of potential third sector provision for reasonable consideration by local authorities.
- **Community right to buy** – the opportunity to raise capital and bid to buy listed assets. Government has cited meeting rooms, swimming pools, village shops, markets and pubs as listed assets that might be purchased.
- **Community right to build** – community groups can build new developments without planning permission if they win support of 50% of local residents.
- **Neighbourhood Forums**, whose formation can be activated by a minimum of 3 people, but whose designation lies in the hands of the local Council. Once designated, the Council cannot dissolve Neighbourhood Forums. As they are not public bodies, these Forums can ignore equalities duties, climate change duties and sustainable development duties.¹³ Neighbourhood Forums can develop Neighbourhood Plans. Local authorities are required to support the development of such plans through advice and guidance but not to fund the

¹⁰ Both quotations are from CLG media release - Localism Bill starts new era of people power, 13 December 2010

¹¹ Allister Hayman blog, Local Government Chronicle, 8 December 2010

¹² Third Sector, 13 January 2011

¹³ Dr. Hugh Ellis, Town & Country Planning Association – evidence to Localism Bill Committee, 27 January 2011

development of such plans. The Government has stated that neighbourhood plans will have to be consistent with national policy.¹⁴

- **Local referenda** on local matters, which can be triggered by 5% of the population. The results of these referendums are not binding. The Secretary of State can determine for a local authority what a local matter is. The petition for a referendum can also be ruled out by being deemed vexatious or abusive.

The Bill also requires twelve cities to hold local referenda for elected Mayors. The role of Mayors concentrates considerable decision making power for a local Council in one person's hands. The provisions of the Localism Bill may further change before it is given royal assent but these changes are likely to be of detail rather than substance.

The Bill confers more than 100 new powers for Government Ministers, such as the right to decide what would constitute an excessive rise in Council tax. The Council can be compelled to put its Council tax rise to local referendum. The Localism Bill removes the duties under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 to promote democratic engagement and civic participation; and the duty on local authorities to accept and respond to local petitions. The Local Government Association has estimated that the Localism Bill will cost each Council an extra £250,000 per annum to implement.¹⁵

In his evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on Communities and Local Government a local government expert Professor George Jones wrote: 'Ministers are essentially promoting sub-localism, taking powers from Councils allegedly to give to "Big Society" actors below the local authority level, but ineluctably sucking up key control functions to Whitehall at the same time.'¹⁶

What this Government means by localism

'Localism is the ethos; decentralisation is the process, and the outcome is Big Society.' Greg Clark MP¹⁷

Government has introduced what has been characterised as 'creative destruction' to public service reform by cutting funding deeply, and removing structures and

¹⁴ Bob Neill, Localism Bill Committee, 27 January 2011

¹⁵ Public Finance, 7 June 2011

¹⁶ LSE blog: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/localism-and-the-big-society>

¹⁷ Quoted in Localism report, House of Commons Communities & Local Government Select Committee, June 2011

requirements on local service provision in the expectation that innovation and better solutions will arise.¹⁸

When he arrived in Government, Eric Pickles announced three priorities for his tenure as – localism, localism and localism. Localism is a major strand of Coalition Government policy, linking agendas on the Big Society, reducing public expenditure and the role of the State, and undertaking public service reform.

Bob Neill, the Local Government Minister, has said that Councils could use their new powers in the light of the Comprehensive Spending Review to ‘look at how they save money by much more joint working, procurement and so on.’¹⁹

The Localism Bill is central but by no means all that the Government has been doing around localism. Bob Neill has said that the Government’s commitment to localism predates the banking crisis and the changes are ‘part of the solution to making local government more sustainable in any financial climate.’²⁰

Critics of the Government’s approach to localism argue that Government has remained centralist and prescriptive in a number of significant areas impacting at a local level:

- The freeze on Council tax
- Enterprise Zones
- Election of Police Commissioners
- Free schools and academies
- Council Housing Borrowing Requirement²¹
- Data sharing including very small items of expenditure
- Central direction of schools, police and welfare budgets (and health budgets at this time)²²

Professor Sir Peter Hall commented: ‘We are told the Government is in favour of localism, despite edicts on how to do things.’²³

¹⁸ Simon Parker-Next Localism: Five Trends for the Future of Local Government, New Local Government Network 2011

¹⁹ Public Finance, 27 January 2011

²⁰ Public Finance, 27 January 2011

²¹ Tony Travers - Home Truths About Localism, Public Finance, 2 February 2011

²² See Ed Cox – Five Foundations of Real Localism, IPPR, November 2010

The rights of localism

The Localism Bill, when enacted, will give important rights to local communities, which third sector organisations may be able to use. Third sector organisations will wish to test this in practice:

- **The right to competitive challenge** could raise important debates about the quality of publicly funded provision and pave the way to differently managed services by third sector organisations. It does not give a right to third sector organisations to deliver public services or prescribe the size of contracts local authorities may issue.

The Localism Bill does not address what is happening in procurement practice. The increasing tendency by local authorities to issue fewer and larger contracts works to the clear disadvantage of small and medium size local voluntary and community organisations. As the contracts get larger, private sector competition will get tougher.

The point has been powerfully illustrated at a national level by Department of Work & Pensions when it recently awarded contracts for welfare to work services. Only one of the 18 prime contractors chosen in Britain came from the third sector, whilst there were almost 300 third sector organisations in their supply chains.²⁴ Chris Grayling, the responsible Minister told Third Sector: 'If a prime contractor squeezes its margins in negotiations with a charitable group, that's something I can't do anything about.'²⁵

- **Neighbourhood Forums** could provide an opportunity for a wider cross section of the local community to be involved. However, there are significant design issues for Neighbourhood Forums. Reflecting rural organisation anxieties, Sylvia Brown from ACRE said: 'We are concerned that the mechanisms are not brought into disrepute in urban areas by the failure to have clear-cut designations of areas, forums and democratic

²³ Financial Times, 6 February 2011

²⁴ Civil Society Finance 4 April 2011; Kevin Curley – evidence to House of Commons Public Administration Committee, 5 July 2011; on 15 May 2011, The Financial Times reported: 'Corporate Britain will not be frozen out of a reinvigorated public procurement market in favour of charities and social enterprises, the Big Society minister has promised. Paul Pindar, chief executive of Capita, the back-office service provider, said Francis Maude, the Cabinet Office minister charged with promoting the Big Society project, had dismissed as "plain wrong" suggestions that the government would scale back plans to use for-profit providers in an attempt to boost Big Society providers. "Behind closed doors, we've had frank conversations that have said 'Yes, there is a role for these guys. But please don't overstate their significance'," he said.'

²⁵ Third Sector, 28 June 2011

responsibilities.²⁶ There is a wider anxiety that Neighbourhood Forums will confer ‘legitimacy, government authority and decision – making power on self selected groups that usually represent either rather eccentric, nutty individuals or narrow sectional interests.’²⁷

In addition, it is not clear how meaningful participation or democratic engagement for the more disadvantaged or excluded is secured in Neighbourhood Forums. Age Concern research shows that over 1 million over 50s consider themselves to be socially excluded from society.²⁸ Age UK has noted that ‘the emphasis on community-decided approaches could mean that the loudest voices lead, without recognising the impact they may have on other people in their community. Local agencies should have a duty of care to assess the impact of these community approaches on socially excluded people.’²⁹

- **Local referenda** may provide opportunities for third sector organisations to raise important local issues. Other voices may be louder. Sir Simon Jenkins, Chair of the National Trust, observed that ‘the Tories have produced a local echo of Labour’s 1940s nationalisation, except that in place of statutory undertakings and democratic oversight, Pickles means to empower the saloon bar at the Bull.’³⁰ The BNP is on record as regarding local referenda as providing unprecedented opportunities, for example, by raising the issue of schools using halal meat in their catering for pupils.³¹
- Advantages in **access to information**, including register of assets, raising a concern that taking this to the nth degree of detail may obscure the really important issues that bear on the local development of the sector.
- Being assisted to take on **assets of community value** could be of great importance. The Quirk Review acknowledged the immense latent potential in such assets.³² The activities of the members of Locality and Community Matters are witness to the public benefit that can be delivered. Community matters estimate that there are 5000 community assets under threat as a

²⁶ Evidence to Localism Bill Committee, 27 January 2011

²⁷ Professor George Jones – evidence to Localism Bill Committee, 25 January 2011

²⁸ Age Concern – Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Social Exclusion Behind Closed Doors, 2007

²⁹ Age UK – cited in NAVCA – Localism Bill, Bulletin 3, December 2010

³⁰ Sir Simon Jenkins, The Guardian, 14 December 2010

³¹ BNP News, 15 February 2011, BNP website, accessed 19 February 2011

³² Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of Community Management and Ownership of Public Assets, CLG 2007

result of Treasury capital asset reduction targets. The Asset Transfer Unit, the core resource in supporting asset transfer, has to date assisted the transfer of 200 assets to the community. Without significant injection of resources, most of these 5000 community assets will not find a community use.³³

Finally, whatever the wider justification for elected Mayors, anecdotal observation of their relationship with the third sector suggests that it is harder for the sector to influence decision making by local authorities when there are elected mayors.

Localism in a cold climate

Public expenditure cuts form an inescapable background to the current Government's approach to localism:

- Taken as a whole, Councils are managing 28% cuts in their central grants over the next 4 years. This is a major upheaval impacting on local communities and the third sector. The poorest areas, who by need are the largest spenders, have been hit hardest. Prior to the cuts, local authorities raised 36% of their own funding through Council Tax, fees and charges.³⁴ Central Government provided the remaining 64%. By 2009, around 70% of Central Government grant to local government was ringfenced.³⁵ In Liverpool, voluntary sector funding has been cut by 48% in one year – down from £37 million to £19million.³⁶
- NCVO estimate a loss of £2.8 billion by charities in the period 2011-16.³⁷ They fear that this could be an underestimate as half the local authorities are cutting third sector funding by more than their allocations suggest. In London, LVSC's Big Squeeze survey of 120 organisations found 63 who gave a cuts figure with 23 expecting their budgets to shrink by over 50% with a further 18 expecting to see cuts of 21-30%. Some 81% of responding organisations reported increased demand for services in the last year.³⁸
- Cuts are hitting specific parts of the third sector hard. Children England's survey found only three out of five organisations responding expecting to be in

³³ NAVCA – Briefing on the Localism Bill on behalf of the Real Power for Communities Campaign, May 2011

³⁴ Simon Parker-Next Localism: Five Trends for the Future of Local Government, New Local Government Network 2011

³⁵ HM Treasury – Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses

³⁶ Kevin Curley – evidence to House of Commons Public Administration Committee, 5 July 2011

³⁷ David Kane and James Allen – Counting The Cuts, NCVO, August 2011

³⁸ LVSC - The Big Squeeze: The Squeeze Tightens, July 2011

business in 5 years time.³⁹ Some 23% of charities polled in North East said they might close in the next 12 months.⁴⁰

- There have been deep cuts in legal aid (£114million) with £64 million (56%) falling in social welfare. Ministry of Justice's own impact assessment shows third sector organisations providing legal aid losing 77% of their legal aid income with private firms providing legal aid losing 25% of their legal aid income.⁴¹
- Local authority grants to local small voluntary and community organisations are particularly vulnerable to cuts. Lord Nat Wei, who was the Government's chief adviser on Big Society, is a strong advocate of cutting such discretionary programmes.

The cuts are significant because they damage the ability of third sector organisations to deliver better outcomes for users and beneficiaries. At an organisational level, they tend to destabilise the ecology of third sector support.

Writing in *The Spectator* in December 2010, Pete Hoskin thought that the Localism Bill could lead to 'a nationwide blame game: are bad services due to the cuts imposed from on high, or the actions of individual councils.'⁴² Bearing out the wisdom of this comment, we have witnessed leading politicians nationally and locally passing responsibility for cuts in public funding for third sector organisations.⁴³

The third sector has been caught in the middle between Government and Local Authorities, as the Government cuts and the Local Authorities seek to preserve what they can of their own services. The recent Ofsted evaluation of commissioning young people's services by local authorities noted: 'Representatives from voluntary and community sector organisations interviewed expressed frustration that the services procured from external providers were being affected harder and earlier than core local authority services.' Ofsted's understated assessment was that 'it was apparent that not all local authorities were applying a sufficiently critical analysis to decisions of this nature.' Ofsted concluded: 'In most cases, local authorities were not giving sufficiently impartial consideration to new providers as part of their

³⁹ Counting The Cuts: The Impact of Public Spending Cuts on Children's Charities, Children England, March 2011

⁴⁰ Third Sector, 1 September 2011

⁴¹ Third Sector, 14 February 2011

⁴² Pete Hoskin – *The Spectator* – cited in LGIU blog, 13 December 2010

⁴³ As an example of the continuing argument between Central and Local Government, Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government, is quoted by Third Sector (2 September 2011) as saying 'the reduction package does not mean that Councils cannot support the voluntary and community sector.'

commissioning processes, particularly voluntary sector, community and charitable organisations⁴⁴

Key issues for the third sector with the Government's interpretation of localism

'We are breaking down the barriers that stop Councils, local charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups getting things done for themselves.'⁴⁵

'It's highly unlikely that more people will come forward to run services. Set up their own schools or volunteer with a charity if they think there will be some personal risk to them.' Paul Emery, Head of Community & Social Organisations, Zurich Municipal⁴⁶

Every Government tinkers with balances between national and local decision making (e.g. whether to have national targets or indicators) but the localism advocated by the Coalition Government tends to weaken national values, infrastructures, and accountability for the delivery of publicly funded local services.

For example, in March 2011, the Department of Communities & Local Government put all duties placed on local authorities under review. The claim was that this was to slash 'burdens'. These duties included ones for protection of disabled children and children with special needs. After 6000 predominantly hostile responses to this review, the Government abandoned this initiative.⁴⁷ Many third sector organisations, which depend on clear nationally set policy guidelines will be affected by the lack of clarity about how they will interface with central and local government under the localism agenda.

The Government's Open Services White Paper advances a principle of fair access for everyone. The combination of cuts with localism could, however, bring greater inequity of service and greater risk of service failure.

The prospective repatriation of business rates is also likely to work against poorer areas.⁴⁸ Commenting on the Localism Bill, Friends of the Earth observed that 'these Government plans could create a postcode lottery, two-tier planning system, where cash strapped communities struggle to make their voices heard.'⁴⁹ Such postcode lottery sharpens concern that it might result in a damaging consequence combining

⁴⁴ Ofsted- An evaluation of approaches to commissioning young people's services, August 2011

⁴⁵ Foreword to 'A Plain English Guide to the Localism Bill', CLG 2011

⁴⁶ Civil Society Governance, 14 December 2010

⁴⁷ Community Care, 30 June 2011

⁴⁸ Public Finance, 21 July 2011

⁴⁹ Friends of the Earth Press Release, 13 December 2010

what the US economist JK Galbraith memorably called private affluence with public squalor⁵⁰

Greg Clark told fellow MPs that his reasons why devolution to communities could not be left to local government were as follows: 'I think that imbalance of power between those who have it and those who are excluded needs to be addressed.'⁵¹

Enabling community voices costs money, but localism brings no extra resources for this purpose. Community organisers once in post will have their work cut out because of the gaps that have greatly increased in available support for community development.

The proposed Neighbourhood Forum structures do not acknowledge where local people, particularly through third sector organisations, have already been involved. These structures and the referenda do not appear to be well conceived to facilitate the participation of those who have been traditionally most disenfranchised.

Consequently, the structures appear to place more power in the hands of an already vocal and entitled minority. Rather than ensure a resolution for local issues, the frustration of local initiative could lead to low level permanent conflict between communities and local authorities at a local level, and an unwelcome politicisation of voluntary and community organisations who find themselves caught up in the local struggles.

Since 1997, public services have been subject to an increasingly complex multi-layered system of governance. The resources of many voluntary and community organisations have been stretched in trying to deal with these different structures.

The Localism Bill adds to the demands on third sector organisations but provides very limited opportunities for communities to side step local authorities and go to Central Government if they think their proposals for plans, orders, asset transfers or tendering are proposed or obstructed by their local Council.

How can the sector address localism?

'Whilst localism and devolution of power to communities can support public service reform, it is not a given that public service reform supports localism. If proposals on opening up public services are not managed properly then it is not local business or charities that will take over services, but large corporations.'

Voice4Change England and Urban Forum⁵²

⁵⁰ JK Galbraith – The Affluent Society 1958

⁵¹ Quoted in Localism report of the House of Commons Select Committee on Communities & Local Government, June 2011

There is every likelihood that the Coalition Government will be in office until 2015. The Localism Bill will probably gain royal assent in November 2011 and become law but this does not mean that different notions of localism cannot gain ground.

Addressing a wide audience, Phil McCarvill suggests that there is much that can be done in any process of decentralisation of service delivery:

- A greater emphasis on codification of rights and responsibilities in public service delivery
- Clear articulation of key commitments relating to core, minimum service standards, levels of provision, available additional support, complaints handling and systems of redress
- Assessment of impact on key policies and services
- Involving relevant communities and groups at the policy and service development stage
- Monitoring impact of policies and services⁵³

Several points can be added:

What action can you take?

- Be part of what will be a continuing debate as a constructive and critical voice
- Show how community involvement and representative democracy work hand in hand
- Inform and educate the general public so that they get a stronger view of the third sector, and its engagement with local participation and democracy
- Question high flown rhetoric about massive increases in volunteering coming over the brow of the hill to resolve crises in the ability to deliver services. As Community Matters told MPs: 'they [volunteers] are not a free and limitless good.'⁵⁴

⁵² Evidence to House of Commons Select Committee on Communities & Local Government, June 2011

⁵³ Phil McCarvill – Equality, Entitlements and Localism, IPPR June 2010

⁵⁴ Localism report, House of Commons Select Committee on Communities & Local Government, June 2011

Public policy

- Argue for the continuing importance of some regional solutions – why should this only apply in London as the only remaining regional structure?
- Argue for adequate funding in nurturing capacity to innovate and removing barriers to participation
- Work with others to gather data and qualitative evidence showing how cuts are affecting essential services to local communities
- Distil the outcomes of localism for the third sector
- Document the legacy of those organisations who do not survive

Within your organisation

- Hone and build leadership and management capacity – your professional contribution is important in all parts of the third sector
- Seek to survive
- Consider greater collaboration, recognising that this is not a magic bullet

Local solutions are very important but so too is the consistency and cohesion that national solutions can provide. Localism is not a panacea for efficiency or effectiveness. Many of its consequences will be long term.

The experiment and unpredictable outcomes of the Localism Bill, when implemented, will require independent evaluation with community participation to test its delivery in practice and the claims that have been made for it.

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About the author and Cass Centre for Charity Effectiveness

Hilary Barnard is a Senior Visiting Fellow in the Faculty of Management, Cass Business School and Head of Strategy & Change for Cass CCE consultancy and talent development. His previous publications include *Big Society, Cuts & Consequences* (Cass CCE, 2010), *Strategies for Success* (NCVO – co-authored with Perry Walker), *Added Value, Changing Lives: a social capital study of voluntary sector impact* (VAW – lead author in conjunction with Carl Poll), and *Really Intelligent Commissioning: a thought piece* (ACEVO). Hilary has run his own consultancy practice working with third sector organisations since 1991. He has worked on the implementation of decentralisation programmes. He would welcome feedback on this thought piece. His email address is hilarybarnard@aol.com

Cass Business School in City University, London is one of the world's leading providers of business education. Cass Business School enjoys a very high rating nationally and internationally in all business disciplines that add value to organisational performance and achievement.

The Centre for Charity Effectiveness (Cass CCE) is recognised world-wide as a centre for excellence for research and education within the non-profit sector. The Centre has been creating and delivering consultancy and training services to the UK's voluntary and community sector since our early roots in 1991. Cass CCE has a strong team made up of a diverse group of academics and practitioners and partnered by the Worshipful City Livery Company of Management Consultants. Being part of a high performing Business School, Cass CCE has continual engagement with cross sector learning and practice from both the private and public sectors.

Over the years Cass CCE has worked with many hundreds of organisations and many thousands of individuals. Cass CCE's mission is to increase the effectiveness and achievement of voluntary and community organisations. This is achieved through: five part-time post-graduate degree programmes focused on Voluntary Sector Management; Research; Mentoring and Coaching services; Short courses and Seminars; together with a highly experienced consultancy team.

Some eleven principal consultants provide the nucleus of the consultancy team. The team is drawn from both expert practitioners and academics. This blend delivers leading edge thinking, benefiting from theory, but always grounded in evidence and practice. This enables Cass CCE to give best value in responding to clients' needs for robust and well evidenced business cases so that they can secure their key social and community objectives.

The Cass CCE consultancy group specialise in strategic thinking, governance, marketing, organisational restructuring, operational effectiveness, process and systems consultancy, evaluation, social enterprise and leadership and management development programmes. The breadth of Cass CCE consultancy and the depth of practical and academic thinking provide a powerful blend to create real change within the organisations with which Cass CCE works.