

Big Society Update

Issue 6 – September 2011

Welcome to another edition with all the news from the Big Society Strategy Team in the [Department for Communities and Local Government](#) (DCLG).

Green Spaces

Last month we published the following community green space 'How To' guidance and advice on the DCLG website:

- 'How To' [guide for community orchards](#), with information about the support available to help community groups conserve or create community orchards and make the most of the green space in their local area.
- [Community Orchard Case Studies](#) which illustrate various community-led initiatives.



- ['Get the green space you want'](#): How the Government can help', which outlines the full range of measures that the Government has in place to support communities who want to get more involved in their local community and get access to the space they need. From April 2012 community groups will be able to use new right to buy provisions; they can already take advantage of the community right to reclaim public sector land where the space can be better used for community purposes

['Potential funding for community green spaces'](#) which sets out the different grant schemes open to local groups, green space initiatives, allotment organisations or trusts, and also where to go to get help when looking for funding.

Vanguards

The Big Society vanguards [reported back](#) to Government over the summer on the work that they have achieved over the past year. The Prime Minister described the vanguards as 'great training grounds for change'. In each of the areas the local community wanted to take action to improve their area - from devolving budgets to street-level, to developing local transport services, taking over local assets such as a pub, delivering broadband to local communities or building more affordable housing - but had been prevented from doing so by barriers. A year on, with a firm commitment from Government to support these communities and a dedicated team of civil servants helping them overcome obstacles or bureaucratic log-jam, many of these ideas are now coming to fruition.

The Royal Borough



Windsor & Maidenhead

Councillor Burbage from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead said: "From enhancing transparency, delivering incentive schemes and promoting volunteering in many ways, the impetus from the Prime Minister, the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Cabinet Office and the rest of Whitehall has been valuable in spreading the message." **Rory Stewart MP for Penrith and the Borders** said: "Eden Valley has proved that barrier busting works. An amazing amount has been achieved in the last twelve months. It is a story of individuals, personalities, charisma. It is about listening to communities, who know more, care more and can do more than distant officials."

Cllr Sean Brennan, Leader of Sutton Council, said that “Being a vanguard has meant we have had access to central government policy makers and been able to describe specifically how national policies are implemented”.



Action for Rural Communities in Cumbria has looked in depth at the Eden Valley Big Society vanguard. The [report](#) identified a number of critical success factors including:

- highly motivated and skilled local participants;
- small amounts of funding for start-up & feasibility activity;
- available advice and support from a range of sources;
- new flexibilities & ways of working by departments & agencies;
- “barrier busting” support by civil servants.

Innovation in Giving

The Innovation in Giving Fund, announced in the Giving White Paper in May this year, has been launched by our delivery partner, Nesta. The Cabinet Office website has a [press release](#), and full details on applying to the fund can be found on [Nesta's website](#). In short, the £10m 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:



- ideas with the potential to be scaled-up and have impact at a national scale
- ideas that are more suited to being replicated at a local level

The first round of applications is open until 14 October. Applicants are being asked to complete a basic form accompanied by a three minute video. If you have any questions then get in touch with Rachel.Pascual@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk

Citizenship Survey

86 per cent thought people from different backgrounds got on well together in their area, compared with 80 per cent in 2003, according to a Government [Survey](#) published recently. However, the survey also found that just 39 per cent of people took part in some form of volunteering in the last year, the lowest level since 2001 and only a third of people participated in civic events such as a demonstration or petition, or contacting a local politician. **Do you have any thoughts or suggestions about why this is and how the figure could be increased? If you have examples that you wish to share then we can ‘shine a light’ on where things are working well at present.**

Big Society in Action - Community Futures in Action



We usually include a case study demonstrating big society in action and if you would like us to include details of your work in a future edition then let us know. Community Futures Kent (CFK) is an organisation run by, and with, people with a learning disability. Their aim is to connect people with a learning disability into community services that are used by everyone. This means building the confidence of public services and supporting people to participate fully in their local communities. CFK have been working with businesses such as Shoppers Anonymous Kent who trained them to be mystery shoppers so helping local

services learn about things they could do differently or better.

CFK worked with Kent Libraries and Archives to open up access to people with learning disabilities. They helped the National Trust at Knole in Sevenoaks to make tactile maps so that people with visual impairment can know where things are in the historic house. CFK have been part of the meetings with Network Rail and South-eastern about making their local train station step free in readiness for the 2012 Paralympics. They are also working with local volunteer centres to support people with a learning disability to be active volunteers in the community. For further information on all the above please visit www.valuesinc.co.uk

Big Society in Action - Head for Business

Head for Business is a small South London business support charity helping people of all ages get their creative ideas off the ground and turn them into business opportunities. It values enterprise in the community, particularly supporting young people, unemployed, women, or those over 50. Based in Deptford it champions an holistic approach to business support where the pastoral care needs have to be identified and supported together with the business skills needs. Since its formation nine years ago, Head for Business:



- has helped over 1500 individuals on their journey towards establishing [new creative enterprises](#), working in partnership with a range of organisations, including Leonard Cheshire Disability, Cockpit Arts, Lewisham College and Age Concern;
- run a successful training programme for 16-25 year olds and developed a programme providing [a business incubator for young entrepreneurs](#); and
- is currently working to make their services available to more young people across London and developing a talent building scheme - connecting professionals in the private and public sector with new entrepreneurs and early stage social enterprises. www.head4biz.com

Public Appointments

Department for Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS) are organising a Networking Event, as part of their work to encourage people from all backgrounds to apply for public appointments on the boards of their [sponsored public bodies](#). Eg the BBC Trust, English Heritage, Arts Council England, the Royal Armouries, the Science Museum and the National Heritage Memorial Fund. These events will provide an opportunity to network in an informal setting with current Chairs and Board Members and to discuss the public appointments process with those directly involved. It will take place on 1st February 2012 at the Imperial War Museum in London. Attendance is by invite only, please contact George.Cutts@culture.gsi.gov.uk or 0207 211 2046.

Participatory Budgeting



Participatory Budgeting involves local people in deciding directly how part of a public budget is spent. This helps tailor services closer to local needs, giving people more ownership of their community. Around 100 such schemes have been undertaken in England. The final report from the national evaluation of Participatory Budgeting, [Communities in the driving seat: a study of Participatory Budgeting in England](#) was published earlier this month. This report examines participatory budgeting projects in England and provides evidence on good practice from the areas involved in the research and practical tools to help undertake participatory budgeting.

It shows some of the ways this tool can encourage localism and build the Big Society by devolving decisions down to a lower and more local level.

It is very relevant to local public agencies and leaders who are involved in community engagement and in promoting the devolution of power. Amongst the findings in the evaluation are Participatory Budgeting can:

- help attract extra funds to deprived areas, including funding from other sources;
- lead to different projects getting funded from those which might have been chosen through other council processes;
- improve the level and quality of information to services providers to help them tailor services.

In addition, the benefits included bringing different people in a community together, increasing people's confidence in addressing local issues, and motivating people to form groups to tackle neighbourhood issues and get engaged in the community in other ways."

Interested in learning more? The Participatory Budgeting Unit are running a series of master-classes in Manchester on 4th October, 8th November and 7th December. Prices start at £50 for voluntary and community organisations. The workshops will offer participants the opportunity to explore how Participatory Budgeting is already working at Neighbourhood level, how it can be scaled up and also meshed with the current policy agenda around neighbourhood budgets, open public services and local empowerment in general. For further details contact Jenny Lazarus on 0161 236 9321 ext 2 or email jenny@participatorybudgeting.org.uk



Radical Future for Community Budgets



Community Budgets enable local public services partners, Voluntary and Community Services and communities to work together to redesign services across boundaries and pool budgets as they see fit, improving outcomes and reducing duplication and waste. DCLG are working closely with colleagues across government and in local government to achieve the Prime Minister's ambition to turn around the lives of 120,000 families – and will continue to develop Community Budgets in order to help

deliver this. The Government is looking to add momentum to this programme and will say more on this soon. We recognise that more and more councils want to pursue a Community Budget, and not just for families with multiple problems but for tackling other issues too – and we are helping them to do just that.

We are also taking practical steps to explore more radical approaches to Community Budgets. We want to test two different approaches:

- **Neighbourhood Level Community Budgets:** enabling a local community to co-design with local partners the service solutions that address their priorities and control the budgets that help achieve their goals
- **Whole Place Community Budgets:** co-designing an approach that brings together all funding on local public services in an area into a single pot.

We expect to issue a Community Budgets Prospectus in the next couple of weeks, presenting our proposals and inviting areas to set out their case for being one of the pilot areas.

If you are interested contact Laura.Cane@communities.gsi.gov.uk and we will make sure that you are sent a copy of the Prospectus when it is published.

People vote for their favourite parks and gardens



At a prestigious event in City Hall, London on 21 September, Baroness Hanham handed out 'People's Choice' awards to Green Flag winning sites that had been voted for by the public – with results proving that our most cherished spots are as diverse as the communities they serve. First place, with over 2000 votes, went to The Old Station, Tintern, Wye Valley as pictured

Baroness Hanham Green Flag Award congratulations to all this winners and to those People's Choice and They are all a real credit continue to push power communities more and encouraged to get future of treasured green



(pictured right) said of the winners; "My year's Green Flag Award schemes that have won Special Innovation Awards. to their communities. As we into the hands of local more people should be involved in shaping the spaces."

Did your local park or garden get nominated? Find out at <http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/GreenFlag/News/Default.aspx?newsID=8172>

The Green Flag Award scheme is the national quality standard for parks and green spaces. The scheme has strong synergy with DCLG's Localism and Government's 'Big Society' agendas. It is supported by over 900 volunteer judges, with urban green spaces being peer reviewed on an annual basis, and it is estimated that over 210,000 volunteers are actively involved in Green Flag Award schemes. In particular, the Community Award element of the scheme recognises the achievements of community and voluntary groups (the Community Award category saw a 13% increase in winners this year). Further information on the Green Flag Award scheme can be found on the website at <http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/GreenFlag/Default.aspx>

Parish and Town Councils – Localism in Action

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has just released their third Localism in Action publication, highlighting a number of case study activities carried out by parish and town councils across the country. With 9000 councils and 80,000 councillors this is a largely untapped resource but NALC are making great strides to try & harness this potential. [Click here](#) for a copy.

That's all for now but we would genuinely like to hear your feedback and thoughts. Please [send us an email](#) and feel free to forward to colleagues!

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