

# What we learnt at school

By Carl Wiper  
Senior Information Officer, CLES

## A report on the CLES Summer School



*Louise Ellman, MP and Adrian Colwell, Director, CLES addressing the Summer School*

This year's CLES Summer School, *'It's time to deliver'*, was held appropriately in Manchester, a city where 'regeneration is the only game in town', according to Manchester's Council Leader **Richard Leese**. One speaker, **Marilyn Taylor** referred to the 'celebrated series' of CLES Summer Schools. It had been a year since an array of speakers from the government and the Policy Action Teams had outlined the ambitious plans of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy to the previous Summer School. Rather than rehashing the

strategy, this event focused on the issue of delivery: what are the mechanisms for bringing about change, how are they functioning and what should we be doing in the future?

When we go to school, we hope to come away having learnt something. So, instead of providing a synopsis of every plenary and workshop, this issue of *Local Work* offers, in no particular order, some of the key concepts – and the contradictions – which emerged.

# LOCAL

# WORK

No 34 August 2001

## What we learnt at school

### A report on the CLES Summer School

By Carl Wiper  
Senior Information Officer  
CLES

Photo credit: Jim Duxbury

**Note:**

More detailed notes on the sessions and copies of some of the presentations are available from CLES.

*Local Work* is published by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies, Ground Floor, Barclay House, 35 Whitworth Street West, Manchester M1 5NG

Tel: 0161 236 7036  
Fax: 0161 236 1891  
Email: [info@cles.org.uk](mailto:info@cles.org.uk)  
Web: [www.cles.org.uk](http://www.cles.org.uk)  
ISSN: 09503080

The views expressed in *Local Work* are not necessarily those of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies

Editor: Pauline Sturges  
Tel: 01726 870 137  
Email: [paulinesturges@onetel.net.uk](mailto:paulinesturges@onetel.net.uk)

Printed by Russell Press, Nottingham

## Communities at the heart

In trying to define what's different about this government's approach to neighbourhood renewal, both **Louise Ellman** and **Atul Patel** spoke of the new emphasis on actively involving communities in regeneration.

For **Marilyn Taylor**, communities should be at the heart of the new regeneration agenda, but this means that the public sector has to let go and allow the community 'permission to do things differently'. Residents should be empowered as consumers of services, but also as producers, by creating new employment opportunities in residents' services organisations and community development trusts, and they should take a greater role in governance, through neighbourhood forums. This also creates a need for capacity building in the public sector to help auditors and contract managers deal with this new situation.

**Jenny Lynn** said the involvement of the community must add something; she feels that some tokenism surrounds regeneration and there must be clear reasons for involvement. She felt that there was a need to 'develop capacity' and create a community which knows why it wants to be involved and can participate on an equal basis.



Cathy Francis, Social Exclusion Unit

**Cathy Francis'** four principles for involving communities in regeneration are: identify, understand, consult and feedback. The first stage is to identify who the programme is targeting. It is important to move away from conceptualising certain social groups as 'marginalised communities' and instead to think of the local area in

terms of 'communities of interest'. Second, if there is a lack of understanding on what the key issues are, regeneration efforts will be misguided and local residents will become increasingly disillusioned and non-participatory. Consultation includes knocking on doors and talking to parents at the school gate as well as more traditional avenues such as community forums. Feedback is crucial, because a failure to explain the outcomes of community consultation exercises, what happens next, or the timescales of actions proposed will work to restrict future involvement.

**Sue Brownill** said there are different groups within the community which need to be recognised. She talked about her work on the role of women in regeneration in the West Midlands. According to the Urban White Paper, women are 'the backbone of the community', but they face structural barriers to participating more fully in its regeneration. Her toolkit for regeneration examines whether a project will bring equal benefit to men and women and has targets for involving women in monitoring and evaluation.

People are turned off by public meetings, surveys and forums, said **Portia Roberts-Popham**. In Huddersfield the private sector donated disposable cameras to local residents so that they could take pictures of what they liked and disliked about their area, while a film maker carried out roving interviews with people in pubs, temples and laundrettes for a short documentary. Once again, this is a way of capturing the differing views within a community.

As **Andrew Mawson** later pointed out, simply asking people what they want can itself be patronising, since they are not necessarily aware of all the options open to them.

## New strategy, new governance – new citizens?

The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy involves not only new programmes but also new mechanisms at a local

level for deciding priorities and allocating funds that are *de facto* new forms of governance. How are these shaping up, and what are the implications for the existing forms, that is, local authorities?

**Neil McInroy** presented the results of a study of existing Local Strategic Partnerships. He had found a spectrum of different approaches to LSPs; some are simply 'reshuffling the pack' while others are thinking more strategically and trying to add value by their work. Whether they will make a tangible difference to deprived areas remains unclear. **Nigel Rix** highlighted one example of an LSP, Hyndburn First, which is a limited company set up to carry out the council's economic development function, with other partners. He felt that a prescriptive approach to how LSPs should operate will hamper their work.

Neighbourhood management is supposed to be a key element in making neighbourhoods 'work', by putting someone in charge of improving services in a local area. However, as **Bob Colenutt** pointed out, neighbourhoods are affected by much wider economic and strategic issues, so that many of the problems can't be solved locally. What is called a 'neighbourhood' may not have a strong unifying identity. **Malcolm Kennedy** said that the usual problems of ensuring that the views of communities are adequately represented in neighbourhood management remain. However, there was a strong feeling that it is a feasible approach if everyone is prepared to work together.

Community planning is now well established in Scotland, and **John Macmillan** described how the process works in Dumfries and Galloway. Its plan is based on the three themes of enterprising and learning communities, inclusive communities and safe and healthy communities. Input from community councils has been vital, and the local authority together with Local Rural Partnerships will deliver the plan.

Where does this leave the local authorities? **David Sparks** felt that the councillor's traditional approach of 'knocking on every door' is still important. He was sceptical about the results of neighbourhood management

so far; it needs more democratic mechanisms. **Ines Newman** said that a new model of local democracy is emerging. A key task is to link the participative democracy of the new structures with the representative democracy on which local government has been based.



From left to right: **Ines Newman**, LGIU, **Tim Chamberlain**, CLES, **David Sparks**, LGA

Creating new forms of governance implies a different approach to citizenship. **Andrew Mawson** and **Dick Atkinson** were sceptical about an approach based on people's rights as citizens, and Mawson's concluding comment was that 'people become citizens by what they do'.

## Communities in business

The role of business in regeneration was flagged up from the beginning, with **Tom Bloxham's** account of the work of his Urban Splash company, and also his comment that many inner cities lack the social networks to support entrepreneurship. The dual need both to encourage local start-ups and investment by existing businesses was emphasised repeatedly.

**Andrew Carter** outlined several examples of how business is regenerating communities in the USA. While US cities have a stronger tradition of civic leadership, they also have the Community Reinvestment Act, which enables them to offer tax breaks to businesses. As a result, companies tend to be more involved, either directly as in Atlanta and Brooklyn, or through partnerships as in Newark and Harlem. The key is not to chase grants but to promote neighbourhoods as investment opportunities.

**Paul Hodson** brought it all back home with examples from the UK of company involvement in regeneration, including training local people alongside staff in IT and secondments from companies to community groups, which had proved very popular with the staff concerned. Some of these had arisen from a 'seeing is believing' tour of Wythenshawe organised by Business in the Community. This type of involvement benefits the companies concerned by raising their profile. The dangers of neglecting this were emphasised by **Erik Bichard**, who gave graphic examples of companies which had neglected corporate social responsibility; companies, like governments, need a 'license to operate', based on public acceptance.

**Andrew Mawson** gave a wealth of first-hand examples from Bromley by Bow of how real change can be achieved in poor areas by releasing human energy and letting enterprising people (those whom **Brian Dowds** called 'community sparkplugs') create and own the services they really need. Inevitably this calls for an entrepreneurial, rather than a bureaucratic approach: 'communities in business not communities in committee'.

## 'Council-run community centres are crap'

This *bon mot* from **Andrew Mawson** summed up a general scepticism that was voiced repeatedly about the effectiveness of the public sector in delivering regeneration.

**Mike Emmerich** compared UK cities unfavourably to the 'comeback cities' of the US. While our cities share many of the problems of the US, they lack the civic leadership to be found there. This is a legacy of the loss of employment in the 1980s and of the defensive battles fought by local authorities against the Conservative government. Staging the 'comeback' involves greater investment by the private sector in run down areas and a more flexible approach to contracting out services. In answer to

an objection that we should be looking to European welfare based models, he insisted that we cannot hope to revive the 'welfare monoliths' of the 1960s.

Describing the situation in Balsall Heath, **Dick Atkinson** said that all the public money spent on regeneration since the 1960s had been wasted, as things have actually got worse. He maintained that providing more doctors does not make people healthier and providing more police does not make them safer. Local people, rather than public sector professionals, have the answers, a view which was further developed by **Andrew Mawson**. Their view was that the public sector should get out of the way while we reinvent the welfare state.

## New partners

Regeneration is a crowded field, and the School heard from some of the other organisations that are taking on a wider role.

**Phil Barton** stressed the role that broker organisations such as Groundwork can play in facilitating regeneration. Public sector bureaucracies can't do it on their own, and bending mainstream funding, though desirable, is very difficult in practice. Trusted brokers can achieve results by working with communities, and he gave the example of the Sitesavers project, which had improved the quality of peoples' lives by concentrating on the issue of place.

The study tour to the Irwell Valley Housing Association showed how one Registered Social Landlord is taking a broad view of the problems faced by its tenants. After taking over the neglected Sale West estate from Manchester City Council, Irwell Valley commissioned a survey which identified five key concerns: crime, employment, young people, health and transport. It is working with its tenants in each of these areas and financing it largely from its own resources. Its Phoenix Centre helps unemployed people to compile CVs and search for jobs, and it has purchased courses from the local

college to ensure that they run. So far this year 50 people have been helped into jobs and 12 into training. Actively involving tenants and training them in management is key to this process.

Meanwhile the study tour of East Manchester saw an Urban Regeneration Company in action. Physical regeneration of derelict sites and unpopular housing is central to its work, but it is supplemented by attempts to repair the social fabric as well, through action zones and the New Deal for Communities.

## Join it up!

Joining it up is a guiding principle of the new approach, and the government is applying it at national, regional and local level, but there are gaps. **Louise Ellman** referred to the 'still unanswered role' of the Government Offices in regeneration, and she also questioned to what extent some key players at a local level, such as the health service and the police are really part of the new culture of accountability. The idea of bending mainstream funding to help deprived areas (and pockets of deprivation in more affluent areas) was repeatedly advanced as more efficacious than chasing grants, though there was little discussion of how this should be done. **Phil Barton** said that he could only think of one successful example, which was the creation of an intermediate labour market in Greater Manchester. One problem in joining up regeneration is the multiplicity of funding streams and the lack of management information. **Amobi Modu**, for example, admitted that the former DfEE had no idea how much money it was giving to the voluntary sector.

## Slums with central heating

This was how **Richard Leese** characterised the previous regeneration of Benchill in Manchester, which had improved the housing without making a difference

to people's lives. The point is that physical and social regeneration are absolutely interdependent, and in some cases they are being done by the same organisations. **Tom Bloxham's** Urban Splash has revitalised the deserted buildings in the centre of Manchester, but he's a property developer (and proud of it!) who is also helping to improve a local clinic in East Manchester and find a new head teacher for its school. The study tour to Moss Side and Hulme showed the substantial physical improvements that have been carried out, alongside the active employment policies of local firms such as ASDA. **Charlie Baker** provided a sober assessment of the extent of community input into the redesign of Hulme, commenting that 'involvement is defined by the parameters of power'.

## Getting beyond city limits

Northern cities and their discontents loomed large on the agenda, but issues of poverty and deprivation in the rest of the country cannot be ignored simply because they are harder to



*Jenny Lynn, West Central Halifax*

define and measure. **Rafiq Shohan** showed that in an apparently prosperous area such as Slough, the average income of residents is less than the average income for the jobs in the town, young people cannot afford to buy houses and there are over 3000 people on the council house waiting list. Both **Jenny Lynn** and **Tony Pike** showed that existing measures of deprivation do not reflect the real problems of rural areas. Social exclusion there is to do with low pay, rather than unemployment, and also inaccessibility and a lack of services such as social housing. This is

particularly acute for certain groups, such as elderly people.

## Time to deliver

'Urban regeneration is not something we will ever finish,' said **Tom Bloxham**, and **Richard Leese** suggested that, 10 years into the (second) regeneration of Hulme, we are still only half way through. Increasingly there seems to be a recognition that achieving real change is a long haul, but paradoxically, this also means that we need to be able to act more quickly. **Brian Dowds** expressed frustration with bureaucracy and said that his organisation will write a cheque on the spot if someone in the community has a good idea, and will give them eight weeks to demonstrate success. The main lesson we learned at this school is: it's time to deliver.

### Speakers mentioned in the report:

**Richard Leese**, Leader, Manchester City Council  
**Prof Marilyn Taylor**, Director, School of Applied Social Sciences, University of Brighton  
**Louise Ellman**, MP, Liverpool Riverside  
**Atul Patel**, Head of Division, Neighbourhood Renewal Unit  
**Jenny Lynn**, Chief Executive, West Central Halifax Project  
**Cathy Frances**, Social Exclusion Unit  
**Sue Brownill**, Oxford Brookes University  
**Portia Roberts-Popham**, Huddersfield Pride  
**Rev Andrew Mawson OBE**, Founder & Executive Director, Community Action Network  
**Neil McInroy**, Consultant, CLES  
**Nigel Rix**, Director, Hyndburn First  
**Bob Colenutt**, London Borough of Haringey  
**Malcolm Kennedy**, North West Development Agency  
**John Macmillan**, Dumfries & Galloway Council  
**David Sparks**, Local Government Association  
**Dr Dick Atkinson**, Chief Executive, Balsall Heath Forum  
**Andrew Carter**, One London  
**Tom Bloxham**, Chairman, Urban Splash Group  
**Paul Hodson**, Business in the Community  
**Erik Bichard**, Chief Executive, National Centre for Business Sustainability  
**Brian Dowds**, Director, Centre for Public Innovation  
**Mike Emmerich**, Prime Minister's Policy Unit  
**Phil Barton**, Director of Corporate Strategy, Groundwork UK  
**Amobi Modu**, Regional Co-ordination Unit  
**Charlie Baker**, Confederation of Co-op Housing Council  
**Rafiq Shohan**, Slough Borough Council  
**Tony Pike**, Countryside Agency