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## Common Purpose In Your Locality?

The Common Purpose Effect - Part 2



by Martin Edwards

Monday, 18th November 2013

One of the key characteristics of the Common Purpose effect is that it is often to be found within networked partnerships where leaders work collaboratively across organisational silos. One such partnership is Locality which forms the subject of today's case study. Locality describes itself as 'the national membership network for community organisations.' But how does it link to Government Policy?

Our first clue was obtained by reference to the [Conservative Home blog](#) [2] which published an article (31st March 2010) in which they wrote about new government policies which included:

- Creating a 'Neighbourhood army' of 5,000 full time, professional community organisers who will be trained with the skills they need to identify local community leaders, bring communities together, help people start their own neighbourhood groups, and give communities the help they need to take control and tackle their problems. This plan is based on the successful community organising movement established by Saul Alinski.
- Creating a Big Society Bank, funded from unclaimed bank assets, which will leverage private sector investment to provide hundreds of millions of pounds of new finance for neighbourhood groups, charities, social enterprises and other nongovernmental bodies.

But which organisations and individuals will be involved in this government policy to select, train and motivate these Community Organisers?

### The Big Society Bank

The Big Society Bank, now re-branded as [Big Society Capital](#) [3], includes [Geoff Mulgan](#) [4] amongst its membership.

Mulgan was previously Chef Executive of the Young Foundation and held various roles in the UK Government including Director of the Government's Strategy Unit and Head of Policy in the Prime Minister's Office. He was also founder and Director of the think-tank Demos.

According to William Clarke's [Tainted Word](#) [5], published in 2001:

Demos trustees bring together mind benders Sir Douglas Hague (former advisor to Margaret Thatcher), Martin Jacques (Co-founder of Demos, former editor of *Marxism Today*, the curiously anti-socialist journal) and Julia Middleton (Chief Executive of Common Purpose).

### Locality and Common Purpose

A [Civil Society News report](#) [6] in February 2011 revealed that:

Locality has been selected to lead the Government's £15 million programme to recruit and train 5,000 community organisers. Locality, which is the new charity formed through the merger of community organisations Bassac and the Development Trusts Association (DTA), will deliver the scheme with 11 partners, including Urban Forum and Voices4change England.

I was immediately able to identify a Common Purpose graduate linked to the merged organisations. This was [Alan Wallace](#) [7], the former Assistant Director for Regional Developments at the Development Trusts Association, London.

The Civil Society News report also told us that:

the community organisers programme was created by the Office for Civil Society in the Cabinet Office (OCS) and forms a key element of the social action pillar of the Big Society.

What other pillars of the Big Society are there?

The answer can be found on the [website of Voices4change](#) [8]. It says:

The Government's Big Society agenda seeks to take power away from politicians and give it to the people. It is closely linked to the localism and public service reform agendas. The Big Society is focused around three core pillars

- \* Promoting Social Action
- \* Opening up public services
- \* Localism and Community Empowerment.

Voices4Change England (V4CE) is a [national advocate](#) [9] for the Black & Minority Ethnic voluntary and community sector (BME VCS). Its website says that it was 'launched on 1st November 2011 as an independent organisation'. But just how independent is it? Voices4Change is a charity with a board of [nine trustees](#) [10], four of whom are Common Purpose Graduates.



Elizabeth Balgobin

The Independent Chair Elizabeth Balgobin is a [Common Purpose Matrix Graduate 1998](#) [11]. Before becoming Chair of (V4CE) Elizabeth was the Interim Chief Executive at Charities Evaluation Services, CEO at London Voluntary Service Council and at Hackney Training and Employment network'.

Karl Oxford was selected by the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber to design and manage community facilitation and cohesion programmes. In 2004, he was assigned lead responsibility for delivering the Home Office's new Early Investment (ChangeUp) Programme for voluntary sector development. He is a [Common Purpose Matrix Graduate 1993](#) [12].

Rupert Daniel is the Programme Director for the Black South West Network (BSWN), an NGO focussed on human rights, equality, access to knowledge and socio-economic inclusion. He is also Vice Chair of South West Stakeholders network, supporting civic participation in social and economic planning and of the South West Regional Race Forum. He is a [Common Purpose Matrix Graduate 1993](#). [13]

Jeremy Cook of the Black Training and Enterprise Group is a [Common Purpose Matrix Graduate 1996](#) [14]. Jeremy is a member of the Department for Work & Pensions Ethnic Minority Advisory Group and the Equality Scheme Reference Group. He is also a member of the Communities and Local Government's voluntary and community sector Board, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills Equalities Advisory Group, a non-executive Board Members of Greater London Enterprise and a Member of the Assessment Committee of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.



Jeremy Cook OBE, Director of BTEG with Nick Hurd, Minister for Civil Society, at the NCVO Award Conference 2011

### **Who exactly is behind the Organisation Locality?**

A visit to the Charity Commission website revealed it is a company registered with the Charity Commission as [Locality \(UK\)](#), [Charity No: 1036460](#) <sup>[15]</sup>. Of its' ten listed trustees three are Common Purpose graduates. These are Andrew Robinson, 20:20 graduate; Barbara Harbinson, Focus Graduate and Joanna Holmes, Matrix graduate. Here's a little more detail about the background of these individuals.



Andrew Robinson

Andrew Robinson MBE is a <sup>[16]</sup>director of [CCLA Investment Management Ltd](#) <sup>[17]</sup>. Previously he was head of Community Development Banking for RBS and NatWest. He was also the founding director of the UK's first community development finance institution (CDFI) and was more recently a member of the government's review of the community ownership and management of assets.

Barbara Harbinson is Chief Executive of [Halifax Opportunities Trust](#) <sup>[18]</sup> and its subsidiary companies.

Joanna Holmes has been CEO at [Barton Hill Settlement](#) <sup>[19]</sup> for the past seven years.

### **Kickstarter Organisations and Common Purpose**

The 'Locality' Charity has already recruited what it calls 'Kickstarter' Organisations which are engaged to support the recruitment of community organisers and act as local hosts. These 'Kickstarter' organisations are found in Bristol, Birmingham, London (South & East), Hull, Norfolk, Cumbria, Manchester and Cornwall.

It hadn't escaped our notice that Joanna Holmes of 'Kickstarter' Barton Hill Settlement, Bristol also sits on the board of Trustees of Locality (UK). She is also a member of the [Bristol Common Purpose Advisory Group](#) <sup>[21]</sup>. Funders for Barton Hill Settlement include [Quartet Community Foundation](#) <sup>[22]</sup>.



Deb Appleby

Deb Appleby, previous CEO of Quartet Community Foundation, Bristol spent her early career in Bristol as a chartered accountant before moving to run [Bristol Common Purpose and Chairing Barton Hill Settlement](#) <sup>[23]</sup>.



Caroline Duckworth

The current CEO at Quartet Community Foundation is [Caroline Duckworth](#) <sup>[24]</sup>. Duckworth was previously development director at Common Purpose UK, Managing Director at Common Purpose UK and Independent Assessor at the Appointments Commission.



Max Weaver

At [Birmingham Settlement](#) <sup>[25]</sup> 2 general managers and the Director of Finance were discovered to be Common Purpose graduates whilst in London we discovered past involvement by Max Weaver.

Weaver, who is [listed by CPEXposed](#) <sup>[26]</sup> as being with 'Kickstarter' Community Links London, is the Deputy Provost at London Guildhall University and is now also a Trustee at London Bridge Museum & Education Trust. Max holds the Degree '[Honorary Professor of Moscow International Higher Business School MIRBIS \(Institute\)](#) <sup>[27]</sup>'. This is an exclusive degree awarded by the Academic Council of MIRBIS Institute to people who have made 'a great contribution to the development of relations between our nations, collaboration and mutual understanding in the name of the younger generation and shaping public opinion'.

The 'Kickstarter' organisation in Manchester is Manchester Metropolitan University where we uncovered seven Common Purpose Graduates. These included four Pro-Vice Chancellors & Deans of Faculty, the Director of Education and the Head of Applied Community Studies.

The 'Kickstarter' organisation in Hull is the Goodwin Development Trust. Here we discovered that Common Purpose 2000 graduate [Kathryn Sowerby](#) <sup>[28]</sup> is Head of Organisational Development. Kathryn is a Panel Member at Keyfund Yorkshire & Vice Chair at Social Enterprise Yorkshire & Humber.

Cornwall appears to be covered by a Common Purpose Matrix graduate found within Penwith Community Development Trust, Penzance.

So we have 'Locality' populated by Common Purpose graduates, appointing 'Kickstarter' organisations, themselves also controlled by Common Purpose graduates, to action the government's £15 million programme to recruit and train 5,000 community organisers.

What was the procurement process by which 'Locality' was appointed as the 'selected partner' to deliver and train community organisers?

The answer recorded in [Hansard on 27th March 2012](#) <sup>[29]</sup> is certainly eyebrow raising:

The Cabinet Office ran an open and transparent procurement process through the Official Journal of the European Union. All bidders were assessed thoroughly against robust and published criteria...Locality was appointed..as they scored higher against the criteria than the other bidders.

This prompts two questions.

Firstly, how many potential bidders actually receive or have access to the Official Journal of the EU?

Secondly, for the procurement process to be transparent and not as cloudy as oxtail soup there should be no evidence of possible collusion between the Cabinet Office and Common Purpose which would suggest that the process was anything other than at 'arms length'. Anything less would suggest potential breaches of both the Ministerial and Civil Service Code. As a gentle reminder Item 4.1.4 of the [Civil Service Management Code, June 2011](#) <sup>[30]</sup> says:

Civil Servants must not misuse...information acquired in the course of their official duties to further their private interests or those of others. Conflicts of interest may arise from financial interests and more broadly from official dealings with,



or decisions in respect of, individuals who share a civil servant's private interests (for example Freemasonry, membership of societies, clubs and other organisations).

Readers should also be mindful of the 'behind the scenes' involvement of Gus O'Donnell, Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service prior to the establishment of the Coalition Government which both Cameron & Clegg said had been built upon principles of 'Unity & Common Purpose'.

Additionally, within his article '[Dark Actors Playing Games](#)'<sup>[31]</sup>, Brian Gerrish revealed that Cameron's Cabinet Office had been in a 'secretive dialogue with Julia Middleton to achieve a culture change in the Top 200 Civil Servants using the Common Purpose Model'.

Could we be witnessing jobs for Common Purpose 'useful idiots' being distributed by Common Purpose apparatchiks?

## The Big Society Is Not A New Idea

I have always found it difficult to grasp the concept of the Big Society. Whilst researching the [archive of the Urban Forum website](#)<sup>[32]</sup> I discovered a link to '[Mutual Action, Common Purpose: Empowering the Third Sector](#)'<sup>[33]</sup>.

Former Home Secretary, David Blunkett published this document for the Fabian Society in 2008. It sets out a wide range of proposals to support the third sector in the future and it includes recommendations on grants and commissioning, volunteering, and how cooperatives and social enterprises could be used as legal vehicles for the future running of local services such as libraries, community shops and pubs etc. Many of the proposed policies and mechanisms for implementing them, described as the 'third way' under NuLabour have simply been re-packaged as the 'Big Society'.

## The Training of Community Organisers

The Hansard Parliamentary record of written questions and answers on the subject of '[Community Organisers](#)'<sup>[29]</sup>, dated 27th March 2012 reveals that:

The Government are committed to train 5,000 community organisers by March 2015. These will be made up of 500 senior community organisers who will in turn train 4,500 voluntary community organisers...Senior community organisers identify and recruit voluntary community organisers from their local community..a total of 87 trained senior community organisers currently operate in [a number] of localities.

The website of Barton Hill Settlement very helpfully contains a [job description of a trainee Community Organiser](#)<sup>[34]</sup>. Under the subheading 'Training Information' it tells candidates that:

The programme begins with a three day residential training course provided by Re:Generate, which will give trainees the opportunity to get a much deeper understanding of 'Root Solution-Listening Matters' and the Community Organising role.

Trainees will then choose from a range of 'Go Deeper' learning options. This will last for the next six months of the contract, and allow them to respond to the needs of their community as different issues and projects arise and also to specialise in for example' community enterprise development, Alinski style citizen organising or the 'Root Solution-Listening Matters' process.

The UK Column has also learned that 'While Re:Generate provides the training to community organisers, it also employs its own community animators programme which is separate from the government-funded community organisers programme'.

## Article update 14th January 2020

Since this article was first published UK Column researchers have discovered three videos of particular relevance. In the first video, hosted on the [Locality youtube channel](#)<sup>[35]</sup>, Nick Forbes, Newcastle City Council Leader, endorses the [Keep it Local principles](#)<sup>[36]</sup>. Forbes is a [Common Purpose Matrix graduate](#)<sup>[37]</sup> gained in 2003 when managing Community Action on Health, Newcastle. The second video presentation concerns the [Future of Community Asset Ownership](#)<sup>[38]</sup> and speakers include Tony Armstrong, John McDonnell MP, current shadow chancellor and Hazel Blears, the former Labour Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government from 2007 to 2009. Tony Armstrong has been [Chief Executive of Locality](#)<sup>[39]</sup> since 2014. He was formerly a [policy adviser at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister](#)<sup>[40]</sup> between 1999 – 2006 at the time of John Prescott.

Those interested in the subject of cross sector partnerships, and their underlying objectives, might find this additional video of interest ([Locality Convention '19: Day one, Building power partnerships](#)<sup>[41]</sup>). The convention was chaired by Tony Armstrong and Vidhya Alakeson, Chief Executive of Power to Change. 'With £150 million endowment from the National Lottery Community Fund, Power to Change supports community businesses to create better places across England.' Vidhya Alakeson is a trustee of the Young Foundation and has a [career background in policy formulation in the health sectors](#)<sup>[42]</sup> of the United States and NHS England.

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