Localism: Harmony or Conflict in Transport Planning

How will the intangible nature of localism be interpreted and integrated into transport planning?

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## Abstract

Through the philosophy of localism, national government advocates the empowerment of local people through a transfer of power and responsibility from central government to the hands of local authorities and the community. However the relatively undefined nature of localism leaves the concept open to individual interpretation.

The importance of a shared understanding of political concepts is well documented in policy research, but the extent to which the concept of localism is defined, understood and incorporated in local transport policy is currently not clear. The potential minefield of power sharing that follows could lead to a less than harmonious relationship when delivering successful transport policies due to the intangible and subjective nature of the concept.

This research investigated the perceptions of local authority stakeholders and community groups involved with transport policy and delivery, to establish their interpretations of localism and how they envisage this impacting on their local area. The research identifies disparities in the variety of community involvement within the Local Sustainable Transport Fund Bids (LSTF), but also draws similarities in project delivery areas.

A shared understanding of localism is essential for local authorities and community groups to maintain a harmonious relationship when delivering transport programmes. The research indicated that although there was a board appreciation for the values of localism their interpretation and delivery of projects was varied.

If project delivery is decentralised to a community level it could become incredibly chaotic, leaving a balancing act for local authorities that would have to integrate community groups, achieve successful project delivery and meet wider strategic goals for the region.

# Introduction

## In 2010, the coalition government introduced the Localism Bill, which aimed to transfer decision-making power from central government to local authorities, communities and individuals. But what does ‘localism’ really mean for the delivery of transport projects in England? The introduction of the Localism Bill was coupled with the beginning of acute budget cuts for local transport projects yet alongside this, the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) was introduced as a potential source of funding for sustainable transport projects.

## This paper will first attempt to define what localism is; then go on to consider how localism will be delivered locally through sustainable transport projects. A review of LSTF bids coupled with a case study analysis will seek to understand how local communities would be involved in the delivery of local transport projects

## Finally the paper will draw upon all evidence reviewed to identify how far localism has infiltrated into local authorities’ delivery methods and whether - as some politicians claim – the localism approach will be a more harmonious way of providing the public with transport projects which fully meet their needs.

# Localism Review

## The coalition’s radical reforms aimed to decentralise elements of policy decision making from central government to local authorities and communities. The aim of this was to deliver services and facilities tailored to the needs of local people. This section will outline the principles of localism and the context for its introduction into mainstream politics.

### What is localism?

## Localism is a very broad concept, but focuses the delivery of political strategies at a local level. To find a definitive definition of localism is very challenging with the absence of a clear and coherent definition within government rhetoric. The following definitions identify the varying perceptions of localism: -

## *“Localism describes a range of political philosophies which prioritise the local. Generally they support ... local control of government, and local culture and identity*[[1]](#footnote-1)*.”*

## This internet-sourced definition is just one interpretation of localism. To support this view, Councillor Richard Kemp leader of the LGA described localism as:

## *‘Involving people, wherever possible, in the decisions that affect their life, and devolving to officers, members and civil society*[[2]](#footnote-2)*’*

## And Councillor Colin Barrow of Westminster City Council noted that:

## *‘Our guiding principle is that power should be held at the lowest possible level, whether it is individuals, communities, neighbourhoods, local institutions or local government*[[3]](#footnote-3)*.’*

## These interpretations highlight a shared understanding in the core values of localism, with difficulties centred on how the concept will be interpreted and implemented. Academics such as Emeritus Professors George Jones and John Stewart challenge the position that concepts such as localism should ever be defined noting that broad concepts, such as localism, such be treated as an approach to governing rather than prescriptive guidance. When combined with the limited definitions provided by government this leaves the concept and its subsequent implementation open to interpretation.

## Enabling Localism

## Localism is enabled in policy delivery through the decentralisation of power from central government to local authorities that places decision-making responsibility at the local level. The introduction of the General Power of Competence in January 2011 was *“intended to change fundamentally the way local government behaves, giving them the same capacity to act as an individual generally has, which will enable them to do anything apart from that which is specifically prohibited.”[[4]](#footnote-4).* The key aim for the introduction of this policy change was to enable greater flexibility for local authorities to create more innovative and entrepreneurial solutions. It removed the statutory constraints on local authorities and allowed them to react to the needs of the local community this included partnership working and the ability to help their communities in ways previously outside their remit.

## The coalition introduced six decentralising actions to aid the facilitation of localism: -

## • lifting the burden of bureaucracy;

## • empowering communities;

## • increasing control of public finances;

## • diversifying the supply of public services;

## • transparency; and

## • strengthening accountability of local people.

## These measures which were introduced to facilitate change have enabled local authorities to some extent to regain control of policy and project delivery for their area and have allowed local authorities to involve local people in projects as they see fit, corresponding with principles of localism.

### Transport funding and localism

## The introduction of localism to the planning system coincided with the streamlining of government funding for sustainable transport projects. To understand how localism will be integrated into transport planning it is important to understand the financial constraints and funding sources available.

## Since the coalition government came to power in May 2010, there have been financial cutbacks across all government funding streams; this has been particularly prevalent within the transport sector. For sustainable transport, funding has been funnelled into the LSTF. The government has pledged £560 million over four years in capital and revenue funding for local governments to deliver sustainable transport projects in their area. However this funding is not available to all local authorities, who have to submit a bid for a portion of the money. Only a selection of authorities will receive funding, with the government favouring applications that involve local communities and businesses.

## Coupled with this, the removal of ring fencing from transport funding has allowed movement of financial resources between the Integrated Transport Block and Transport Maintenance, with no statutory obligations for local authorities to invest in sustainable transport.

## The next section will review the LSTF bids and the level of community involvement outlined within them to assess how localism is being integrated within transport projects in practice.

# Localism in Practice: A review of LSTF bids

## The 73 LSTF bids that have been submitted provide an initial indication of how local authorities intend to tackle localism. To understand how this varies between local authorities a review of ten successful LSTF bids was undertaken to identify similarities and differences across a number of themes. This was used to identify if there is uniformity in how localism is being integrated into projects and whether this will lead to harmony or conflict.

## The review does not aim to be an exhaustive assessment of all sustainable transport policies implemented by each local authority, nor a critique of their methods of inclusion for localism, but rather an overview to provide an initial indication of how localism is being integrated into local transport policy. Specifically the review will highlight who will be involved with the delivery of sustainable transport projects through the identification of community groups and third sector organisations within the bids. It will then be possible to identify areas of transport planning and delivery where localism had greatest prominence and how this compares across the bids.

### Selection of LSTF Bids

## The LSTF bids selected for review were categorised first by geographical location, to ensure an even spread across England, and then by type of authority. The LSTF bids reviewed were Brighton and Hove City Council, Cumbria County Council in partnership with Lake District National Park Authority, Darlington Borough Council, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Nottingham City Council, Peterborough City Council, Devon County Council, Shropshire Council, Suffolk County Council and City of York Council.

### Criteria for review

## The criteria used to assess localism within the LSTF bids were:

## 1. Involvement of local people within the *planning and design* stage of the LSTF strategies;

## 2. Integration of local people and businesses through continued *consultation*;

## 3. Local involvement with local people and groups acting as *delivery* partners

### Planning and design

## The objectives of the LSTF packages were derived from a multitude of sources, with some local authorities basing their bids on extensive surveying and consultations from recent Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) and Local Development Frameworks community sessions. Alternative sources were targeted consultations with the general public, stakeholders and businesses to collect local views specifically related to the LSTF bids. The review identified that each local authority chose a different method on which to base its LSTF objectives. However for most of the reviewed bids consultations with community groups provided an important insight into local transport needs.

###  Consultations

## Consultations are often used as the key method for gauging the opinions of local people. It was interesting to note the variety and depth of public and private stakeholder consultations recorded in the bids, which ranged from relatively little collaboration to extensive research with the establishment of neighbourhood groups (as seen in Peterborough’s LSTF bid).

## Of the reviewed bids, Dudley, Peterborough and Nottingham seemed to have the most in-depth public consultations. In these areas consultations were conducted with local businesses, community groups and stakeholder groups. In particular, Peterborough also engaged people through neighbourhood council meetings, public exhibitor meetings with key stakeholders and resident groups. A public examination in Dudley formed the basis for the majority of the transport projects that were included within the LSTF bid.

## Approximately half of the bids included a community consultation group with local authorities placing an increased amount of decision making with neighbourhood groups. Darlington, amongst others, consulted with local disability groups to ensure their needs were considered in all areas of transport planning and in Peterborough the initiation of the small neighbourhood groups within each of the key localities ensured an even distribution of public opinions. For all of the consultation sessions there was the general inference that local public opinion would be collected through organised groups rather than on an individual basis.

## Consultations seemed to provide an outlet for the public to identify areas of transport planning that local people thought the LSTF should focus on. The review highlighted this would be far easier to achieve through community group involvement rather than talking to individuals. It was unclear if the consultations were an avenue to identify potential delivery partners or simply an information-gathering task. Beyond the consultation stage the level of individual and community involvement generally decreased.

## When local authorities design transport projects, good practice dictates that consulting with the community should form the basis for delivering a wholly ‘local’ project. Projects with a large amount of community involvement will encourage greater involvement from local people as they have would have a greater knowledge of the aims of the local authorities with transport projects in their area. Without this crucial input, challenges which communities face in relation to transport could be overlooked. That said, the lack of experience and expertise of many community groups in transport matters and of delivering high profile projects could lead to the suggestion of impractical projects that do not appreciate the wider implications for the transport network. Therefore role of the local authorities becomes ever more important in managing the expectations and demands of the local people to recognise their needs and interpret them to develop transport projects that are based on needs and sound evidence.

### Delivery

## Community involvement in the delivery of transport projects was strongly related to the type of intervention the council were looking to introduce. As expected there was variation across the bids, ranging from an in-house delivery team at the council carrying out all of the projects with minimal community involvement, to other authorities who involved community groups at higher levels of planning and in some cases offered them the opportunity to sit on the stakeholder decision board.

## The LSTF bids that were reviewed provided evidence that indicated community involvement was concentrated within the areas of marketing and raising awareness. This could be because third sector organisations and community groups have the skills and connections that allow them to engage with local groups and individuals. In addition, there was an absence of community involvement in areas of policy and strategy development and the delivery of more infrastructure based projects

## Although this review has assessed the involvement of local communities within sustainable transport delivery, the validity is reliant on the amount of information provided in the LSTF bids. In many cases although community groups and local businesses were cited within the bid, there was generally relatively little information regarding which areas they would aid with delivery. In many cases their involvement seemed limited to providing letters of support for the package. It appears that not all local authorities have finalised the mechanisms for implementing their delivery plans, however the content of the bids suggests that delivery will be one of the key areas to utilise community involvement.

### Conclusions

## The review identifies that localism is filtering into local transport planning, however the extent and form of inclusion is incredibly varied. A number of similarities were identified across the strategies that relating to localism.

## Firstly, in terms of consultation, most authorities consulted with the public prior to submitting their LSTF bids. The methods that each authority used to investigate public opinion varied by location however there were overarching trends for workshops and drop in sessions that were carried out for the development of the LTP3 and LSTF projects.

## For the delivery of LSTF projects, local people and businesses were generally involved with behaviour change elements, including raising awareness and promoting transport projects. In some communities local area action groups had been organised, but this was not a common theme.

## The variety of projects introduced through the LSTF largely relates to the way local authorities and the public have interpreted the values of localism and how public opinion and local authorities have influenced the transport choices for that area. The following chapter will explore in more detail how localism is being introduced in a case study of Nottingham city.

# Delivering Localism: Nottingham Urban Area Key Component bid

## To support the review of LSTF bids, this section will focus on how localism is being introduced into transport projects in Nottingham. The case study will highlight areas of community involvement within the Nottingham Urban Area LSTF bids drawing upon interviews with the local authority and community groups. Interviews were conducted with Nottingham City Council and two local community groups: - Pedals, a cycling campaign group and Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire (RCAN) a rural community organisation which were both cited within the Nottingham Urban Area key component bid.

## Nottingham was selected as the case study example due to its successful LSTF bid and its reputation for delivering transport projects within the East Midlands area. Alongside this, the Nottingham Urban Area bid specifically noted community involvement as a core element of its projects indicating that the concept of localism was incorporated within it.

### Review criteria selection

## For continuity the same criteria will be used for analysing the case study example as were used in the review of the LSTF bids.

### Planning and design

## The development of Nottingham’s LSTF bid follows robust research through consultations with local businesses and interest groups. Key themes of the LSTF bid reflect similar bid proposals that were put forward to the previous government, with ideas based heavily on projects that included community delivery programmes. Despite the change in government the delivery methods and ethos of the bid proposed by the City Council matched with the ideals of central government. This synergy between project bids highlights that Nottingham was already planning to involve local people within their delivery structure before the coalition pushed the localism concept forward.

## Nottingham’s LSTF bid focuses on a new way of engaging with the public rather than introducing new transport projects, the bid *‘is more about making people aware of what is available, where to find information. Not a new offer but connecting people[[5]](#footnote-5).’* Therefore, extensive consulting with local businesses and community groups helped to guide the principles that were underpinning the bid. The limited change to the direction of the projects relates to the successful integration of previous projects. One example of this is the Ucycle project delivered by Sustrans which is a continuation of a previous successful project.

### Consultations

## For their LSTF bid, Nottingham City Council used the Greater Nottingham Transport Partnership (GNTP) to gain consultation contacts. An external consultant conducted the consultations and although initially experienced difficulty in gaining access to the groups, once the objectives of the project were explained, groups were willing to participate. This approach could be criticised due to its selective capture, as there was relatively little consultation with the general public. However due to the relatively constrained timescales the GNTP provided a ‘ready-made’ pool of engagement.

## From interviews with community groups there was a mixed response in their awareness of LSTF consultations. Pedals, the community cycle campaign group, were involved from the initiation of the project. The LSTF bid was taken to the Greater Nottingham Cycling Development Group (which meets every 2 months) for consultation. This allowed Pedals to express their views of current and future transport projects along with other cycle interest groups in the area (Sustrans, CTC). RCAN who are currently involved with the delivery of transport projects, found it challenging to become involved with the consultations and only after enquiring with the council were they included within the bid. This case study only features interviews with RCAN and Pedals and did not contact all groups that were involved with the consultation, thus it is difficult to establish how well consultations filtered into all community groups. If further research were to be carried out it would be interesting to investigate further the perceptions of those people who were not consulted about the development of the LSTF bid and compare how their perceptions differ from those who were involved.

## One project included in the LSTF bid is the establishment of a community travel hub. This will provide an avenue for continual consultations with the public and community groups and will be project managed by a third sector organisation. A Smarter Travel Neighbourhood Co-ordinator, also employed by the third sector organisation, would act as the main point of contact between the council and the public. The co-ordinator will foster a volunteer peer network of community champions to act as points of contact, service sign-posters and advocates for local travel needs building on the Changemakers model already in operation for the ‘Decade of Better Health’ health promotion programme. Thus although there are no structured consultation sessions with the council, this project in-particular focuses on raising awareness of travel options and consultations with the public.

## Overall, the proactive working relationship that the council has with Pedals is a good working example of localism; however this does not necessarily stretch across all groups. There is some disparity in the level of engagement between the council and the community and volunteer network. This highlights that it will continue to be challenging for local authorities to consider the views of all local interest groups and individuals and this could lead to an inharmonious relationship with some local groups.

### Delivery

## The majority of projects put forward within the LSTF bid will be co-ordinated by Nottingham City Council, with some of these delivered through third sector organisations. One example of this is the continuation of the successful UCycle project, which will be delivered by Sustrans. Although this project is not new to the Nottingham area it will receive further funding because of its success in increasing cycling numbers amongst university students.

## The development of a community travel hub and Smarter Travel Co-ordinator will be a new project in the area and will be delivered by a local third sector organisation and project managed by the council. These two examples highlight third sector project delivery.

## Within the interviews with both the city council and community groups there was a general consensus regarding the potential pitfalls that could occur when delivering projects based on community and volunteer involvement. With generating and harnessing local interest identified as the greatest challenge and hence biggest risk. The city council has introduced measures to ensure community involvement should there be problems when recruiting volunteers. These include drawing upon the volunteer resource-base that was established as part of the ‘Decade of Better Health’ campaign in Nottingham. These volunteers are already experienced in helping promote active travel and smarter choices and therefore well placed to assist with the promotion of travel options as part of the LSTF project. In addition, Nottingham Community and Volunteer Service (NCVS[[6]](#footnote-6)) have been identified by the council to be well-placed to manage the recruitment and development of the volunteer network.

## RCAN highlighted that when working with volunteers it is important incentivise volunteering to encourage uptake. This is not a financial incentive but to provide volunteers with personal and professional development skills to increase work satisfaction this is being successfully implemented by RCAN to retain involvement from its volunteers. One example of incentivisation is developing driver skills. As a volunteer for the Wheels to Work project volunteers have the responsibility for assisting the delivery transport services for those who have limited access to transport options.

## This case study has identified that the level of community involvement across project areas is quite varied. Of the two groups interviewed, RCAN are involved with the delivery of the Wheels to Work scheme however, this is again a continuation of a successful project. Pedals noted that their project delivery involvement would be relatively restricted as they are not a citywide group. Instead they would be aiding delivery by raising awareness in their local areas and through RideWise to ensure cycling is considered within all schemes.

## In this case, involvement in delivery has been based on previous experience of delivering similar projects. This does raise the question of how new community groups or individuals could become involved if there is not the financial budget and resources for training. In turn this could lead to a lack of community groups that have the experience to deliver these projects. It is also interesting to note that a number of the projects delivered by the community and third sector organisations are continuations of projects that are already in operation. This highlights that local people are already involved in delivery of many of Nottingham’s transport projects, therefore the principles of localism seem to some extent to already be in use

### Conclusions

## The case study has highlighted how community groups and third sector organisations have become involved with the design and delivery of projects within the LSTF bid. In general, the consultations were conducted through pre-selected organisations, which may create problems in establishing how representative the findings are for the whole of the community. However the relatively short timescale available to carry out consultations prior to submitting the LSTF bid meant that using pre-selected groups was the most time efficient method.

## The council noted that community groups with previous experience of delivering similar projects provided assurance of effective project delivery. Some of the projects therefore will simply be a continuation of collaborative working already in operation.

# Discussion

## This paper has aimed to provide an overview of how local authorities are incorporating localism within their transport projects, drawing on Nottingham as a case study location. This discussion will highlight how the six decentralising actions proposed by the government May interact with new models of delivering local transport projects.

## **Defining localism** is the first step to understanding how to implement transport projects using this concept. Despite extensive research, prescriptive guidance on localism in the current literature was clearly absent. The paper highlights that local authorities have a shared understanding of what the localism concept aims to achieve, but the lack of best practice guidance will inherently lead to different interpretations being applied across local authority projects. However, this lack of practical guidance may not be an barrier to delivery of localism as allowing local authorities to interpret the concept and apply it as they see fit is in keeping with the spirit of the concept.

## This research identified some scepticism regarding how localism can actively achieve the inclusion of local people within project delivery, with apprehension regarding devolving responsibility completely down to an individual level. To effectively identify how localism is being integrated into local transport policy it is possible now to reflect back to the six government initiatives, which were introduced to decentralise policy to the local authorities.

## The introduction of the general power of competence has **lifted the burden of bureaucracy** allowing local authorities to control the direction of transport strategies within their area without having to follow national guidelines. In terms of localism, this has enabled local people to help mould LTPs to meet their needs. Having reviewed individual projects within LSTF bids, it is apparent that local authorities are diversifying the types of projects planned in their local area. However, whether these diversified projects meet the needs of both local people and wider local transport objectives is still unknown. Although the General Power of Competence has created more freedom for local authorities, it is still debatable whether it has truly lifted the burden of bureaucracy, for example funding through LSTF is controlled by central government and only released based on specific criteria set out at a national level.

## That said, delivering projects solely based upon public opinion could bypass the reasoned and researched knowledge base which projects are currently built upon. With very few examples of how projects have been implemented using the principles of localism in the past, it is difficult to predict the uptake and demands of each local authority area. Thus, although public involvement is essential to understanding local opinion for transport projects, there is the danger the ill-informed decisions could lead to complications for the future transport network. The consequences for ‘widening a road’ or ‘adding an extra lane’ may not be fully understood by members of the public. It will be the responsibility of local authorities and transport professionals to manage the expectations of local people and advise them of the implications for each potential project suggested.

## **Empowering communities’** means allowing local people to influence and aid the delivery of local transport projects. Enabling communities to affect local authority decisions from the design stage creates the opportunity for people to become integrated with transport projects from the beginning. Consultations provide an avenue for local people to express their opinions regarding local transport needs. Without them, the representativeness of the bid could be questioned. The practical challenges associated with empowering communities include managing increasing numbers of community groups, which could be a laborious, expensive, and time-consuming task.

## This paper highlights numerous cases locally of people becoming integrated into the decision-making process and within the reviewed bids there appears to be a relatively harmonious working relationship with community groups and local authorities. However this may not be true across all areas of the UK, and some local authorities may experience difficulties with too little or too much public involvement. They will need to take responsibility for this and effectively manage the process to achieve a harmonious balance.

## There are numerous examples within the LSTF bids that showcase collaborative working between local authorities and community groups. As part of Darlington Borough Council’s LSTF bid they identified the Tees Valley Rural Community Council as committed to working with rural communities to identify issues and potential solutions relating to travel. In Shropshire local environmental groups and social enterprises will be key partners and take a leadership role in delivering local community car clubs. Finally, in York a community interest company (Bike Rescue) will be working in partnership with the city council to operate and manage the Hub Station which will provide cycle parking and changing facilities for cyclists to the rail station.

## Alterations to the **control of public finances** were some of the most notable and early changes accompanying the introduction of localism. The establishment of the General Power of Competence and removal of ring fencing has allowed local authorities to ascertain control of where funding is applied to transport projects. The rapid turnaround in financial freedom and the accompanying responsibility to effectively utilise limited funding resources will lead to important decisions for local authorities. Those local authorities that do not receive LSTF funding will have the added responsibility of finding alternative funding sources to support the delivery of transport projects. It will be interesting to note the level of community involvement within these areas, and whether participation in project delivery is higher to compensate for the lack of additional funding.

## Through **diversifying the supply of public services**, local authorities can utilise resources provided by local community groups and businesses within local transport projects. The review highlighted a number of examples from local authorities that have cited the inclusion of third sector organisations and community groups as delivery partners in their LSTF bids. However, community groups involved with project delivery (from reviewed LSTF bids) have often had previous experience of working with local authorities to deliver transport projects. It is difficult to say at present how successful this integration has truly been as many projects are yet to begin. However it will depend largely on a harmonious working relationship between the local authorities and their delivery partners to delivery projects that meet both of their goals.

## The publication of LSTF bids by each local authority illustrates a move towards **increasing transparency** between local authorities and communities by making the aims of local transport policy easily available for public viewing. This increased information sharing should enhance public understanding of transport projects within their local area. Transparency relies heavily upon local authorities revealing detailed transport strategies and financial expenditure for the delivery of projects within their LSTF bids. This will undoubtedly expose them to greater scrutiny from the community. Relating back to the LSTF bids, the varying levels of information detailed within them highlights that information sharing is relatively uneven, with some of the bids providing a detailed breakdown of strategies and budget allocation for each aspect of the project with others providing a more general overview where the budget will be used within the LSTF bids.

## **Strengthening the accountability of the community** is a method of encouraging sustained involvement in transport projects from local people. Involving local people within the development of LSTF bids was achieved by increasing public consultations to assess the local issues on the transport network. Consultations were a part of most LSTF bids; however there is great variety between the bids in terms of the type and number of community groups involved, with some local authorities just focusing on a small number of businesses and others consulting a wide range of stakeholders. The research highlighted that community groups felt their involvement was important in shaping the local transport projects due to be delivered through the LSTF, and the consideration of public opinion was vital in terms of designing and delivering relevant projects. It will be interesting to note if these organisations feel that their accountability is increasing as they take on greater responsibility for delivering projects.

### Summary

## In summary, despite the relatively ill-defined nature of localism,, local authorities are attempting to integrate it within transport projects and tailor it to meet local circumstances. The review showed disparities in the application of localism, with public involvement concentrated within particular aspect of project delivery, most commonly marketing and raising awareness rather than larger infrastructure projects. As such, it will be interesting to see over time if localism and local people become more integrated in transport projects, thereby increasing their accountability and responsibility as their experience of localism in practice grows.

## Looking at the wider perspective for integrating localism, there appears to be a relatively harmonious integration of local people in planning and design, consultation and delivery. However at this early stage of project delivery it is difficult to assess whether this harmony will continue. The disadvantages associated with delivering transport projects under the localism concept are evident in both consultation and delivery stages. In terms of consultation, maintaining a high level of consultation with the public will be challenging for local authorities where communities show a limited interest in becoming involved with projects. In terms of delivery, similar problems may occur relating to the management of the groups who are involved. As the number of delivery partners increases, the responsibilities of the local authorities to effectively manage these groups will become more complex and time consuming. If localism were to be devolved to an individual level this is likely to lead to ineffective and problematic project delivery.

# Conclusion

## This research has investigated how the relatively intangible concept of localism can be interpreted and integrated within local transport delivery. The radical changes to transport funding combined with the introduction of the concept of localism has placed greater responsibility in term of transport delivery into the hands of the local authorities and community groups.

## Despite the absence of a definitive definition for localism, the review of LSTF bids identified that local authorities are embracing localism and the inclusion of community groups within their transport projects at the planning and design, consultation and delivery stages - all be it to varying degrees.

## This integration appears to be relatively harmonious, with local authorities and community groups working effectively together. However all of the projects are still in their early development stages with many yet to be implemented. Therefore the real challenge for local authorities is still to come. As such, incorporating localism in the implementation of transport projects will not be without its difficulties; and local authorities should carefully prepare to manage the interests of community groups and the public thus ensuring the effective delivery of proposed transport projects.

## The recent royal assent of the Localism Bill highlights the continued importance of integrating local people within Government thinking. Therefore it is imperative for local authorities to plan effectively and learn quickly from each other in terms of the best methods for engaging and integrating local people. This is made evermore important due to the limited evidence illustrating past experiences of delivering projects in this manner, not only in transport planning but also across all areas of governance.

## This paper has shown how localism is being used to develop transport projects that reflect the needs and desires of local people. At this early stage it is impossible to say how effective it will be as an approach in the longer term. While increased community involvement has the potential to bring a fresh approach and perspective to transport delivery there is the possibility that increased community involvement could lead to the delivery of projects based on the whims of public opinion at the expense of technical objectivity. However where local authorities are able to balance these two factors localism has the potential to provide a valuable addition to the current transport planning toolkit.

## Further research should be carried out to monitor the development of the concept and its continued integration within transport planning. Particular attention should be paid to how LSTF projects are performing in one year’s time and if the role of community groups has changed as localism becomes more embedded (if at all) within the delivery of local transport projects.

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