

Extra Local | News from Big Local areas

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Big Local

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Issue No.2

September 2019



Stamford boating lake comes alive with zorb balls

Credit Flickr – N 6642

Welcome to Extra Local

By Matt Leach

Hello and welcome to Big Local Connects 2019 and this, our second edition of *Extra Local*.

This year's paper is packed full of stories celebrating projects pioneered by Big Local areas across the country.

It has been a pleasure, over the past year, to visit so many of your areas and witness the brilliant ways that you are working with neighbours, partner organisations and each other to lead change within your community. I am continually humbled and impressed by your efforts and hope that you will experience something of the same from reading this newspaper.

The projects and topics that jump from the pages are vivid and diverse, with stories taking us to places where people are building confidence and skills they never knew they could, through to communities reigniting their local economy.

Please ask questions and get involved in whatever way you can (you can see more of my top tips for making the most of your time on page 3).

I hope you enjoy this year's Connects and have a rewarding year ahead. We look forward to seeing what brilliant ideas emerge next.

Pushing the boats out

RIDGE HILL BIG LOCAL

By Karen Rees-Unwin & Imogen Faux

As a booming summer season comes to an end, the once neglected Stamford Park boating lake and Chadwick Dam is on its way to becoming a self-sufficient business. Just three years ago, the lake, now teeming with rowboats, kayaks and zorb balls, was accruing leasehold debt and on the brink of closure. Ridge Hill Big Local and its newly set up social enterprise business, Ridge Hill Big Local Enterprises approached Tameside Council with their vision for the space and in 2017, won a twenty-five-year lease on the area for a low rate.

The two lakes are an important part of the community's history.

The lakes have long been a local treasure. In restoring them, a strong tradition has been revived.

"Engaging communities can be hard," reflects Big Local rep Anne Sherriff. "But when you hit on something they're already passionate about, the energy comes from the people. That's why the boating lake is flourishing".

The project is run by Ridge Hill Big Local Enterprises, set up as an income stream to support itself and Ridge Hill Big Local activities. Big Local vice-chair and Volunteer Director of the social enterprise business, Karen Rees-Unwin and community engagement officer Rob Bishop manage the lakes and channel trade into various forms of social investment – from education, to health initiatives, to career development for young people. Initial grant writing enabled

the transformation of Chadwick Dam. Kick-started by Big Local, funding was secured from the Angling Trust, Transport for Greater Manchester, the Forestry Commission and People's Postcode Lottery. With it, angling platforms, pond dipping and nature activities were brought to the area, transforming the dam from a forgotten space into a thriving hub of social action.

In early 2019, a £100,000 grant from Power to Change allowed the team to buy new equipment and begin further transforming the boating lake in early 2019. As a result, they are fast becoming recognised as the area's watersports centre and nature reserve, attracting a growing crowd of day visitors from the surrounding parklands in addition to locals. "It's definitely the grants that have

"The key ingredient is passion, from the leadership and from the people"

allowed things to move forward so rapidly," reflects Karen, who has been proactive in seeking donor support since the lease on the lakes was won.

The parkland is also used by staff and patients from next-door Tameside Hospital for health walks, and Ridge Hill Big Local Enterprises

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TAKE ME HOME!

WE'VE PRINTED ENOUGH COPIES OF THIS NEWSPAPER SO EVERY BIG LOCAL AREA CAN TAKE HOME TEN COPIES

We will be capturing Big Local Connects 2019 on camera. If you have any concerns about photos, please speak to a member of staff



EXTRA LOCAL
September 2019

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Extra Local has been published by Social Spider CIC on behalf of Local Trust.

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Registered in England
and Wales | Charity
number 1147511 |

Company number
07833396



News

Learning on the job

Winterton Big Local's growing apprentice scheme



Apprentice Beth at her local medical practice

WINTERTON 2022 BIG LOCAL

By Jessie Powell

Winterton 2022 is investing in its future by providing apprentice-

ships in partnership with local businesses in North Lincolnshire. The project, which launched in 2015, has trained almost 20 apprentices across a variety

of industries, from medicine to mechanics.

With an investment of £60k, it's one of the area's main projects and looks to empower both individuals and local businesses through training and support. So far, around 75% of apprentices have gone on to be employed by their host organisation.

Beth, who is currently undertaking a medicine dispensary apprenticeship at the local medical practice said: "The apprenticeship has been such a great opportunity for me and I feel like it's providing the skills and the knowledge I'll need to progress with my career."

Winterton 2022 has an ambitious plan to continue investment in training, helping meet skills-gaps in the area to enable local industry to thrive.

As well as enthusiasm from local people and businesses,

partnership working has been vital, as Kerrie Prowting, Winterton 2022 co-ordinator, explains. "To run the scheme, we work with a charity who employ the apprentice and handle the admin that goes with that, as well as the liaison with local colleges regarding progress."

In addition to receiving support from the intermediary organisation, businesses employing an apprentice receive 50% of the apprentice's salary costs.

Jackie Smith, who employed Beth at the medical practice said, "We didn't know much about apprenticeships before we were contacted to take part in the scheme, but we're really glad we signed up."

"We've taken on two apprentices, one in admin and one in dispensary and they've been brilliant additions to our team, I would certainly recommend other businesses to sign up."

Understanding the dangers

Training tackles the threat of child grooming

NORTH MEETS SOUTH BIG LOCAL

By Ola Kanu & Louise Tickle

Ola Kanu, community co-ordinator, North Meets South Big Local, reports:

It could start in a setting as innocuous as a fast food shop, but one thing is sure: groomers are extremely creative in the ways they entrap children and young people.

In response, our Big Local partnership decided to pilot a new anti-grooming education programme, so that students and parents in our part of Chadwell Heath, Greater London, would be prepared.

Inspired by a talk given by Paul McKenzie at a Big Local Youth Exploitation & Violence Cluster, we identified that children in the

transition between primary and high school are particularly vulnerable. The shift from being big fish in primary school to inexperienced 'newbies' can leave young people open to potentially damaging 'friendships'. So, we ran sessions for children in years 5 and 6, equipping them for the move to secondary education.

Working closely with Paul McKenzie and Marks Gate junior school, tailored materials on grooming were created for both parents and children and approval was given for the project. As a result, 156 primary students attended six sessions entitled, "Be Safe", spanning topics such as friendship, peer pressure, and who you can trust.

By the end of the sessions, 98% of children who participated said they better understood the dangers posed by grooming. "It taught me how to be more careful" said one

child. "Paul made it easy to understand and he was really funny" said another.

We felt it was important to extend the training to parents and guardians, too, so laid on four "Be Groom Safe" sessions specially designed for adults. One hundred staff, parents and school governors came to the course, where they learnt about the signs and stages of grooming relationships, the manipulation tactics groomers use, and other related issues. Some adult participants expressed a fear that their teenage children or friends might already have been targeted.

Marks Gate School Head, Karen Taylor, reported that the event had been useful. "All teachers said how good the training was and how it has made them so much more aware."

Parents commented that the training was "honest, if very upsetting

to watch and listen to."

All who attended said they were more aware of grooming techniques as a result and had a better idea of how to identify if their child was at risk.

Looking at feedback from the workshops, our senior Big Local partner, Angela Gray, said that a lack of awareness had been identified among parents and the community.

"It is vital that we continue providing opportunities to increase understanding of the danger of grooming, and build on our partnership with specialist organisations, the community and educational bodies to continue offering these sessions," she said.

North Meets South's longer-term aim is to integrate the workshops into the transition programme for year 6 students, undertaken by all students just before the school summer holidays.

Bridging the gap

Collyhurst's steel bridge connects residents to community

COLLYHURST BIG LOCAL

By Louise Tickle

The bridge, which was officially opened at a Celebration Day on 16 May 2019, replaces a wooden crossing that had been condemned as unsafe and closed to the public over a decade ago.

Funded by Collyhurst Big Local, the bridge crosses the River Irk and links Smedley Dip to Collyhurst making walking routes to local amenities shorter and safer.

Co-Chair of Collyhurst Big Local John Compton said "There's such busy traffic here, walking routes we've restored, and now this bridge, mean it's massively easier for kids to walk to school and there's also a way for parents to take buggies home. It's safer for everyone and it's going to help people who live here enjoy their area and walk between the different estates that have been cut off from each other by big roads."

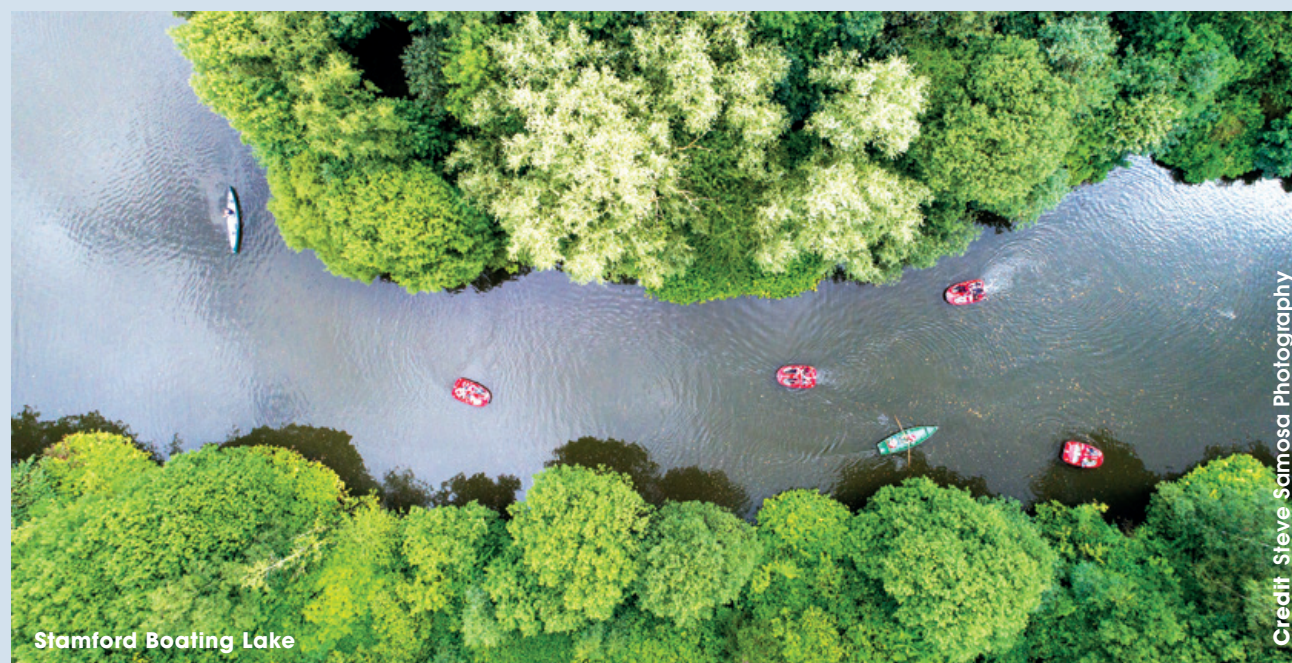
Within sight of the gleaming tower



Co-chair, John Compton with engagement worker, Sue Bowen

buildings in Manchester City centre, the new bridge provides the final link in the partnership's "Connecting Collyhurst" project, joining up old pathways around and across a historically important river valley

that was once home to dye works, corn mills, paper mills, ropemakers and quarrying. The bridge is an essential link for pedestrians, both in their day-to-day travel, and in connecting with the local area's past.



Continued from Page 1

have recently acquired a grant to plant a sensory garden which will be accessible to both the public and long stay hospital patients. The lakes have also helped enrich the younger generation's experiences; with numerous school,

scouting and youth groups taking wildlife trips to the lakes, whilst a team of holiday workers between the ages of 14 and 30 assist a fulltime staff member to run the boating lake in open season.

"The lakes are getting busier every year," Karen remarks. A lot of external funding was needed to get things up

and running, but she believes that the business is now sustainable.

"This is a Big Local area that has been brave – willing to take risks for the sake of enterprise," says Anne Sherriff. "This has been key to their success, but the other key ingredient is passion, from the leadership and from the people."

People

Elaine Lovell: the person behind the cashpoint campaign

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Matt's top tips to get the most from Big Local Connects 2019



Matt Leach is Chief Executive of Local Trust

We want everyone who attends Big Local Connects to have the best time possible so take a quick look at our tips below to make sure you get the most out of it...

- 1 Ask questions! Whether it's in a session or around the venue Connects is all about learning, so don't be afraid to ask.
- 2 Complete the human bingo on page 6 for an easy ice breaker
- 3 Explore the marketplace, meet Local Trust staff and see what else is on offer
- 4 Share your experience and photos using #Connects19 & tag us @LocalTrust
- 5 Take time to chill out at the beach (our dedicated wellbeing space in Gallery 1)
- 6 In a group? Why not split up so you can attend more sessions
- 7 Check the event programme on page 7 and pick the sessions that matter most to you
- 8 Get creative and contribute to the Big Local allotment art installation
- 9 Fill in your postcard and post it at the marketplace for a chance to win a teapot!
- 10 Pick up copies of Extra Local to take back to your area

Sport

Volunteers in Slade Green step up to coach the next generation

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Arcade fires growth

Dover Big Local's vibrant arcade is reigniting local business

DOVER BIG LOCAL By Imogen Faux

Up and down the passages of Stembrook Lane Shopping Arcade, an array of smart shopfronts are open for business. As a new Community Radio recording studio is launched, the arcade is one shop short of reaching full capacity.

Set up by Dover Big Local as a 'Co-Innovation Space' the arcade is for local businesses and entrepreneurs in their fledgling stages.

Over the decades, rising rent prices coupled with low footfall have caused a slump in trade for the port town's high street. The Co-Innovation Space aims to change this; acting as a launchpad for businesses with the potential to be a commercial success on the high street, Dover Big Local hopes the project will bring new life and local artisanry to a town centre in decline.

Launched in September 2018 in a building that was once a neglected Co-op supermarket, the building had stood boarded-up for 18 months and it wasn't until Big Local offered to take it off the Council's hands for a rent of one pound per year that it was injected with new life.

Now, the arcade hosts a vibrant range of enterprises spanning textiles, gardening, health and fitness, games, music studios for young people, an events venue, legal support services and more. Big Local chair Martina White

manages and curates the space, carefully selecting business ventures that are bespoke, personal and local to Dover.

The business owners are quick to sing the praises of Big Local and its support of their enterprises. With its open plan layout, the arcade lends itself as a communal space for the shop owners, allowing them to pool ideas, exchange tips and give each other feedback. "They're learning from each other," Martina observes. She too offers advice and support where needed, drawing on her 50 years of business experience.

The lease on the Co-Innovation Space will be up for renewal in two years. Before then, the main challenge is to ease the transition of businesses out of the building and onto the high street, Martina explains. Not all the businesses will make it, but the intention, she says, "is to provide a minimum risk environment for people to try out their business ideas and see if they cut the mustard."

Currently, she forecasts that two or three businesses will succeed. "Others will learn a lot and have had a worthwhile experience."

Nevertheless, as Big Local rep Carl Adams points out, "Even if just a couple of businesses survive, that's two more businesses that didn't exist before, which are now injecting life into the high street and serving the local economy."



The Big Local-backed Stembrook Lane Shopping Arcade in Dover

"Even if just a couple of businesses survive, that's two more businesses that didn't exist before"

Welsh House Farm residents are shaping the consultation process for new local housing



Making community voices heard

WELSH HOUSE FARM BIG LOCAL

By Michael Thawe & Georgie Burr

Welsh House Farm Big Local has been collaborating with Birmingham City Council in the planning for a social housing development, aiming to make residents' voices heard at all stages of the development lifecycle and to secure positive outcomes for the community.

Michael Thawe, resident and Big Local worker, reflects on the experience of working with the Council:

Access to secure housing gives people a foundation for their life, so when Birmingham City Council came to us with a proposal to create eight 'modular' homes for social rent, we were immediately interested. This proposed space was an area we had identified for development anyway – it was previously a magnet for rubbish.

The council approached us to deliver the consultation for the housing scheme – but they had already decided how the process would run. We felt that their proposed approach would not work to engage local residents, so we pushed back. They were willing to adapt and work on our terms and from then on, we have been collaborating. The benefits to council and community have been mutual. Birmingham City Council need

"We felt that their proposed approach would not work to engage local residents, so we pushed back"

Community rd

to build housing, and because residents trust Big Local staff, we managed to build a lot of local support for the scheme. The project will be going to planning committee soon.

This is our first joint project with the council, and it is opening doors. We are building more strategic relationships with other parts of the council, which gives us more opportunity to advocate on behalf of the residents of Welsh House Farm. After all, if we don't talk about what we need, who will? We have also accepted invitations to join the Housing Liaison Board, which gives the opportunity to raise housing issues.

Collaborating with a council is not plain sailing; working on these kinds of projects requires you to remain positive. But we consider ourselves fortunate to be one of only 150 areas in England to be given the £1.1million – a unique opportunity to learn and develop. There

are a lot of issues with Birmingham City Council, but where they are doing the right thing, we will work with them.

As a result of their experiences, Welsh House Farm and four other Big Local areas have been helping Local Trust research a new report and guide on regeneration and development. The aim is to help communities across England impact regeneration in their areas, and influence Local Authorities and Developers to integrate community interests in their approach to development. The Estate Regeneration Best Practice Guide will be launched this autumn. You can hear more about the subject of regeneration at our learning event, in partnership with Create Streets and Blue Chula on 9th, November in Birmingham.

For more information about the Best Practice Guide:
Email georgie.burr@localtrust.org.uk

Outdoor bling

By Imogen Faux

Bollards, bins and benches: all essential infrastructure for our communities, but not the most beautiful. Yet this hasn't deterred several Big Local areas from using these as canvases to revive neglected areas and connect people with their local heritage.

Working with local artist Martyn Lucas, Leigh West Big Local have been reimagining both their cityscapes and greenspaces alongside children from the local primary school. They've transformed street bollards into striking art installations and using historic photos of the area for inspiration, the children have recreated images of old landmarks on vinyl wraps for bollards.

Elsewhere in the neighborhood, disused spaces have been transformed into bright and quirky planting areas using upcycled tyres. Those out for a stroll should look out for the Incredible Edible allotment and a familiar mischief-maker...

Meanwhile, green-fingered Mablethorpe Big Local has been cultivating neglected space; turning an 80-metre scrubland into an enchanting wildflower garden. Leaders Val and Kim have engaged local artisans, the local probation Community Payback team, the local fire brigade (for watering), Men's Shed and many more in the creation of their thriving garden.

In SO18 and Sompting, Big Local areas are using wood and metal carvings to connect divided areas and commemorate wartime history. Sompting Big Local has funded a series of handcrafted war memorial benches for the local parks, to provide quiet spots for reflection. Whilst SO18 has commissioned acclaimed sculptor Andrew Frost to carve a signpost engraved with local wildlife, marking the way to the local parkland and pond. The piece, which punctuates a turning circle at the end of a bus route, is part of a greater plan to get people exploring their green spaces on foot.



Val and Kim cultivate neglected space



A Minion keeps a watchful eye



Sculptor Andrew Frost's wildlife signpost



A handcrafted memorial bench



Artist Martyn Lucas with local schoolchildren

People

Katy's story



Katy at a community art installation funded by Rudheath and Witton Together

"Projects fail, projects succeed; there have been tears and tantrums as well as celebrations and a host of wonderful moments big and small."

RUDHEATH AND WITTON BIG LOCAL

By Katy Sneyd

I couldn't be prouder to be part of the important work Local Trust is doing nationally. Our Big Local has grown so much over the past few years; more and more people are getting involved and our partnership is a true reflection of the people who live here.

But in that time, I too have grown as a person and as a professional.

My Big Local journey started in spring 2015, when a young girl from our community killed herself. It was – and remains – a tragedy for everyone who knew her. It shook us all. To show the family that they weren't alone, I organised a community walk so they could see their friends and neighbours stood with them in their grief. It was at that point I realised so much more was needed in this area. I felt if we could build a truly caring community that supported people in the long-term, it would be the best thing we could do to prevent such a tragedy happening again.

A few weeks before, I'd been asked if I would be interested in joining Big Local partnership to help decide how to spend the funding, but I was busy with other volunteering projects, so said no. But after this tragic loss of life in our community, I approached Big Local and had a very honest conversation about what I believed needed to change.

To my surprise, I was offered the chance to apply for a job as a community worker for Big Local, and in September that year, hit the ground running; organising events and meetings with schools, businesses and sports groups. I developed networks, and small but encouraging improvements started to emerge.

Projects fail, projects succeed; there have been tears and tantrums as well as celebrations and a host of wonderful moments big and small.

When I joined I didn't realise how many opportunities would be offered – as an employee, but also as a resident. I have taken every training course going, led a session at Big Local Connects 2018 and accompanied residents who had never been on a train or even out of the town to last year's conference. By 2018 I'd been appointed as Rudheath and Witton Together's community engagement and development manager.

My next challenge is to take on the role of communities project manager for Wigan Council. I wouldn't have been able to achieve this without the support and opportunities that Local Trust has provided. I know Rudheath and Witton Together will continue to thrive and I couldn't leave completely so hope to rejoin as a partnership member.

I have met so many energetic, motivated people who want to make positive changes in their communities. The whole-hearted support I've been given at every step is something I'll value forever.

So, 'thank you' to the whole team at Local Trust and to everyone I have met through Big Local.

Connects Bingo

Can you find someone who...

Make the most of the opportunity to meet others at this year's Connects. Cross off these, to get you started

Owens a pet	Has an older sister	Is visiting Nottingham for the first time	Is an only child	Had braces
Is left handed	Can speak another language	Has more than one child	Is wearing brown socks	Is featured in this newspaper
Has been involved with their Big Local since its launch	Has been in a YouTube video	Has a tattoo	Can juggle	Can recite a poem by heart
Made a New Year's resolution in 2019 and has kept it	Has sung in a choir	Can do a cartwheel	Has fainted in public	Can play a musical instrument
Was born in September	Has been to 3 continents	Has run a marathon	Has broken a bone	Gets around by bike

EVENT PROGRAMME

Big Local (ON)NECTS

2 DAYS OF ACTIVITY & INSPIRATION

5 themes

Each session will follow one of these themes:

- **Change:** starting, influencing and measuring positive change in your area, and working with others to achieve it
- **My partnership & me:** learn specific skills that you and your partnership can use, and make sure you look after yourself and have fun while working on Big Local
- **Leadership:** inspiring community leaders and shouting that Big Local is resident led
- **Legacy:** what could it mean for your area, and what could it look like?
- **Creativity:** whether it's creative thinking or creative actions, have fun while working on Big Local

Session types

Check the type when deciding which session you're in the mood for:

- **Listen:** listen, think and explore ideas
- **Do:** do a practical activity together
- **Share:** discuss experiences and knowledge
- **How-to:** learn from mistakes and successes

Marketplace

Marketplace drop-in
Corridor by Suites 1 and 2 |
Ground floor

Fri 3:00–6:40pm /
Sat 9:15–3:30pm

In the marketplace you'll find a selection of organisations ready to offer advice and talk through ideas.

In place of a thousand words: advice on photography
David Severn

Get support and technical tips on taking photographs and learn how to use photography to tell your stories through imagery

Voices of Big Local
Suzie Harris (Hamlett Films)

Suzie will be on hand to talk about the creative storytelling mentoring that is available for individuals working with a support partner or attending a learning cluster.

DIY toolkit
Steve Skinner, Bill Badham
(Big Local reps)

Advice and guidance on free exercises that can be run with your partnership, to help generate new approaches, plan-ahead, map power and maximise your Big Local's impact.

Diagnostic drop-in
Janet Sutherland, Biljana Savic & Andreas Markides
(Academy of Urbanism – AoU)

AoU provide support to deliver and sustain great towns and cities. They can help you to identify opportunities, magnify efforts to achieve change, establish realistic and sustainable goals and build confidence and engagement in your area.

The power of sport
Paul Kendall (StreetGames)

Sport changes communities. Healthy, active communities are safer, stronger communities. Speak to StreetGames about how sport could help with the biggest challenges in your community.

Solving problems with your local transport
Andrew Allen (Campaign for Better Transport)

Can't get where you want to go? Poor transport makes places difficult to live in. Come and discuss what's wrong with your buses, bike lanes and roads, and how to make them better.

Starting/scaling a land-based community initiative
Oladayo Ayorinde & Mark Walton (Shared Assets)

Have you identified land locally or have ideas but don't know where to start? Have you started an initiative but are facing challenges? Get inspiration and discuss your ideas with Shared Assets.

Community Leadership Academy
Ned Younge (Koreo)

Koreo will be on hand to answer any questions you have about leadership in Big Local, and how to participate in the Community Leadership Academy.

Digital diagnostics
Phoebe Tickell and Ed Saperia
(London College of Political Technologists)

Problems with your website? Want to use open data more? Got an idea for a tech project? Phoebe and Ed can help by offering one-to-one advice and resources.

Meet Local Trust
Local Trust staff and trustees

A designated point at which you can find Local Trust staff and trustees all day. Drop by and ask questions about Big Local and make suggestions for future Learning and Networking events and support partner offers. Learn how Local Trust's policy team are using the principles behind Big Local to influence decisions at a national level. Find out how you can get involved, and what else is being done to put communities on the agenda.

Communications health-check
Oliver Hickson (Media Trust)

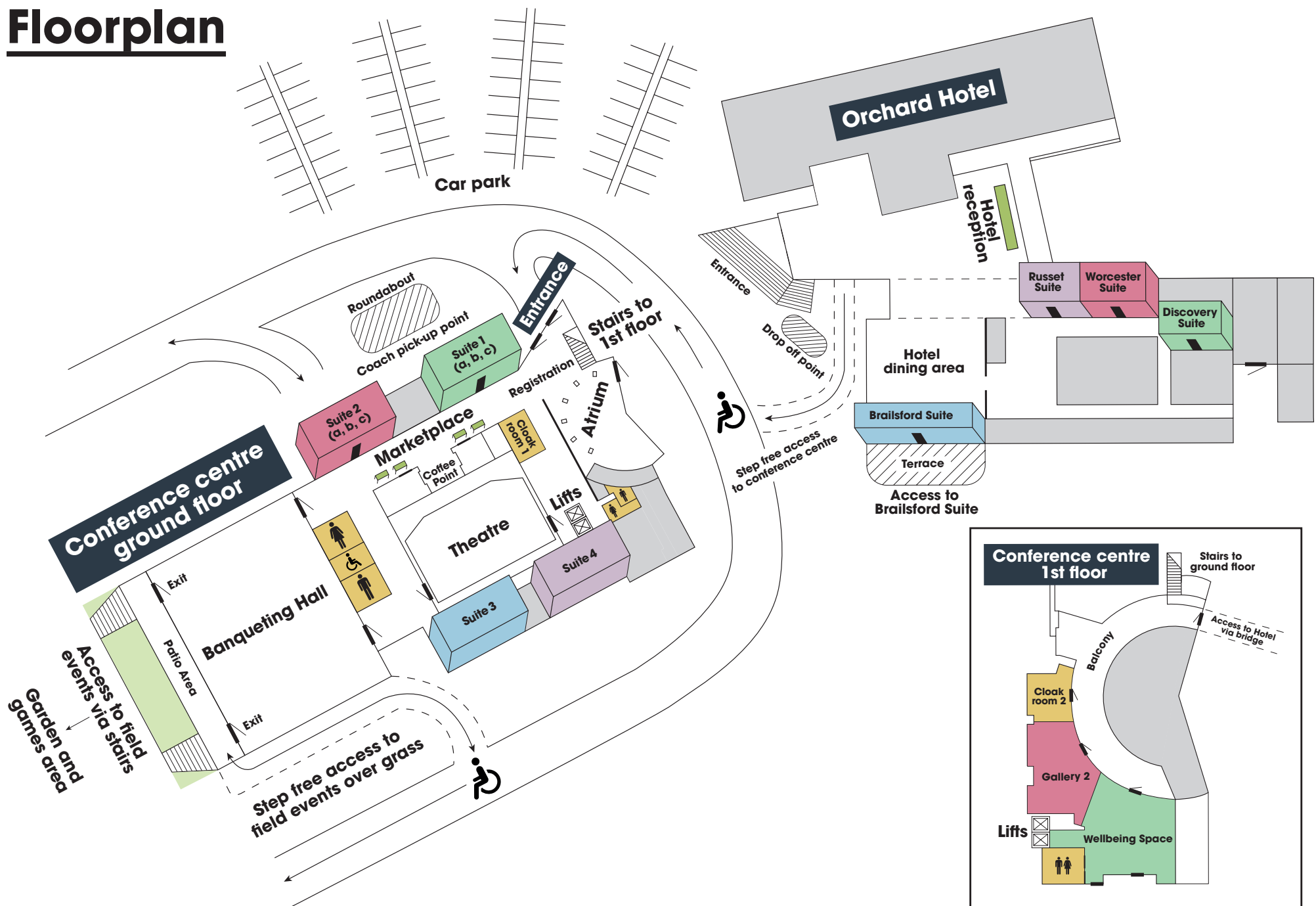
Want to tell your story in the best way possible? Learn your communications strengths and if you've got areas to improve on. Have a think about how confident you are at using story-telling techniques, social content, partners or free media and learn more from Media Trust.

Big Local Postbox

Fancy winning a special Big Local teapot? Write what you've learnt on the postcard in your Connects welcome pack and post it in the postbox!



Floorplan



Friday

Registration
Entrance Foyer | Ground floor
3:00-4:00pm

Register for Connects and collect your welcome pack. Cloakroom 1 is for coats only and Cloakroom 2, on the 1st floor, is for coats and bags. Have you got a few minutes to spare? Head to the Atrium and get started on the Handmade Parade.

Handmade parade (drop in)
Atrium
3:00-6:30pm

Get involved with the Big Local allotment art installation and be part of the parade on Saturday!

Wellbeing & mindfulness
Wellbeing Space in Gallery 1 | First floor
3:00-6:40pm

Take a break and enjoy some relaxing activities. For a timetable of activities see the wellbeing flyer in your tote bag.

Prayer room/quiet room
Russet Suite in Orchard Hotel | Ground floor
3:00-9:30pm

Welcome
Conference Theatre | Ground Floor
4:00-4:15pm
Speaker: Matt Leach (Local Trust)

4:30-5:30pm

I am an activist
Conference Theatre | Ground floor

Type: Listen Theme: Change
Speakers: Joeli Brearley, Kay Johnson, Karen Keates & Jenny Westwood

Hear inspirational stories of journeys from 'ordinary to activist'. Joeli launched Pregnant then Screwed after her own experience of pregnancy discrimination. Kay started The Larder, a social enterprise in Preston, to promote food that's healthy, local, seasonal and waste-free. Jenny and Karen founded IntraQuest out of a passion to increase self-awareness to support positive long-term change and life fulfillment.

2020 Vision - work, welfare & living standards into the next decade
Brailsford Suite in Orchard Hotel | Ground floor

Type: Discussion Theme: Change
Speaker: Steve Toff (Writer)

Explore the fundamental changes that have taken place across Britain over the last 50 years: living standards, the labour market, inter-generational inequalities and an ageing population. We will discuss how to create a brighter future for the next decade.

Reimagine your library
Suite 1 | Ground floor

Type: Share Theme: Change
Speakers: Rebecca Trevalyan (Library of Things), Danny Leech (Rastrick Big Local)

Libraries are finding imaginative ways to tap into new opportunities and meet the needs of local people. Discover two examples of communities turning their libraries into thriving, joyful hubs.

Great Big Local Get Together
Suite 2 | Ground floor

Type: Do Theme: Creativity
Speakers: Siobhan Harley & Eleanor Harrison (The Jo Cox Foundation)

A fun interactive session that will allow you to make new connections by discovering the surprising things that you have in common with one another. *This session is repeated at 5:40-6:40pm.*

Doing meetings differently
Suite 3 | Ground floor

Type: Share Theme: Creativity
Speaker: Helen Garforth (Just Ideas)

Struggling to retain or attract new partnership members? Engaging people is a challenge for Big Local partnerships but to drive change, people need to get together to make decisions. This session will look at creative ways of meeting to maximise engagement and enjoyment! *This session is repeated at 5:40-6:40pm.*

Beyond the foodbank - cook tasty food on a budget
Suite 4 | Ground floor

Type: Do Theme: Creativity
Speakers: Sue Morris & Clare Hackney-Ring (Community Stuff CIC & Devonshire West Big Local)

Discuss food poverty, healthy eating, budgeting and the cookbook Community Stuff have developed for foodbanks. Make some food to share, proving homemade is healthier, cheaper, easy and fun. Each Big Local can take a cookbook away with them! *This session is repeated at 5:40-6:40pm.*

Look after your wellbeing
Gallery 2 | First floor

Type: Share Theme: My Partnership & Me
Speaker: Mark Bishop

Informal discussion with tips on how to combat stress, anxiety and low mood problems and to help build resilience. Designed for everyone who wants to learn some practical tips for wellbeing. *This session is repeated at 5:40-6:40pm.*

Local Trust Trustee Q&A
Banqueting Hall | Ground floor

Speakers: Jeannette Lichner, David Warner & Rich Wilson

An opportunity to get to know some of the Local Trust Trustees. Hear about their reflections on the past year, future plans and get your questions answered.

5:40-6:40pm

Using improvisation skills in Big Local
Conference Theatre | Ground floor

Type: Do Theme: Creativity
Speakers: Showstoppers

Come and learn how musical improvisation skills can be useful in delivering Big Local and have a go at putting those skills into action!

Big Local CONNECTS

GoodGym - using exercise to connect communities

Brailsford Suite in Orchard Hotel or Brailsford Terrace, weather permitting
Ground floor

Type: Do **Theme:** Creativity

Speaker: Alexander Kenmure (GoodGym)

Learn about GoodGym; a unique and innovative project that uses both physical activity and technology to help people feel more engaged in their communities and support isolated older neighbours.

Active collage with active threads

Suite 1 | Ground floor

Type: Do **Theme:** Creativity

Speaker: Mandi Knight (Northfleet North Big Local)

This session will draw on experiences and learnings of being part of a resident-led programme to create lasting change. Make banners using creative collage with unwanted magazines and simple traditional sewing techniques. We will be sending out thoughts of positivity, celebrating our achievements and reinforcing our commitments.

Great Big Local Get Together

Suite 2 | Ground floor

Type: Do **Theme:** Creativity

Speaker: Siobhan Harley & Eleanor Harrison (The Jo Cox Foundation)

A fun interactive session that will allow you to make new connections by discovering the surprising things that you have in common with one another. *This is a repeat of the earlier session at 4:30 - 5:30pm.*

Doing meetings differently

Suite 3 | Ground floor

Type: Share **Theme:** My partnership & me

Speaker: Helen Garforth (Just Ideas)

Struggling to retain or attract new partnership members? Engaging people is a challenge for Big Local partnerships but to drive change, people need to get together to make decisions. This session will look at creative ways of meeting to maximise engagement and enjoyment! *This is a repeat of the earlier session at 4:30 - 5:30pm.*

Beyond the foodbank - cook tasty food on a budget

Suite 4 | Ground floor

Type: Do **Theme:** Creativity

Speakers: Sue Morris & Clare Hackney-Ring (Community Stuff CIC & Devonshire West Big Local)

Discuss food poverty, healthy eating, budgeting and the cookbook Community Stuff have developed for foodbanks. Make some food to share, proving homemade is healthier, cheaper, easy and fun. Each Big Local can take a cookbook away with them! *This is a repeat of the session at 4:30 - 5:30pm.*

Look after your wellbeing

Gallery 2 | First floor

Type: Share **Theme:** My Partnership & Me

Speaker: Mark Bishop

Informal discussion with tips on how to combat stress, anxiety and low mood problems and to help build resilience. Designed for everyone who wants to learn some practical tips for wellbeing. *This is a repeat of the session at 4:30 - 5:30pm.*

Dinner and entertainment

Banqueting Hall | Ground floor

7:00-9:30pm

Dinner will be followed by Indeedy Musical bingo from 8:30pm - like normal bingo, but with songs instead of numbers! Mark songs off your bingo card as you hear them and compete to win hilarious and exciting prizes.

Fireside storytelling
Wellbeing Space in Gallery 1
First floor or outside in the Garden & games area, weather permitting

8:30-9:30pm

Theme: Creativity

Speaker: Louise Tickle

Gather round and share a story with our journalist-at-large, Louise.

Coaches to all offsite hotels at 9:30pm

Saturday

Morning run

7:00am (meet in the Orchard Hotel or Jubilee Hotel reception)

Helen Garforth, Carl Adams (Big Local reps)

Meet Helen at the Orchard Hotel or Carl at the Jubilee Hotel reception for a gentle jog to start your morning.

Registration (for new arrivals only)

Entrance Foyer | Ground floor
9:15-10.15am

Handmade parade (drop in)

Atrium | Ground floor

9:15-3:30pm

Feeling creative? Another chance to contribute to the Big Local allotment art installation to commemorate Big Local Connects and be part of the parade today!

Prayer room/quiet room
Russet Suite in Orchard Hotel | Ground floor

9:15-4:30 pm

Wellbeing and mindfulness

Wellbeing Space in Gallery 1 | First floor

9:30-4:10pm

Take a break and enjoy some relaxing activities. For a timetable of activities see the wellbeing flyer in your tote bag.

Welcome and warm-up
Conference Theatre | Ground floor
10:15-11:05am

Speakers: Matt Leach (Local Trust) & Feelgood Communities

See the premiere screening of the We're Big Local film based on the poem created at last year's Connects with poet, Tony Walsh aka Longfella.

11:25-12:15pm

Youth Forum
Conference Theatre | Ground floor

Type: Listen **Theme:** Leadership

Speakers: Callum Hill (Dyke House Big Local) Emily Griffiths and Jake Durbin (Mossley Big Local), Luci Busescu (Marsh and Micklefield Big Local) Layba Nisar and James Rose (Heston West Big Local)

This is the first Big Local youth forum with panel members from four Big Local areas contributing. Listen to the young panel debate topics and priorities that are important to them, followed by open questions from the audience.

Mental health and Big Local
Discovery Suite in Orchard Hotel | Ground floor

Type: Listen **Theme:** Change

Speaker: Ros Brunwin

This session will explore the barriers people experiencing poor mental health face in being involved and included in our communities, and in Big Local, and ways these can be overcome. *This session is repeated at 1:45 - 2:35pm.*

Big Local Legacy - what have we learnt?

Brailsford Suite in Orchard Hotel | Ground floor

Type: Listen **Theme:** Legacy

Speakers: Clubmoor Big Local, Barrow Island Big Local, Podsmead Big Local, National Association for Neighbourhood Management & Local Trust

Have you thought about your Big Local legacy? This is an opportunity to hear how three areas have defined their legacy, and what difference they hope to make beyond the ten years. *This session is repeated at 1:45 - 2:35pm.*

What does it mean to be coastal?
Worcester Suite in Orchard Hotel | Ground floor

Type: Share **Theme:** Change

Speakers: Rodger Read (Withernsea Big Local), Ian Brocklebank (Cleethorpes Big Local), Becky Doran (Revoe Big Local), Sacha Bedding (Dyke House Big Local)

Is your Big Local part of England's coastline? Share what that means for you and learn what these Big Locals think of the unique opportunities and challenges of being by the sea. Help unite the coastline!

How can community hubs be financially viable?

Gallery 2 | First floor

Type: Share **Theme:** Legacy

Speaker: Lisa-Marie Giquel (Local Trust)

Most Big Local areas have a community "hub" and see this as an important part of their legacy. This workshop will look at what can help to make these spaces financially viable and sustainable, drawing on research and inviting areas to share their knowledge and experience.

Meet the media
Suite 2a | Ground floor

Type: How-to **Theme:** My partnership & me

Speakers: Louise Tickle, our journalist-at-large & Anna Bradley-Dorman (Ramsey Million Big Local)

How do you work with the press? What do they need from you to develop a story? What would you look to achieve by doing so? What are the risks? Get the answers to these questions and more to help you manage media interest in your Big Local.

Pom-bombing - combat loneliness and isolation
Suite 4 | Ground floor

Type: Do **Theme:** My partnership & me

Speakers: Shona Gilsenan, David Roberts & Neil Langford (East Coseley Big Local)

Find out about the unconventional way one Big Local is addressing loneliness and isolation by harnessing the power of craft creativity and social media.

Listening to young people at risk
Suite 2 b/c | Ground floor

Type: Share **Theme:** Creativity

Speakers: Joshua Imuere (Art Against Knives), Julia Hines & James Masters (Grange Big Local)

Youth exploitation and crime is a common problem and it affects everyone in an area. Talk about how to create safe spaces, activities that engage and how to involve the whole community.

Communicating your values: story of self

Suite 3 | Ground floor

Type: Do **Theme:** Leadership

Speaker: Nick Spooner (HOPE not hate)

Explore how telling impactful, moving and value-based stories encourages others to act in this practical session.

The day after tomorrow

Suite 1 b/c | Ground floor

Type: Listen **Theme:** Legacy

Speakers: Bill Chaff and Roy Blenkin (Barrowcliff Big Local), Ralph Rudden (Sale West Big Local), Waqas Arshad (Bradley Big Local)

Wondering what might happen after the Big Local programme ends? Come and explore the idea of a post 2026 entity to act as a Locally Trusted Organisation for Big Local areas, raised by these Chairs and Vice Chairs of Big Locals.

Meet the authors

Suite 1a | Ground floor

Type: Share **Theme:** Creativity

Speakers: Ryan Herman & Maddy Costa

Essay authors, Ryan and Maddy, have spoken to nearly 40 Big Local areas about how they're using sport and creativity to make opportunities to gather, build teamwork, and generate a new sense of positivity. Hear what they discovered and share your stories about what has worked in your area.

Lunch | Banqueting Hall

Ground floor

12:15-1:45pm

Refreshments, food and some games led by StreetGames!

1:45-2:35pm

Managing conflict
Conference Theatre | Ground floor

Type: Listen **Theme:** My partnership & me

Speakers: Mary Austin, Jackie Jones, Mike Chapman (AFTA Thought)

Learn how to improve relationships and reduce the risk of conflict escalation in this interactive, engaging session. See the impact of conflict resolution strategies and share best practice with others. *This session is repeated at 2:45 - 3:35pm.*

Mental health and Big Local
Discovery Suite in Orchard Hotel | Ground floor

Type: Listen **Theme:** Change

Speaker: Ros Brunwin

This session will explore the barriers people experiencing poor mental health face in being involved and included in our communities, and ways these can be overcome. *This is a repeat of the session at 11:25 - 12:15pm.*

Big Local Legacy - what have we learnt?

Brailsford Suite in Orchard Hotel | Ground floor

Type: Listen **Theme:** Legacy

Speakers: Clubmoor Big Local, Barrow Island Big Local, Podsmead Big Local, Ben Lee (National Association for Neighbourhood Management) & Jeremy Yung (Local Trust)

Have you thought about your Big Local Legacy? This is an opportunity to hear how three areas have defined their legacy, and what difference they hope to make beyond the ten years. *This is a repeat of the session at 11:25 - 12:15pm.*

Intergenerational work: connections and perceptions
Worcester Suite in Orchard Hotel | Ground floor

Type: Share **Theme:** Creativity

Speakers: Iona Lawrence, Lauren Banks & Jess Dyson Houghton (The Cares Family)

Loneliness doesn't discriminate. Hear about the creative ways old and young are coming together to tackle disconnection and build community in Liverpool, Manchester and London.

Building a strong relationship with your local authority
Suite 1a | Ground floor

Type: Listen **Theme:** My partnership & me

Speakers: Chris Thomas (Church Hill Big Local), Carl Kroon (Arches Big Local), Adam Lent (New Local Government Network)

Hear how Big Locals can build strong and constructive relationships with their local authorities, including a briefing from the New Local Government Network on how local government is changing and the opportunities and challenges this presents.

Working with sports teams in your Big Local
Suite 2a | Ground floor

Type: Share **Theme:** My partnership & me

Speakers: Val Taylor (Bermondsey Big Local), Stephen Perez (Arches Big Local), Wayne Smith (Olympia Boxing)

Sports teams and groups can create a fun and energising space for bringing a diverse community together. Come and hear how Big Locals have worked with sports teams to deliver on their plans.

Big Local goes wild: art as transformation
Suite 4 | Ground floor

Type: How-to **Theme:** Creativity

Speaker: Alison Vint (Big Local Thurnscoe)

Explore how the 'Go Wild in Thurnscoe' sculpture trail captured everyone's imagination and achieved even more positive outcomes than the Big Local anticipated.

Big Local, Little Voices - a formula for change
Suite 2 b/c | Ground floor

Type: Listen **Theme:** Change

Speakers: Chloe Adams, Nicholas Rushton & Lewis Jones (Grace Mary to Lion Farm Big Local)

Hear how this youth partnership are looking to make positive change in their area by early intervention and educating younger peers of the dangers around drugs and knife crime.

Becoming your own Locally Trusted Organisation - is it right for you?
Suite 3 | Ground floor

Type: How-to **Theme:** My partnership & me

Speakers: Jane Lewis (Tang Hall Big Local)

Thinking of managing funding yourselves, rather than via a Locally Trusted Organisation? Hear from a Big Local area that has chosen to and explore the advantages and disadvantages. Is it a good idea? What's involved? What will come up along the way?

Learning from failure
Suite 1 b/c | Ground floor

Type: How-to **Theme:** Change

Speaker: Leila Jancovich (University of Leeds)

Leila Jancovich, Associate Professor in Cultural Policy and Participation at the University of Leeds, believes evaluations that only celebrate success minimise change and can cause past errors to be repeated. This how-to workshop introduces tools to help you learn from failure.

Improving the local economy part one: panel discussion
Gallery 2 | First floor

Type: Share **Theme:** Change

Speakers: Fran Jones (Centre for Local Economic Strategies) & Eddie Steingiel (Birchwood Big Local)

Hear about some of the exciting economic development work taking place across Big Local, including firsthand accounts from partnership members, and research findings from CLES. This is a double length session to allow you to explore the topic in-depth. Part 2 is at 2:45pm with an open discussion led by Niamh Goggin (Small Change) on how to kick off a successful community-led economic project in your area.

2:45-3:35pm

Managing conflict
Conference Theatre | Ground floor

Type: Listen **Theme:** My partnership & me

Speakers: Mary Austin, Jackie Jones, Mike Chapman (AFTA Thought)

Improve relationships and reduce the risk of conflict escalation in this interactive, engaging session. See the impact of conflict resolution strategies and share best practice. *This is a repeat of the session at 1:45 - 2:35pm.*

Creating greener spaces
Discovery Suite in Orchard Hotel | Ground floor

Type: Listen **Theme:** Change

Speaker: Rachel Summerscales (Hulme Community Garden Centre)

People grow here as much as plants. In this session, Hulme Community Garden Centre will provide insight into their community-led inner-city horticultural project with big plans and an ambitious model.

START the heart of your community
Brailsford Suite in Orchard Hotel | Ground floor

Type: How-to **Theme:** Legacy

Speakers: Alister Shaw (Big Local rep) & April Ellis (Westfield Big Local)

People are the most important and valuable part of any community. Learn how you can successfully engage the people in your community on their terms using the START method.

Thinking about the future
Worcester Suite in Orchard Hotel | Ground floor

Type: How-to **Theme:** Legacy

Speaker: James Goodman (Local Trust)

An introduction to thinking about the future, with a game to explore how the world and our communities may be changing. Useful for Big Local areas thinking about their long-term plans.

The difference you make - deciding what to measure
Suite 1a | Ground floor

Type: Share **Theme:** Change

Speaker: Richard Usher (Just Ideas)

Your Big Local knows it's making a difference in your area, but how do you decide what you will measure and get people involved? Share your experience and engage with fresh ideas from other areas.

Telling stronger Big Local stories for funding and support
Suite 2b/c | Ground floor

Type: Do **Theme:** Leadership

Speaker: Will Hill (Stronger Stories)

Telling a strong story about your community group is the biggest thing you can do to win the support you need. Learn how to build a story for funders and turn it into communications materials.

Setting up a youth market
Suite 4 | Ground floor

Type: How-to **Theme:** Creativity

Speaker: Denny Cornuau (Plaistow South Big Local)

Be inspired and learn from Plaistow Youth Market, an engaging project showcasing the talents of young people living in Plaistow and teaching real skills around how to run a successful business.

#Makingourspace - building strong resident support
Suite 2a | Ground floor

Type: Listen **Theme:** Legacy

Speakers: Nicola Thompson & Joanna Scott (Selby Big Local)

Developing the community's voice is vital to the success and legacy of Selby Big Local's new sustainable space for residents. Ensuring it is 'us' from the beginning and creating strong foundations is key. Join this session to hear their story so far.

Leading from the front: supporting women in community leadership
Suite 3 | Ground floor

Type: Share **Theme:** Leadership

Speaker: Wendy Davies (Organisation and Social Development Consultants)

Fewer women than men rise to leadership positions because of visible, and invisible, obstacles, but how can your community support and benefit from the leadership of women and girls? Explore how Big Local communities can become places of balanced leadership and opportunity no matter what your gender is.

School engagement - practical strategies
Suite 1 b/c | Ground floor

Type: Listen **Theme:** Change

Speaker: Alan Fraser (Cranford Community College & Heston West Big Local)

It is vital that Big Local areas engage and involve young people. Schools provide a route to that engagement, so why is it so difficult? What can be done to be improve engagement? Come and find out from Alan Fraser and hear his experience of working with Heston West Big Local.

Improving the local economy part two: get started in your area
Gallery 2 | First floor

Type: Share **Theme:** Change

Speaker: Niamh Goggin (Small Change)

After hearing about a variety of projects in part 1, learn more about community-led economic development projects; what makes them successful and how you can kick one off in your area at this open discussion led by Niamh Goggin.

Reflections and close
Conference Theatre | Ground floor

3:45-4:10pm

Type: Listen

Speakers: Showstoppers, Handmade Parade & Matt Leach (Local Trust)

Showstoppers will reflect on the two days with a special performance, witness your collective creative efforts with the Handmade Parade, find out who has won a Big Local teapot, and closing words from Matt Leach, Chief Executive of Local Trust.

Coaches to Nottingham train station from 4:30pm

Elaine Lovell: the person behind the cashpoint campaign



Elaine promotes the new free cash machine

Tell us a bit about your background and life in your area

I was born in 1964 to working class, Labour-voting parents. I'm the second youngest in a family of five children and grew up in a council house in Hill Top. I was sent to Sunday school, and was taught to look after people less fortunate than myself. I was a sickly child and missed a lot of school, but my father taught me that my illnesses wouldn't stop me achieving anything I set my mind on, particularly northern soul. I developed a love of music and dancing, and still love music today.

I left school with no qualifications, was married with two children by the age of 19 and divorced at 22 years. By 23, I was in a new relationship, which I've been in ever since. My partner raised my children as his own.

I've always felt a sense of belonging and pride about my area, even before Big Local. Having tried living elsewhere for approximately a year, I hated it – it felt unsafe. So, I brought my children up in Hill Top and they're now raising their families here.

How did you get involved in social action and Big Local?

I started writing newspaper articles about issues that residents were concerned about. When I went to work in a care home about 12 years ago, I learnt about 'duty of care' for vulnerable people. I began calculating money matters (benefit entitlement, in particular) and realised that our residents didn't have enough to live on. That's when I started my campaign. I got involved in Big Local because it was an opportunity to improve my area for my grandchildren, so they could have more fun and opportunities. It was a chance to show them that they too could make a difference.

What's the biggest challenge you've overcome since being involved in Big Local?

That's easy: public speaking. I still struggle to articulate myself in front of a group of people, or people I don't speak to on a regular basis. I found it daunting every time I had to meet or speak to new people.

Where does your ATM campaign fit into the Hilltop and Caldwell Big Local strategy?

One of our Big Local priorities is to counteract poverty. Getting rid of ATM fees puts the funds back into our residents' pockets. An adult can lose approximately £78 a year from making just one withdrawal per week. Due to my epilepsy, I myself lose approximately £21 a month from having to access my minimum wages from a fee-charging machine.

If you were to run your campaign again, what would you do differently?

I'd make much more regular contact with the people I was trying to prove my case to. I wouldn't doubt myself so much, too.

Who have been your main sources of support throughout the ATM Campaign?

Tough one. There have been many. My Big Local rep calling me his 'Free ATM Queen' helped. The Partnership Chair lives close by and I've known her since childhood, so she's always on hand to give me a confidence boost when I need it, too. Also, my Big Local advisor, Maxine Tuffin, helped me to make my first contact, and Niamh Goggin of Small Change gave lots of useful advice and helped me make contact with an MP.

My partnership colleagues have given loads of encouragement and support, as has Warwickshire County Council's Community Development Worker, Chris Florance, who I worked with to produce the evidence that was needed to substantiate my case.

What tips would you give someone else wanting to start a local /national campaign or make a difference?

Take advice from anyone and any place that shares the same objective as yourself. Make a noise, email repeatedly, sign petitions, start petitions, contact councillors and MPs, find evidence to substantiate your case and send it to everyone.

What have been the high and low points of your campaign, and being in Big Local?

The low point was being told that we weren't entitled to receive help because we didn't quite fit certain criteria. I don't think we've reached the high point of the campaign yet, but I believe our area's ATM situation looks a little brighter.

What's next on the agenda for your Big Local?

Over the school holidays there's a lot going on for families. After that, we're starting a new five-year plan, so it's going to be exciting and busy.



You can read the full story of Elaine's ATM campaign, 'The injustice of pay-to-use cash machines', on the Local Trust website.

Young people
making a movie

Young directors putting their community on the big screen



the young filmmakers from the local council to the House of Lords, incorporating interviews with Baroness Benjamin, Jeremy Guscott and Peter Gabriel along the way. Designed to be used as a resource on social mobility and resilience, the film will be launched nationally in November.

Filmmaking is one of the biggest success stories to come out of Heston West Big Local. What started as a humble Sunday film club has, in just two years, grown into a youth filmmaking project that is rolling out increasingly high-profile pieces from a fully equipped studio. With training from a professional filmmaker, the young people quickly learned how to work the kit and now operate with an impressive degree of independence.

Earlier this year, the young directors produced a promotional video for One World Strong's 2019 Marathon, featuring people from across the community. The film was seen by a global audience and directed over 21,000 visitors to the Heston West Big Local website – enough to make the site crash.

The active involvement of young people in this Big Local Area is no accident, but instead part of a strategy to put schools and young people at the heart of the community. The engine behind this is Big Local Chair, Alan Fraser, the Director of Community Development at

Cranford Community College. Alan believes that engaging schools in community work is of benefit to all involved: community, school and pupils. "Schools are ready-built networks of young people and families, bringing together people from all backgrounds" Alan explains. "Students bring energy and dynamism to a community."

This is certainly true of Heston West, which uses Cranford College as the hub for a kaleidoscope of intergenerational clubs and activities. A 60-strong army of young volunteers regularly attend community cleanups and proactively seek opportunities to engage with neighboring schools as ambassadors for their initiatives. This year, the Partnership Board welcomed its youngest member (15), a move that Alan hopes will inject creativity and relevance into the area's leadership.

A few years in, Heston West Big Local is beginning to reap the rewards of this 360-degree investment in the next generation. New arrivals are remaining in the community, minorities are integrating, and students who fly the nest for university return in their holidays to mentor their younger peers.

"We have a responsibility to young people," Alan asserts. "For a person to be successful in school and in the outside world, you need to support them as a whole, and that goes far beyond the confines of the academic curriculum."

HESTON WEST BIG LOCAL

By Imogen Faux

Young filmmakers of Heston West Big Local have been commissioned to create a documentary for use in schools across the country, building on the success of their first film earlier this year. Seventeen-year-old documentary film-

maker Serena Lola and a production team from Cranford Community College will document the remarkable life of Hounslow's late Deputy Lieutenant (a Crown representative), Maria Pedro. Before her death in November 2018, Pedro dedicated herself to working with young people and community groups in the suburban borough of London. Tracing Pedro's life has taken

The Pom-bomb phenomenon

EAST COSELEY BIG LOCAL

By Monica Begum

We can all feel lonely sometimes. But Age UK's Loneliness heat map indicates isolation within Coseley is higher than most, as researched by Kate Beale, project manager at Just Straight Talk (JST). This is why East Coseley Big Local launched a new pilot project in March with JST, called Just Start Talking.

To start tackling loneliness and isolation in the area, East Coseley Big Local has funded David Roberts and Shona Gilsean from JST, a Coseley-based social enterprise, to set up a programme of activities such as coffee mornings and befriending sessions, to help residents widen social circles and vary their routines. Most of the activities are held at The Rainbow Centre owned by Bromford housing association which allows JST to use the centre for free. Residents

are welcome to turn up to the centre to chat, make new friendships, play board games and do gardening.

One of the initiatives, PomPoms4Loneliness, gets people together for pom-pom making coffee mornings. As a result, PomPoms are quickly becoming recognised as the symbol of the campaign as people take them around the community, sharing them to raise awareness.

The idea is to ask local people who find the pom-poms to take pictures of themselves holding them and take them on a journey – some pom-poms have even made their way to Greece and Jamaica! The pom-poms are both a tool to connect people, and a symbol of the fight against isolation, encouraging individuals to head out into their local area and interact with others.

The real reward of the project, David thinks, is seeing the impact on individuals, illustrated by the story of one man who lived on his own for a long time



The phenomenon has gone global, with poms making their way to more tropical climates

and couldn't cook. Through JST, he was introduced to a healthy cooking course. Enthusiasm sparked, he now enjoys cooking regularly. His journey, along with many like it, shows the project's success in improving people's quality of life as a result of taking part in community activities and learning new skills.

JST and East Coseley Big Local continue to work on fostering a supportive environment where people can

forge friendships and start to look forward to the future. Their vision is that pom-poms become recognised even more widely as a symbol of the campaign against loneliness and isolation, encouraging people to 'Just Start Talking' about the issue.

To find out more, head along to East Coseley Big Local's session at this year's Connects. See the programme for details.

Could it be magic?

Brinnington's gamers promote mental wellbeing

BRINNINGTON BIG LOCAL

By Imogen Faux

An unlikely activity group is gaining recognition amongst Stockport's local social service providers as an effective way to tackle mental health issues.

The Stockport Adventurers Guild, set up with support from Brinnington Big Local almost four years ago, uses tabletop fantasy games such as Dungeons and Dragons and Warhammer to combat social anxiety and isolation.

Each Thursday, eager gamers crowd around a table in the Brinnington First House community building. To the untrained eye, this is just an art room. To those who have been initiated, it is an electrifying world of monsters and magic, conjured by Guild founder and Big Local Worker, Mark Mitchell, from behind a cardboard rampart.

The group has been so effective in supporting people that health workers and social services have actively referred individuals they believe will benefit from the service.

With just under half of the population living alone, Brinnington is affected by unemployment, youth antisocial behaviour and depression.

In response to these issues, the Guild founders struck gold with their lateral approach to mental wellbeing. The group has become known

as a way to build confidence, forge friendships and sharpen problem-solving skills.

Yet despite the positive response from social services, the group is keen to keep a clear line between the group and the area's formal mental health services, Citizens Advice Bureau and the council.

Mark from Brinnington Big Local says "We're here to give something else – to take away the worry, leaving other services to tackle issues head-on."

The vision is for the group to become self-sufficient. With £2700 from Big Local and a Tesco Community Grant (obtained with help from Big Local), the Guild are on track to be fully equipped to run alone. Expenses are relatively low, covering items such as figurines, rulebooks and bespoke metal charms and unusual, colourful dice for each player.

At a strategic level, Mark plans to take the project to schools and organisations for use as a teambuilding exercise. As for the role of Dungeon Master, he would be happy to do himself out of the job. A handful of promising wood elves and goblins are already in the wings.

"Ultimately, the project will have succeeded if we can equip people with the confidence to brave their anxieties," he says. "So that when faced with a difficult situation, they are able to don their tabards, draw their swords, and run at life's challenges!"

"When faced with a difficult situation, they are able to don their tabards, draw their swords, and run at life's challenges!"



Brinnington's gaming group is a world of monsters and magic

The food of love

Big Local newlyweds feeding the community



Growing local veg



Jan and Bill with a van full

LEIGH NEIGHBOURS BIG LOCAL

By Cathie Peloe & Imogen Faux

Vice-chair Jan Eckersley and fellow board member Bill Burton tied the knot in June this year – an occasion celebrated by the wider Big Local family. Now, through a couple of fun – and touching – initiatives, the newlyweds are providing food for the people of their community.

Jan and Bill were aware of the great demand for food provisions in their area, having worked side by side at Leigh foodbank. Together they decided to create an 'Incredible Edible'-inspired allotment on a piece of neglected land at the rear of a car park on Railway Road, just outside Leigh town centre.

The area had been overgrown with brambles, strewn with litter and subject to dog-fouling and other environmental anti-social behaviour, but was cleaned up and landscaped by Jan, Bill and a team of Leigh Neighbours volunteers. The couple collected old tyres and

recycled them into planters, painting each and arranging them on site to create a striking landmark.

They planted a variety of vegetables, herbs and fruit, carefully cultivating them through the dry summer of 2018 until harvest, when residents were invited to help themselves to the produce. A year on, the allotment is abundant, and was even entered Wigan Council In Bloom.

Not stopping at garden produce, the bighearted couple also took their wedding as an opportunity to support the foodbank, suggesting that wedding guests give food donations instead of wedding presents.

"The idea first came about from working and supporting the foodbank via our Leigh Neighbours Big Local and being informed of the amount of people who are needing their support," explains Jan.

The wedding guests gave very generously, with the total donations weighing in at 270kg.

"We were overwhelmed by the response," she remarks. "We wanted to share the story so it may inspire others, too."

Learning to roll with the punches

Birkenhead's new boxing club is a hit with the community



▲ A young resident gets his gloves on

BALLANTYNE & BIDSTON BIG LOCAL

By Ryan Herman

Whilst football forms part of daily life for many people in Merseyside, boxing has firmly established itself as the region's second sport. Popularity has been fuelled by the success of fighters such as Tony Bellew, Rocky Fielding and the Smiths (Liam and Callum). So, when Beechwood, Ballantyne & Bidston Big Local in Birkenhead started its boxing club last year it had ambitions, one of which was to appeal to boys and young men.

"There are a lot of issues here around anti-social behaviour" Big Local Project Manager Chauntelle

Bowler explains "there's not much provision for young people, the club wanted to channel their energy in the right way."

But once Big Local partnered with Venture Boxing Club in Birkenhead they realised that the sport's popularity was attracting a wider audience. Coach Mark Stevenson recalls, "We would run a session and have 73 lads turn up. But then mothers would turn up with their daughters asking if they could take part. What we came up with was a BoxFit programme."

The sessions ran for a trial period and now plans are afoot to create a new legacy boxing programme to outlive Big Local.

Chauntelle says, "A group of residents have come together to take this project forward. They have been meeting with Community Action

Wirral who provided advice in terms of what people need to start a programme, including a trustee, a secretary, a constitution.

"They've now got a bank account. They've constituted themselves. They've met with the (Big Local) partnership and the plan is to bring in Venture who will train up a couple of residents who live on Beechwood Estate to become coaches so they can run sessions." It's been a long, and sometimes complicated, process to get this far. But hopefully it will be worth the wait.

As Chauntelle says, "People continue to ask when it's starting again, so the demand is there. It's just about putting the right things in place. Fingers crossed, it's just a matter of 'when' rather than 'if'."

Cycling group makes plans to ride into the future

GATESHEAD BIG LOCAL

By Ryan Herman

Gateshead Big Local has teamed up with national charity Cycling UK to build the momentum for their cycling club to last long into the future. Founded in 2018, Gateshead's Community Cycling Club began life thanks to conversations between Big Local staff and the community, and subsequently led to a meeting with Cycling UK.

Project Manager of Gateshead Big Local, Andrew Tinkler said: "We knew we had people interested (in a cycling club), we had also heard that Cycling UK were setting up a range of community clubs in the area, with a particular focus on the social aspects of the groups.

"So, we told Cycling UK what we wanted to do, and they said 'yes'. They were also able to provide us with a lot of the infrastructure we needed to set up a cycling club, such as insurance, risk assessment, planning for rides and training.

"As well as £1,100 that was invested by Big Local, Cycling UK helped us access other funding, so we've been able to purchase five bikes that people can use and they will be regularly serviced."

As well as getting together to cycle, the club provides a social element for members. There is also a health-themed sub group which has a remit to improve physical health of local people and access to exercise facilities.

Andrew says, "We're not going to put on the lycra and break any world records! Everybody does things at their own pace. But there are people who wouldn't have met each other without this group.

He adds, "It would be nice to have each group stepping it up over the next couple of years. They could become constituted, which would allow them to apply for external funding.

"The ultimate goal is to have groups like the cycling club doing their own thing without needing Big Local."



Members of Gateshead Community Cycling Club out on their bikes

"We're not going break any world records! Everybody does things at their own pace"

Kicking off a winning streak

Volunteers in Slade Green step up to coach the next generation



Mel provides guidance from the sidelines

“

I thought, ‘well if everyone else is going to do it, I might as well get my level one qualification at the age of 44’

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SLADE GREEN BIG LOCAL

By Ryan Herman
& Jessie Powell

When Mel Hudson decided to set up and coach a football club in Slade Green, she had barely coached a game in her life.

Her desire to set up the Slade Green Knights was driven by a recognition that there were no activities available for young people in the area and her lack of experience wasn't about to stop her from making a difference.

Mel says, "I decided, if I wanted to put a community football club together, I had to set an example. We asked local people if anyone wanted to be a coach. We were able to pay the FA to come down a run a Level One course and I thought, 'well if everyone else is going to do it, I might as well get my level one qualification at the age of 44'."

She continues, "We've got a lot of kids in this area who get into different problems. We wanted to find a way of bringing them together and talked to them, rather than putting together different projects in the hope one might work."

But whilst there was enthusiasm

from would be players, others in the area weren't so convinced.

Mel recalls, "On the first day, somebody from the council appeared and said, 'I thought I'd come along to keep you company.' They didn't think anyone would turn up."

But despite the doubters, the first session drew strong attention and by the end of it there were 50 kids registered to play as well as follow up calls after the session from those who couldn't make it but wanted to attend future training.

Slade Green Knights now has over 150 footballers representing teams ranging from under 6s to senior mens, with 14 qualified coaches; many of whom are parents who have dedicated their time for the certification. Not only did Mel's persistence pay off but every team enjoyed instant success on the pitch.

"2017-18 was our first season and all of our teams got promoted including five league champions" Mel describes, "The Under 15s team also won their Shield. Last season we had two teams reach cup finals and the men's team reached the semis only to lose to a club three divisions above them."

Off the pitch, Mel's dedication to the team and the value it adds to

her community has also been recognised. In 2018, she was awarded Volunteer of the Year at the London Grassroots Football Awards.

When asked about the future of the club and what's next after both personal and club success, Mel has very clear plans.

Mel says, "We have no facilities for

sport. We have some lovely green spaces but they're undulating and not suitable for football. So, we're trying to find a way to buy the land that once belonged to Slade Green FC before it folded in 2009."

"We want to give the people of Slade Green a stadium they can call home."



Under 8s celebrate success

FANCY A BREW?

COMPLETE ANY POSTCARD AT CONNECTS 2019 FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN A BIG LOCAL TEAPOT



Complete a postcard at this year's Connects for a chance to win one of five limited edition Big Local teapots. The teapots will be given out to five lucky winners at 3:45pm on Saturday.

Postcards can be found in your welcome pack and around the venue, and can be posted in the Big Local postbox located in the Marketplace.