

Responses to speaker questions from ‘Tried and tested solutions for a green recovery: Community wealth building’ on 2 September 2021



John Heneghan	Response
<p>What are the key issues involved in training up council officers to fully adopt the CWB mind-set?</p>	<p>This is a really good question – CWB approaches work really well where there is a sense of the whole organisation understanding and buying into the agenda, with support from both the political and officer leadership. We run a range of community wealth building training and events throughout the year, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Introduction to Community Wealth Building · Unleashing the Power of Procurement · Developing an Anchor Institution Approach <p>Additionally, we can provide bespoke training for your own organisation. See: https://cles.org.uk/events/ for more details.</p> <p>CWB ‘diagnostics’ help assess the extent to which existing policies, strategies and actions are reflective of a progressive and inclusive local economic approach. These are structured around the</p>

	<p>CWB pillars (procurement, employment, finance, land and assets and plural ownership), and highlight where there are current strengths and priorities for development.</p>
<p>How does this approach impact wider Local Authority duties, such as licencing / planning, eg, take aways (red meat) taxis, electrification</p>	<p>A CWB approach is an opportunity for anchors organisations to think about all of the levers they have at their disposal to create more inclusive local economies. So, there is merit in applying a CWB lens to all of the powers/duties you mention.</p> <p>Particularly in relation to spatial / land-use considerations, there are massive opportunities to use these agendas to promote social, economic, and environmental justice. The following links may be of interest:</p> <p>https://cles.org.uk/publications/recovery-reform/</p> <p>https://cles.org.uk/blog/our-land/</p>
<p>Could CWB be integrated into Levelling Up Fund bids?</p>	<p>Yes. It's worth emphasising, though, that the kind of economic development thinking that presumes this level of investment in infrastructure and shovel-ready schemes will, in of itself, improve the lives and outcomes for many of our communities is fundamentally flawed. It assumes that once investment capital has been secured, wealth, jobs and opportunity will trickle down for all to share. We know from experience this is not the case. If you look back over the last 20-30 years, we have seen various incarnations of regeneration funding, some with significantly higher levels of investment than is being made available through the levelling up agenda - and yet persistent issues of deprivation and deep-seated inequalities remain. Of course, some investment in physical infrastructure is needed, but we also need investment in social infrastructure and more deep-rooted economic change to ensure that the benefits of that investment are translated into</p>

	<p>improved outcomes and wellbeing for communities.</p> <p>You can read more of our thoughts on this here -</p> <p>https://cles.org.uk/blog/devolve-redirect-democratise/</p> <p>On the specific point about bids, obviously local authorities will be seeking to access resources through this programme. Embedding CWB thinking and practice in the design and delivery of your programme is an opportunity to think about how to make sure this investment genuinely creates opportunities to maximise local employment and training, including for those who are furthest away from the labour market, helps build strong ecosystems of local supply chains, with opportunities for social businesses and maximises social value. We'd be happy to talk to any local authorities who are keen to do this.</p>
<p>Distant shareholders are important income source for say pensioners, How can pension funds be engaged in CWB?</p>	<p>Local authorities and other anchor institutions are key financial players in place. Their footprint covers pension fund investments, capital investments and finance provided as part of business support programmes. A CWB approach means local authorities actively seeking to maximise their financial power in the service of the generative economy, by leveraging their investments as powerful drivers of change</p> <p>Pension funds can be a source of local investment. Nationally, local authority pension schemes are worth more than £280bn. Beyond their responsibilities to their members, these funds are reservoirs of the wealth which has been built in their place. Their investment decisions should reflect the local roots and values of their members. There are strong examples from across the country of schemes adopting ethical investment approaches. For example, in 2017 Islington Council set out to decarbonise its investments by 2022.</p>

	<p>Recent years have also seen the development of dedicated locally focused pension investment funds, designed to provide sustainable, long term income to members while delivering a “triple bottom line” by creating a positive local social and environmental contribution. In Lancashire this approach has led to investment in housing, while in London three pension organisations are working together to create a fund targeted at assets such as affordable housing, community regeneration projects, digital infrastructure and clean energy.</p>
<p>Do you liaise with organisations such as 'New Local' to get help get this message across?</p>	<p>This question was a follow up to a question about the balance in a CWB approach between ‘top down and a more grassroots, ‘bottom-up’ focus. We think both are needed, we need a strong local state alongside more engaged and empowered communities. Contrary to some of the prevailing narratives on the role of community power, we don’t see these things as mutually exclusive. As we say in this blog on economic recovery and the role of community power:</p> <p>https://cles.org.uk/blog/economic-recovery-and-reform-the-role-of-community-power/</p> <p><i>“Instead of a confrontation to the local state or as a route to cost savings in public services, it should be a source of community wealth and be directed to growing new forms of community ownership in the commercial economy”.</i></p> <p>You might also be interested this recent ‘in conversation with’ event that CLES hosted with Adam Lent, the Chief Executive of New Local</p> <p>https://cles.org.uk/events/cles-in-conversation-with-adam-lent/</p>