

## Report on “Making Connections; The third sector and the Integrated Regional Strategy”

Held on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2009 at the St. George’s Centre, Leeds.

This was a one day conference to discuss how the experience and work of the third sector could be connected to the emerging Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS). It was targeted at the sector but was attended by a range of organisations, including the key regional agencies.

### Key Speakers

- Tom Riordan (Chief Executive, Yorkshire Forward)
- Isobel Mills (Deputy Director, Government Office Yorkshire and the Humber)
- Tim Frenneaux (Principal Integrated Strategy Manager, Yorkshire Forward)
- Elizabeth Cox/ Saamah Abdallah (new economics foundation)
- Richard Wood (Head of Planning Strategy Service, Local Government Yorkshire and Humber)

### Workshops

Workshops were designed to showcase successful projects from the sector, but with the intention of translating factors behind this success into lessons that could be learned for the IRS.

- Homebuilder.
- Fair Play Partnership
- Rotherham Voluntary Sector Children Young People and Families Consortium
- Incommunities
- The ABLE Project

### Attendance

The conference was attended by 66 people from 44 organisations across the region.

### Key Speakers - main points:

#### Tom Riordan (Chief Executive, Yorkshire Forward)

- Even if the IRS doesn’t happen, and Yorkshire Forward disappears, we will still need to be clear about what we want as a region.
- The third sector really will be involved as a key partner.

- Equality is important but we cannot have an IRS that doesn't allow for competition, and with competition comes inequality. The key question is; is there a limit to the level of inequality that we as a region are willing to tolerate?
- We need to ensure that immigration is seen as a positive contribution to the region; how? How are we going to tackle the BNP "nightmare"?
- Social Enterprise will probably fill the gaps left by the demise of quangos and the reduction in public expenditure.
- Localisation of services is a good thing, but we must be wary of devolving too much responsibility where there is no capacity.

### Isobel Mills (Deputy Director, Government Office Yorkshire and the Humber)

- The time is right for the third sector to engage with the "new world order".
- There is a growing gap between "official" performance ratings and public perception; people feel disempowered and there is a sense of unfairness in society.
- The third sector has to have the evidence to be indispensable; the IRS is an opportunity to be in at the design stage.
- Any government will have to look to communities to deliver outcomes much more than in the past. Community economic development will be re-born.
- Local authorities will be community leaders; small is beautiful.

### Richard Wood (Head of Planning Strategy Service, Local Government Yorkshire and Humber)

- The IRS has to be a collaborative venture.
- There are complex inter-relationships of policies between local, sub regional and regional levels.
- The IRS has to be built from the bottom up using community strategies, Local Development Strategies, Transport Plans, Housing Market Assessments, and Housing Land Studies.
- Functional economic Sub Regions will be a core component.
- The IRS will be about *areas* not *levels*.

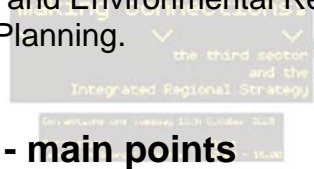
### Elizabeth Cox/ Saamah Abdallah (new economics foundation)

- Elizabeth and Saamah presented the think piece "Living better, using less"
- Economic growth has delivered mixed blessings for the environment, equalities, and well being.
- We have to rethink the mantra and purpose of economic growth.
- We have to reduce over consumption, understand the region's fair share of resources, and the inter-dependence between localities.
- We have to understand what supports a good life.
- Civic society, third sector, public and private sectors have to work towards a common and just purpose.
- The IRS should support action to encourage strong social organisation, activism, and mutualism.

- The IRS should support *innovation* to deliver an understanding of common purpose on economic and environmental literacy, and open up opportunities for delivery in different ways.
- The IRS should stress the importance of co-production principles; recognising people as assets, valuing work differently, building levels of trust and shared expertise, and strengthening social networks.

### Tim Frenneaux (Principal Integrated Strategy Manager, Yorkshire Forward)

- The IRS is about *Sustainable Economic Growth*; “*Economic Growth that can be sustained and is within environmental limits, but also enhances the environment and social welfare, and avoids greater extremes in future economic cycles*”
- The IRS represents a wide open door for the third sector; there are big opportunities for the sector to be pro-active; submit evidence in response to the Key Lines of Enquiry, join in the collation and assessment of evidence through a workstream.
- Workstreams are; Economy and Skills, Quality of Life and Equalities, Climate Change and Environmental Resources, Housing and Regeneration, Transport, Spatial Planning.



### Workshops - main points (on how the sector might be able to connect with the IRS)

#### Homebuilder

- Local level decision making must be enabled by developing an environment where partners can pool their resources and work flexibly together.
- Funding; even when this is via contracts and commissioned work, there has to be an accountable structure without prescriptive outcomes and outputs that become problematic when trying to coordinate activity.

#### Rotherham VCS Children, Young People, and Families Consortium

- Key success factor is ownership of the consortium by its members. The IRS should promote good models of working but let local organisations set up and run them.
- Voluntary and community sector (VCS) engagement with Local Strategic Partnerships needs to be coordinated across the region. A job for the Regional Forum?
- Partnership working between local authorities, CVS', and special thematic groups is crucial.
- Must look at how the IRS will be *implemented* especially in what will be a tough economic climate.
- The VCS has to urgently consider how it operates in these changing times.
- There has to be away of holding to account those who *don't* engage as well as those who do.

## The ABLE Project

- The IRS should provide an *enabling environment* for “organic” local development to flourish in. Solutions to problems develop *organically*, built on community energy and assets.
- Whatever the strategy, resources have to be provided *consistently*, at the right *time*, and for the *long term*.
- The IRS has to encourage creativity and innovation, but this requires vision and leadership.
- The IRS should be “social proofed”.
- The IRS has to be relevant to people.
- There needs to be long term investment in sustainability.
- We cannot “bean count” social benefits.
- We have to be proud of our projects and work.
- The capacity of the VCS to complement public services is massive.
- There is no “one size fits all” model.
- Enthusiastic and passionate people are behind successful projects.

## Fair Play Partnership

- Collaboration requires resources and has a cost.
- The VCS can influence both the *what* and the *how* in the IRS.
- How will the sector be represented on the sustainable development board?
- The IRS process needs to be communicated to the VCS. A job for the Forum?
- There are some key areas of activity for the sector in the IRS; for example preventative health care. These should be high priority.
- The IRS must include and value the contribution of volunteers and volunteering.
- Keep the language simple. Avoid “business speak”.
- The VCS needs to present its case better so that the public and private sectors understand it.
- The recession is an opportunity for the VCS to do things differently and more sustainably.
- A lot of the sector is made up of business. The IRS should recognise this.
- Social and environmental issues should be given equal priority to economic growth in the IRS.

## InCommunities

- It is critically important to identify the *principles* that enable projects to succeed.
- We need to tackle the disconnection between knowledge on the ground and bigger strategies like the IRS. How?
- We have to capture information and intelligence and communicate it.
- The IRS has to enable *local* and *different* needs to be addressed, because the region is very diverse.
- The third sector has to develop clearer lines of communication and ways of gathering feedback from communities.

## Conclusions

- The conference was intended to help place the Regional Forum and the sector at the forefront of IRS developments. It succeeded in doing this; we organised a good informative event and helped to promote collaborative working at regional level. The event evaluation showed that the majority of attendees felt that the conference had been a good starting point for sector engagement with the IRS.
- Ten high calibre people volunteered to be part of a Focus Group for sector input. The Forum will facilitate this.
- We also intended, via the workshops and the nef think piece, to influence thinking about how the IRS might be constructed, particularly as far as sustainability is concerned. This is part of a longer term goal, and the conference was intended to start the process. The Forum will be moving this agenda forward in the months to come.
- Some common themes emerged from the workshops, especially in relation to the need for the IRS to create the right kind of *culture* and *environment* to enable locally based solutions. This should be an important part of the way in which we present our evidence. "Evaluation findings and examples of best practice that help to understand the role that previous and existing policy and delivery has played in attaining the current position" ("Submitting evidence to inform the IRS"; from the Project Plan).

Stephen Fox  
November 2009



# Making Connections 13 10 09 - evaluation

<b>Speakers</b>		Very good	Good	Average	Poor	
Tom Riordan	No.	11	15	2		28
	%	39.29%	53.57%	7.14%	0.00%	
		<b>92.86%</b>				
Richard Wood	No.	7	10	11		28
	%	25.00%	35.71%	39.29%	0.00%	
		<b>60.71%</b>				
Elizabeth Cox	No.	18	6	7		31
	%	58.06%	19.35%	22.58%	0.00%	
		<b>77.42%</b>				
Tim Frenneaux	No.	6	13	5		24
	%	25.00%	54.17%	20.83%	0.00%	
		<b>79.17%</b>				
Isobel Mills	No.	12	11	1		24
	%	50.00%	45.83%	4.17%	0.00%	
		<b>95.83%</b>				
<b>Workshops</b>		Very Useful	Quite Useful	Satisfactory	Not Useful	
Homebuilder		4		1		
FairPlayPartnership		3	2	1		
Rotherham VS		3	1			
Incommunities		1	2			
The ABLE Project		2	1			
<b>Expectations</b>		Completely	Mostly	Partly	Not at all	
	No.	7	10	6		23
	%	30.43%	43.48%	26.09%	0.00%	
	<b>73.91%</b>					
<b>Info pack</b>		Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	
	No.	12	13	2		27
	%	44.44%	48.15%	7.41%	0.00%	
	<b>92.59%</b>					
<b>Venue Find and access</b>		Completely	Mostly	Partly	Not at all	
	No.	17	9	1		27
	%	62.96%	33.33%	3.70%	0.00%	
	<b>96.30%</b>					
<b>Rooms</b>		Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	
	No.	12	11	5		28
	%	42.86%	39.29%	17.86%	0.00%	
	<b>82.14%</b>					
<b>Catering</b>	No.	10	14	4		28
	%	35.71%	50.00%	14.29%	0.00%	
		<b>85.71%</b>				