

# The Localism Bill

## What it means for you

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# Today's presentation

- Main features of the Localism Bill
- 'The Big Society'
- What do people think?
- What opportunities are there?
- What do you think?

# The Localism Bill

“The time has come to disperse power more widely in Britain today.”

The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, Coalition Agreement, May 2010.

# Main points of Localism Bill

- Local Government
- Communities and individuals
- Planning
- Housing

# Local Government

- General power of competence
- Abolition of the Standards Board
- Predetermination
- Directly elected mayors

# Communities

- Community right to challenge
- Community right to bid
- Local referenda
- Right to veto excessive council tax rises

# Planning

- Abolition of regional strategies
- Neighbourhood planning
- Community right to build
- Consultation with communities over large planning applications
- Stronger enforcement
- Reforming the community infrastructure levy

# Planning

- Reform of local planning
- Duty to co-operate
- Nationally significant infrastructure projects

# Housing

- Social housing tenure
- Social housing allocations
- Homelessness
- Council Housing finance
- Homeswap
- Social housing regulation

# Big Society

- The Localism Bill is part of a wider policy framework, central to which is the concept of 'Big Society'.
- Community Organisers
- National Citizen Service
- Big Society Bank
- Community First

# What the Government says

"The Localism Bill is one of the most radical pieces of legislation to be debated in this chamber for decades. It is a triumph for democracy over bureaucracy."

"The Localism Bill will herald a ground-breaking shift in power to councils and communities overturning decades of central government control and starting a new era of people power."

Rt. Hon Eric Pickles MP, Local Government and Communities Secretary

# What the Government says

“For too long, central government has hoarded and concentrated power. Trying to improve people’s lives by imposing decisions, setting targets, and demanding inspections from Whitehall simply doesn’t work.”

Rt. Hon Greg Clark MP, Minister of State for Decentralisation

# What Local Government says

“We welcome the positive ambitions of the Localism Bill to drive power and decision making down to communities. Local (community, neighbourhood, parish and town community) councils will be greatly encouraged by their enhanced recognition and the opportunities to serve local people through greater influence in planning, housing, social and economic regeneration and community well being.”

Cllr. Michael Chater, Chairman of the National Association of Local Councils said:

# A NIMBY's Charter?

“We must be careful that localism does not become a platform for disaffected people to block change at any angle.”

Rt Hon Richard Harrington MP

"Local planning is a cauldron of self-interest. The whole culture of planning at local level is largely negative – building new houses is never popular.”

David Snell, author of *Building Your Own Home*

# Good for the voluntary sector?

“Localism is our agenda and has been for many years. The government has aligned itself with us.”

“There’s been a tendency for it (the Government) to adopt a ‘year-zero’ approach when implementing Big Society, as if all the organisations that could deliver it had to be invented from scratch.”

Steve Wyler, CEO of Locality

# Good for Communities?

- “The right to challenge is not a tool for community empowerment, it's a lever to accelerate privatisation in disguise.”

Jay Kennedy , Head of Policy, Directory of Social Change.

# Good for Local Government?

“The UK is too centralised and devolving more power locally is a broadly the right thing. But somehow Ministers have been convinced that decades of central control can be reversed overnight. Local officials are quite rightly befuddled when told they should simply ignore reams of legislation, which remains in force, ‘because the Minister says so’.”

Ben Wittenberg, Directory of Social Change

# Opportunities

- More responsive, democratic and flexible local government
- Safeguarding of important local assets
- Community run local services
- More local influence over planning
- Housing that better meets local need

# More information

[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localismplainenglishguide](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localismplainenglishguide)

[www.lga.gov.uk/lga](http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga)

[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk)

[www.dsc.org.uk](http://www.dsc.org.uk)

[thebigsociety.co.uk](http://thebigsociety.co.uk)

What do you think?