

# Northumbria Research Link

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# LITTLE LEISURE CENTRES AND LIBRARIES IN THE BIG SOCIETY. LSA 2015

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# WE ASK:

- ◉ What were the problems volunteer groups faced in asset transfer?
- ◉ What support did they need?
- ◉ What support could be provided?
- ◉ In the context of a critique of the Big Society.

# RECENT ASSET TRANSFER IN LEISURE

- ◉ sports centres, swimming pools and libraries
- ◉ volunteers plan and execute the transfer to trust status themselves
- ◉ take roles of governance and delivery afterwards
- ◉ an alternative to local government closing non-statutory services as a consequence of reduced funding



**Ecclesfield Library** is about to become independently run by the community.

This will create exciting possibilities for the library and you, with lots of **new opportunities** to safeguard and develop this valuable community resource.

We need to act **quickly** to take advantage of these opportunities!

We would like to hear **YOUR** ideas and wishes for future activities in the building!

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Storyteller (Children Welcome)

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**TUESDAY**  
29th APRIL 2014  
9am - 11am

**WEDNESDAY**  
30th APRIL 2014  
7pm - 9pm

[library.ecclesfieldgroups.com](http://library.ecclesfieldgroups.com)  
(0114) 245 0200

FRIENDS OF  
**ECCLESFIELD LIBRARY**



4 REGIONAL NEWS

northnews.co.uk

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2011

## Gym'll fix it as closure averted

**By Mark Tallentire**  
[mark.tallentire@northnews.co.uk](mailto:mark.tallentire@northnews.co.uk)

**O**VER 25 years, Deerness Gymnastics Club has produced more than 80 international gymnasts, including four world and five European titles. And all this came out of the tiny village of Ushaw Moor, in County Durham.

Coaches, parents and gymnasts alike have been devastated, therefore, when, earlier this year, Durham County Council announced plans to close its Deerness leisure centre, in order to cut costs.

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## Inquiry after cars collide

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## Half century for chemists

**Mark Tallentire**  
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**I**N 1961, a group of chemists gathered in a small room in the heart of Newcastle to form the Institute for Social Renewal. It was a time of great change, and the institute was born to address the social and economic challenges of the day.

The institute has since grown into a major force for social renewal in the region, with a focus on education, training, and community development.



**IN TRAINING:** Gymnasts at the academy

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"Initially there was shock. But we decided there was no way we would let it go. Parents and helpers have come on board and we now have 150 volunteers who want to keep it open as a true community facility."

Jessie Hoskett, 17, who is part of the current British champions senior men's four, trains at the centre five times a week, for four hours at a time.

"It was quite disappointing to hear about the closure. There was panic. But the plans are very exciting. It gives us a lot more freedom and flexibility."

Durham County Council-run leisure centres in Crook and Ferryhill will close tomorrow, while the council is retaining Pity Me's facility on reduced hours.

For more information on Deerness Gymnastics Academy, visit [deernessgymnastics.org.uk](http://deernessgymnastics.org.uk)

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# IN CONTRAST TO THE FIRST GENERATION OF TRUSTS

- ◉ E.g. SIV, Edinburgh Leisure, Greenwich Leisure
- ◉ major objective to avoid non-domestic rates to central government; and avoid CCT
- ◉ volunteers in governance as trustees; recruited for their expertise
- ◉ transfer to trust status led by paid employees
- ◉ local authority represented on the board
- ◉ BIG and may expand beyond local area

# REVIEW OF 5 YEARS OF THE BIG SOCIETY

| Achievements  | Negatives   |
|---|---|
| new kinds of partnerships; voluntary sector resilient, and strengthening communities; volunteering remaining high compared to other countries - although at static levels since 2001. | large companies benefiting - bias against the local and voluntary sector; services not sufficiently meeting the needs of those who most need them -exacerbating gaps rich and poor; lack of dialogue to find a way of adapting to budget cuts; power not significantly transferred from the state; failure to establish a strong partnership with the voluntary sector; failure to mobilise the private sector to work for the common good. |



# METHODS

- ◉ Semi-structured interviews with managers and volunteers [sometimes the same person] in 11 facilities (libraries, museums and sports centres) which have transferred from local government to volunteer control and one in an authority which developed volunteers to work alongside employees (2014-15).
- ◉ Review of support and guidance [Sport England, DTS, and N. American]



# EXAMPLE - BRAMLEY BATHS LEEDS



- ◉ A small swimming pool and leisure centre - outskirts of Leeds - built in 1904. Used by local residents and schools for swimming lessons.
- ◉ Opening hours reduced in September 2011 as part of a spending review by Leeds City Council.
- ◉ Local community group established to support the pool in February 2011 and re-opened in January 2013 as an Industrial Provident Society on a 25 year lease from the Council.
- ◉ Houses a public gym, swimming pool, steam room and space for community events, meetings and fitness classes.
- ◉ The trustees are volunteers and paid workers manage the pool and deliver the service.

# WHAT SUPPORT WAS PROVIDED TO VARYING DEGREES?

- ◉ Guidance and support with establishing legal entity and business plans
- ◉ Mentors who have been through the process.
- ◉ Volunteer development officers - especially in areas of low social capital
- ◉ Advice and support from local authority staff
- ◉ Political goodwill

# SUPPORT - PROVIDED TO VARYING DEGREES

- ◉ Technical training and support
- ◉ Rate relief
- ◉ Favourable leases
- ◉ Assurance that building liabilities will be met
- ◉ Clarity over liabilities arising from previous grants.
- ◉ Redeployment of local authority staff and clarity over application of TUPE regulations.

# SUMMARY

- ◉ our examples are 'little'. individual and small.
- ◉ Oligopoly - Of 161 contracts with local authorities, three operators hold 61%. Sports and Leisure Management; Places for People and Greenwich Leisure Limited. 'predatory trusts'. Is big the default option?
- ◉ Hard to get a national picture in sport
- ◉ In libraries - all small local trusts.

# CONCLUSIONS

- ◉ important supportive role of Volunteer Advice Centres
- ◉ contrast in collaboration government / volunteers
- ◉ has had to be genuine transfer of power
- ◉ Most support is required in most disadvantaged areas. - but it tends to be delivered to demand.



# CONCLUSIONS

- ◉ little evidence of businesses showing leadership in committing resources for the common good



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# WHAT CAN WE LEARN - ACTION/SUPPORT?

- ◉ Improve and promote Sports England's asset transfer advice - for local govt as well as volunteers.
- ◉ Facilitate networking for support
- ◉ guidance on TUPE
- ◉ Local to be the default option to promote community engagement
- ◉ volunteer led transfers should be encouraged, rather than discouraged

# WHAT CAN WE LEARN - ACTION/SUPPORT?

- ◉ Favourable rate relief and lease conditions
- ◉ Technical support and training
- ◉ support from development officers
- ◉ businesses to commit resources for the common good
- ◉ Clarify liability for previous grants

# REALISTICALLY...

- ◉ Most of this costs
- ◉ We are here because of cuts in expenditure
- ◉ We can't develop volunteers to provide a service for all [rather than the advantaged] without support.
- ◉ And this takes time
- ◉ Funds and time are in short supply!

# REFERENCES

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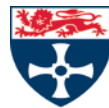
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# ANY QUESTIONS?



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