

Building Community Capacity for the Future

Thursday, 24th – Friday, 25th October 2024

Participant Biographies



Stephen Aldridge

Stephen is Director for Analysis and Data at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

A government economist by background, he has also worked in the Department of Trade and Industry (now the Department for Business and Trade); various predecessors to his current department; the Cabinet Office; and Her Majesty's Treasury.

Amongst other things, Stephen is a founding trustee and Board member of the Centre for Homelessness Impact; a member of the Public Policy Committee of the British Academy; a fellow and Council member of the Academy of Social Sciences; a trustee of Local Trust; and an Advisory Board member at the Centre for Science and Policy at the University of Cambridge. Stephen was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB) in the Queen's birthday honours list 2007.



Matt Buckham

Matt is Managing Director the SNG Community Foundation leading a multi-disciplinary team across the south of England. The directorate focuses on community action, digital and financial inclusion, Employment and training, social impact, and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG). Matt has 20 years working in the social housing sector across regeneration, community investment housing management and support.

Studying towards an institute of leadership management in executive coaching and mentoring, Matt believes in the power of people and communities to solve societal issues. Having led the housing sectors first large scale community asset transfer Matt has worked with community organisations and champions across England. Currently the SNG Community Foundation are spear heading research into new community models with joint ventures looking into doughnut economic approaches to long term social infrastructure development.

Matt sits on The Centre for Excellence in Community Investment's (CECI) core group and Business in the Community South East board and is a key advocate for community investment in the housing sector.



Harry Cheong

Harry Cheong is currently the Senior Policy and Insights Manager at Places for People, a role he began in January 2024. He previously worked with the Welsh Government on immigration policy and held various roles at the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) in Singapore, contributing to policy reforms for vulnerable youth and young persons, as well as different types of families (divorced, ageing, etc.). Harry holds an MPhil in Public Policy from the University of Cambridge and has experience in research, policy analysis, and stakeholder engagement, making him skilled in policymaking, strategy, program implementation, and legislative reviews.



Millie Dessent

As Policy Officer at Local Trust, Millie plays a key role in research, writing and publications work to synthesise the evidence and make the case for the development and implementation of an effective neighbourhood's policy in England.



Jonn Elledge

Jonn Elledge is a freelance journalist and broadcaster, writing for titles including the Guardian, i Paper and CapX and contributing a weekly column to the New Statesman. He was previously an assistant editor at the NS, where he was responsible for launching and editing the urbanism site CityMetric, hosting the Skylines podcast and writing a lot of angry columns about transport, housing policy and Brexit. His books include A History of the World in 47 Borders: The Stories Behind the Lines On Our Maps (2024); while his weekly Newsletter of (Not Quite) Everything Substack, a baffling digest of politics, history, geography and nerdery.



Rach Fulford

Rach is Head of Communities and Engagement at Sovereign Network Group (SNG) and leads a wide range of Community Investment initiatives, customer-led social action and place-based programmes across the south of England.

Rach has worked in a variety of roles across the charitable, private and public sectors and is known for her energising approach and action focused thinking. Rach enjoys facilitating cross-sector collaboration across communities, maximising on powerful partnership working and generating social impact.

Rach is a keen motorcyclist and enjoys letting her hair down at track days in the UK and Europe in her free time and is currently training to be a road riding instructor.



Rose Grayston

Rose Grayston is a housing campaigner and policy expert fighting to reverse the decline of decent, affordable housing in the UK, with a focus on England. Her work aims to change the way new homes are financed and delivered to improve the affordability and sustainability of new development. Previously Policy Manager for Shelter and Senior Programme Manager for the New Economics Foundation, Rose now works in partnership with Toby Lloyd through their consultancy, On Place. She is currently Expert Adviser to the Minister of State for Housing and Planning.



Shahi Islam

Shahi Islam is Homes England's Director of Affordable Housing responsible for delivering the Affordable Homes Programme. Shahi has been at Homes England since 2013, serving in various leadership positions to support the management and delivery of a number of major capital and revenue programmes. With close to 20 years in the sector, Shahi has extensive experience in housing working in roles covering policy, strategy and programmes. Prior to the Agency he worked at the Greater London Authority working on housing investment policy.



Madeleine Jennings

Madeleine leads on policy and communications for Local Trust. Providing strategic direction for Local Trust's policy programme, overseeing stakeholder engagement both within the policy sector and government as well with wider civil society. Madeleine seeks to maximise engagement with the Big Local programme, celebrating its successes and the people at its heart whilst looking for opportunities to embed the core principles of the programme in public policy.

Madeleine's background is in policy, public affairs and strategic communications. Previously, she worked for the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and the British Association of Social Workers (BASW). Her primary motivation is getting non-policy professionals involved with public policy making.



Sahil Khan

Sahil is Director of Community Investment and Resident Engagement Peabody, and leads the work of the Peabody Community Foundation. Sahil has worked in the housing sector for over 15 years. Sahil's previous roles have included Director of Community Investment at Catalyst and Head of Community Investment at Southern Housing. Sahil started his career as a youth worker and has a long-standing interest in youth work, community development and social innovation.



Matt Leach

Matt Leach is Chief Executive of Local Trust, a Lottery-funded charitable endowment supporting long-term place-based, community-led change in 150 deprived neighbourhoods across England. Over the last decade, Local Trust has drawn on its work to pioneer new thinking about social infrastructure, neighbourhood regeneration and the challenges associated with turning around peripheral and deprived communities. Matt has previously held a range of senior roles in the UK government, think tanks and civil society sectors.



Matthew Morgan

Matthew Morgan, Director and Co-Founder: With over 20 years' experience in writing and communications, Matthew is responsible for setting the charity's strategy with the Board of Trustees, overseeing its research and commercial services, and delivering lasting impact with the Quality of Life team. In making health and wellbeing central to the way we create and care for our homes and communities, he seeks to foster greater understanding and cooperation between local communities, the built environment industry and government at a local and national level.



Andrew O'Brien

Andrew O'Brien is the Head of Secretariat for the new Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods. The Commission aims to examine the role of neighbourhoods in people's lives and developing policy proposals for how government can support its development. Previously, he was Director of Policy at the think tank Demos and Director Of External Affairs at Social Enterprise UK. He has written widely on communities, mostly recently *The Preventative State* and *Tacking Back Control: proposals for how to give power and agency to our communities*.



Munny Purba

Munny is a dedicated advocate for youth engagement and social justice, with nine years' experience working with young people. Currently the Programme Officer at Cumberland Lodge, Munny specialises in political literacy and community leadership, empowering young people to actively engage in democratic processes. Her work spans developing workshops and podcasts on media literacy, depolarisation, and civic responsibility, as well as managing the flagship Youth and Democracy network, that bring emerging leaders together from across the UK. Passionate about amplifying youth voices, Munny is committed to fostering positive change and helping to build a more informed, inclusive, and equitable society.



Sandra Ryan

Sandra is the Property Director at Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation, a charity whose purpose is to build the foundations of a healthier society by improving health care, driving health equity and tackling the social factors that lead to poor health.

Sandra has worked in property for over 30 years specialising in asset management and development. She has worked for private family offices, FTSE 100 companies and latterly a charity. She has experience across a broad sector of property including retail, life science, marinas, and mixed-use residential and commercial projects.



Hilary Satchwell

Hilary is an architect, urban designer, and master-planner with over 25 years of experience focused on large-scale housing, placemaking, and fostering community. As a founding director of Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design, she leads projects that span new settlements, urban extensions, and urban and estate regeneration across England, working closely with the planning system and local communities to create thriving, people-friendly places. Her work also involves research on social value in planning and social infrastructure, as well as shaping policy and design guidance.

Hilary serves as one of Sadiq Khan's Mayor's Design Advisors, is a trustee of Design: South East, and a non-executive director at Future of London. She also campaigns for diversity in urban development through the Part W Collective and chairs the board of governors at a primary school in South East London.

Hilary has spent a lot of time thinking about why we now have systems that make some of the key infrastructure we need in new places almost impossible to deliver well.



Barbara Slasor

Barbara is Gaunless Gateway Big Local Community Development Lead since January 2017 to present. Barbara works to support a resident-led proactive partnership to identify, prioritise, make decisions and act in response to local community needs utilising £1.15m of Big Local funding. She has given evidence as a community expert witness at an APPG inquiry into Levelling Up, supported various campaigns including a community wealth fund and supported communities to have a voice as part of the UK Covid Enquiry.

Working in the voluntary and community sector for 22 years, she has been involved in local governance as a primary school governor, a charity trustee and is a company director at BS Consultancy and Continuum CIC. In her spare time she loves to read or play online games.



Cee Swakamisa

Cee is a third-year, part-time doctoral candidate at the University of Leeds, researching social entrepreneurship ecosystems and the role of the faith sector in eradicating multidimensional poverty and advancing sustainable development in South Africa. They are also a Fellow at The Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and Cumberland Lodge, two organizations focused on addressing the challenges of our time and fostering more inclusive societies.

As an aspiring social entrepreneur, Cee is currently enrolled in a 9-month Innovative Entrepreneur programme run by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. They are developing a social enterprise aimed at tackling global challenges related to housing affordability and access to electricity. Their project focuses on creating and deploying affordable, net-zero carbon homes that integrate smart home automation, renewable energy systems, and modular design.



Julia Thrift

Julia Thrift is Director of Healthier Place-making at the TCPA (Town & Country Planning Association) where she works to facilitate cross-disciplinary collaboration to create well-designed places, spaces and buildings that make it easier for people to live healthier lives. She is a trustee at Trees for Cities, a charity that works with communities to improve lives by planting trees. Earlier in her career she was a Director at the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). Formerly a journalist, she has a degree in philosophy from UCL.



Becky Tunstall

Becky Tunstall is Prof Emerita of Housing at the University of York, and currently Visiting Professor at the Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion at LSE. Her research has focussed on housing and inequality, neighbourhoods and renewal, and she is author of *The fall and rise of social housing: 100 years on 20 estates*. She is the PI on *Insecure lives*, an ESRC project on people experiencing insecurity about two or more of work, income, housing, food, and health and care. It aims to find out how many people are affected, and what impact multiple insecurities have on their lives and futures.



Kyle Vanelli

Kyle Vanelli is a Policy Officer working for Local Trust with prior experience in international development and refugee casework. He has been leading on Local Trust's policy development on housing, including research on transferrable lessons from the New Towns programme and building evidence on the long-term importance of social infrastructure to places. He has also worked to develop Local Trust's policy recommendations to the new government on public health and economic reforms.



Tanya Vice

As a dedicated Project Co-ordinator at Heart of Sidley Big Local area, Tanya has been instrumental in empowering residents and securing additional funding for community development projects. Her efforts have led to the planning approval for development of a fully accessible community hub, which will provide a central space for residents to connect and participate in local activities.

Tanya's experience, passion for community engagement, dedication to fostering community empowerment and her strategic approach to creating positive impact have made her a valuable asset to Heart of Sidley, driving the initiative's success.