# Know Your Place

## Why local heritage is vital to justice and wellbeing

A DISCUSSION PAPER FROM THE CENTRE FOR WELFARE REFORM

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Citizen Network
FOR A WORLD WHERE EVERYONE MATTERS

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*'To be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places: to be human is to have and know your place.'*

Edward Relph, Place and Placelessness, 1976


www.timewalk.btck.co.uk

# Foreword

This very useful paper draws together a diverse range of facts and research to illuminate an issue that is vital to justice and to our wellbeing - the survival of our local heritage, our buildings, our green spaces and the social structures that maintain them. Sadly, as Joyce Bullivant documents, too often local heritage, particularly Northern, industrial and working-class heritage is being irretrievably lost. The impact on community life and wellbeing is grave.

This issue illuminates a profound failure of political imagination. It is not just our current extreme Right-wing Government that focuses on money and jobs as the only measures of success. The whole political system has forgotten that human beings need communities, identities, histories and diverse ways to express their citizenship. Furthermore, the centralisation of money, power and planning leaves local people unable to take back control and protect what they value.

In Sheffield we can see this struggle being played out today. Our city has some great examples of old buildings which are being protected and re-used, but also many community assets that are under threat.  Local government - the number one target of cuts by Central government - often feels trapped in an unwinnable game. But this situation can be salvaged, by transferring assets, power and resources back down to the local communities that make up this great City.

Cities are more than the people who live in them; they are also a legacy of those who came before, who built for those who would come after them. Today's citizens must be given the same opportunity to demonstrate their love for their own place.

Simon Duffy

Director of the Centre for Welfare Reform

# 1. Introduction

**There is a lot of talk about resilient economies by organisations such as ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability). Economies that can weather literal storms, such as flooding and storm damage, and financial storms, such as recession and changes in the world economy. But economies are made of people, and in the lower income groups their ability to weather the storm is fast being eroded in ways that limit their ability to function as a member of a community. Over the years many initiatives have been funded to fight inequalities in our Northern cities. Yet despite these efforts the same areas remain areas of high deprivation and often crime. Some have had problems for so many decades many of the earlier residents have died or moved away; so the problems must reflect structural problems - not the people who live there. A common factor is of course low wages, and high reliance on benefits.**

On the face of it selling a community asset seems like an inconsequential act, possibly even a sensible way of conserving resources, but research from a variety of sources suggests any money "saved" by selling it may result in rise in costs elsewhere both tangible and intangible.

My own interest was sparked by a lecture streamed from the RSA given by Eric Klinenberg. Having studied community involvement with heritage I have come to the conclusion that morale can be helped by the existence of heritage buildings or damaged when historic buildings are lost to a private developer, or worse, demolished. So many of the buildings are built in the centre of communities and are often the heart of the community.

Although some of these examples here are specific to Sheffield and some of the financial concerns are specific to the North of England, I think the main focus of the argument is much wider. My argument is not just about preserving heritage but it is also about why we need local authorities to have a holistic view of the impact of the decisions they make.

# 2. Common Ground

*"Today, societies around the world are becoming more fragmented, divided, and conflicted. The social glue has become undone."*

Eric Klinenberg[1]

**In 1791 the people of Sheffield rioted, releasing people from the debtors prison, attacking the Rev. Wilkinson's house and setting fire to his haystacks. Wilkinson was a major landowner and a magistrate. The Inclosure act that they were protesting about enclosed the common land and left the ordinary people with nowhere they had a right to be. The riot of 1791 was the beginning of unrest in the city and throughout the country for a number of years.[2]**

Across the country decisions in local councils are having a cumulative impact that could have as lasting a mark on the poor as the Inclosure Act. For those on lower income public spaces and buildings are the only places they have the legal rights to be. In the case of historic buildings and sites it also incorporates a history of people like themselves that goes back generations for some, quite possibly the only place their history is preserved.

In June 2018 Locality reported that they had found that more than 4,000 publicly owned buildings and spaces are sold off every year across England. These are parks, libraries, town halls and swimming pools. Many are being lost to private developers. Locality reported that a consistently high number of public buildings and spaces have been sold each year in England from 2012 to 2016.[3]

Around twenty Anglican Churches close each year, with the figures for non-denominational churches considerably higher.[4] 25% of South Yorkshire's working men clubs have closed. In Sheffield in the last two years, 5 former clubs have closed. Across the country the number of working men's clubs have fallen from 4,000 in the 1970s to around 1,500 today.[5]

The Campaign for Real Ale said that many areas are losing their local pub with 467 closures across the UK in the first 6 months of 2018. 4 out of 5 people have seen a pub shut down within five miles of their home in the last five years.[6]

Over the years because of changes made, many community schools were closed as pupils were moved elsewhere and some were converted into flats or for business use. Councils have also closed more than 500 children's centres since 2010.[7] The closure of many youth clubs over the past few years combined with a battery of cuts to youth services have left disadvantaged teenagers idle and isolated as the centres lie derelict or are sold off to private

developers.[8] Adolescent mental health services and career advice has also been cut throughout England, combined with a rise in expulsions from schools.[9, 10] It must be hard for many young people not to feel abandoned.

2,000 villages are classified as unsuitable for new housing because of the lack of a local pub or somewhere the community can meet together.[11] Cuts to public transport have left many areas, both rural and urban, without adequate transport.[12]

In industrial areas, changes within the steel industry and related trades and closures to coal mines have had a major impact on local communities as large local employers have gone from many areas and previous works have been demolished. Only a few buildings remain as a reminder of the origins of their neighbourhood, and most of these are public buildings or in public ownership.

Communities are losing their anchorage points and the distinctive character of their area, leaving people feeling angry, frustrated and disorientated. They are losing the familiar and safe community gathering points. They may not be burning haystacks but there are signs of unrest.

# 3. Social Exclusion

**In their report of 2018 the Sheffield City Partnership Board said:**

*"Inclusive growth in a city is dependent on the health and wellbeing of the population since they are the principal component of the economic infrastructure."*[13]

**But health and wellbeing is also dependent on not being excluded, and inclusion is not a simple matter of more jobs and better wages.**

Power and Wilson (2000) describe social exclusion as a tendency to push vulnerable and difficult people into the least popular places.[14] But as shown by the selling off of a pub and the church in a rural village, social exclusion can happen in any area. The great divide is between those who are rich enough and fit enough to drive and those too poor to even use public transport, even if it is available. Social life within the community is based on who has a big enough house to invite others to visit, and who they are willing to invite.

Neighbourhoods can break down if the three elements – home, services, and environment are disrupted to a point where a feeling of security and familiarity in their neighbourhood disintegrates. In some areas the disintegration may not be so obvious, but it still has an impact. From the old

village communities to the heart of city there are many that are experiencing mental health problems and chronic loneliness.

The environment you grow up in has an impact. Research on children growing up in social housing compared to children of similar income and social hardships, find that children from social housing had a distinct disadvantage in future outcomes such as qualifications, employment, depressive illnesses and poor self esteem. So exclusion is not purely down to social disadvantage, but also to where you live. Research, mainly from outside the UK, suggests that ways in which young people's peer groups, social networks and social capital (the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society) as well as local norms and expectations and the social practical support available to families, can influence children and their life chances.[15] Research in Canada also seems to support the idea that where youths live is a big factor in whether youths turn to knife crime. Social deprivation may be a contributing factor, but social environment definitely matters.[16]

In 1995 there was a heatwave in Chicago that caused 739 deaths.[17] Researchers comparing death rates in different neighbourhoods, which to all appearances were matched in levels of high deprivation, found some surprising results. It became apparent that there was something more to who died than whether they were wealthy enough to afford an air conditioning unit. Areas that were identical in levels of high deprivation differed in how many people survived the heat. This set Eric Klinenberg, a sociologist wondering what could account for this marked difference.

It became obvious that the major difference was closer knit communities were used to checking in on each other and had busier street scene. After many of research the years Klinenberg has drawn the conclusion that the layout of an area and the inclusion of a well used community buildings, such as a library, had a whole series of advantages for the local population including better health; and it has long been understood that social cohesion develops through repeated human interaction and joint participation in shared projects, not merely from a principled commitment to abstract values and beliefs.

The social and physical environment shapes our behaviour, helps make us who we are and determines our lifestyle. Klinenberg says that although solid infrastructures such as public transport are important, more important to the success of a community is the social infrastructure which determines whether social capital develops.

He defines as social infrastructure public institutions such as libraries, swimming pools, athletic fields, playgrounds, parks and other green spaces that people can use freely. Community organisations including churches and civic associations act as social infrastructures when they have an established

physical space where people can assemble. Commercial establishments can also be an important part of the social infrastructure, particularly when they operate as "third spaces" places (such as cafes, hairdressers, post offices and bookstores) where people are welcome to congregate and linger regardless of what they've purchased.

When social infrastructure is robust, it encourages mutual support and collaboration among friends and neighbours. When degraded, it inhibits social activity, leaving families and individuals to fend for themselves. Social infrastructure is vitally important, because it is through local, face to face, recurrent interactions that communities are built.

Social infrastructure rarely crashes as completely or as visibly as a fallen bridge, and its breakdown doesn't result in immediate system failure. But when social infrastructure is degraded, the consequences are unmistakable. People reduce the time they spend in public settings and stay in their "safe houses". Social networks weaken. Crime rises. Older and sick people grow isolated. Younger people get addicted to drugs and become more vulnerable to lethal overdoses. Distrust rises and civic participation wanes. In rural areas this is possibly not so obvious because younger people are forced to move out due to housing shortages in the area or are in too small a number to be seen as a threat. The main impact may be unseen behind closed doors.

Even in the 'nicer areas' communities are under threat as the cuts continue and people's income drops and the available social infrastructure is sold off. The places where connections can be made are gone. Green spaces on their own are not enough if the local community feels they cannot control activities that go on there.

*"People love the greenery but it is a source of problems, such as kids on motorbikes and antisocial behaviour in the woods.*

*"In the past there used to be wardens and kids clubs and there was always someone responsible there. The open space is unsupervised and part of the discussion is how we create sufficient activities to get over the antisocial behaviour."*[18]

The Mental Health Foundation says that mental health is shaped by a wide range of characteristics including the social economic and physical environments in which people live. They state the impact of the cuts has resulted in a loss of community resources and facilities and the erosion of social capital due to weakened social networks and reduced social interaction.[19]

In 2006, Councils were given a statutory responsibility to explore local issues surrounding community cohesion and put together a tangible local delivery plan for delivering and effectively monitoring projects that bring local people together.[20]

To create cohesion in the community several things are needed: a shared vision for a neighbourhood, a strong sense of individual's responsibilities in an area and clear communication of what is expected of people and what they can expect in turn. There must be a strong sense of trust in local institutions to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests. A strong recognition of the contribution of both those who are new to an area and those who already have a deep attachment to a particular place, with a focus on what they have in common. A strong and positive relationship between people in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods. But the need for protection of community spaces does not seem to be considered as a necessary component.

*"To appreciate why this matters, compare the social space of the library with the social space of popular commercial establishments, such as Starbucks or McDonald's. Commercial entities are valuable parts of the social infrastructure, and there's no doubt that classic "third places," including cafes, bars, and restaurants, have helped revitalize cities and suburbs. But not everyone can afford to frequent them, and not all paying customers are welcome to stay for long. Spending time in a market-driven social setting—even a relatively inexpensive fast-food restaurant or pastry shop—requires paying for the privilege."*[21]

Planners looking at urban regeneration are well aware of the need for an asset place-based approach. Gorman states that all neighbourhoods have individual and collective assets that need to be strengthened and enhanced, stressing resident involvement is an important factor.[22] Place-based development reflects a growing understanding that local settings present unique factors that can generate positive effects such as creativity and innovation, but also negative effects such as feelings of exclusion leading to loneliness, depression, and even violence.

While it is true that 1.2 million elderly people suffer from chronic loneliness, there are 9 million people in the UK who are always or often lonely. Two-fifths (40%) of people aged 16-24 say they feel lonely often or very often, compared to 29 per cent of 65-74-year-olds and 27 per cent of those aged over 75.[23]

*"Loneliness is not new but we do increasingly recognise it as one of our most pressing public health issues. Feeling lonely often is linked to early deaths – on a par with smoking or obesity. It's also linked to increased risk of coronary heart disease and stroke; depression, cognitive decline and an increased risk of Alzheimer's. It's estimated that between 5% and 18% of UK adults feel lonely often or always. And when we feel socially rejected, it triggers a response in our brain similar to one from experiencing physical pain."*[24]

American research has found that elderly people with reduced social contact have a 31% higher risk of death. The LSE calculated that each older lonely person could cost health and social care services up to £6,000 over 10 years. Lonely older people are 1.8 times more likely to visit their GP, 1.6 times more likely to visit A&E and 3.5 times more likely to enter local authority-funded residential care.[25]

NHS figures published June 2018 revealed that almost 400,000 children and young people aged 18 and under are in contact with the health service for mental health problems. According to the figures, the number of "active referrals" by GPs in April was a third higher than the same period two years prior. Those seeking help for conditions such as depression and anxiety showed a sharp increase.[26]

The rise in mental health problems may be coincidental, but indications are that children from lower income families are more likely to be isolated with low self esteem and fewer opportunities to socialise outside school.[27]

Almost 25% of children in Sheffield are living in poverty, compared to the UK average of 20%. This varies considerably across the city, with almost 43% of children in Firth Park living in poverty, compared to just 3% in Ecclesall.[28]

Schools are social infrastructures. For pupils, teachers, parents, and entire communities, schools can either foster or inhibit trust, solidarity, and a shared commitment to the common good. They can also set boundaries that define who is part of the community and who is excluded. They can integrate or segregate, create opportunities or keep people in their place.[29]

Under-funding has pushed many schools into taking the carrot offered to become academies. However, continued underfunding has pushed many schools into using untrained teachers to try and fill the gaps. Official government figures show that the number of unqualified teachers has increased by more than 60% to 24,000, since the government removed the requirement for teachers to gain qualifications.[30] Demands to perform to national standards, despite the lack of qualified teachers has led to record levels of expulsions and cuts to creative subjects in the curriculum. Children from low income households rely on schools for their social interaction and unlike higher income households often don't have access to social media.

This and the lack of after school clubs and external activities mean many children lack social interaction and access to creative learning. This puts the children at a great disadvantage both with regard to social skills and in achievement levels. Mental health problems in the young are rising. Sheffield has the highest rate of expulsions in the country and it can be surely no accident that a rise in violent crime has risen in areas where there are the highest expulsion levels.[31]

The links to youth violence rests on the youth's perception on the degree of safety, social stability and social cohesion that exists within the immediate community. The location that a youth lives in can influence the extent to

which they experience both mental health and violent outcomes. In other words the young need a strong social infrastructure too.[32]

*"The attacks have left Haigh and others scrambling for answers. Many of those involved in the violence are believed to be youngsters not previously associated with serious crime. "That's what is most alarming about it," said Haigh. "It's people connected with very low-level criminal activity, or not connected with any criminal activity at all." Dianne Hurst, a Labour city councillor on the Woodthorpe estate, said some of those involved were "from nice families… they aren't those that you would expect to see in trouble."*[33]

Research shows the need for a community that is active and where people are liable to bump into each other through the day to day activities, such as libraries, child centres, and workplace. Libraries throughout the UK have closed or had their services reduced. In Sheffield, although there have not been as many closures as in other authorities, 16 libraries have become volunteer run.[34] Activities in the volunteer libraries vary considerably from library to library, but all are run on restricted opening hours compared to previously.[35] This, apart from social interaction is also problematic, as it limits access to a computer and the chance to study in a quieter setting after school, than home may be. It is obvious, looking at the individual websites ,that the libraries lack the previous uniformity that happened under a professionally run library service. With the cuts in Sure Start and other child centres, and the neighbourhood school often no longer in the neighbourhood, the working men's club closed down, the church repurposed and the local pub boarded up, where is the social interaction going to happen? Even the local post office has gone from many areas.

# 4. The Therapeutic Value of Heritage

**Development banks like the World Bank have missions that go beyond profit to include "reducing poverty" and "promoting shared prosperity." For many communities, wellbeing and prosperity are defined, in part, by an active connection to their cultural and spiritual heritage, often tied to geographic sites.**[36]

Public buildings that have a long history have an advantage that newer buildings without a history haven't. It gives older people a chance to talk about their experiences to the young and it makes social interaction easier. Most older public buildings are geographically central to the community. The history and appearance gives the area an identity that is unique to their area.

While 'therapeutic' experiences are being found in the reviews of the heritage funding bodies such as Historic England and Heritage Lottery Fund, until recently they have largely been absent in health geography literature or more widely within public health promotion literature. The positive experiences have been seen more as educational or in terms of economic regeneration, as an introduction to history, meeting other like-minded people and seeing wider community connections grow. But it became obvious that there were also benefits from using a person's love of history and place, to boost their sense of belonging, cultural identity and security.[37]

Heritage conservation is by its very nature about generating a closer relationship with one's local area. Geographers have long explored the beneficial effects of having a strong sense of place and belonging. Perceptions of places can be influenced by personal experiences and memories, the length of time spent living in a particular area, as well as awareness of historical significance for example, drawing on research on Wigan Pier, Northern England, demonstrates the active nature of heritage consumption, as visitors draw upon their memories and biographies to validate the interpretation of exhibits. Community-based heritage conservation is also by its very nature driven by the coming together of members of the community who participate in forms of voluntarism.

*"Sheffield council have the foresight of a myopic mayfly, the self awareness of a pebble and couldn't plan their way out of a plastic bag. Time and again they have had the opportunity to do something great in this wonderful city, chances to make something of its people, location, history and atmosphere and time and again they have thrown the chances away."*[38]

It is obvious from public protests at the loss of historic buildings that heritage matters to ordinary people. In a dispute about protecting the character of the Devonshire Quarter in Sheffield over 11,000 people signed an online petition and demonstrations were held outside the Town Hall.

But the cuts in funding have made planning committees nervous to take on big developers due to possible high court costs if the developer challenges their decision in the court. In Sheffield there are approximately 120-130 Heritage groups and organisations. There are several hundred events a year; which is a clear indicator that people' heritage and culture matters to them. Many organisations have several hundred members and have been around for over 30 years. But recent pressure from government planning policies and the local authority's desire to regenerate areas and create new business opportunities means that sometimes important assets are lost.

Urban planners and private sector property developers are increasingly prioritising top-down 'master planning' of the community. Top down planning often ignores the existing structures within a community. Residents within acutely declining areas face an increasingly precarious future. Many developers argue for old buildings to be cleared for regeneration. But clean sweep solutions are immensely damaging to community ties, costly and therefore impossible to implement in the several thousand acutely declining neighbourhoods in the UK. There is an anger and a bitterness within the displaced people that does not seem to shift with time, creating wistful community web pages where former neighbours connect and reminisce.[39]

Holding onto people, developing micro-initiatives within neighbourhoods, restoring, beautifying and upgrading areas is a greener and more realistic alternative than the large-scale disruption of past and often current urban regeneration programmes.

Across the industrial Midlands and the North there is a push to show modern forward thinking cities and developers are encouraged to build large shiny towers to give that image. However research has shown that modern companies often prefer an old building as it gives a sense of longevity and security, and people like the character the older buildings give to an area whether in rural or urban districts. Even in rural areas the push for more housing can put ancient areas at risk. Bad planning decisions are not only economically damaging but also damaging to health and wellbeing of a community. Heritage is part of the anchorage of a community when the upheavals of factory, pit, quarry or farm closures have left communities with a feeling of loss.

*"A review of population-based research on mortality risk over the last 20 years indicates that people who are isolated are at increased mortality risk from a number of causes. More recent studies indicate that social support is particularly related to survival postmyocardial infarction. The pathways that lead from such socioenvironmental exposures to poor health outcomes are likely to be multiple and include behavioural mechanisms and more direct physiologic pathways related to neuroendocrine or immunologic function. For social support to be health promoting, it must provide both a sense of belonging and intimacy and must help people to be more competent and self-efficacious. Acknowledging that health promotion rests on the shoulders not only of individuals but also of their families and communities means that we must commit resources over the next decade to designing, testing, and implementing interventions in this area"*[40]

According to research carried out by English Heritage for their annual Heritage Counts report, visiting heritage sites has a significant and positive impact on life satisfaction and visits to historic towns and buildings were found to have the greatest impact on wellbeing.[41] The report also calculates the value of these visits in financial terms and estimates the impact as being worth some £1,646 per person per year, meaning visiting heritage is better for your wellbeing and life satisfaction than similar participation in sport. How much is heritage on the doorstep worth to the local community in health and wellbeing? Or to put it another way how much more demand is there on healthcare and other services when local heritage has been sold off?

There would seem to be a disconnection between those who are looking for finance to improve health in the community and to cut crime and those who think finance from the sale of community assets especially heritage assets is a good way of bringing in finance for these preventive health schemes without looking at the hidden costs of removing these buildings from use.

One problem is there has been no clear value placed on such heritage assets from a health and crime reduction point of view, so it is hard to compare the monetary value with the community value. Too often community protests against demolition or change of use of a community asset is seen as nimbyism or backward-looking by local authorities. There is need for more research in this field.

# 5. Cultural Elitism

*"There must be an urgency, now, to help disenfranchised communities of all different types express their identity, to celebrate their history, to see themselves as belonging to part of a bigger picture, and this must include a refocusing on the working classes: their art, their stories, their being able to progress through the artistic professions as easily as their privileged counterparts. The idea that the working class might have their own cultural identity too often gets dismissed, and that creates a void. And that's the void that's currently being filled by the far right across western democracies."*[42]

**Article 27 of the Universal declaration of Human Rights states:**

*"Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits."*[43]

Despite many acknowledging that the heritage and culture of the North is distinctive, yet there seems to be very little effort to preserve that culture either locally or nationally. Funding for culture and heritage from central government and funding bodies has never been high in comparison to elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Is this because of the geography or because a lot of Northern heritage in need of funding is about works and workers?

In 2013 Sheffield' City committed itself to the objective of preserving and enhancing buildings and areas that are attractive, distinctive or of heritage value.[44] But what is of heritage value? Historic England has said that for a building to be listed it has to be of a specific architectural, historic interest of national importance.[45] This has meant that much of the industrial areas found themselves battling without national support for their prominent industrial buildings. Industrial archaeology was, and still is, very much the poor relation, even in Sheffield, where the subject of modern Industrial archaeology was born in 1918 with the creation of the Sheffield Technical Societies at Sheffield University.[46] Recently the Government granted £7.6m to Wentworth Woodhouse stately home, whereas most grants through the Heritage Lottery fund rarely reach the £1m level in South Yorkshire.[47]

Volunteering in Heritage Lottery funded projects would appear to be mainly a white elderly middle income activity, although there are exceptions.[48] Is that because many of the applications for funding are made by that same groups or because their application is more likely to succeed?

In her PhD Thesis *Understanding Cultural Participation and Value in Barnsley*, Sarah Hughes draws attention to the problems of definition of what culture means to the national press.[49] They define good arts provision in terms of how much choice there is in theatre, cinema, concert halls and museums in the immediate vicinity, failing to look at culture in a local context. The orchestral tuba player and the brass band tuba player, of the same ability are seen differently: one is part of high cultural events, the other is a hobbyist. Ballet is culture, whereas Morris dancing is seen by many as a joke:

*"The 'official' model of participation remains a top-down affair, operationalised as a demarcated set of activities and practices, defined largely by what government has traditionally funded, and informed by middle class norms and understandings of what counts as 'legitimate' culture.*

*"…from this perspective, the 'nonusers' of culture can, in turn, be construed as a social problem: a passive, isolated and inadequate group morally adrift from the mainstream and therefore in need of mobilisation."*

Areas like Castleford must legitimise their cultural heritage from mining by emphasising their Roman Heritage. Barnsley must focus on stately homes, such as Wentworth Castle, to legitimate their heritage. This is created by a mixture of local perception that our industrial heritage is inferior and assumptions about what national funders will financially back. It has led perhaps too many cash-strapped councils discounting any heritage that cannot bring in funding.

National survey data for England shows that even in 2010, before the main impact of austerity, community organisations in the coalfields were more likely to report that they had insufficient overall income to meet their objectives.[50] Cuts in local authority funding in England have hit deprived areas disproportionately hard. Across the country as a whole, the density of voluntary organisations in deprived areas is anyway far lower than in more prosperous areas.

Central Government spending per head on culture in London was nearly fifteen times greater than in the rest of England, and successive governments and Arts Council England continually fail to redress the balance between London and the regions.[51] In 2013 51% of ACE's £322m public funding budget was spent on London, and of the further £450m used by the DCMS to direct-fund 16 major cultural organisations, an estimated 90% went to London.[52] As a result, Londoners benefited from £69 of cultural spending per head, compared with just £4.50 in the rest of England. In addition, ACE committed 45% of its £317 million arts lottery funding to London, meaning arts funding in London was £17.41 per person in London, but only £3.90 in the rest of England.[53] In 2018 it was found that for the North to get the same Arts Council England funding per head as the capital it would need £691m more in the 2018-22 funding round.

And the same shortfall is found within the Heritage Lottery Fun (HLF).[54] Since the Lottery began, the cumulative loss of funding to Britain's industrial communities has probably been around £3 billion, or £200m a year. In the last 5 years, communities in industrial Britain received only around 60 per cent of the national average per head. This has been made even worse by the HLF's bias towards North Yorkshire and its rural communities and churches.[55]

Sheffield is composed of distinct neighbourhoods with their own cultural identity. This cultural identity has been one of Sheffield's great strengths helping people to feel part of a community. With the closure of the pits, many works and dairy farms, communities are left feeling disenfranchised.

# 6. Power to the People

**In England 85% of councils were making cuts to public health budgets in 2018/19. In Sheffield the Council cut its budget by £880,000.[56] In January 2018 Sheffield Council predicted an overspend of £20 million in their social care budget.[57] All the community properties put together and sold would make only a small dent in the health and social care budgets.**

A look at what is happening in present and past publicly owned properties would suggest that community asset transfer could not only save the council money on running costs and repairs but that community involvement would also bring about community cohesion, improved mental health, reduction in loneliness, amongst other things. It is obvious however that extra funding to repair and restore a building so communities are able to concentrate on making the building pay is not easy to find. Despite these problems community-run can assets do well. A sample of properties previously or currently owned by the council show an amazing breadth of activities that add to the local community and that did not happen while under council control.

**What follows are a few examples.**

# Meersbrook Hall

Friends of Meersbrook Park have calculated that a potential community asset transfer of Meersbrook Hall by the Council, the council would make an annual revenue savings of more than £65m from removing their need to maintain and heat the building, and further savings in staff time, administration and unforeseen costs such as damage repair.[58] After repairs and restoration is carried out the building will also go up significantly in value. Add to that its present use working with local schools, Workers Education classes, and IT classes plus a number of public events it is already doing and a wide range of suggested activities when restored including commercial and community use. In fact they save considerably more money by the transfer than the original projected sale price.

Figure 1. Maypole at Meersbrook Hall

# De Hood

At Manor Top an old school, has been taken over as a community gym and has in six years gone from a boxing gym to also running a cafe and various keep fit activities such as dancing and football, as well as a recovery drop in centre for addicts and a drugs and rehabilitation centre.[59] The crime rate is down 60%, arson has halved and it has a membership of 500 people of all ages who are now healthier and happier.

The savings to emergency services, social services and health services must be quite phenomenal in an area that was previously known for criminal and anti-social behaviour. Yet the site is to be sold to create a new shopping centre.

There is a suggestion that a new place could be found for them, but that would cost money and it is doubtful the sale of the old school will provide the finance for a new club as well as the old school being in the centre of the community that anywhere else would not be. There is also an obvious strong community link that will not be there in a bright shiny building if they do actually get one.


Figure 2. De Hood notice

# Grenoside Reading Room

Built around 1790 as an endowed school the building had fallen into disrepair and in 2006 the ownership of the building passed from the parish council to the residents of Grenoside.[60] It took 6 years to get HLF funding to fully repair and restore the building. It became Grenoside's first listed building and though small is very much in the heart of the community with a wide range of activities and community events including a rehearsal room for the Grenoside Sword dancers, and a lunchtime cafe once a week.


Figure 3. Grenoside Reading Room

## Heeley Development Trust

In 1997, having raised funding, Heeley Development Trust (HDT) took ownership of 3.5 hectares of land on a 125-year lease from Sheffield City Council.[61] HDT have been delivering youth, community, environmental and economic development projects in the Heeley area since then including:
– Heeley People's Park, Sum Studios (a grade II listed Victorian school) redeveloped as a managed work space with 46 creative business tenants
Recycle Bikes – a social enterprise supporting disengaged young people to gain training, confidence, work experience and jobs. The Trust is also working in partnership with the Friends of Meersbrook Hall to revitalise the hall and reopen it to the public; providing within the hall an Online Centre which offers free drop-in computer and internet access, as well as formal training in 'Computers for Beginners'. HDT employs 32 staff across the above projects.

# Burton Street Foundation

Burton Street Foundation began in 1998 in another derelict Grade 2 listed school like Sum Studio but unlike HDT the community was no longer centred there but nevertheless the foundations contribution to the community especially those with disabilities is phenomenal.[62] Around 2,500 people use the site every week, for work and for play. They host countless events each year and employ around 140 people. Their disability services have around 250 clients. 14 local businesses are based there, and around 35 charities and community groups use their facilities each week. They now run and maintain 5 buildings across 3 sites as well as a getaway in Wales too. They have a bistro, a cafe, a recording studio, a gym, conference facilities and offices for hire.

Figure 4. Burton Street Foundation

# Heeley City Farm

Heeley City Farm took over land that the council owned after a failed bypass had left them with cleared land and no money to do anything with it.[63] The Farm grew organically over the years from its early days with a shed and £25 in the bank, and soon became a well-loved part of the Heeley landscape providing beautiful green spaces and education, employment and training opportunities.

Heeley City Farm is now a well established community, not-for-profit charity and visitor attraction based on a working farm a mile from Sheffield City centre. Staff and volunteers from Heeley City Farm work with young people, adults with learning disabilities and with local communities across Sheffield to promote regeneration, environmental education, energy efficiency and health and wellbeing. Horticulture trainees, staff and volunteers also manage several organic vegetable gardens across the city. The last remaining terraced house on the Farm site has been eco–refurbished and now houses South Yorkshire Energy Centre, an interactive visitor and advice centre open to the public. Their Community Heritage Department has been delivering high quality community heritage, archaeology and history projects across the city since 2008.


Figure 5. Heeley City Farm entrance

# Gillfield Wood

The land is mostly owned by the council but in 2011 a Friends Group took over the maintenance and now has up to 100 volunteers.[64] Besides conservation they have recorded 1,600 species. The Friends group hosts a conservation morning once a month coppicing trees, relaying paths and mending dry stone walling. They created a pond, a wildflower meadow and opened up a glade to let sunlight in for butterflies and insects and there are 60 nesting boxes. There are several walks about a mile long and they run events for the community and for families during the year including bird walks, a history walk, one about flowers and fungi in the autumn and a mammal survey.

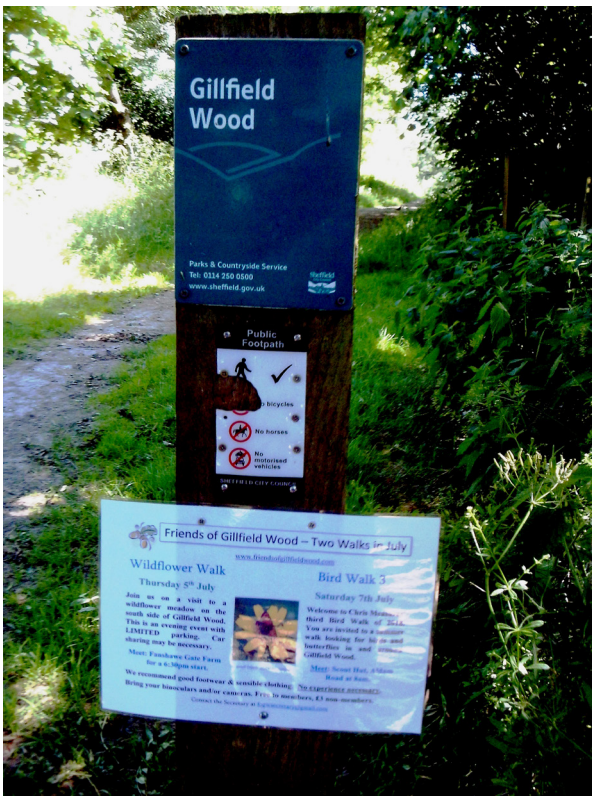


Figure 6. Gillfield Wood poster

# 7. Conclusion

**Within many communities across the UK there are historic buildings that the community wants to keep. Those they get to keep have a head start in community enthusiasm, and perhaps because they aren't run by the local authority running they come up with a wide range of ideas to keep the buildings running at capacity.**

97% of the community organisations Locality surveyed said that the community asset transfer had strengthened their relationship with the local community.[65] 52% also highlighted a strengthened relationship with other public agencies as a key benefit. 58% of community organisations we surveyed reported that their relationship with the local authority had been strengthened by the process of community ownership. 70% of local authorities either agreed or strongly agreed that the process had enhanced partnership working with local voluntary and community sector groups. 75% reported an increase in more effective community engagement.

What is also clear from the examples given is that community assets can help create jobs, training opportunities and give support to some of the most vulnerable and marginalised sections of the community. Despite the obvious lack of funding some have been running for over 20 years.

Many councils now are looking at setting up community anchors or hubs to tackle the root causes of inequality and to create a highly-localised service. At the same time councils are selling off the community buildings already there and often displacing the community organisations they say they want to work with. It's hard to tackle loneliness in an area where there is no place to meet. Or set up training for people where it involves expensive buses to get to the training place.

A recent YouGov poll commissioned by Locality found that 71% of people felt they had not much or no control over the important decisions that affected their neighbourhoods and local communities. With more community buildings being sold off that percentage is going to rise.

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Joyce Bullivant** is a disabled parent and carer for an older son with a variety of mental health problems. She has learnt that neither role fits with the perception that public bodies have of disabled people namely: disabled people cannot be carers.

Joyce's involvement in heritage has led to her belief that we are not using our assets wisely. Heritage is popular, creates social cohesion and can access funding that other kinds of community organisations cannot. She believes mixing public services with grassroots organisations could make the money go further, remove people from a medical environment they no longer need and allow local services to target crisis areas without leaving vulnerable people with no support at all. Joyce is currently working with a number of heritage organisations who are using heritage funding to fund community events and keep community facilities open in areas of high deprivation.

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