Exchanges for Change:
a place-based approach to shifting power locally

A CTRLshift project funded by Local Trust

CTRLshift

Authors: Sarah Spanton & Mark Walton
with contributions from: Georgie Burr, Monica Cru Hall, Alex Phillips, & Mike Riddell

October 2021

Contents

1.   Executive summary

(i) CTRLshift is a collaboration between organisations working nationally and locally in the UK who work across a wide range of sectors but whose work all involves shifting power from central and local government and corporations, to communities and individuals. A key aspect to its approach has been to host national 'summits' – both in person and online – to bring together organisations and networks to identify key issues and themes, map strategies and approaches, and learn more about each other's work.

(ii) Following the 2019 CTRLshift Summit held in Stoke-On-Trent, local organisations Counter Community and UnLtd in North Staffordshire, engaged with the CTRLshift national Steering Group to explore how CTRLshift, as a national collaboration, could support the development of local activities in Stoke-On-Trent aimed at building and shifting power locally.

(iii) A pilot action research project called Exchanges for Change was co created and collaboratively delivered by a Working Group made up of local Stoke-based CTRLshift partners, and CTRLshift partners working nationally (and locally in other places), including the project funder, Local Trust.

(iv) The overarching question for the research project was: *"How can connections and relationships of mutual aid between local and national partners aimed at shifting power locally be facilitated in ways that are simple, effective, quick and low cost?"*

(v) Local members of the Working Group identified a number of key themes within which they wished to explore, with support from national CTRLshift partners, how power could be shifted more locally. These were: (i) mental wellbeing & caring, (ii) making and selling, (iii) democracy, (iv) value creation and exchange, (v) planning and regeneration and (vi) local food growing. National members of the Working Group then helped to broker support from the wider national CTRLshift partnership appropriate to each theme.

(vi) A series of workshops or 'Exchanges' were arranged and facilitated by the Working Group members which brought together local organisations and individuals working on the themes and national CTRLshift partners with relevant knowledge and experience. The Exchanges were designed to provide opportunities for mutual exchange and sharing of knowledge and skills and with the aim of developing a mini action plan or identifying some concrete next steps in relation to each theme.

(vii) As the project was designed as a pilot, and as an action research project, data was collected from Working Group members, participants and local and national partners using a mixture of pre and post Exchange questionnaires, polls and interviews.

(viii) All those who took part agreed that the Exchanges had resulted in knowledge sharing and the overall process was felt to have been respectful and based on co-creation, equal participation and good communication.

(ix) The process of developing the themes for the Exchanges was seen by local Working Group members as a process of collective solution finding which helped them to more clearly define local issues and opportunities, providing a possible framework for future action and helping to develop a new language to engage others in work that would accelerate a shift of power and control more locally.

(x) The key learning from the process was the recognition of the importance of narrative and identity. There is a need for a new more positive and accurate narrative, to be collectively developed about Stoke-On Trent and North Staffordshire by local people. This has the potential to act both as a tool for collective empowerment and in order to provide a solid position from which to take action in the future.

(xi) Critically the idea of "shifting power" was felt to be useful and provided a new language which enabled local participants to discuss the themes of making, planning, democracy etc. within new framings of narrative, identity, and power dynamics. CTRLshift as a network or movement was also seen as credible and action focussed, bringing in expertise from other areas but not dominating; creating a partnership of equals that was learning together and from each other.

(xii) Overall, Exchanges for Change was felt to have contributed towards the development of an effective process of support provision for place-based action that was flexible, exploratory and non-prescriptive. This was underpinned by supportive locally-led facilitation which enabled people to stretch in safety and which created a space for people to think and reflect together about how they might start to shift power locally in relation to the different themes.

(xiii) It was highlighted that whilst a small amount of money can catalyse a lot of action it was not possible to rely on passion and volunteer time in the long run, and that a lack of adequate resourcing risked leaving partners and participants feeling let down and unable to build on the momentum created by the process. However, within the constraints of the available resources the Exchanges for Change programme demonstrated clear potential for the CTRLShift partnership to support the development and delivery of place-based action aimed at shifting power and control to communities and individuals.

(xiv) Overall the Exchanges for Change programme has been an effective place-based approach, which resulted in valuable learning with respect to the development of processes for connecting local and national partners in order to support communities to shift power locally. It has significant potential for further development as part of a wider programme of work by the CTRLshift partnership nationally.

2.   Background and context

2.1   About CTRLshift

CTRLshift is collaboration between organisations working nationally and locally in the UK who work across a wide range of sectors but whose work all involves shifting power from central and local government and corporations, to communities and individuals. It was initiated by a number of individuals involved in The Permaculture Association, REconomy, Shared Assets, The Alternative UK, and Transition Network amongst others in 2017, and aims to accelerate a shift in power to people and communities that is socially, economically and environmentally just and sustainable.

2.2   CTRLshift Summits

CTRLshift seeks to catalyse a network of change-making organisations, networks and independent practitioners, creating a movement for positive social, economic and environmental change. A key aspect to its approach has been to host national 'summits' – both in person and online – to bring together organisations and networks to identify key issues and themes, map strategies and approaches, and learn more about each other's work.

The first summit in Wigan in 2018 brought together over 100 organisations and networks. It resulted in the creation of a number of working groups and a shared commitment to continue to work together. A report of the event can be found [here](#).
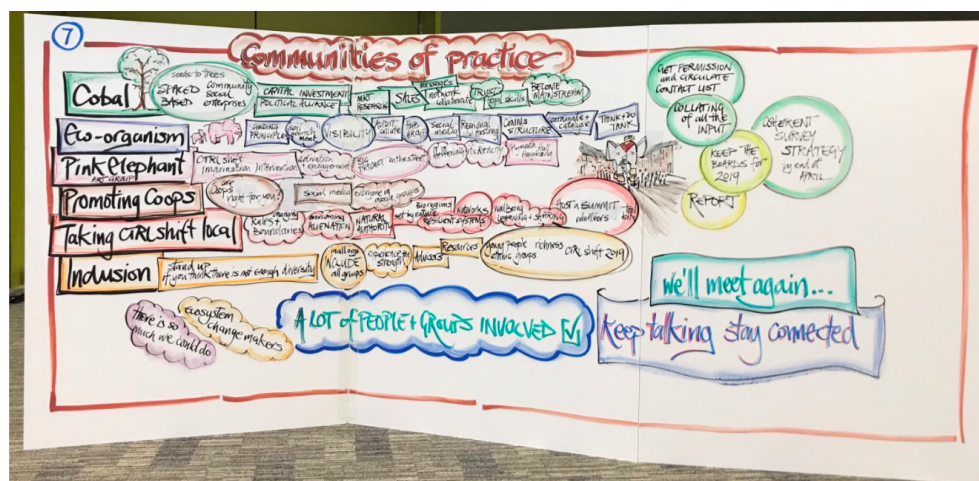
The second summit in 2019 was held in Stoke-On-Trent where there was a strong desire from local groups to showcase the work being done locally to build agency and shift power. The summit was held at an ex-pottery works converted into a hotel called Potbank and during the event a working group of local motivated individuals and organisations came together and developed a commitment to making Stoke "the first CTRLshift city".

A report of the event can be found [here](#).

2.3   Stoke CTRLshift City

Following the 2019 CTRLshift Summit local organisations in Stoke, led by Counter Community and UnLtd in North Staffordshire, continued to engage with the CTRLshift national Steering Group to explore how CTRLshift, as a national collaboration, could support the development of local activities in Stoke-On-Trent aimed at building and shifting power.

2.4   Exchanges for Change

2.4.1   Working Group

A working group was established made up of local Stoke-based CTRLshift partners, and other CTRLshift partners working nationally (and locally in other places), to explore how relationships and the sharing of knowledge and resources between local and national partners could be facilitated by the CTRLshift partnership in order to accelerate a shift in power to communities and individuals in specific places. The working group consisted of representatives from:

● **Counter Community:** a not-for-profit membership network and digital platform that enables organisations and individuals to work together for social change and to boost the local economy.

● **UnLtd:** a charitable organisation that funds and supports social entrepreneurs to enable them to make a bigger contribution to our economy and society.

● **Therapy North Staffordshire:** Monica Cru-Hall supports communities - including schools, prisons, and positive focused interest communities - to build community groups, develop group capacity and uncover their voice individually and collectively.

- **Waymarking C.I.C:** supports community-led planning, regeneration and economic development.

- **Shared Assets CIC:** supports the management of land and buildings for community benefit.

- **Local Trust:** a place-based funder supporting communities to achieve their ambitions. Local Trust are funding two groups specifically in Stoke-On-Trent, Stoke North Big Local as part of the Big Local programme, and The Portland Inn Project as part of the Creative Civic Change programme.

It was agreed that this work would take the form of a pilot action research project, called Exchanges for Change, which would be co created and collaboratively delivered by the Working Group.

2.4.2   Aims

The aims of the project, agreed between the Working Group partners, were:

(i) *To explore*, with local Stoke Ctrl Shift City partners, Stoke North Big Local, The Portland Inn Project and CTRLshift partners working nationally (or locally in other places), how relationships and engagement between the partners can support each other in realising shared ambitions to sustainably shift power and control of their democracy, economy, environment and resources closer to the centre of the lives of local communities and individuals.

(ii) *To review* recent evaluations and research related to other existing place-based approaches to local economic development and capacity building in order to understand what else is happening, what works, and where CTRLshift can add value.

(iii) *To co-create and test* processes and protocols that can be used to facilitate engagement between Stoke CTRLshift City partners working with other groups working in Stoke and North Staffordshire to shift power locally, and with national partners to secure appropriate support and resources to support the delivery of CTRLshift objectives locally.

(iv) *To capture evidence* of the scale, effectiveness and impact of both the process of facilitating engagement between the local and national partners the activities delivered, resources invested and relationships developed.

(v) *To make recommendations* for the development of a future programme of work that could:
- connect,
- develop relationships of mutual aid between, and
- deliver light, quick, cheap and effective support to communities seeking to shift power locally.

3.   What Do We Know About 'Place-Based' Working?

This work was undertaken as a 'place-based approach' to delivering systemic change.

3.1   What Is A Place-Based Approach?

In a series of papers produced by Renaisi in 2020[1] place-based approaches were defined as having the following characteristics:

- About collective practice within a place rather than a specific organisation or service.
- Long term in ambition and practice.
- Flexible and responsive, builds relationships and connections between people and organisations and engages in questions of complexity.
- Focused on definitions of places that are understood by those who live in them.
- Attempts to unlock structural change and builds in opportunities for learning and adaptation.

A separate study also by Renasi[2] identified that "place-based delivery is built up from questions about that place; its community, needs, assets, services and 'what-makes-it-what-it-is' are all considered before prescribing an intervention."

3.2   Types of place-based approach

The same research identified five different types of place-based approach.

- National charity programmes: where a national charity with an interest in a particular theme e.g. child poverty, undertakes work on that theme in a specific place.
- Funder or resource led programmes: where action is driven by the availability of a specific funding stream.
- Building and enterprise-driven activities: where a local enterprise, often with a building, develops a range of activities and relationships which seek to drive change in their area.
- Whole place thinking: where a group of local people or organisations start by thinking about the whole place and the actions that might be needed to deliver systemic change.
- Local organisation evolution: where a local organisation uses place-based approaches to achieve their objectives, working outside of their 'core-business' and across the community to achieve more.

3.3   Starting points for place-based action

In their 2018 Place Action Enquiry, Lankelly Chase observed three different potential starting points for place-based action to achieve change, each with their own advantages and

---

[1] Funding Place Based System Change, (2020), Renaisi
[2] Place Based Social Action: Learning Review (2018), Renasi

disadvantages. These are:

- The strategic level: working with senior leaders, people recognised as having power, authority or influence within the local system.
- The operational level: working with particular projects and interventions seeking to achieve change in one or more aspects of the system.
- At the grassroots level: working with community activists and mission-led individuals.

3.3.   What works?

In their Place Action Enquiry[3], Lankelly Chase also observed that the systems which are effective in responding to severe and multiple disadvantage have some common qualities which they organised under the headings of perspective, power and participation.

- Perspective: people view themselves as part of an interconnected whole, are viewed as resourceful and bringing strengths and share a vision
- Power: is shared, and equality of voice actively promoted, decision-making is devolved and accountability is mutual.
- Participation: is enabled through open and trusting relationships, collaborative and shared leadership and through collective learning and adaptation.

They also identified that initial work often focussed on enabling people to see themselves as part of an inter-connected whole, and to see power imbalances in the system. Later work focussed on building trust between actors in the system. There was an overall trend of moving away from a concern with initiatives and projects, and toward a focus on engagement with a broader system of support and services, and networks available to people across the locality.

In terms of measuring impact research undertaken by the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) on a framework for place-based approaches[4] identified the need to enable learning about 'what happens' rather than measuring tangible outcomes. Research Cooperatives UK into the Community Economic Development programme[5] identified that communities faced challenges in attempting to get recognition and buy-in for activities which would deliver outcomes which were not aligned with the standard measures of economic success which still shape how LEPs, local authorities and city councils understand and evidence economic development.

Research into the early years of the Big Local programme[6] identified that offering local support through a national network, keeping things simple and offering light touch support were all effective, whilst this study and others also identified that place-based action needs time (often several years) to deliver change and therefore requires long term resourcing.

[3] Place Action Inquiry: Our learning to date, (2018), Lankelly Chase
[4] Working In Place: A framework for place based approaches, (2016), Institute for Voluntary Action Research
[5] Community Economic Development: Lessons from two years' action research, (2017), Cooperatives UK
[6] Big Local: the early years, (2014), NCVO, Institute for Voluntary Action Research & Office for Public Management

4.   Methodology

4.1   Exchanges for Change

Exchanges for Change was created as a collaborative action research project, to explore how relationships and the sharing of knowledge and resources between local and national partners could accelerate a shift in power to communities and individuals in specific places, in this case Stoke-On-Trent and North Staffordshire.

4.2   Roles

In order to undertake the project the Working Group established two sub groups:

- The Organising sub group was made up of the CTRLshift partners local to Stoke-On-Trent and North Staffordshire (initially Counter Community and UnLtd, and then later Monica Cru-Hall who trades as Therapy North Staffordshire, as the project developed). It was responsible for identifying the themes of and potential partners for the exchanges, and designing, promoting and delivering the programme of exchanges.

- The Brokerage sub group was made up of national CTRLshift partners (Waymarking and Shared Assets). It was responsible for designing, undertaking and analysing the research, and for engaging with and contracting the national partners to undertake the exchanges.

4.3   Action Research Methodology

4.3.1   Overarching Research Question

The following overarching research question was agreed by the Working Group:

How can connections and relationships of mutual aid, between local and national partners aimed at shifting power locally be facilitated in ways that are simple, effective, quick and low cost?

4.3.2   Exchange Themes and Partners

The Organising team identified six areas they wished to develop greater local control over, and for each theme a question was formulated that would act as a focus for the Exchange.

The initial approach to CTRLshift partners to participate in an Exchange was undertaken using an open call by email to all CTRLshift partners who were asked to express an interest participating in an Exchange via a Google Form. This method produced only one offer of participation so the Working Group collectively identified CTRLshift partners working nationally, and locally in other places with expertise specific to each theme and made direct

personal approaches to them. This method secured participation from all of the partners approached.

For one theme (Mental Wellbeing) it was not possible to identify a suitable partner within the existing immediate CTRLshift network, however a Working Group member was able to identify a suitable organisation from within their own network. For a second theme (Growing) it was not possible to secure a suitable partner to participate in the Exchange.

The five themes for which Exchanges were undertaken and the key question and Exchange partner for each are listed below.

Theme	Key question	Partner
Mental wellbeing & caring	How can we develop peer led processes of care and wellbeing?	Equal Care Coop
Making & selling	How can we build on the area's making activities and heritage to provide opportunities for skills development, training and employment and create short, local, ethical and collaborative supply chains for local produce and products?	The Alternative UK
Democracy	How do we organise and make decisions locally?	Shared Futures
Value	How can we redefine what we mean by value and shift the goals of our local economy?	TimeBank Hull & East Riding
Planning and Regeneration	How can we strengthen the potential role for arts, culture and local agency in planning and regeneration?	Waymarking

The additional theme and question identified by the Organising team was:

Growing: is there the opportunity to develop a food-network that links organic growing, allotments, farmers, nutrition, cooking, cafes, surplus foods etc together?

Exchange partners were paid a small flat fee to:

- Attend two Exchange meetings to:
  - introduce themselves and their work, and
  - share their work in more detail and lead a discussion about how it might be relevant to the development of local action to shift power locally with respect to their theme in Stoke and North Staffordshire.

- Be available for follow up support after the Exchanges.

4.3.3   Exchange Formats

Due to Covid –19 restrictions all events took place online using Zoom.

Four Exchanges (known as Main Exchanges) were held as part of a single process co designed by the Working Group consisting of three online sessions held over four weeks. These were; Mental Wellbeing & Caring, Making & Selling, Democracy, and Value. The sessions were:

- Session 1: 3 March, 10:00–12:00. This short session brought participants together to introduce themselves, get to know each other, share how their work is related to the CTRLshift aims of shifting power locally, and to hear a short introduction from each Exchange partner about their work in relation to their Exchange theme.

- Session 2: 17 March, 10:00–15:00. This longer session acted as the Exchange session. Each Exchange partner hosted two 40 minute sessions in which they presented their work in relation to their theme and participants were able to ask questions and reflect on the relevance of the content of the presentation to their own work and context.

- Session 3: 31 March, 10:00–12:00. This final short session brought local participants back together to reflect further on the Exchanges and identify actions that they might take forward as individuals, within their organisations or projects or collectively, in order to shift power and control locally.

These sessions were advertised via an Eventbrite page and promoted through Counter Community and UnLtd's networks.

The Planning and Regeneration Exchange was undertaken through a separate parallel process co designed by Waymarking and the Portland Inn Project, consisting of three online sessions which explored issues of planning and land use:

- Session 1: 17.3.21   18:00 – 19:30
  The session provided an introduction to, and overview of, the planning system in England – its history and how it works, and explored Neighbourhood Plans, Community Land Trusts, and ideas around Neighbourhood Economic Resilience.

- Session 2: 12.4.21   18.00 – 19.00
  The session reflected on the ideas presented in Workshop 1, discussing in more detail together how communities can get involved in shaping how their neighbourhood's develop.

- Session 3: 26.4.21   18.00 – 19.30
  This final session supported participants to plan what next steps they and their communities would take to make an impact on issues arising in their neighbourhoods.

These sessions were promoted through The Portland Inn Project's networks.

4.3.4   Intended Impacts

The intended impacts of the Exchanges were as follows:

- The Exchange has resulted in; knowledge sharing, new knowledge production, identifying common local challenges, network building and has initiated collective local solution finding.

- Local partners/participant's voices have been amplified.

- Local partners/participants feel they have stronger tools to make change/shift power locally.

- The Exchange has resulted in a mini action plan or next steps from each exchange.

4.3.5   Measures of Success

In order to assess the impact of the Exchanges the Working Group identified the following measures of success:

(i) The attributes necessary to achieve connections, relationships of mutual aid and co-creation between local and national partners take place, and can be identified and described.

(ii) Simple, effective, quick and low-cost ways to shift power locally have begun to be identified.

(iii) The Exchange has resulted in a realistic mini action plan or next steps have been outlined from each exchange.

(iv) The Exchange has initiated future partnership working, between some partners (at local-national and local-local levels).

(v) National partners can identify valuable learning from local partners and participants.

(vi) Local partners and participants can identify valuable learning from national partners.

(vii) We will have captured information that can inform the development of a new inclusive language for CTRLshift nationally to talk about *realising shared ambitions to sustainably shift power and control of their democracy, economy, environment and resources closer to the centre of the lives of local communities and individuals'* with local people.

(viii) The Working Group will have captured information that can inform a new 'model' to enable CTRLshift to work with local partners to sustainably shift power and control of their democracy, economy, environment and resources closer to the centre of the lives of local communities and individuals.

4.3.6   Evidence collection

Evidence to assess the impacts of the Exchanges, and of the overall programme, was collected through a mixture of online surveys and interviews. The specific evidence collection methods are summarised in the table below.

Who	Method	Mode
Exchange Participants	Feedback Survey (Both Exchanges)	Google Form
	Feedback during Exchange (Planning and Reg Exchange)	Zoom Polling
Key Local Representatives	Pre-programme Survey	Google Form
	Post-programme Survey	Google Form
National Partners	Pre-programme Survey	Google Form
	Post-programme Survey	Google Form
Working Group	Pre-programme Survey	Google Form
	Post-programme Survey	Google Form
	Final individual short interview	Online Meeting
	Group Review Meeting	Online Meeting

5.   Exchange discussions

5.1   Main Exchanges

The key themes identified in each of the 3 Main Exchange sessions are noted below.

5.1.1   Main Exchange Session 1

	Key themes	Quotes
1	A desire / need to invest in the wider community's development of personal power	'People don't want to take ownership of stuff. A sense of agency has been educated out of people'
2	A goal of building on existing assets to create a new future, creativity and culture were highlighted in particular.	'Art and artists are always pushing boundaries… they need to be part of recreating the future'

3	A need for leadership and action	'Where is the leadership and support coming from to help people create a bigger vision?'

5.1.2   Main Exchange Session 2

	Key themes	Quotes
1	The importance of story and listening for building both personal and collective power	'Changing the story of our area'
2	Peer to peer (timebanking) and mutual aid approaches for both personal and collective power building, with a focus on levelling out power	'Like the idea of the timebank as a way of bringing people together and to creating new opportunities for collective work'
3	Concern about capacity issues and the realities of delivering (fear of taking risks and 'failure')	'I have my doubts – partly because a lot of people with useful skills don't necessarily have much time or energy to do other things'
4	Valuing the importance of and working on how to connect people and projects across North Staffs	'Want to see more sharing of good ideas. Lots of good ideas already happening – how can we spread and duplicate them'
5	Desire for 'people with power' to trust communities more and take a more participatory approach	'If the funding from developments came to communities, they could have real power…'

5.1.3   Main Exchange Session 3

	Key themes	Quotes
1	Creating a new story about North Staffs – to celebrate and speak to people in power	'Shaking off, what has been put upon us here. Passion to show North Staffs is not a forgotten dusty place'
2	Resolving the tension between holding onto and respecting the past, whilst also moving forward	'Unpicking the past and telling it with a modern slant - Holding hands with the past and bringing it into the future'
3	Importance of redefining ideas around value, including valuing yourself & valuing everyone	'Until we know who we are, we can't build anything'

5.2   Planning & Regeneration Exchange

The Exchange provided a presentation on three approaches to community led regeneration:
- Neighbourhood Plans
- Community Land Trusts (CLTs)
- Neighbourhood Economic Resilience / Community Economic Development (CED)

There was a large interest in Neighbourhood Economic Resilience/CED and Portland Inn Project has a particular interest in Neighbourhood Plans. There was less interest in the CLT model.

The key overarching theme arising from Session 1 was: communities leading on positive uses of local land. Additional themes identified across the three sessions included:

	Themes	Quotes
1	Issues for projects around temporary and permanent access/use of and/or ownership of brownfield land / vacant green spaces	'Catch 22 – want to see development but not to the detriment of wildlife and community.' 'Issue of temporary take-over of buildings. But then where do we go, there's no permanency.'
2	Issues for projects around temporary and permanent access/use of and/or ownership of and empty buildings (both council and other owners)	'Emptying of urban centres, a change in use. How can those empty spaces be accessed and re-used?' 'Will we ever have power without ownership.' 'Community Land Trusts in town centres/high streets for alternate use for retail space.'
3	Communities with no input into how and what new development is taking place on their doorstep	'How to safe-guard communities. Issue of adjoining areas where aggressive development is taking place.'
4	Community gardens/allotments/urban farms	'Want to take greater ownership of the allotment association site and spaces bordering us.'
5	Concerns about the planning system	'Communication, issues of transparency. Type of language being used. Concerned planning staff don't want to make language accessible.'
6	Role of the Local Authority and how to make the council be more accountable.	'Break-down the barriers within the council.' 'Council doesn't own as much as you might think. They own random little strips of land.' 'Have collective understanding of how council are using land'

7	Communities role in decision-making about what happens in their places	'I want to see a community that thrives.' 'Urgent situation on nearby green space… we were supposed to be part of decision-making, but it has been flattened recently.' 'But we are easily forgotten in the discussions. A missed opportunity. Our skills are not recognised.'
8	Loss of mature green spaces (brownfield spaces) – their value for health and biodiversity	'Want to be able to advocate more for thinking about the nature that's there. Keep some percentage of green.'
9	Importance of neighbourhood-level economic resilience	'Emphasis on community business as the heart of what is important'
10	Value of communities working collaboratively across North Staffs	'About not working competitively, work collaboratively and pool resources. Pool hours, time and expertise. Start with nothing, get creative. There are other ways to do what needs to be done. Think about what skills and resources we've got'

6.   Exchange Actions and Outcomes

One of the goals of each Exchange was to create a realistic and achievable mini-action plan for that theme.

6.1   Main Exchanges

During the discussion in the Main Exchange sessions, it became clear that participants wanted to combine their initial reflections around the four main themes, making the production of realistic achievable action plans per theme not possible. A number of broader ideas for possible development were identified during the action-planning session, although who would lead on these areas was not specified, these were:

- Create a forum to continue the conversation and reach beyond those in the exchange to get involved.

- Ensure young people in particular are involved in this conversation (to retain them in the area).

- Hold a series of workshops - followed by a 'lab' process.

- Developing a project that would work across North Staffs, across Local Authorities to help people to overcome this fragmentation.

- Create a physical space where people can come and do activities, tell their stories etc.

- Connect people and places with an activity-resource bus.

- Create a place for exchange of resources.

6.2   Planning and Regeneration Exchange

The Planning and Regeneration Exchange did create a set of actions for the Portland Inn Project participants, and the other participants attending created actions representing their own individual projects and concerns.

The Portland Inn Project actions were:

- Focus next on gardening and food education.
- Form a group to start researching the Neighbourhood Plan process.
- Have an Environmental Sustainability Plan to run alongside the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Find ways to ensure the Neighbourhood Plan is connected with the creative work of PIP.
- Find out more about the area's Local Plan.
- Find out how the Council is working with other Neighbourhood Plan Forum's in Stoke.
- Explore how to develop and maintain partnerships in/with the Council.
- Research ways to ensure communities are leading.

Other participant individual/group actions were identified. As with the Main Exchanges these did not always include who would lead on them:

- Need some sort of multi group approach to the Council to discuss the issues and challenges for communities in gaining access or asset transfer of brownfield land.
- Ongoing research into finding out how communities can access/use property and land without owning it.
- Finding help to access the site plan of an allotment space (lack of positive engagement to date with the local authority on this).
- As a community group make a decision about whether to become more business like to take on an empty shop unit.
- Find ways of getting people working together, using a community organising model.
- Set up a new partnership for a community garden project in Knutton.
- Organise some events to enable social enterprises to amplify their voices.

6.3   National Partner Actions

- Georgie Burr (Local Trust) hosted a sharing circle on the topic of social infrastructure and how to call for funding and respect for this invisible (but integral) community work with 5 of the participants, including working group members (following a break-out

group discussion).

- Hannah Batley (Equal Care Coop) and working group member Monica Cru-Hall (Therapy North Staffordshire) have made plans to meet up face to face to get to know each other's practice better. The Exchanges have influenced Hannah's decision to undertake more work face to face with communities in the future.

- Shared Assets already had a commitment to deliver 6 days consultancy work over two years for the Portland Inn Project, funded via the Creative Civic Change programme run by Local Trust. The Exchange has enabled PIP staff to clarify how they want to use the support made available through the programme.

- Waymarking and Shared Assets have agreed to take some of the findings from the Planning and Regeneration Exchange forward into researching, developing and finding funding for a vacant land strategy. This work would be undertaken in collaboration with grassroots community organisations in North Staffs who've taken part in the Exchange programme. Work to develop a proposal and seek funding for the project will start in Sept 2021.

- The All Party Parliamentary Group for 'Left Behind' Neighbourhoods is due to visit Stoke on Trent and has made links with Alex Phillips and Mike Riddell.

6.4   Local Working Group Member Actions

- Stoke Working Group members are sending out the Exchange presentations to all participants who took part, and are inviting all to remain connected and will ensure they convene a meeting over the summer to update everyone on new funding bids that are being submitted.

- Stoke Working Group members discussed the possibility of asking local participants if they want to meet up with Indra Adnan (The Alternative UK) and Jez Hall (Shared Future CIC) over the summer. This may not be possible to set up due to capacity issues within the team.

- Counter Community is leading on a partnership bid to the Community Renewal Fund which includes several local participants and organisations as well as all of the Stoke Working Group team and Shared Assets and Waymarking. The content of the bid has been informed by the Exchange process and dialogue.

- Additionally, a Lottery Bid for Growing Great Ideas is being developed in the area and Counter Community and UnLtd are involved in this, and will bring the Exchange process learning to the bid.

- UnLtd is continuing to develop a local Social Enterprise Network in partnership with the social enterprise communications organisation Noisy Crickets. The development of this work will be informed by the Exchanges.

- Stoke Working Group members have discussed creating a local team with some of the Main Exchange participants to explore how they might continue the work together, including the potential of creating a series of podcasts on each theme.

- Monica Cru Hall of Therapy North Staffordshire has recently been invited to be part of a partnership with Staffordshire University on Brownfield Sites, due to her role in Exchanges for Change.

7. Evaluation Results

7.1 Participant Responses

Across the 3 Main Exchange sessions and the 3 Planning and Regeneration Exchange sessions, there were a total of 69 attendances. 27 individual people took part across all the Exchanges (see Appendix I, Table 1).

The Main Exchanges had a total of 17 participants taking part, and the Planning and Regeneration Exchanges had 10 additional new participants taking part.

Participant numbers fluctuated through delivery of the 3 sessions. In the Main Exchanges, the numbers increased in the second session, and then decreased in the third. Across the Planning and Regeneration sessions the numbers gradually decreased (see Appendix I Table 2). Some participants attended both sessions.

7.1.1 Overall

Participants were asked which objectives they felt the Exchanges had started to address.

In the Main Exchanges participants were asked in the second session (via an online survey) and the Planning and Regeneration Exchange participants were asked via a poll in the third session. The two areas identified as being achieved the most were:
- Exploring new tools and resources to help make positive local change (15 out of 22)
- Amplifying local people's, groups' and organisation's voices (14 out of 22).

See Appendix I, Figure 1 for full details.

7.1.2 Main Exchanges

12 participants completed the survey.

Reasons participants gave about why the Exchanges were of interest to them included allowing them to think more about alternative forms of democracy, issues of power and the importance of narrative and storytelling in bringing people together and building a sense of identity and agency.

They also identified the need for a different language that was fit for its purpose when explaining what we mean about 'building an alternative', and the importance of a common set of values and principles for people to sign up to so their trust is the first commodity or asset that is developed before looking at a strategy for change.

Overall feedback about the Exchanges ranged from them being inspiring to being "interesting, but not as useful to my organisation as I'd hoped".

See Appendix I, 4 for full details.

7.1.3   Planning and Regeneration Exchange

Only two participants responded to the survey.

Comments on what was most interesting and relevant included the contribution of the sessions to participants' work on placemaking across Stoke and North Staffordshire; providing a clear starting position for what might be needed to begin to think about shifting power locally, and providing insight into different models of locally community led regeneration.

7.2   Partner Responses

Partners who were involved in the delivery of the Exchanges identified having been inspired, stimulated and energised by the Exchanges, that the process had validated their work, strengthened their networks, given their organisations greater profile and helped develop their understanding of the application of their work and a 'new language' with which to talk about it.

They felt that they had created new connections with local people, groups and organisations, and began to explore how tools and resources they worked with could help to make positive change and find solutions to local issues. However most also felt that it was too early to really tell what impact the Exchange had had and that the project needed to be longer to genuinely make a difference.

Partners were evenly split over the extent to which they felt the process of arranging and delivering the Exchange had been quick, easy and low cost, however all stated that they had enjoyed the process. Three of the four felt the Exchanges were effective.

See Appendix II for full details.

7.3   Working Group Responses

Working Group members felt that the team had worked effectively both locally and nationally and that the Main Exchange sessions were 'intimate and powerful', with the openness of the discussions 'created something beautiful'. Powerful stories were told and there was a 'sense of pennies dropping and connections being made – both in terms of issues and in terms of relationships'. They felt that local people who are marginalised and ignored 'were able to have their say and felt they were listened to' and that people were listening to each other and were having 'what appeared from the outside to be a conversation that hadn't happened before'.

A lack of time and financial resources was noted as an issue, in particular the inability to resource ongoing and follow up work to secure a legacy from the Exchanges. There was also disappointment to not get much achievable or realistic action planning from the Main Exchanges. It was identified that holding another session to reflect, or longer action planning session would have taken the conversation further. Participants needed more time to discuss and reflect to reach a point where they could take action.

The process of the Exchanges was felt to be a 'great way to get people enthused and ask questions', and the fact that it was tailored specifically to North Staffordshire and didn't use 'off the peg' consultation style techniques was appreciated. The Main Exchange session process was 'de-professionalised', using an apparently informal, but carefully planned approach which meant that 'we found a new language to bring people together' which 'created an equity of access'. Working Group members reported that participants enjoyed and appreciated the sessions and that they 'gave people a platform to have their say'.

8.   Conclusions

(i) The Exchanges for Change programme has been an effective place-based approach which resulted in valuable learning, with respect to the development of processes for connecting local and national partners in order to support communities to shift power locally.

(ii) All those who took part (Exchange participants, local and national partners and Working Group members) agreed that the Exchanges had resulted in knowledge sharing.

(iii) The partnership developed by the Working Group in particular was felt to have been respectful and based on co-creation, equal participation and good communication. Whilst relationships of mutual aid were not yet felt to have been fully established between partners, there was felt to be potential for these to be developed further over time.

(iv) The process of developing the themes for the Exchanges was seen by local Working Group members as a process of collective solution finding which helped them to more clearly define local issues and opportunities, providing a possible framework for future action and helping to develop a new language to engage others in work that would accelerate a shift of power and control more locally.

(v) Design and delivery of the Main Exchanges was undertaken in a way that was informal and approachable and the action research, or learning-by-doing, approach was appreciated.

(vi) The key learning from the Main Exchanges was the recognition of the importance of narrative and personal identity, both in terms of the negative narrative imposed on the area from outside which acts as a barrier to people taking action, and in terms of a new more positive and accurate narrative that needs to be collectively developed in order to give local people a solid position from which to take action in the future. This was recognised as a key part of any future process of change and one that needs to happen before going on to solve technical problems or undertake specific activities. A role in facilitating this process of empowerment through narrative and identity development was identified as one that local partners could take forward together.

(vii) Whilst some specific tools were identified that could be applied locally such as the development of a timebank, local partners did not feel that participants were yet ready to go ahead and apply them.

(viii) The process of the Exchange sessions was felt to have reinforced the bonds between those who are already active locally, and to some extent to have amplified the voices of the groups and individuals who participated in the Exchanges, if only within the limited context of the Exchanges themselves. The process also provided both a local and national platform for local Working Group members.

(ix) Whilst the process itself was not 'simple quick and low cost' it was recognised that it was both a pilot delivery process and an action research process, and the work has contributed significantly to the potential for CTRLshift partners to develop a future process that is simple and low cost. It should be noted that all place-based approaches take time and so the ambition to develop a process that is also quick, may not be either achievable or in fact desirable.

(x) CTRLshift as a network or movement was also seen as credible and action focussed, bringing in expertise from other areas but not dominating; creating a partnership of equals that was learning together and from each other.

(xi) Critically the idea of "shifting power" was felt to be useful and provided a new language which enabled local participants to discuss the themes of making, planning, democracy etc within new framings of narrative, identity, and power dynamics. This, alongside a process and facilitation that enabled all participants to feel equal and listened to, meant that learning felt experiential rather than "taught" and led to some powerful moments of realisation for participants.

(xii) Overall, Exchanges for Change was felt to have contributed towards the development of an effective process of support provision for place-based action that was flexible, exploratory and non-prescriptive. As such it was felt to be genuinely place-based and focussed more on

people than on organisations. The identification of the themes for the Exchanges enabled participants to engage, explore and respond within a framework that was open enough to enable them to come out of their comfort zones and develop new thinking and ideas, but not so open that people felt scared or intimidated. This was underpinned by supportive locally-led facilitation which enabled people to stretch in safety and which created a space for people to think and reflect together about how they might start to develop ways to shift power locally rather than feeling that they had to move immediately to taking action.

(xiii) A key a characteric of participatory action research processes is that there is a high level of uncertainty at the outset of the process, requiring a willingness by all partners to accept a degree of risk taking and show a commitment to keep 'showing up' even when things feel unclear or ill defined. Within this particular process it was also felt to be important that Local Trust as the funder took a full, active and equal role as a Working Group partner, helping to shape but not dictate the way the process developed.

(xiv) It is clear that this action research process and the model that it has developed fits well with the definitions of a 'place-based approach' set out in the research highlighted in Section 3 above. In particular it is one that takes its starting point at the grassroots level, working with community activists and mission-led individuals. Whilst the approach modelled many of the characteristics identified as being necessary for a successful place-based action (people were viewed as resourceful, power was shared, participation was enabled through open and trusting relationships, and light touch support was offered through a national network), it was neither long term enough nor well-resourced enough to enable adequate follow through and ongoing support and action beyond the Exchanges. It was highlighted that whilst a small amount of money can catalyse a lot of action it was not possible to rely on passion and volunteer time in the long run and that a lack of adequate resourcing risked leaving partners and participants feeling let down.

(xv) However, within the constraints of the available resources the Exchanges for Change programme demonstrated clear potential for the CtrlShift partnership to support the development and delivery of place-based action aimed at shifting power and control to communities and individuals. The identification of local themes and issues and the design and delivery approach ensured that the activities were relevant and tailor to local needs, and the experience was valued by both national and local partners in the process. The successful hosting of events in partnership with local activists and organisations created spaces to connect and convene, share knowledge, build relationships and catalyse a partnership between national and local organisations.

9.   Recommendations

(i) The national CTRLshift partnership should give consideration to how it can incorporate the Exchanges for Change process – or a similar effective place-based approach – into its work to support local action to shift power to individuals and communities.

(ii) In order to do so it should work more closely with local partners to design and host Summits – or similar events – that bring together national and local actors in a place in a way that is intentionally part of a longer term process of engagement, support, learning and mutual aid.

(iii) Such events could provide spaces for collective development of themes for future more focused Exchanges and help foster new relationships between local and national partners.

(iv) Consideration should be given to how to resource, support or undertake processes of narrative development as a tool for empowerment where this would be of value to local communities, and also how to adequately resource longer term local participation in planning, delivery and facilitation of activities and Exchanges both pre and post events.

10.   Next Steps

One of the key objectives at the outset of the work was the development of mini action plans for each theme. Whilst an action plan was developed as a result of the Planning and Regeneration Exchange it was not achieved in the Main Exchanges, at least in part due to participants not yet having the capacity and confidence to commit to specific actions without further resource and support, a number of follow up actions have been committed to, or delivered, by both local and national partners since the end of the Exchanges.

10.1   Local Working Group Members and Local Partners

10.1.1   Main Exchanges

The Main Exchanges identified the importance of, and need for, a programme of work to create opportunities for people across Stoke-On-Trent and North Staffordshire to tell their stories and develop new and empowering narratives about themselves and their communities as a precursor to the development of other forms of collective action.

As a next step the local partners will be hosting a session at the Better World Festival being held by the local Business Improvement District in August. The session will share the outcomes from the Main Exchanges, invite participants to consider issues of power in their own lives and invite them to get involved in taking action together.

10.1.2   Planning and Regeneration Exchange

Following the Planning and Regeneration Exchange the Portland Inn Project has committed to form a group to find out more about the area's Local Plan, start researching the Neighbourhood Plan process and to develop an Environmental Sustainability Plan.

10.1.3 Other Actions

Both Monica Cru Hall (Therapy North Staffordshire) and Alex Phillips (UnLtd) have become involved in projects with or been asked to give lectures at the local university based on their involvement in the Exchanges for Change programme.

Counter Community has submitted an Expression of Interest to the Community Renewal Fund for funding for a programme work which includes elements that build on and develop aspects of the Exchange for Change programme.

10.2   National Partners

Shared Assets and Waymarking are both keen to continue working with local partners in Stoke-On-Trent and North Staffordshire, in particular to explore the potential for developing a programme of work to work with local communities to map derelict and unused land and assets and bring them into community use or management to meet local needs and priorities.

10.3   CTRLshift Nationally

CTRLshift nationally is currently being supported by Transition Network who have secured funding through the National Lottery Community Fund Growing Great Ideas programme which includes some dedicated staff time and funding to support the ongoing development of the partnership. The national CTRLshift Steering Group is reviewing how best to deploy these resources and is considering how it might take forward a programme of national and local events which could act as catalysts for the development of further place-based work between national and local partners with a shared objective of shifting power to local people and communities based on the Exchanges for Change process developed and described here.

Appendix I : Participant Responses

1. Attendance

Table 1: Overall attendances

	No of sessions	Total number of online hours	Number of attendances	Total individual participants
Main Exchanges	3	9	35	17
Portland Inn Project Exchange	3	4	34	10
TOTALS	6	11	69	27

Table 2: Attendances per session

	Session 1 Attendance	Session 2 Attendance	Session 3 Attendance	Total no of attendances
Main Exchanges	12	15	8	35
Portland Inn Project Exchange	14	11	9	34

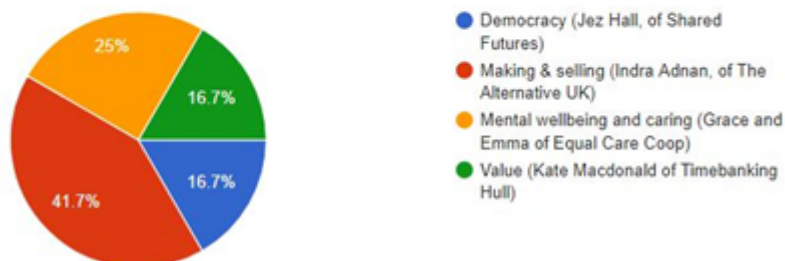## 2. Achieving of Exchange objectives

Figure 1: Achieving objectives
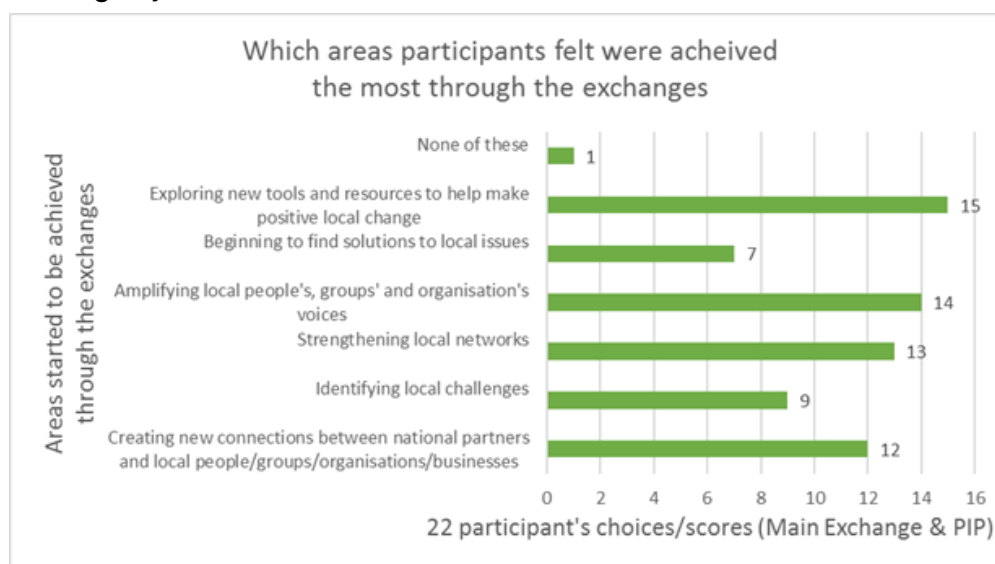
3. Exchange themes

5 out of 12 (41.7%) identified the Exchange on Making and Selling as the most interesting and relevant to them (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Relevance and interest

1a. Which of these themed sessions have you found the most interesting and relevant to you/your organisation/group/business?

12 responses

- Democracy (Jez Hall, of Shared Futures)
- Making & selling (Indra Adnan, of The Alternative UK)
- Mental wellbeing and caring (Grace and Emma of Equal Care Coop)
- Value (Kate Macdonald of Timebanking Hull)

4. Main Exchanges survey feedback

12 participants completed the survey.

4.1   They identified reasons why the exchanges were of interest to them, including:
- *Allowed me to think more about the democracy we have and what alternative there is and how it should be shaped (Making & Selling).*
- *The need to tell/show and develop a unique story that captivates people and grabs public attention (Making & Selling).*
- *Made me think of lots of ideas for getting my community together and sharing resources/skills (Value).*
- *About sharing ideas on the importance of story-telling (Mental Wellbeing & Caring).*
- *I thought that his understanding of power and dynamics within organisational relationships was interesting. I gleaned from what he was speaking about is sometimes power and those who hold it won't relinquish easily without a fight, and maybe there were different avenues to explore an alternative route to that power without expending energy fighting a fruitless battle (Democracy).*

4.2   They also shared what they thought national partners had gained by taking part in the Exchanges.
- To connect with people working at grassroots level.
- That there is a wealth of skills and experience to draw on.
- A new perspective on N Staffs; some very interesting local 'voices'.
- I think they may have learned a lot about how to really, truly invest in co-creation and cooperative thinking, as opposed to something superficial and rushed.
- A chance to invest in enterprising ideas/projects at this stage of their venture.

4.3   Additional comments were made about the exchange discussions and their value
- The language we have is not fit for its purpose of explaining what we mean about building an alternative to what we have.
- Ideas start with individual ideas and building to bring people together to create great things.
- I think it is a consciousness which has been shifted, a kind of enlightenment. What is required is a common set of values and principles for people to sign up to so their trust is the first commodity, asset evaluation, thematic vision (What do we all want to focus on) and then look at a strategy for change.
- Good to share ideas and bring these to life in other neighbourhoods.

4.4   Overall feedback about the exchanges was
- The sessions have been really inspiring.
- What a great session. Thank you.
- Interesting, but not as useful to my organisation as I'd hoped.

5.   Planning & Regeneration Exchange survey feedback

Only two participants responded to the survey.

5.1   Comments on what was most interesting and relevant were:
- *More generally it has been useful for our work in placemaking and work across Stoke and Staffs. Hearing others talk about what is important to them, and interesting to how that might be similar or different to what I can do within my power locally.*

5.2   Additional comments about the exchange discussions and their value:
- [The Exchange] *gave a very clear starting position for what might be needed to begin to think about shifting power.*
- *I'm interested to understand more about the models, in terms of next steps on the actions and further examples of community organised/organisationally organised approaches to each of the three areas talked about at the beginning. I'm also interested in more detail about CLT's and personally whether there are Community Cultural Land Trusts: I'd be interested in another conversation with Sarah or another about these.*

Appendix II: Exchange Partners Responses

1.   About the partners

Exchanges were delivered by:
- Democracy: Jez Hall (Shared Futures CIC)
- Value: Kate McDonald (Hull & East Riding Timebanking)
- Making & Selling: Indra Adnan (The Alternative UK)
- Mental Health & Wellbeing: Hannah Batley (Equal Coop)
- Planning & Regeneration: Sarah Spanton (Waymarking)

Sarah Spanton was also a national partner so her feedback is captured within the Working Group responses.

2.   Forming connections and building relationships of mutual aid

Reasons partners identified as important in relation to forming connections and building relationships of mutual aid between local North Staffs partners and national CTRLshift partners included:
- Two partners identified wanting to develop their practice on the ground in North Staffs. It is implied that they see this as a possibility going forward.
- One partner identified that the Exchange had been important because it had given her a sense of what community members are motivated by and she had been able to see how they had responded to what she offered.

2.   How the organisations and partners benefited from the exchange

Key areas which partners hoped they would benefit from at organisational, personal and professional levels and which were achieved for some partners were:
- Two partners identified having achieved being inspired, stimulated and energised by the Exchanges.
- Two partners identified that the response from the Exchange participants reassured or encouraged (validated) their work.
- Two partners identified the Exchanges had strengthened their organisational profiles.
- Two partners identified that they had widened or strengthened their networks.
- Two partners identified that they had a 'clearer understanding of the challenges' or were more aware of 'resistance to certain issues'.

Additional benefits partners identified as having been achieved included:
- It was 'refreshing' to share practice outside of the partner's own area.
- The exchange enabled reflection on their own practice in their own locality.
- Now understanding that there is a gap "between the 'technical' processes for citizen empowerment and the realities of people's everyday lives", and that this is "a wake up call on what is possible".
- A 'new language for community action' was revealed.

3.   How the Exchanges have started to help shift power locally

At the completion of the Exchanges, partners were asked to score which of seven areas they felt had started to be achieved through the Exchanges (Table 1).

Table 1
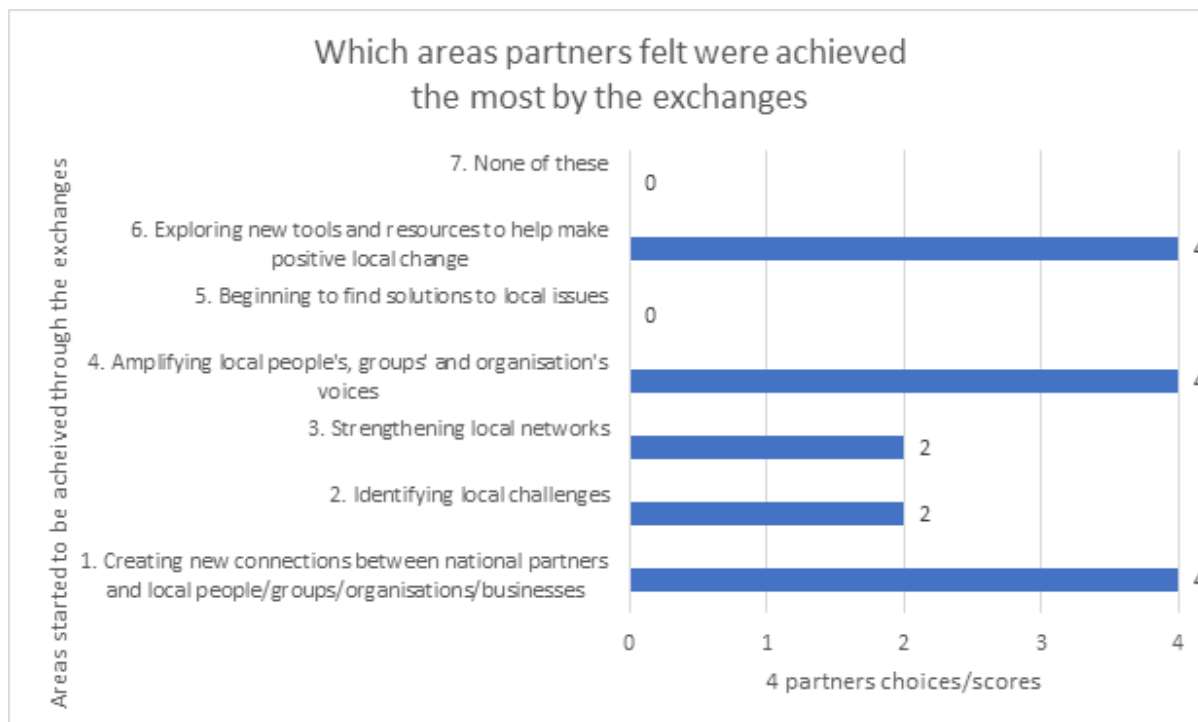
All four partners felt that areas 1, 4 and 6 had started to take place:

- 1: Creating new connections between national partners and local people / groups / organisations / businesses
- 4. Beginning to find solutions to local issues
- 6. Exploring new tools and resources to help make positive local change

Most of the partners commented that it was too early to really tell, or that the project needed to be longer to genuinely make a difference in these areas, or that they didn't have enough local knowledge to comment further.

4.   Identifying whether local participants will want to work further with partners

 Three of the partners were able to identify a range of tools, techniques and resources they could provide at the outset, these included:

Jez Hall:
- Participatory Budgeting (community led democratic resource distribution)
- Social enterprise and community/network development

Kate Macdonald:
- Tools around mutual aid (sharing – skills, space, equipment)
- Timebanking
- Price based credit
- Local investment eg savings pools
- Strengths based collaboration
- Relational networks

Indra Adnan:
- Building CANs – Citizen Action Networks / Community Agency Networks
- Process – collaboratories

At the end of the Exchanges, two of the partners felt the Exchanges were at too early a stage for the dialogue to reach a point where participants and local partners were ready to ask to use or find out more about the tool and resources. However, one partner (Hannah Batley) came away from the Exchanges having been asked for more information about her practice.

5.   On whether the exchanges were simple and effective, quick and low cost

In terms of whether the exchange process was quick and low cost, at the outset, there was an even split between partners who felt it would be and those who weren't sure. At the conclusion, the partners' opinions on this had swapped around, those who were initially uncertain concluded that the Exchanges had indeed been quick and low cost.

Partners who concluded that the Exchange set up process wasn't quick, identified benefits to this lack of speed, including 'It was complex and required patience. But that paid off' and that the time put in was a positive trade-off for the enjoyment gained from it. Partners that identified the process was quick and low cost, also identified their enjoyment as a factor and that offering their time for free is part of their social mission.

6.   How effective were the exchanges

In terms of whether the Exchanges were effective overall, three out of four of the partners felt they were. However, partners identified not having enough time and the organisers having limited resources and capacity, as factors that constrained the programme from achieving more.

7.   How realistic and achievable were the mini-action plans

None of the partners answered positively that the mini-action plans the Exchanges set out to create were realistic and achievable. There is a strong sense from the partners that they were not certain about their effectiveness, nor even in one case that action plans had been created. Partners identified more time being needed to create realistic and achievable action plans and that participants had not 'left the session feeling clear about what the next steps were'.

8.   Further comments and feedback about the Exchanges

Partners made a number of other key observations with respect to the process overall.

- One partner identified the artist participants as potentially having a key role going forward.
- Comments were made about the energy generated in the Exchanges and the need to maintain it beyond the Exchanges.
- The Exchange process seemed a 'natural' one, not a forced one, yet it still was pro-active and catalysing.
- One partner felt there should have been more local participants taking part.
- One partner actively identified the Exchanges as a valuable initiative and is interested in being part of making them happen in other locations, as well as in her own area.

Appendix III: Working Group responses

1. What worked well

- The Working Group worked very effectively as a team. The relationship strengthened through the process of working together. Clear roles were developed and 'people recognised their strengths and played to them'.

- Working Group members had shared values and interest in the goals and outcomes from the outset and 'were generous with their time'.

- When North Staffordshire Working Group team member Kez, unfortunately had to drop out of her Project Coordinator role, there was an initial period of uncertainty. The local team coped well and used the resources to bring Monica on board.

- Monica as Project Coordinator for the main Exchange sessions has strong skills and lots of enthusiasm. She grew in confidence as the process went on and "was able to showcase her skills to national partners".

- CTRLshift national Working Group members Mark and Sarah worked well as a team, have strong management skills, kept good notes and records, and "kept things running smoothly and within scope".

- The six themes that the North Staffs team members came up with gave the necessary focus to developing the exchanges.

- The introductory session with SNBL and PIP representatives was valuable as it initiated their 'buy in' to the process and importantly clarified the themes were relevant.

- Whilst ideally the Exchanges would've been good to do in person, it is likely that more people were able to attend because they were online.

- The Main Exchanges were very well facilitated. Monica's approach to facilitation (enthusiastic and informal) was the right one for the audience, it "helped to make the Exchanges feel so energised and locally relevant".

- Despite being on 'Zoom', the Main Exchanges were "really energised", "people engaged quite deeply, almost so much that it stalled the process".

- The Main Exchange sessions were "intimate and powerful", the openness of the discussions "created something beautiful", powerful stories were told and there was a

"sense of pennies dropping and connections being made – both in terms of issues and in terms of relationships".

- Local people who are marginalised and ignored "were able to have their say and felt they were listened to".

- People were listening to each other and were having "what appeared from the outside to be a conversation that hadn't happened before".

- Working Group member Monica commented she had a deep learning experience herself (despite having lived in North Staffs all her life), she realised that "Stoke on Trent has had its power taken away" (through the post-industrialisation process), she noted that there are "massive gaping holes and the state has been people's parents since".

- The Exchange process has started some new conversations, which need to now go deeper.

- The Exchanges have been catalytic. They have created some "fertile ground for planning some next steps for local action". The Exchanges have "really contributed to speeding things up, getting people on board and to get people to understand", they have been part of a movement made up of a growing number of people in "who want to create social change in North Staffs".

- The Exchange programme was successful at testing the working group's ideas and thinking in the 'real world'.

- Other positive realisations identified are that "We've realised in order to create action we need to have conversations – we can't just do stuff".

- The Exchange process has some 'replicable steps' that could be followed if the Exchange process were run in another area.

- There is a desire amongst working group members to find ways to continue working together in North Staffordshire.

2.   **What didn't work so well or that could have been done differently**

- A lack of time and financial resourcing was noted as an issue. The programme was planned to be undertaken without funding initially, then Local Trust came on board via Georgie and made the project more viable by providing funding. However, the programme, which was ambitious, was limited by its financial resourcing, which had an impact on time resources from team members. It should be noted that Working Group members have all worked voluntarily to increase what was possible to deliver.

- The issue of having provided a programme that had no resourcing to support the legacy of the work. In particular North Staffordshire Working Group members would like to find funding to resource Monica to coordinate the legacy work from the Exchanges.

- It was found that the potential for the scope gradually growing larger ('scope creep') was high.

- It was a challenge particularly with the Planning & Regeneration Exchange to keep expectations from participants at a reasonable level, given the resourcing. Extra meetings and additional planning was needed to tailor the sessions to their needs.

- The experimental, co-designed and co-produced and unique place-based nature of the programme made it impossible to be totally clear what would be taking place at the outset – this is an ongoing tension with this type of work.

- It was revealed through the Main Exchanges that the themes of narrative, North Staffordshire identity and agency were new, relevant and important. This has been identified as needing further exploration.

- Surprise was noted in the Main Exchanges that "so many people who didn't know their voice" and that there was a "lack of leadership" amongst participants.

- There was disappointment to not get as much achievable or realistic action planning from the Main Exchanges. A number of reasons were articulated for this. These include: needing a full day on action planning, the combining of the themes, rather than keeping them split into four distinct areas may have hampered the ability to action plan, also that if further funding for legacy work had been secured then this might have incentivised action planning.

- It has been identified that holding another session to reflect, or longer action planning session would have taken the conversation further. Participants needed more time to discuss and reflect to reach a point where they could take action.

- It would have been beneficial if structured follow up time had been built in for Main Exchange participants with the national partners.

- It took a lot of time to understand and clarify how to bring SNBL and PIP into the programme in an effective way (having been asked to do this by Local Trust). The time needed for relationship development, which is built into this Exchange approach, should not be underestimated.

- It was disappointing that SNBL didn't come on board with the Exchanges themselves. We were unable to find out why this was – although the pandemic must have been a factor.

- It was disappointing that finding national CTRLshift partners was a challenge. Especially for the growing theme, which had to be dropped due to no partners coming forward.

- Focussing on fewer themes may have proved less time consuming and a clearer offer to participants.

- The total number of participants involved in the main exchanges was not high.

- Identifying earlier within the North Staffordshire working group who would take on the marketing/comms role – may have helped develop who were the core audience for the Exchanges earlier. Giving a longer lead in time to promote the Exchanges. Additionally, exploring how to involve more local change-makers in the co-design process could have engaged more local grass-roots community members from across North Staffs.

3. **Design of the exchange programme**

- The Exchange programme concept 'exchanging for change' was accessible and worked well.

- The process of the Exchanges was a "Great way to get people enthused and ask questions".

- The Exchange process enabled the sessions to be tailored specifically to North Staffordshire, "There was a structure based on us recognising what the barriers to participation might be". The Working Group didn't use 'off the peg' consultation style techniques for the Exchanges sessions, because it was known they would not have worked.

- The Main Exchange session process was 'de-professionalised', using an apparently informal, but carefully planned approach.

- Through the Exchange session process (especially the Main Exchanges), "we found a new language to bring people together", this "created an equity of access".

- The value of the Exchanges being mutually beneficial to both local participants and national partners was understood.

- The Main Exchange workshop format was well structured, especially the use of smaller break out groups. Capturing the discussion was also important.

- The Exchange process took a while to take shape, in relation to understanding the potential scope of the Exchanges and that there were different ways to deliver the Exchanges.

4.   **Delivery of the Exchange programme**

- The Main Exchange workshop delivery was very effective and well facilitated.

- The Main Exchange session style suited the audience. It was 'friendly, informal – but there was structure in the background to make sure things happened'.

- Monica was able to be flexible with her facilitation and change the session structure when needed.

- During the Main Exchanges other working group members could have been used more as a resource to help facilitate delivery.

- Due to time constraints, communications pre Main Exchange sessions amongst working group members weren't always clear about what would be taking place in the Main Exchanges.

- It is not yet clear if and how an Exchange programme like this is definable as a re-usable model.

- Georgie's role was not just a funder, but also as a contributing Working Group partner.

5.   **Participant experience of the Exchanges**

- "Everyone I spoke to found it useful and worthwhile" (Main Exchange participants)

- The main Exchanges "gave people a platform to have their say".

- Main Exchange participants "found it a very enlightening experience – got them to think about where they were going".

- "People engaged quite deeply, almost so much that it stalled the process".

- It gave Main Exchange participants "an opportunity to reflect on things they had never considered before".

- One person in the Main Exchanges said "they found it a 'wow moment' – and they needed to go away and think about it", in reference to the idea that Stoke and North Staffordshire doesn't currently have a story about itself.

- Three people from the Main Exchanges "thought it was brilliant". They were excited about what the Exchanges discussion unearthed, and about continuing the conversations, including thinking about doing thematic podcasts.

- In the Planning and Regeneration Exchange, there were positive comments in the first and third sessions about the presentation material and discussion opportunity.

- Planning and Regeneration Exchange participants were excited about the ideas around Neighbourhood Economic Resilience (11 out of 12 found this aspect the most valuable of the first session).

- There was a concern about the Main Exchanges that participants who are keen for action to see action take place, might be put off engaging in the future, if none is forthcoming.