

Building on Rural, Coastal and Dispersed Community Strengths

Resident-Led Leadership
and Big Local



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Housekeeping.



Microphones

Please keep your microphone muted until the end of the webinar, to minimise background noise.



Cameras

You are welcome to keep your camera on if you feel comfortable, but it is not required.



Respectful Participation

Please be respectful in the chat and during discussions. We aim to create a safe, inclusive space for all.

Chat Function

Feel free to use the chat throughout the session. We will monitor it and respond where possible.

Use of AI

We may use AI notetaking, recording, or transcription tools. By joining, you acknowledge and consent to this.

Please do not use your own AI notetaking tools or automated recording bots during this session.

Slides & Materials

Any slides or resources used today will be shared following the webinar.

Recording

Any recordings will be shared in line with the purpose of this session. Please respect the confidentiality of others when participating.

Timing

We will begin and end promptly. Please stay for the full session if you can.



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Agenda.

10:00	Welcome Joe Hannett, Community Futures
10:15	Local Trust David Vincent
10:25	The Centre West Cumbria Sharon Barnes
10:40	IVAR Rural Philanthropy Network Chris Mills
10:50	Q&A Session
11:20	Breakout session
11:35	Reflection period
11:50	Summary and close



Local Trust
trusting
local
people

Rural, Coastal and Dispersed Community Strengths: Resident-Led Leadership and Big Local





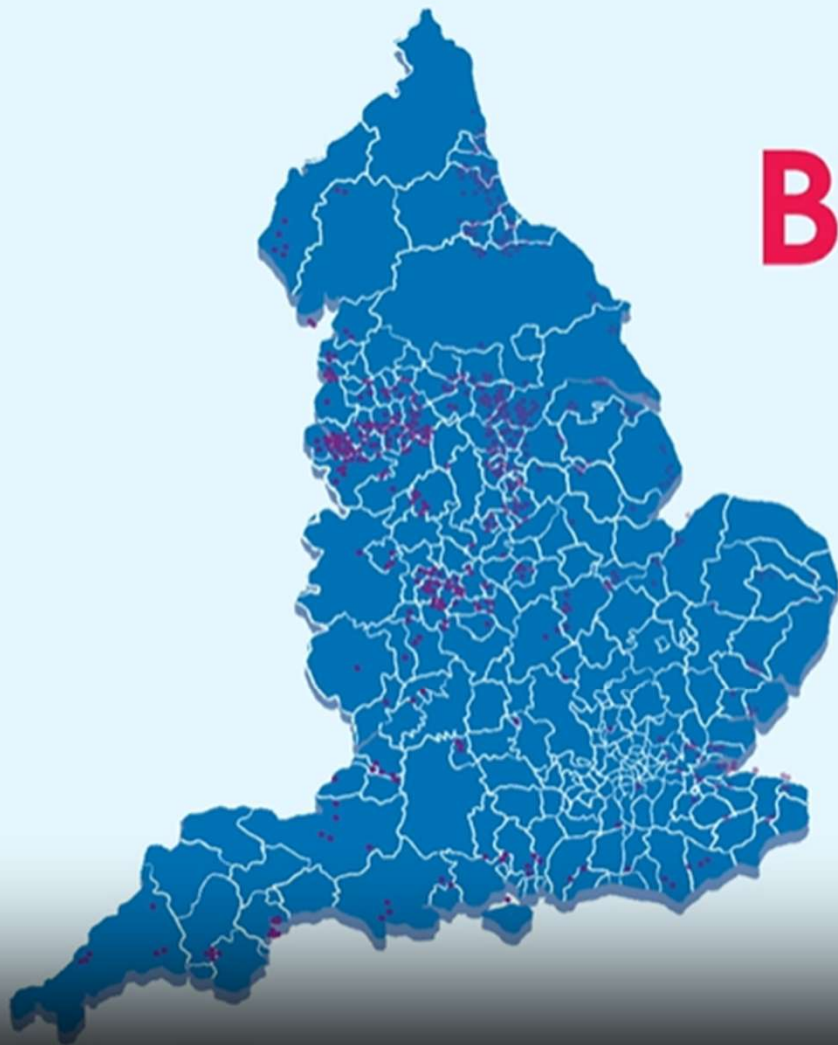
Local Trust was set up in 2012 to deliver **Big Local**, a unique programme that puts residents in neighbourhoods across England in control of decisions about their own lives and areas

at least
£1m per
Big Local
Area

£217m
endowment

We have aimed to demonstrate the value of long term, patient, resident-led funding, and use our learning from delivering the Big Local programme to bring about a wider transformation in the way policy makers, funders and other agencies engage with communities and their neighbourhoods.

Big Local



East Cleveland Villages Big Local – working collaboratively across a disparate area



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Eastern Sheppey Big Local – tackling isolation and food poverty



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Withernsea Big Local – tackling financial exclusion



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Challenges and learning in delivering Big Local in rural areas

- Lumping rural areas together
- Finding a suitable *local* trusted organisation
- Infrastructure support
- Bringing a partnership together and engaging with the community

Local Trust

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Rural Philanthropy in England & Wales: Building the field of knowledge & practice

An introduction to our research

Dr Chris Mills

September 2026

In partnership with:



Contents

1. Our research project
2. Some early findings
3. Find out more

Research aims

Research objective

- To better understand and highlight the importance of rural philanthropy in the UK and how philanthropic funders can most effectively invest in rural communities

Aim to understand

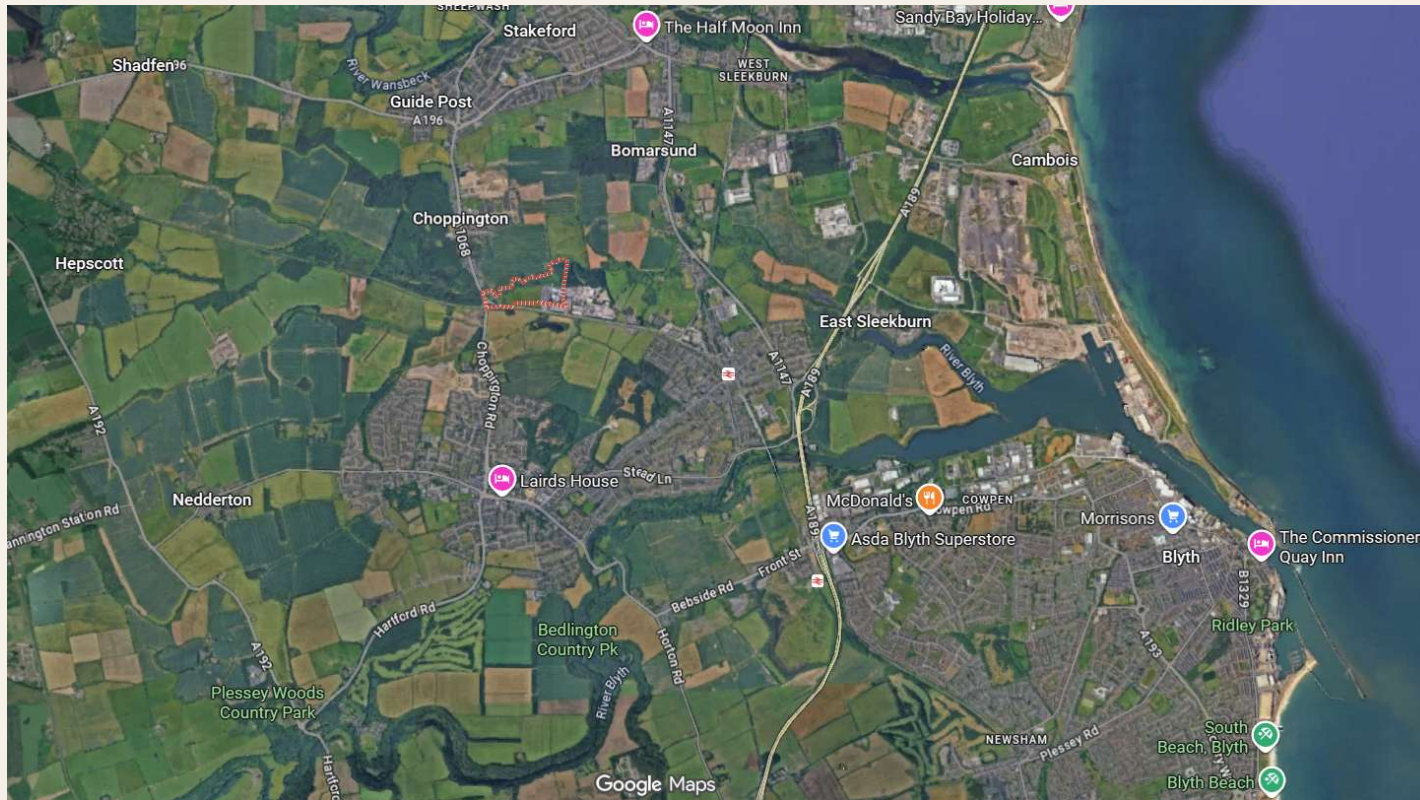
- The nature and extent of flows of philanthropic funding based in and directed to rural communities in the UK
- The experience of rural communities and organisations in accessing funding
- Grantmakers' strategies and practices in rural philanthropy

Data collection

- Analysis of 360 Giving grant-making data for 2022-2024 for four case study areas: Devon, Northamptonshire, Northumberland and South West Wales
- 24 interviews with rural voluntary community organisations
- 10 interviews with funders
- Rural funding case studies

Exploration of grant-making data

Significant methodological challenges in allocating grants to rural or urban



The experience of rural VCOs: Challenges in accessing funding (1 of 2)

VCOs described the following challenges in accessing funding

Funders' limited understanding of rural contexts:

- Rural communities face interconnected challenges such as transportation, digital connectivity, social isolation, employment, and access to healthcare, which are not always recognised by funders.
- Rural need is routinely underestimated, especially as commonly used data sources (e.g. Index of Multiple Deprivation, other post-code indicators) often fail to capture rural realities.

The experience of rural VCOs: Challenges in accessing funding (2 of 2)

VCOs described the following challenges in accessing funding

- Limited trustee and staff capacity to make applications and manage grants
- Competing on unfair terms - needing to work hard to legitimise rural need in funding applications
- Rural geography not factored into funders' expectations – dispersed service users, higher costs
- Community infrastructure (e.g. community buildings, VS support) is the foundation of rural resilience but is often underfunded

The experience of rural VCOs: Making funding work for rural VCOs

What '*rural-ready*' funding looks like to VCOs

- Listening to and understanding local communities
- Building trusted local relationships
- Getting behind and supporting local leadership
- Valuing depth and consistency over scale

‘Rural ready’ funder strategies

Funders described various strategies for funding rural communities:

- Funding programmes with a specific rural theme – e.g. *‘Supporting Rural Communities’*
- Responsive grant-making, which allows rural communities to identify their own needs rather than conform to a narrow programme design
- Place-based funding / understanding local context - “*knowing your patch*”
- Funding rural community infrastructure, including village halls and other community spaces, and rural voluntary sector support organisations

Funding practices for rural communities

- Funding practices that enable funders to support rural communities:
 - Eligibility criteria inclusive of small organisations
 - Proactive outreach – work with local VS infrastructure support organisations; build understanding and trust
 - Pre-application support
 - A simple application process
 - A grant assessment process that incorporates local intelligence and is sympathetic to the rural context
 - Involving people with rural knowledge in decision-making
 - Light-touch and narrative reporting
- Crossover between ‘*rural-ready*’ and open and trusting funding practices

Find out more

- Project page on IVAR website:
 - <https://www.ivar.org.uk/growing-the-field-rural-philanthropy-in-the-uk/>
- Due to publish the report in February 2027
- Sign up to IVAR's newsletter:
 - <https://www.ivar.org.uk/newsletter-signup/>



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Breakout Rooms.

- What Big Local principles, approaches or ways of working feel most relevant to rural communities?
- What support do rural communities need to lead change effectively?
- What do these Big Local insights mean for funding and commissioning in rural communities?



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Future events

22nd September (in person):

Big Local legacy: Long-term funding and beyond Big Local at L30 Community Centre

23rd September (online)

Inclusive Community-Led Change: Power and Representation in Practice

30th September (in person)

See social infrastructure in action: Learning from Big Local and Live Well at Our Sale West

Sign up: www.vsnw.org.uk/events/

Learning into Action Awards

An opportunity for participants in the Big Local North West Learning Programme to apply for a small grant to help put ideas into practice in their own organisations, partnerships and communities.

You could use the funding to:

- Test a new idea.
- Bring residents together.
- Try a different approach to community engagement.
- Explore a new partnership.
- Capture and share learning.
- Pilot something you've always wanted to try.

More details will be shared in October.

Learn → Develop an idea → Connect with others → Apply for a Learning into Action Award → Test your idea → Share your learning

Thank you

<https://www.vsnw.org.uk/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/voluntary-sector-north-west>



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