



# The Upper Calder Valley Renaissance Conference

## Taking Stock and Looking Forward

21<sup>st</sup> November 2014

Hebden Bridge Town Hall



## Report on Conference Findings

January 2015

# Executive Summary

The merits of the original UCVR Vision from 2003 were twofold: firstly, it was founded on a systematic, well thought out and cleverly articulated analysis of the qualities, character and potential of the Upper Calder Valley and its five key settlements.

Secondly, it was created around on a sophisticated community consultation process which served as a catalyst for local people to come together, to reflect on the potential of their places and be inspired to become engaged in helping to influence and shape their environment.

The Conference included presentations from a range of high profile speakers and the chance for delegates to help shape the future work and direction of the UCVR.

This report summarises the presentations made by the three Keynote Conference Speakers and goes on to set out the findings from the Workshop Sessions in which Conference delegates worked in six groups and addressed the questions:

*Q1) What Upper Calder Valley-wide Issues should the UCVR Address in the Future? and Q2) How can the UCVR best Tackle these Valley-wide Issues?*

Professor Terry Hodgkinson highlighted the innovative elements of Yorkshire Forward's Renaissance Programme, of which the UCV was a key part. This entailed the processes of Rethinking, Remaking, Reinvention, Renewal and Regaining, with an emphasis on quality and design. These could be measured through evidence of an increase in footfall and visitor numbers, jobs, values and rents, local pride and a strong sense of place.

Cannon James Allison emphasised that the UCVR is about people and how it has managed to spur local communities to be more creative and ambitious, as 'Renaissance' is all about discovering what we have in common, finding unity in our diversity, investing in people, being supportive, partnerships and positive change.

Steven Wyler took an overview of national trends in community led regeneration and the need to reignite the impulse to act. He noted the potential of neighbourhood planning exercises, and trends towards the devolution of responsibilities and services to local communities, to act as means of defining and debating common aspirations. Emerging new government funding initiatives need to be tapped into, including asset transfers schemes, and doing so should help foster what he called 'ready for everything communities'.

The wide range of issues and suggestions for the themes that the UCVR should aim to address in the future were explored by the six UCVR Conference Workshop Groups. These highlighted those originally outlined in the 2003 Vision document, plus some additional ones that have come to the fore in the

last 12 years, such as walking and cycling, renewable energy, independent shops and the future of 'services'. The three issues which garnered the most attention were transport, housing development (especially the need to build more affordable housing) and the local economy. The main issues/shared themes to come out of the deliberations are:

- 1. *The Rural Economy, Farming and Food***
- 2. *Tourism, Culture and Heritage***
- 3. *Local Businesses and Economy***
- 4. *Housing***
- 5. *Facilities for Young people and The Elderly***
- 6. *Transport***
- 7. *Engaging with the Hilltop Communities***
- 8. *Walking and Cycling***
- 9. *Renewable Energy***
- 10. *Regeneration***
- 11. *The Provision of IT facilities and High Speed Broadband***
- 12. *Local Shops***
- 13. *Services***

The exact views of each workshop group are outlined in the summary, as are the ways in which the groups thought they could be tackled by the UCVR. This list does not exclude other issues the organisation and its members may additionally wish to address in future.

These thirteen key issues, and others, be discussed in more depth at the open meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> January and at following UCVR meetings. The future, unique, role(s) to be played by the UCVR will also be reviewed at the January meeting and beyond.

## 1.0 Introduction

In December 2002 Yorkshire Forward, the Regional Development Agency, appointed consultants John Thompson and Partners to work with the local community on a long term vision for the renaissance of The Upper Calder Valley.

This was part of the innovative county-wide Renaissance Market Town programme which aimed to develop sustainable strategies for the economic future of rural areas and their settlements.

The aims of the UCVR programme were to:

- *Improve the quality of life of the area and its five key settlements, Walsden, Todmorden, Mytholmroyd and Sowerby Bridge*
- *Create economically and socially vibrant places*
- *Establish effective 'Town Teams'*
- *Boost Economic performance*
- *Develop ambitious and achievable Town Visions*

The merits of the Vision were twofold.

Firstly it was founded on a systematic, well thought out and cleverly articulated analysis of the qualities, character and potential of the Upper Calder Valley and its five key settlements.

Secondly, it was created around a sophisticated community consultation process which served as a catalyst for local people to come together, to reflect on the potential of their places and be inspired to become engaged in helping to influence and shape their environment.

Much has been achieved under the UCVR banner and many of the projects in the original 25 year programme have come to fruition, helping to improve and transform many of the places and spaces in the valley, as well as the lives of the people who live here. More needs to be done.

A new Exhibition has also been created to celebrate the last ten years' of the UCVR and will be touring the Upper Valley throughout 2015.

The UCVR Partnership Steering Group, working with Calderdale Council, decided to hold a major conference in November 2014 to celebrate the achievements of the UCVR and explore how we can deliver the next phase of this important initiative.

The Conference included presentations from a range of high profile speakers and the chance for delegates to help shape the future work and direction of the UCVR.

This report summarises the presentations made by the three Keynote Conference Speakers and goes on to set out the findings from the Workshop Sessions in which Conference delegates worked in six groups and addressed the questions:

Q1) *What Upper Calder Valley-wide Issues should the UCVR Address in the Future?*

*and*

Q2) *How can the UCVR best Tackle these Valley-wide Issues?*

## **2.0 The Speakers' Presentations**

The three keynote Conference speakers were asked to contribute because they are experts in their field and two of them played important roles in the success of the UCVR project. They also provided valuable insights into National, Regional and Local perspectives.

**Professor Terry Hodgkinson CBE** is the former Chair of the Yorkshire Forward Regional Development Agency, the body responsible for setting up and funding the original UCVR exercise.

**Canon James Allison** is the former Vicar of Mytholmroyd & Cragg Vale and was Chair of the UCVR from 2006 to 2012.

**Steven Wyler** is an independent advisor in the social sector and the former Chief Executive of Locality and The Development Trusts Association.

The summaries set out below have been written and edited by Dr Lindsay Smales from Leeds Beckett University, who chaired the conference and is wholly responsible for any errors or misinterpretations in these accounts of three very valuable contributions.

### **2.1 Professor Terry Hodgkinson**

Entitled, 'Renaissance Reflections', Terry's talk recalled one of the key principles behind Yorkshire Forward's (YF) Renaissance programme, as articulated by Heather Hancock, "if you do what you always did, you always get what you always got".

As well as setting up The Renaissance Towns Programme, which saw a panel of some of the world's leading architects and urbanists working with local communities across the region, the agency also create The Rural Renaissance Market Towns initiative. It is this latter programme under which the consultants John Thompson and Partners were tasked with coming to the Upper Calder Valley to work with, "town teams, assembled to represent local people, amenity, business and political interests in creating long term environmental, social and economic renaissance strategies ... built upon rising aspirations and enhanced citizenship and civic leadership".

This bringing together of experts and local communities, some 26 other places within the region benefitted from being included in this Yorkshire-wide project, was designed to result in a publicly endorsed 'Charter' for the future development of these places, such as the UCVR Vision Document (2003).



Professor Hodgkinson went on to outline the elements of a successful, place based renaissance as being:

A clear transition between the three phases of the project, Rethinking, Remaking and Regaining, with an emphasis on quality and design. Through a process of community engagement via 'Charrettes' (community consultation events), the publication of a local 'Charter', in the form of a strategic development framework, and the delivery of development projects and investment.

If successful, this would result in the following indicators:

- An increase in footfall and visitor numbers
- An increase in local jobs
- An increase in property worth, values and rents
- An improved sense of place and belonging
- Personalised identity
- A place with a well-recognised differentiator

In conclusion, Terry highlighted the fact that the watchwords for the Renaissance programme were 'Reinvention' and 'Renewal'. In this way the initiative identified and recognised the history of the people and places (such as the Upper Calder Valley), then took them out of their comfort zones to find new solutions.

## 2.2 Canon James Allison

James began by observing that it was hard to believe that it is ten years since the start of the UCVR process, during which there has quite literally, been “a lot of water under the bridge”. He observed that the process was always about people and community and the biggest change is not to be found in buildings but in us.

The diversity of the Upper Valley was noted, as was the big challenge of unifying the five towns with historical links but entrenched rivalries. As an example of this James cited a conversation he once had with a Todmordian who complained that in Hebden Bridge, *“everyone is looking for something, but if they found it they would not want it”*. He also noted that he thought the community of Luddendenfoot had missed out and there was a negative over emphasis on ‘paperwork’, despite the positive support from officers of Calderdale Council.



A key feature of the UCVR has been the ways in which we spurred one another on to reach beyond the usual indicators of ‘regeneration’, such as new benches and lighting. In spite of long standing differences, James suggested that the UCVR project achieved the difficult objective of enabling the people of our ‘Happy Valley’ to discover what we had in common, be it our traditional independence or the travails associated with flooding. He cited ‘the terrible orthodoxy’ exemplified by the notion that people and communities cannot change, and that one of the saddest things he had ever heard was someone say that, “this is too good for people like us”. As a Christian he believes in change and he committed to the UCVR project because “Renaissance is all about change”.

This emphasis on positive change formed the basis of James’s concluding remarks. Learning to change is key, as is finding our unity in diversity, investing in people, training, consultation, support and partnership working. It is by focussing on these



important principles and attributes, and because it is all about people, that has enabled the UCVR to carry on following the demise of Yorkshire Forward in 2010.

## 2.3 Steven Wyler

Steven's talk was entitled '**Community Led Regeneration: Where Next?**'

The old regeneration industry is largely dead and that's partly because the money is no longer there but also because the old operating model simply didn't work. In simple terms the old model, which would be described as a command and control leadership model, was as follows:

- The problem would be defined by senior politicians and senior officials;
- Large amounts of money would be thrown at experts – private and public sector consultants and professionals – to work out what should be done;
- This usually involved some form of masterplan and joint ventures with developers and others and setting up a regeneration company to manage things;
- A shedload more public money would then be needed to commission building works, refurbishment, new infrastructure and so on;
- The regeneration company would produce reams of statistics – on new or improved homes, business start ups, jobs created, tourist spending, inward investment, etc to justify the public spending.

There is no doubt that the old model got many important things done. We can point with pride to better housing, town centres smartened up, new shopping centres or leisure centres or business parks or tourist attractions.

But there were big problems with this command and control leadership model.

- First, it was incredibly expensive.
- Second, the model had a tendency to produce vanity projects.
- Thirdly, the local community was always an afterthought.

But some, including Yorkshire Forward (which I believe stood head and shoulders above the other Regional Development Agencies), and including The Upper Calder Valley Renaissance, were acutely aware of these sorts of problems. I am enormously impressed by the very widespread public engagement exercise you undertook right at the beginning of your journey, and how you worked so hard to tap into local knowledge and ambition, and created community-based teams to decide what the most pressing local problems or opportunities were, and therefore what should be done. And all credit to Calderdale Council and Yorkshire Forward that they backed this approach. And as a result you have clearly achieved a great deal along the way.

The question is how to go beyond, how to achieve breakthrough, to build on past success and to use the plateau as a launch pad for going even further.



The first thing must be to think afresh about your overall core purpose. Ten years ago you set out to achieve economically and socially vibrant places and improve quality of life. It would be hard to argue against such excellent objectives, but can they be meaningful in the current context? At a time of economic uncertainty, a loss of public trust in both public and private institutions, deepening social division, and large scale public spending cuts year on year for the foreseeable future, what will it be possible to achieve?

One option would be to set out to create 'resilient communities', in other words accepting that in many ways things will get more difficult, so that the best you can do for the coming years will be to shore up the defences, work out the best ways to protect as best as possible struggling local businesses, to try to maintain and patch up local infrastructure, to focus public services on the most acute problems, and to manage down expectations. The difficulty with this is that you will always be on the back foot, and it will be very difficult to generate a sense of economic and social vibrancy, let alone improve quality of life, so you might have to decide to ditch your core purpose and replace it with something less aspirational.



But other options exist. For example you might set out to create 'ready for everything communities'. In other words to go onto the front foot, to consider what it would take for all the communities in the valley to become truly ready for everything, not just able to withstand external shocks, but also willing and eager to seek out new possibilities, looking forward all the time. This might mean taking more of an 'investment for the future' approach to public services and economic development, moving as much as possible from crisis intervention to early intervention. As David Robinson from the Early Action Taskforce says, it's much better – and cheaper - to build a fence at the top of a cliff than to provide an ambulance at the bottom.

It might also mean taking a strengths-based approach to the challenges ahead – not focusing on the deficits but rather on the assets – the resources and possibilities

locked up in land, buildings, the natural environment, local heritage, and above all in the people of Upper Calder Valley, which could with a little bit of imagination and flexibility be released and applied for good purpose. This requires a true investment mentality – above all getting behind the willing and the brave.

So perhaps this is the best time possible to think afresh about what will reignite the impulse to act. I know that neighbourhood planning exercises are underway locally. That's positive, but only if they can be liberated as much as possible from the inevitable little group of technical planning enthusiasts and can become a truly popular and widespread exercise to define and to debate common aspirations – without that it will be hard to build enough momentum to actually make things happen, big or small, and the last thing you want is just another paper exercise.

Can you go further? – yes I think you can. I see no reason why you shouldn't have the ambition to be known as the most vibrant district in the whole country for community ownership and community enterprise. For example, how many local buildings and pieces of land, public and private, are listed as assets of community value? A handful at most I expect. Why not take the opportunity to list several hundred – and send out a strong and hopeful signal in these difficult times – these are the assets that matter to us the people, and this is the scale of our ambition. In Scotland, over half the Western isles are now in community ownership, an area equivalent in size to the whole of West Yorkshire. If it can happen in Scotland, why not in England? And while you are at it, why not take the opportunity to really extend community ownership, for example through community share issues, which is happening with great success more and more across the country, and which give local people a genuine stake in the local facilities they care most about.

I'm not pretending any of this is easy. It's not. But there is support available, and sometimes even new funding. For example the Big Lottery Fund has put £150m into the new Power to Change trust, which will be giving grants to community enterprises, big and small, from early next year. That provides a tremendous opportunity for anyone with a truly strong idea and genuinely entrepreneurial instinct.

Now, I'm not saying that communities should be expected to do it all on their own. It is very necessary to win allies for community-led regeneration. We all know that many earlier regeneration partnerships were problematic – uneasy alliances of organisations, coming together to bid for the latest pot of regeneration money, or European funds or whatever, with people more often than not fiercely protecting their own institutional vested interest, and distorting activities to fit into someone else's funding regime.

Also next year government will be inviting proposals for community economic partnerships – experiments in creating new forms of local finance, thinking afresh how the financial resources and purchasing powers of councils, housing associations, and others can be redeployed in a local area, alongside social lenders and banks, to create new streams of hyper-local investment.

And that takes me to my final suggestion. We are seeing some local councils and other public bodies taking very seriously the 'local by default' proposals that my old organisation Locality published earlier this year. Local by default simply means that the starting point for control of budgets, design and commissioning of services, and delivery of services, should be at the local neighbourhood. Any move to authority-wide or regional or national commissioning would need to be justified by exception. This 'local by default' proposal draws on research by Professor John Seddon at Vanguard which demonstrates that the prevailing idea that efficiency and lower cost is best produced through an economy of scale is rotten at the core.

Attempts to aggregate service contracts on a bigger and bigger scale have a tendency to over-standardise and to generate failure demand, pushing round problems instead of dealing with them, and costing a great deal of money – Vanguard estimates that 50-80% of all public service activity is wasteful work, and that a move to a 'local by default approach' could save at least £16 billion a year. This is why the Locality Vanguard report is called 'saving money by doing the right thing'. And of course a local by default approach to public spending is extremely good for the local economy, it means that the resources circulate and recirculate locally, creating wealth in a community and keeping it there, not allowing it to leak out for example to corporate providers with names like G4S, Serco, Capita, and Maximus, who have no stake whatsoever in any community.

So these are my suggestions. I hope at least they will stimulate debate. I hope that, in your own terms, you will be bold enough to set out on a path to foster 'ready for everything communities'. And above all, in these difficult times, I encourage you to travel hopefully.

### 3.0 The Findings of the Workshop Groups

This section contains a full, verbatim, record of the feedback provided by the six Conference Workshop Table Groups and a summary of their key ideas. The aim is to bring together the main themes, issues and approaches set out by the groups and it is intended as a way of helping stimulate debate about the future priorities for the UCVR. Whilst there is some inevitable repetition, they serve to provide a lot of food for thought and a whole raft of challenging and positive suggestions.



The first topic for Group discussion was, **What Upper Calder Valley-wide Issues should the UCVR Address in the Future?**, The second Workshop exercise asked Groups to take their responses to the first question and identify some of the ways in which they could be implemented, as in: **How can the UCVR best Tackle these Valley-wide Issues?**

### 3.1 Summary of Key Issues

A summary of the wide range of issues and suggestions for the themes that the UCVR should aim to address in the future highlights all of those originally outlined in the 2003 Vision document (issues 1-6), plus some additional ones that have come to the fore in the last 12 years, such as walking and cycling, regeneration, renewable energy, independent shops and the future of 'services'. The three issues which garnered the most attention were transport, housing development (especially the need to build more affordable housing) and the local economy. All of the main issues/shared themes to come out of the deliberations are set out below:

- 14. The Rural Economy, Farming and Food**
- 15. Tourism, Culture and Heritage**
- 16. Local Businesses and Economy**
- 17. Housing**
- 18. Facilities for Young people and The Elderly**
- 19. Transport**
- 20. Engaging with the Hilltop Communities**
- 21. Walking and Cycling**
- 22. Renewable Energy**
- 23. Regeneration**
- 24. The Provision of IT facilities and High Speed Broadband**
- 25. Local Shops**
- 26. Services**

The exact views of each workshop group are outlined in the summary below, as are the ways in which the groups thought they could be tackled by the UCVR.

It is important to note that this list does not exclude other issues the organisation and its members may additionally wish to address in future.

These will thirteen key issues, and others, be discussed in more depth at the open meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> January and at following UCVR meetings.

The future, unique, role(s) to be played by the UCVR will also be reviewed at the January meeting and beyond.

## 3.2 The Workshop Table Findings

**TABLE 1**



### **What are the valley wide issues for future discussion?**

- Hilltop villages and communities from the valley sides should be more included
- Integration of valley-wide transport
- First-rate safe walking and cycling infrastructure
- HS3 yes, but local rail routes also improved and not allowed to deteriorate
- Generating employment by increase of renewable energy especially water power
- Support for home workers such as good internet & setting up support groups

### **How should these issues be tackled?**

- UCVR to get in touch with organisations on the periphery eg Midgley Matters, Luddenden Conservation Society, Parish Councils, Cragg Vale Comm Assoc
- Bus routes such as HB, Peckett, Old Town, Midgley, Luddfoot & Mytholmroyd



- Improve no of rail journeys from Mytholmroyd & Walsden to Leeds via the old direct route instead of through Bradford
- Provide more support for Alt tech centre
- Use of existing infrastructure & old mills
- Get the issues, solutions & proposals included in the Local Plan (to be adopted 2017)

**TABLE 2**



### **What are the valley wide issues for future discussion?**

- Affordable Housing
- Transport – congestion, smart travel (interchange bus / rail)
- Few safe routes for bikes, bike links hilltop villages & valley bottom
- Lots of home workers
- Brownfield sites – make better use of these for jobs, housing and landscape improvement
- Social inequality – rich/poor, skilled/unskilled, local/non-local
- Economic leakage – keeping money in the valley

### **How should these issues be tackled?**

#### *Transport*

- Improve parking at all stations
- Improve cycle parking & storage
- Flexible space on buses & trains
- Smart tickets like Oyster cards – interchangeable between buses & trains
- Cycle hubs / hire bikes at stations
- Park & ride to town centres, shuttles for tourists & commuters

#### *Brownfield*

- Improve how the community can influence what happens on brownfield sites – community assets, neighbourhood plans. Linking towns up

## Social inequality

- Getting issues into Neighbourhood plans
- Living wage employers

## Economic leakage

- Local sourcing, employment, hot desking

**TABLE 3**



## What are the valley wide issues for future discussion?

- The road. Air pollution, roadworks, safety & congestion
- Car parking & coach parking
- Rail connections & public transport
- Isolation within the communities eg hill-tops
- Affordable homes
- The planning system
- High rentals for shops
- Poor phone reception / broad band connection
- Digital literacy? Improving?
- Flooding
- Silo working
- Disparity of resources
- Falling birth rates – why? Young families can't afford to live here?
- Churn of residents in hilltop communities due to harsh winters
- Lack of intergenerational mixing / groups
- Wind power – bad image
- Renewable energy

## How should these issues be tackled?



- Reaching-out programmes such as Stay-Well project
- Band of positive storytellers
- Cultural destination project
- Ownership of planning decisions
- Statutory and community bodies working together. Hub & spoke system
- Community owned assets
- Electrification of railway
- Town teams and sub committees – working together along Upper valley
- Look for differentiators
- Work with young people to shape their future
- Small, high quality, unique bars, cafes, clubs – licence issues due to residential properties
- Exchange of expertise between neighbourhoods
- Community led renewable energy schemes

**TABLE 4**



**What are the valley wide issues for future discussion?**

- Renewable energy - wind, hydro, biomass, PVs
- Canal – heritage, leisure, linear park, disability access, wider use for sustainable transport, horse boating
- A646 – how can we make it safer for cyclists
- Alternative transport – light rail system (Littleborough); trains to Huddersfield
- Festivals & events – marketing, visitor economy & tourism
- Culture
- Social care – how to provide support for people at home and facilities for young people
- Economy – employments & jobs; businesses; shops threatened by on-line shopping
- Food growing, farming & land-use
- Housing – mix & affordability
- Tea-time economy; lack of facilities for commuters en route home; social hubs

### How should these issues be tackled?

- Co-ordination along the valley, hilltops & towns – through festivals & events eg Valley of Lights, Rochdale canal, cycling / walking festivals
- Renewable energy – centre of excellence / ATC; exploring best practice and positives and negatives; community energy schemes – be a national leader
- Transport – canal; relevant to visitors and boaters
- Social care – informal care, JRF, dementia friendly, hubs. Applying best practice, caring community
- Involve communities & local people. Explore developmental capacity of UCVR – eg Development Trust. Explore relationship with other organisations, especially town teams & Community land trust
- Affordable housing – support CLT
- Be inclusive of disabled people
- Support volunteers
- UCVR as pressure group – bring people together to challenge authority and stimulate change. Non-conformist
- UCVR as credible body for Upper Valley, along with Town & Parish Councils
- Economy / shops – small independent shops & pubs; local produce, farms. Business Forum.

**TABLE 5**



### What are the valley wide issues for future discussion?

- Housing – young people and older people. Tod vs Hebden
- Visitor economy – disjointed, not promoting the area
- Transport – improvement of rail development; road safety – cyclists / pedestrians; bottle-neck on valley road; air quality – hot spots
- Lack of business space; office space, starter type, commercial units
- Employment – service skills / low income

- Enterprise – gaps. Growth in creative & digital but no space to grow.
- Commercial lead is missing
- Sites have more economic value as housing
- Keeping local & independent shops not large-scale retail
- Car parking is limited in Hebden
- Possible threats from cuts in services and their effects
- Trying to get more local spend

### How should these issues be tackled?

- Community Land Trust – source all free land to begin the process. Needs to be linked to the locality / area. Nature of housing needs to be demand-driven. Design a programme to assess housing stock and who needs to move into a different sized house – ‘house swap’. Financial access & packages – private developers. Promote positively to new developers. Co-housing options – mirror the ‘Lilac’ scheme.
- Visitor economy – joint strategy. Town teams already working on joint Land Trust.
- Branding – Calderdale not known elsewhere. Identity – ask local people what they want to be. Mirror Incredible Edible. Identify our assets, identify types of visitors & where they want to stay. Strategy for accommodation. Selling the economic benefits of tourism, local & wider. Promote economic gains. Identify unique selling points.
- ‘Social Enterprise valley’ – accredited by Social Enterprise UK. Landscape, heritage, adventure sport, cycling.
- Transport – more trains, electrification, speed limits enforced

**TABLE 6**



### What are the valley wide issues for future discussion?

- Transport
- Affordable housing
- Redundant buildings / land
- Ageing community
- Lack of identity for promotion of area

- Recreation – footpaths, bridleways, mountain biking
- Web-based communication
- Co-ordination & communication between different groups
- Need to identify funding streams, promote self-sufficient community groups

#### **How should these issues be tackled?**

- Re-branding – strong, recognisable – ‘Calder Vale’?
- Speak with one voice – join forces, partnership working
- Better broadband connectivity
- Building environmentally friendly homes – sustainable building methods & materials
- Valley forum – UCVR website?
- Transport – sponsorship for new pathways / recreation routes