



THE COALFIELDS RESEARCH PROGRAMME:

DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 3

WORKING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE MORE:

STRATEGIES FOR FACILITATING REGENERATION

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1. Introduction

This paper aims to examine the ways that regeneration is facilitated in the four districts of Cynon Valley, Easington, Mansfield and St. Helens. Within the coal districts regeneration is facilitated by a combination of partnership working and a reliance on external funding, both of which underpin most of the regeneration projects. This paper should be viewed not only in relation to regeneration in the coalfields but also in the context of the overall changes in regional policy and re-development.

This paper is divided into two main parts. Part one focuses on the issue of partnership working. It will outline some of the main partnerships in the coal districts, examine the motivations for partnership working and finally discuss the power structures of partnerships. Part two will examine the related issue of funding. The main sources of funding to the coal districts will be outlined followed by a discussion of some of the issues raised by a reliance on external funding regimes.

2. Partnership working

Partnerships have become a central feature of regeneration. During the 1970s regeneration tended to be led solely by local authorities; however, regeneration strategies have since been marked by a distinct shift towards multi-agency approaches. Consequently, local authorities have increasingly found themselves working in collaboration with other agencies.

It was not until the 1980s that public-private partnerships were seen as the way forward for economic regeneration. This trend has continued throughout the 1990s with the development of multi-partnerships of not only the public and private sectors but also the voluntary and community sectors. Thus, partnerships seem to contribute to the blurring between the public and the private with the increasing involvement of quangos and private business in regeneration. Partnerships have increasingly come to replace local authorities in the formation of policy.

The concept of partnership has thus flourished as a vital tool in regional regeneration. The partnership approach to regeneration originated principally in urban areas but has now spread into all areas of regeneration. The notion of partnership has also spread beyond the realms of economic development and the partnership can be seen in operation in education, health, housing, and social services.

This section thus aims to examine the nature of the partnership phenomenon in the coalfields, to illustrate the extent of partnership working in the four districts, the motivation for such partnerships, and whether they are seen as an effective tool for regeneration.

2.1 Partnerships in action

Throughout the four districts, there are a number of partnerships operating at a number of different levels and incorporating a wide range of agencies. The partnerships in the four districts vary in their form, some are very informal and unstable while others are highly structured with clear aims and objectives, with the

various members formally signed up [could scan in some of these]. This section aims to outline the extent of partnership working in the four districts.

Within the four districts there can be identified a number of large partnerships set up to address the regeneration of the district. These are usually made up of a partnership between local authorities, English Partnerships, TECs and government offices. It should be noted that there is not the level of private sector involvement in these partnerships that might be expected.

The East Durham Taskforce (EDTF) is perhaps the best example of one of these types of partnerships, being the largest and longest running partnership set up to tackle regeneration in any of the four districts. In many ways the EDTF could be viewed as a partnership of partnerships. The various member of the EDTF are outlined in Table 1, in addition to these 'key' members there is also interaction with a number of other agencies outside of the 'core'.

Table 1: Membership of the East Durham Taskforce

Durham County Council
British Coal Property
County Durham and Darlington Training and Enterprise Council
Easington District Council
East Durham Community College
East Durham Development Agency
Employment Service
English Partnerships
Government Office for the North East
East Durham Business Leaders Forum
Northern Development Company
Rural Development Commission

The East Durham Taskforce seems to have a great deal of support within the community:

The mechanism of the Taskforce was a Godsend, if we hadn't had that with interagency support, real commitment from officers involved, we wouldn't have made the progress we've made. [Peter Kemp, Social Services, Durham]

The Programme for the Valleys is a wide ranging scheme that has been in place since 1990, it aims to create employment, improve training and education, improve quality of the environment, health and housing. Fundamental to these aims is partnership working:

These aims will be achieved by strengthening the partnership between Government, agencies, local councils, and the private and voluntary

sectors under local leadership; and by increased support for local community action. [Programme for the Valleys, p5]

St Helens does not have partnership schemes on the same size and extent of those mentioned above but nonetheless partnership working is very much a part of the regeneration process in St Helens. There is the Ravenhead Renaissance Project which is an SRB programme. Another SRB partnership is the Newton 21 partnership. It may be that St Helens does not require the formal and highly structured partnerships such as the EDTF. There is an indication from the interviews that because the key agencies in St Helens operate at the same spatial scale, and it is an unitary authority, precludes the need for a formal partnership to bring disparate agencies together, as they are all working within the same area to start with.

In Mansfield, both the district and county council are involved in formal partnership agreements with a wide range of organisations. For example, Mansfield District council's economic development strategy puts a heavy emphasis on partnership working and states it works closely with the East Midlands Development Company, Employment Service, English Partnerships, Mansfield 2010, North Notts. TEC and Nottinghamshire County Council; members of each of these agencies are formally signed up in their literature. The County council is equally committed to partnership working with its strategic plan for 1997-2001 entitled 'building together'. The district council and county council also work in partnership with the other district councils in North Nottinghamshire to form the 'North Nottingham Strategy for Renewal'.

A further important partnership in the area is Mansfield 2010. Set up in 1990 Mansfield 2010 is a partnership between the public and private sectors; partners include Mansfield District Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, TEC, Chambers of Commerce and local businesses.

In addition to these large and formal partnerships, there are many other smaller partnerships in operation in four districts. There are community level partnerships, education partnerships, health partnerships, environmental partnerships and partnerships to combat crime, to name but a few. The next section will examine the motivations for setting up these various partnerships.

2.2 The Motivation for partnerships

Although partnerships seem to be endemic in the field of regional regeneration there is some ambiguity as to what exactly constitutes a partnership. Partnerships seem to have no stable definition but shade into many meanings and interpretations (see Mackintosh, 1992). Lowndes et al (1997) make the distinction between networks and partnerships, where networks are not formally constituted whereas partnerships tend to have a formal basis. Mackintosh (1992) identifies three models of partnership, however she does not see them as autonomous, but rather elements of all three tend to be present in most partnerships. The *synergy model* is the involvement of two distinct sectors (such as the public and private) in a joint venture that produced 'synergy from complementary assets, skills and powers'; in the *transformation model* two sectors work together in a joint venture that attempts 'mutual transformation of culture and objectives'; in the *budget enlargement model* the sectors work together to obtain funds from a third party.

Reflected in the academic literature there is a high level of ambiguity in relation to the concept of partnership. This ambiguity is reflected in the nature of many of the partnerships encountered in this research. For example, some of the partnerships were very formal but for most of the partnerships there an ambiguity in relation to their goals and strategy, as Mackintosh states;

Such schemes are rarely well defined one-off deals between partners with clearly differentiated goals, but rather sites of continuing political and economic regeneration. (Mackintosh, 1992, 297).

There is also a tendency for partnerships to be seen as fragile:

...organisational objectives may be vague and ill-defined at the beginning and are often obfuscated by promotional literature designed to suggest a consensus that has been achieved by merely setting up the agencies (Bailey, 1993: 297)

The aim here is not to identify or construct a 'model' of a partnership, but rather to examine the multiple motivations that drive and shape partnership working. Analysis of the interview material suggested that a number of motivations underpin the increasing use of partnership working. These will be outlined in the following sub-section.

2.2.1 Partnerships as positive and new, or a necessary way of working?

Throughout the grey literature and many of the interviews partnerships were seen as a positive new way of working. The language of partnership in the grey literature is tied up in a very positive rhetoric form the almost evangelical 'true spirit of partnership', 'singing from the same hymn sheet', to the often used military metaphors of the 'taskforce' and 'strategy' and the sexual metaphors of 'getting into bed together'. The image portrayed is one of agencies working together very happily. However, such language perhaps hides the other motivations, those more based in the reality of facilitating regeneration, but this is not to underestimate the genuine benefits of working together.

Throughout the districts, there is an acceptance that partnership working is the only way that regeneration can be achieved. Indeed, there seems to exist an unquestioned voice in some arenas that partnership working is the panacea for economic regeneration:

It is all about partnership working. The East Durham Taskforce was probably the forerunner in this region of partnerships at a very high level...*We all speak with one voice.* We all talk to one another now. [Rick Martin, Government Office for the North East] [emphasis added]

Although partnership working can be problematic and cause tensions (see next section) for most organisations, it was seen as positive way of working:

[who do you work in partnership with?] Every one! I think there is a very good working relationship, in St Helens...but there is a sort of, willingness to share information and what you do see is the same people, in fact you get sick of seeing the same people round the tale,

because, when we did the submission to the commission for the territorial employment pact, as I said John and myself put something together very, very quickly and they did an action plan, but to show the extension of the partnership we just had one page, which I ran round the Borough in an afternoon and got the signature to it and you can virtually say that people didn't read it, they just glanced through it and put their signature to it. They are something like your Chief Executive from St Helens college, Chief Executive from Groundwork Trust, from the Chamber, from the Health Authority from the CVS, Employment Service and very quickly in St Helens, get the key people round the table. So I think there is a very good working relationship.” (Deborah Irwill, Economic Development St Helens MBC).

It is not only in the arena of economic regeneration where partnerships are seen as positive:

Looking at the partnership approaches to solving problems with different agencies and that includes the local authority, includes Health Authority, any other agency really, that has an input to a particular problem that we have, we try to involve them, to solve the problems, rather than trying to stand alone and do them with no assistance.” [Inspector Harris, St Helens Police]

For many agencies, partnerships were seen as a new way of working. Although partnerships are very often tied up in short term specific goals (often linked to funding regimes) for many of the agencies this was seen as a positive step as it meant things actually got done:

In the past you can pretend that you are having collaborative work and relationships with other people and other agencies but if you don't actually put things down in a way that can be monitored and evaluated, and I sound like a clown now! I mean this is really true. You just all go away from whatever meeting you are in thinking 'oh that was a nice meeting', but actually there is no positive outcome for any of the service users and that is what we are about as an organisation. So I think that both sets of organisations have to learn quite quickly, I mean the last two years especially and that is because of the economic situation. [Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council, Social Services]

For others, partnership is simply seen as a pragmatic way of achieving goals in the light of a lack of alternatives:

...where with a partnership of private and public money and the community working it together, they can provide basic facilities that otherwise the private sector wouldn't supply and the public sector can't afford to supply anymore...it's a whole new area and it is opening up with academic writing about it and with a change of policy in government as well [Lynsey Moris/Glyn Bowen, Wales Co-operative Development]

For many of the agencies involved in the districts the partnership approach was seen as one way of dealing with the enormity of the task that they face:

it's placing an obligation, a statutory obligation on local authority now, to develop a community safety strategy, of which the Police would be 1 of the partners and I think it's something we have noticed in the last 4 or 5 years is this emphasis on working together. We cannot solve society's ills, on our own, neither can Social Services, Education, the Council. We all have to work together to try and, you know if there is a family or 1 or 2 individuals causing grief and mayhem, burglaries, car crime, is how we work together can tackle that individual. That's where the emphasis is. It's not always on crime detection, it's n community safety and everybody working together, and it's got to be the way forward, really". (Chief Superintendent Dennis Jone, South Wales Police).

2.2.2 Funding

Despite the positive benefits of partnerships it is clear that the motivation for partnerships is not just the opportunity for a new way of working but is intimately linked to funding. Many partnerships can be seen to have emerged as a consequence of funding regimes that very often require bids to include partnership working between agencies. This motivation for partnerships can be related to Mackintosh's (1992) 'budget enlargement model'. The relationship between funding and regeneration can be problematic.

Having to bid for funding means that the various agencies are effectively in competition with each other and thus contradicts many of the motivations for partnership working outlined in the previous section. Indeed, Peck and Tickell (1994) note that many of the new partnerships of the 1990s will be bidding against each other and thus mitigate against any utopian ideas of co-operation often associated with partnerships:

...the new partnerships will tend to be fragile, corporatist-style coalitions, constructed with the view to getting one over the competition and, above all, getting the money. Without the oxygen of public money they are likely to fade away. (Peck and Tickell, 1994:253).

Throughout the four districts and across all manner of agencies partnership working was strongly linked to access in funding. Funding bids for the SRB, EU and the National Lottery all have to show evidence of partnership working, leading to many organisations working together in what is often termed 'marriages of convenience'. Accounts from key actors outlined how agencies were being added to partnerships without any consultation or having even met, never mind having worked together in partnership. Despite these issues there was a pragmatic acceptance that partnership working was a necessary part of accessing funding:

I think...I mean I think to the extent that it's developed now, it's relatively recent and it all started with Objective 1 because the prog was unworkable without it...you couldn't do it...and I mean it's ironic in a way that the European Commission has always laid great emphasis on partnership working and in a way it's the UK Government that's resisted that and wanted a fairly tight grip on the funds and indeed

in other cos. this is still often the case, the Government is the body that dictates what happens to the funds no matter what they say...but in this country I think we've always taken the view, subsidiary and all that, it's not the Commission's business to interfere and who we work with below and we have some sympathy with that view...but I think the way the...I mean the programme would have been chaotic had we not been working in partnership here because in the early stages we were overwhelmed with applications...completely overwhelmed and without some help in actually narrowing down the priorities and agreeing on a strategic way of working, which the Government office couldn't do on its own, they wouldn't, we wouldn't have got other people to sign up to it if it had just been dictated to people outside...we needed to bring that in...not only that...I mean it helped to share the load of actually dealing with the programme, so you know that's really where it stems from...(Liz Gill, Government Office, Merseyside).

A further argument for partnership is the drawing of resources across sectors-a motivation most strongly advocated by police, social services and health. In such cases it is not only financial resources that are exchanged but also skills, information and networks:

And I know it's a term that's used a lot lately, but it has to be a partnership approach, that the Local Authority has to work with private investors and the community to get the money in and basically it's working together to get the money from wherever they can, to invest for the good of the locality [Linsey Morris/Glyn Bowen,Wales Coop]

3. Power relations/hierarchies/accountability

Although working in partnership can be viewed as a positive way of operating and there are very clear gains to this type of working, in particular in drawing funds, nonetheless from the interviews there is a strong indication that the power structures of partnership can be problematic and cause tension and conflicts. The phrase 'partnership working' tends to present an image of equality and co-operation between agencies and this is an image that the grey literature is very keen to promote. With so many partnerships in operation, it is difficult to see how every 'member' would have an equal voice. Evidence from interview material suggests that partnership working was not always as smooth as the grey literature would suggest. The most common conflicts came between those agencies that saw themselves as being at the top of a hierarchy and those who felt, for whatever reason, they were being excluded.

Outlined in the grey literature is the number of successful projects achieved by harmonious partnerships. For example, an explicit part of the Program for the valleys is a statement to include the 'people' despite the non-elected members in it;

'partnership with the people gives everyone the chance to play their part in the regeneration of the valleys. I hope it will be seized with both hands'

this strategy may be aiming to 'include' the 'people of the valleys' but in many ways it seems to be part of a shifting responsibility back to the communities;

'success will depend on their skills talents and on the strength of their communities'.

Some of the larger 'top-down' organisations do not seem to have as many networks of partnerships, as illustrated by EP in Merseyside:

[*Do you work with TECs?*] To be honest we are a bit isolated from all the training requirements and that, we are a bit isolated we don't really talk to TECs and that, we are just involved in regenerating land and buildings. I know the GO has to be more involved in that sort of thing because of the ESF. But to be honest we are a bit

removed from getting involved, I think the RDA it will all change, but at the moment EP is just concerned with reclaiming derelict land...[*Involvement with local councils?*] To be honest we are a bit removed from that as well. We don't really, we meet the developer, we meet the council boys, but no I can't say we do day to day involvement. One of the tick boxes the answers we have to answer in our internal reports to the board when we go for any approval is community involvement, and we are keen that the community is supportive of anything we want to do. But with these big schemes I personally don't get involved with the community side of it. There is only so much you can do you will get bogged down in it (English Partnerships, Merseyside).

This quote illustrates the reluctance and perhaps more importantly, the lack of need amongst such organisations to develop partnerships. After all EP have no need to go into partnership to attract money. However, many of the 'higher' agencies we talked to liked to present themselves as working in partnership with the local community such as the government offices, the WDA and English Partnerships. Nonetheless, there was a strong indication that there was a definite hierarchy within such certain partnerships, with some members being more equal than others. For example, a member of the WDA describes how partnerships with the WDA evolved, placing the WDA very much at the centre:

start off with central hub...joint venture board which consisted of a couple of WDA directors, a couple of leading members from what was then mid-Glam. County Council and a couple of the leading officers...departmental directors...and then the same thing with CV Borough Council.....the 4 or 5 leading elected members and then the chief exec, the financial director, the planning director. Everything that we did was fed into this central hub via the project team and via this matrix approach and as a result it got political endorsement at the most senior level, but also everything that we did was then passed back out to the shakers and movers in order that everyone knew working in the 2 local authorities and community groups...everyone knew who the principal players were and they all knew as to why we were doing it and as a result it was very easy actually to get a lot of action...[Andrew Dakin, Welsh Development Agency]

Indeed the WDA seemed to be highly critical of the way the local authorities operated in the past:

the Government structures of Local Authorities they are Dickensian aren't they.....the way in which they do the business is not really conducive to getting economic development and the wealth creation process underway...the bureaucratic structures and I think there's a way in which you can go too far because if you strip out too much of the established tradition then big mistakes can be made and they have been made. But essentially getting Local Authorities to be more business like and saying to them you only get money if you really get your act together.. [Andrew Dakin, Welsh Development Agency]

Evidence suggests that the WDA is a very dominant player not only in partnerships in the valleys, but also in shaping the overall regeneration of the area. Compared to the other three districts the Cynon Valley seems to have fewer partnerships and a much less visible involvement of the local council of Rhondda, Cynon Taff (RCT). This can be related to the amount of power and money invested in the WDA through the Welsh Office, whereas there is no comparable body in the other districts. This may explain why partnerships are not as well developed in the Cynon Valley.

Difficulties also arise in partnership working where the various members of the partnership operate at different spatial boundaries. This seems to be particularly the case in Easington and Mansfield where there is a two tiered local government structure with both district and county councils. Although both these councils

represent the districts there is a feeling on one side from the county councils that the district councils lack a 'wider vision' and have a tendency to parochialism, and similarly the district councils feel that the county council do not fully appreciate the nature of the problems in their areas.

“Because members were so parochial and had their own pet schemes, they never thought about, I don't think, on a co-operate basis, about the needs of the whole community...because they are notoriously difficult to deal with. People felt, well, if by community action we can achieve things quicker than if we go to the District Council, we can use this community development worker to help us get there, OK!
[Peter Kemp, Social Services; Durham]

This can also be problematic for the agencies working with them:

Very sensitive some of the areas in terms of individuals struggling for power...if you look at LAs, CCs in terms of the taskforce...you know what people are in for...all right it is my job and I do that...but I want to get from here to there and I'll stand on anybody that's...and I'll do it my way. It should be focused very firmly on partnership...I know it isand it looks that way but when you look at the in-fighting and you get involved... (Mic Wood, Durham TEC)

In St Helens there was a general feeling that partnership working went more smoothly because the various agencies such as the council, TEC etc. all operated within the same spatial boundary. It was stated that in St Helens, there was a strong logic for partnership which led to both 'tightness and openness' (Key Actors conference). Where the conflict tended to arise here was where partnerships were based on a Merseyside basis and St Helens felt sidelined.

Smaller community groups often felt excluded from the more formal partnerships. The lack of community involvement in partnerships is one of the key issues outlined in the Taskforce Report. In many cases community groups may find themselves included in a partnership with little consultation or input.

For most community organisations, a partnership approach is the most realistic...However, there have been instances when statutory organisations have failed to make good their promises and the community organisations with their small, precarious resources have had to foot the bill. (Chasing the Dragon, VAEI, p50).

During a conference of 'key actors' from the four areas, it was agreed that partnerships were an effective way of working and a way of getting round the issue of competition between areas and agencies. However, there was a feeling that there were too many partnerships and that in the last few years there has been a rush to work in partnerships and form partnerships but now there is feeling that there is need to take stock and re-evaluate the drive to partnerships. The term 'partnership paranoia' was used indicating the emphasis placed on partnerships throughout the districts. For example, it was stated that in Mansfield alone there were over 70 partnerships in operation on Mansfield. It was further argued that there might be a need to move away from partnerships to focus on issues of need instead.

4. Funding

Evidence from the research has shown that throughout the coal districts regeneration is heavily dependent on external funds to facilitate funding. Accessing adequate funding is a major preoccupation of the majority of agencies operating in the districts from regional government to small community groups.

The erosion of local authority financial power in the form of budget cuts and capping has led to a reliance on external sources of funding to finance regeneration throughout Britain. Funding can be seen as part of wider changes in regional policy and the structures of local government.

There is little doubt that large amounts of funding have been made available to the coalfields since closure, however, there is a large degree of doubt in relation to the effectiveness these funds in regenerating the coalfields. These funds have been at a number of levels from large-scale land reclamation to money for community projects. The reliance on funding has become an integral part of the regeneration process in the coalfields.

This section thus aims to outline the role of funding in the four districts by outlining the main sources of funding and the feelings around funding from the agencies interviewed.

4.1 Sources of funding

There are a number of different funds available to the coalfields, the main ones being from the SRB and European money. Each funding regime has its own particular geography, which is not specifically contiguous with a coalfield geography, which can create problems for coalfield areas. Table 2 outlines the various funds available to the four districts. The coalfield taskforce report stated that there is an increasing need for funds to be targeted directly to the coalfields since they tend to lose out in the competitive bidding process. This section will outline the various funds available to the districts.

Table 2: Sources of funding

	European	National	Other
St Helens	Objective 1 RECHAR	SRB (Ravenhead SRB and Newton SRB)	
Mansfield	Objective 2 RECHAR	SRB (Diamond partnership) Development area status Enterprise zone status Regional selective assistance	
Cynon Valley	Objective 1 RECHAR	Assisted Area Status	Save the children
Easington	Objective 2 RECHAR	SRB Enterprise Zone Status	

4.2 European Funding

The coalfields can be seen as benefiting from many layers of European funding. The coalfields have attracted a large amount of European funding, it is estimated that £200m a year in EU aid is flowing into the coalfields, although the amount varies

between areas (DETR, 1998a). Most of the aid to the coalfields comes from 'Objective 2' status for industrial areas, however in case of Merseyside and South Wales 'objective 1' applies. The UK is also the biggest recipient from the EU's RECHAR which is specifically targeted to coalfields. The coalfield taskforce report states that 'it is clearly of vital importance that coalfield communities remain eligible to receive EU aid'. The report also states that in future rounds of EU funding many of the coalfields may no longer be eligible for Objective 2 funding because they do not meet the criteria of 'above EU-average unemployment'.

The RECHAR programme had been an important source of funding for the coalfields since 1990, when it was launched by the EC as a special programme of assistance for the regeneration of the coalfields. The programme has been run in two phases. RECHAR 1 ran from 1990-1995 and brought 300m ECUs of investment to the coalfields, while RECHAR 2 ran from 1995-1997 and was due to provide 400m ECUs of aid (Coates and Barrett-Brown, 1997). The RECHAR money has gone into industrial units, small scale factory development, renovation of community centres and, more recently, community economic development aimed at the long term regeneration of the coalfields (Coates and Barrett-Brown, 1997). The programme draws its funding from the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund. RECHAR differs from other funds such as the SRB as it has a less competitive bidding framework with resources directed at designated areas (Ball, 1998). Eligible applicants for RECHAR include local authorities, TECs, town and parish councils, BCE, higher and further education, government departments and agencies, non-profit making companies, charitable trusts and the voluntary sector. Table 3 outlines the allocations to eligible regions:

Table 3: RECHAR II 1994-1997, UK Regional allocations

Region	ECU (millions)
Yorkshire	44.573
East Midlands	42.154
North East	23.456
Wales	20.459
West Midlands	12.664
Eastern Scotland	10.002
North West	6.904
Western Scotland	2.657
Total for UK	162.869

Source: Ball (1998)

4.3 SRB

The SRB was set up in 1995 bringing together number of disparate funding regimes to simplify the funding and bidding process and thus to facilitate a more co-ordinated approach to regeneration. Money from the SRB only applies in England. The BIDS

are made through the Government Offices and thus they have a large amount of control over what is funded.

A number of SRB projects can be seen in operation in the districts such as the Mansfield Diamond Partnership and the Ravenhead and Newton 21 SRB partnerships in St Helens. However, one criticism levelled at the SRB is that it fails to represent the coal districts, in particular smaller areas that miss out through the qualification criteria. The taskforce response stated that although some of the coalfields have benefited from SRB projects in the past, there is a need for the coalfields to be a key focus in allocating bids through the RDAs. It was also stated that the SRB should devote a greater proportion of funds to community projects. Many complaints were levelled at the SRB that it excluded community projects and those that did not have a principally economic focus such as health and housing. However, this is said to change under the recommendations put forward to SRB round 5.

4.4 English Partnerships

A significant player in the regeneration of the coalfields is English Partnerships. English Partnerships is a governmental body set up in 1993, from a number of agencies, to encourage the physical regeneration and reclamation of land and buildings. English partnerships are also charged with working alongside local authorities and community groups to promote regeneration. In 1996, English Partnerships took over 5,600 acres of land from British Coal (Coates and Barrett-Brown, 1997). They have subsequently outlined a business plan in which they aim over the next ten years to invest £385M and create 52,000 new jobs (English Partnerships).

In the first year of their coalfield's programme EP claimed to have 'facilitated' 2188 job opportunities, reclaimed 216 hectares of land, attracted £24.5m of private sector investment and created 11km of new roads (DETR, 1998b).

By the end of their ten year programme EP hope to have created 46,500 job opportunities, 'facilitated' 17.5m sq. ft of new industrial floor space, created 25km of new roads, brought forward the building of 5000 new houses and secured £750m of private sector investment (DETR, 1998b).

English Partnerships have sites in all three of the English districts: Lea Green in St Helens; Shirebrook, Pleasley and Ollerton in Mansfield; Vane Tempest, Seaham colliery, Dawdon and Foxcover in Easington.

4.5 National Lottery

Throughout the four districts, little mention was made of the national lottery as potential source of funding. This may be because it is a relatively new source of funding, or a lack of knowledge about this source. Indeed, nationally the coalfields receive a far less proportion of lottery funding compared to other areas. The coalfields receive an average of £70 per head, and as little as £5 in some areas, compared to a national average of approximately £90. Table 3.4 outlines the allocations to the districts (excluding the Cynon Valley). In response to this situation a conference was held in November 1998 to ascertain why the coalfields were not gaining from the national lottery and what could be done to address this. In response the National Lottery Charities Board a £2m project to improve the uptake of funds in

Barnsley and Chris Smith stated that each lottery distributing body had agreed to contribute a research project to identify the reasons for the low take up in the coalfields.

Table 4: Local Authority Totals

	Sum of award amount £s	Number of awards	Population	Per capita rate £s
Easington	1,846,982	63	95,213	19.40
Mansfield	7,100,932	55	101,355	70.06
St Helens	12,544,141	52	179,483	69.89

Source: Press release, Department of Culture Media and Sport, 1.12.98

At the Coalfields conference in December 1998, Chris Smith pledged that the coalfields should receive a 'fair deal from the lottery' and that new directions from government were being given to distributors to ensure that the coalfields no longer lose out:

The coalfields deserve a fair deal from the lottery, and the government is determined to see that they get it. People across the country play the National Lottery, and people in every area of the country should have access to benefits National Funding can bring. (Chris Smith, National Coalfields Conference, 1.12.98)

Much was made by Chris Smith during the conference of the need to improve the quality of applications and quantity of bids from the coalfields but little mention was made of bureaucratic problems of filling in lottery applications for smaller organisations.

4.6 Coalfield Funding

In addition to being eligible for national funding, there are a number of funds targeted specifically at the coalfields.

In 1992, after the announcement of closures, Michael Heseltine promised a £1 billion to the coalfields in the form of redundancy and to regenerate the communities, in addition, a Coalfield Areas Fund was established with £5m for local authorities.

4.6.1 British Coal Enterprise

Although government initiatives and investments covered mining areas they were not specifically targeted at miners. The only specific government measure to address the effects of the pit closures was British Coal Enterprise (BCE)¹, which has been the main government body for creating jobs in the coalfield. BCE was established in 1984 with the aim of linking up with, and in some cases establishing, coalfield based

¹ From July 1986 the company's name changed from NCB (enterprise) Ltd to BCE (Ltd.)

job creation agencies, and to support their efforts to bring in new businesses and employment to both coalfield areas and ex-miners.

A recent report carried out by BCE (1996) stated that in the last ten years the organisation has helped create 130,000 jobs in the British coalfields. The total investment made by BCE during its existence was £101M, into over 5,000 projects. A major part of BCE that had a direct link with ex-miners was the 'Job and Career Change Scheme' (JACCS). The scheme was designed to help redundant British Coal employees into new jobs. In total, it is claimed that by 1995, 57,000 former British Coal workers found work through JACCS (BCE 1996). Although BCE has invested a large amount of money into the coalfields, and has helped in the creation of further employment, miners themselves have not necessarily been the immediate beneficiaries of such investments. Indeed, BCE have always stated that their investments are not solely targeted at miners, but are for:

jobs for anyone in any a traditional coal mining locality, (BCE 1996: 33).

There is some doubt as to the impact of BCE efforts in job creation, in the light of the large-scale job losses in the Coalfields. As Turner (1992) states:

The activities of an organisation like BCE, however, unless its budget and activities were substantially increased, can constitute only a partial and marginal response to a situation of rapid large-scale de-industrialisation, (Turner, 1992: 7)

Furthermore, BCE has been quite specific in stating that it does not expect significant demand from older ex-miners in starting their own businesses or for new employment (Rees and Thomas, 1991). BCE have also been criticised for operating over too wide a region and giving help to firms where the pit's closure has had little affect on local unemployment rates (Turner, 1995).

4.6.2 Coalfield Communities Campaign

The Coalfields Community Campaign (CCC) was set up in February 1985 by local authorities sharing common problems out of the decline of the coal industry. These member authorities fund the activities of the CCC. The organisation started with 32 members and now has over 90 member local authorities. The main aim of the CCC is to "help rebuild the economic, social and environmental fabric of coalfield communities", (Coalfield Communities Campaign, 1995a). It addresses this in two main ways. The first is to keep issues concerning miners and the mining industry at the forefront of government and media attention. A major part of this is lobbying central government and Europe for money for the coalfields. The second aim is to produce research to back up their arguments. A particular success of the CCC has been RECHAR, a programme of aid for the coalfields introduced by the European Commission after lobbying led by CCC. Additionally, the CCC persuaded the European Commission to follow up with RECHAR 2 in 1994. Together, the two RECHAR programmes have brought nearly £300m for economic regeneration to the UK coalfields. The CCC has also helped fund many projects in the coalfields, ranging from large-scale regeneration initiatives to small community projects (see Coalfield Community Campaign, 1995b).

4.6.3 Coalfields Taskforce

In answer to the needs outlined in the Taskforce report the 'response' outlined further funds that would be made available to the coalfields. Over one billion pounds is being devoted to 'local authority areas with coalfield areas' each year. In addition a further £354m is being invested over the next 3 years. This money is being divided between the areas outlined in Table 5. The 'Coalfield Regeneration Trust' is being set up as a charitable body that will support community initiatives that the taskforce identified as being important. The 'coalfield enterprise fund' (being created by English Partnerships) will support small firms in the coalfields. In addition the SRB is being reshaped to benefit coalfield areas with an estimated £70m to be targeted to partnerships in the coalfields. Further money will go to help improve housing.

Table 5: "Future government investment in the coalfields"

	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
EP coalfields programme	64	69	63
Coalfields regeneration trust	30	10	5
Coalfield regeneration trust	5	5	5
Coalfields housing	8	10	10
SRB partnerships	10	20	40
Total	117	114	123

Source:DETR, 1998b

5. Funding Regeneration in the coal districts

It is clear from the previous section that a large amount of funding is available to the four districts (and the coalfields in general). This section aims to examine how effective funding is as a means of regenerating the districts.

There is a clear consensus from the interviews that the various funding regimes create problems in regenerating the districts. The previous section demonstrated that partnership working was, in part, related to the need to gain funding. However, from the interviews there is a far more positive attitude to partnership working than to funding although the two are clearly related.

From analysis of the interview material a number of common themes were identified in relation to the issue of funding. These were; the bureaucracy of applying for funding; the short-termism associated with funding; and the dependency created/sustained by funding.

5.1 Bureaucracy

Access to funds from the SRB and Europe are awarded on a competitive basis and this in itself creates problems at a number of levels. It puts bureaucratic pressures on organisations in applying for funding and tends to discriminate against agencies or areas with weak institutional structures, in particular, but not exclusively, community

groups. Many agencies have highlighted the vast amount of resources and time they have had to put into completing applications and many have argued that funds are awarded in accordance to those who are best at filling in the forms rather than those that are most eligible. The actual process of applying for funding was seen as problematic at all levels but particularly so for the smaller organisations:

European funding has been very important in financing much innovative provision in the valleys, but this is not an easy road for the small organisation. Lack of information, tight deadlines, jargonistic guidelines and forms, delayed payments and, above all, the increased competition for funds mean that much energy can be wasted in the process of chasing European funds. (Chasing the Dragon, VAEI, p50).

However, even local authorities saw it as a gamble:

“I think we waste time, putting bids in, we spent £10,000 on one bid, and we were lucky, because we got £1m out of it, some people have done similar things and wasted £10,000.” [Peter Elderton, Nottinghamshire County Council Economic Development]

Others were more frustrated at the amount of time and bureaucracy involved and thus felt the funding regimes were constraining their efforts:

What I am beginning to think is one of the main things is funding. You go in there, identify things, this is great, we want to do this, and then they have got to write out a tender, then it has got to go in, and it could be a year. later, before you have got the money. Forget it! If you are going to go in there, and you have got to motivate people, if you can't carry it through, don't bother in the first place.” [Ken Hazzard, Mansfield Training Initiative]

“I have been involved with SRB funding. I have been in bids for RECHAR. I have been on several seminars for the European and to be honest, by the time you have written the bid, it's got through the process, it should've been done anyway. Or it's gone passed it. I think there should be a flexible arrangement, like European funding for Career plus Modern Apprenticeship, is earmarked for the TEC's, fine. Why can't they do something for the communities? Say, 'we are going to spend £100,000 this year. £60,000 of that will go to the TEC and they will then work with the local communities to spend that £60,000. So people then have a chance of putting the bid together and running with it. Rather than get motivated, get facts and figures, and then wait 18 months.”[Ken Hazzard, Mansfield Training Initiative]

However, it is the smaller organisations that feel they are missing out because they do not have the institutional structures or contacts in place to make a successful bid:

“There is a big problem, I mean, some of it is bureaucracy bound and we, I mean, we come from the bottom up position, bottom upward, and most organisations on that basis will not have the ability to cope with the bureaucracy and the form filling and the requirements that is attached to most funding. So a lot of good initiatives which are local based, local led which are long term sustainable, economic social projects, don't get anywhere because of that.” (Jon O'Neill, Mansfield Unemployed Workers Centre)

The MUWC clearly illustrates the multiple hurdles facing small organisations in accessing funding. It is precisely such community organisations that the SRB and the various partnerships claim to want to include but the present structures clearly mitigate against this:

We have worked on a project with some wonderful ideas, that could really have a big impact on the community. But, you know, there have been problems, even in funding itself, 'cos. everybody wants to match your funding, nobody will give you 100%. So, but they always work to different timetables! Like you're going for a role up in Rural

Development and you are going for SRB money and you are going for European money, to run a project for rural areas, all 3 are totally different timetables, totally different requirements on the forms and usually totally different monitoring evaluation output to monitor. You do sometimes sit there, when you are doing all this and think 'well, just a minute. Am I just sat here, chasing, not actually doing what we set out to do?... People come and sit here from groups that have been established in the last coalfield areas, Nottingham or wherever, they say 'look, I have got this idea but it won't happen because the professionals are killing it off.' They say 'no, we'll put money into that next year!' But the problems here now. People can't wait another 12 months for a solution. Funding is a major problem." (Jon O'Neill, Mansfield Unemployed Workers Centre)

A further issue in relation to funding is that regimes such as the SRB and EU insist that funding is matched. This presents a problem, again, particularly for smaller organisations:

Not entirely no. I mean the big problem under the last government was additionality. And I mean a number of the local authorities in Wales, particularly the poorest ones, particularly the former county councils like Mid Glamorgan, were able to catalogue umpteen instance where their bids had been accepted but were unable to receive the money because they couldn't provide the match funding. So Wales did miss out on many millions of pounds and the figures are available. It is the poorest communities that loss out most. For example again, just look at my constituency. The main accessors of European funds have been South Glamorgan County Council and Mid Glamorgan County Council rather than the smaller authorities below. I mean South Glamorgan have had no real difficulties nor the Cardiff Bay District Council in pulling down money whether it is for a distribution road around Cardiff or a business dev in the Bay because they have got the resources to match it. An authority like Mid Glamorgan covering many of the valleys one of the poorest authorities in the country, desperately needing the money, but is unable to pull the money down. The commission has tried to put more of an emphasis on the OB2 programme on the valleys development but the problem the local authorities still have is that lack of match funding. and you can say rules are flexible now the private sector can provide that match funding fair enough but I mean are the private sector interested in the valleys? No. [Wayne David, MEP: Wales]

A further bureaucratic issue in relation to funding is the difficulties in qualifying and applying for funding. A particular problem in relation this that come out strongly from the interviews was the qualifying criteria for European funding. Many of the agencies that we talked to expressed concern about their continued qualification for EU money. Many felt that the qualifying criteria discriminated against the coalfields. For example in indices of deprivation the coalfields tend not to come out as particularly deprived because of the high levels of home-ownership and low levels of ethnicity in the coalfields. Furthermore, continuing low levels of claimant unemployment were also seen as discriminating against the coalfields. For example, the MEP for Durham illustrates this problem in relation to qualifying for objective 1 status:

We are hovering round about 75% of the EU average GDP per head of population...we're actually qualifying for Objective 1 status under European funding...and yet the unemployment statistics show that we have made tremendous progress...and yet we have got a tremendous amount of poverty and deprivation out there. [Stephen Hughes, MEP: Durham].

5.2 Competition

A consequence of the reliance of funds from the SRB and Europe is that it increases the atmosphere of competition between regions (in addition to the competition to attract inward investors). The SRB and EU funds are awarded on a competitive basis and the feeling of being 'in competition' was evident from the accounts of some of the agencies we talked to such as the GO in the NE:

I am born and bred in the NE of England and I will do my best to get as much money for this area, at the expense of Manchester/Leeds. We are all in competition, it stands to reason. [Rick Martin, Government Office North East]

The above respondent does not seem to view competition as problematic, indeed, he sees it as something beneficial, note how in the next quote he discusses funding in terms of the quality of bids rather than the results they produce, he presents no evidence of suggest that competitive bidding will yield greater results:

It is quite interesting, local authorities, when SRB first started, didn't like it at all, it was another 'beauty competition', and they thought 'here we go again'. It is surprising how attitudes have changed. Even at local authority level, they recognise that the competitive level of SRB has been very beneficial because it has improved the overall quality and standard of the submission and schemes that they have put forward. It has encourage partnership working. [Rick Martin, Government Office North East]

It is interesting that he then makes the link to partnerships as it might be thought that notions of competitiveness would go against the 'spirit of partnership' that tends to be expressed by the same organisations. It seems that the notion of the partnership is bounded by the funding regimes. Definitions of partnership should recognise that partnerships are bounded by an increasing number of contingent factors.

Competitive funding is also seen by many as counterproductive since when funding is turned down the problem does not go away and in many ways is somehow de-valued by the rejection. This is particularly the case for smaller organisation who often lose out in this competitive arena.

5.3 Funding and control

A further problem identified in relation to funding is that the funding regimes have a very strong influence over what path regeneration takes. So a consequence of the reliance on funding for regeneration is that the successful bids, put together more often than not by partnerships, have a greater influence in shaping regional policy than local authorities. In addition to funding further shifting power away from local authorities the particular funding regimes strongly influence what is funded:

They are hampered by a bidding process, to Europe, to SRB, where people say, 'if you want European money, you have to have these kinds of things in it; if you want SRB these are the priorities. [Rick Martin, Government Office North East]

This is particularly the case in S. Wales where the WDA has a much greater influence over funding than the Local authorities:

The funding has been progressively pooled from the local authorities large parts of the Urban programme have always been funded at the expense of grant going directly to LAs...as far as the last 6 years are concerned with WDA... again yeah the WDA does get money from central government but a large amount of that has been put back

in to the communities, into the valleys through these urban regeneration partnerships...but of course the money is coming with conditions (Andrew Dakin, WDA)

Returning to the issue of partnerships, certain 'partners' control of money has an influence on what is and isn't done:

yeah the WDA gets the money from central government but a large amount of money has been put back into the communities, into the valleys through these urban regeneration partnerships...but of course the money's coming with conditions, as I said earlier in the Cynon Valley it's this management structure and you have these actors who want to go and do the business and if you won't accept that then we're gonna take the ball away and we won't play...so it came with conditions...but then urban programme funding from central government directly has come with an enormous amount of conditions and I think quite rightly so. (Andrew Dakin, WDA)

and this control is not just restricted to economic development:

I don't know, I mean there was certainly, there has been a commitment to joint working, to partnership working with the voluntary sector, I mean I suspect as I was indicating earlier I think we have probably become more robust in the last few years in us being clear about what it is we are working in partnership with the voluntary sector organisations to achieve. You know and tying funding very closely to service level agreements. And I think some of the larger voluntary organisations have grown up in the last few years in terms of their commercial know-how and that sort of thing. I mean because they have experienced the same sort of funding difficulties and crises as we have. Money is tight all round really. You know nobody is going to invest anything in any agreement unless there is clear outcomes. [Rhondda Cyron Taff Social Services]

The eligibility of projects are also seen as creating distortions in the districts, for example qualification for SRB funding tends to be skewed towards those projects with an economic angle which many have argued discriminated against those with more socially orientated projects such as housing. There is a strong feeling that what is funded does not necessarily reflect what needs to be done. In many ways, the mechanisms of the funding regimes fail to take into account the wishes of those living in the very communities they are trying to improve. It was stated quite strongly during a conference of key actors from the districts that there is a need for greater accountability by including communities. Problem of getting different criteria for output and fitting in with what the money is available for rather than what needs to be done. Frustrations among the local people that funding is only available for certain things. It was stated that money needs to be reflective of very localised needs.

5.4 Short-termism

Another effect of relying on funding is that it leads to short-termism since projects tend only to be funded for a limited length of time. This limits the ability of agencies to tackle the problems and can lead to cynicism within the local communities:

I mean even with the European project is three years and 3 years can go really quick, it's not long enough for an overall strategic approach and multi-agency as well...you've got different agencies...and if we're all funded for one year and starting at different points of the year how can we get a multi-agency approach if we are not gonna be there...so it is a problem... We can't sit down with people from other agencies who perhaps we would like to, because their funding will be up before ours

and they don't know if they are going to be there. So they can't plan long-term. It would be good if we could all sit down and come up with a strategy within a geographical area and come up with a project that would have a long term strategic goal at the end of it...but it doesn't work like that...it's always short to medium term... and I mean there are positive sides to it because then you could set measurable objectives along the way, but there's no sort of overall strategic approach which we lack... I don't know what the answer is because nobody's going to give us funding for 5, 6, 7 years. (Lyndsey Morris/Glyn Bowen, Wales Co-op)

A view which was shared by the social services in RCT when talking about the funding coming into the Cynon Valley:

at first it was OK, it did draw resources but unfortunately what it drew was short term resources, the longest term one was save the children which was prepared to fund for ten years. And if you lived on an estate on Cynon you began to feel like some sort of experimental monkey because everybody was doing things to your community. It was all short term funding. I mean all right it helped temporarily but it may have left more problems that it solved in the longer term. (Rhondda Cynon Taff Social Services]

and also by CISWO in Mansfield:

“Many ‘clip board projects’ were done. People standing on the street, getting information for appraisals/investigations into social and industrial structures and everything else going on. a lot of short term projects suddenly sprang up, most have fizzled away. There has been a lot of tinkering around the edges. It’s near impossible to get long term funding. (Patrick Maiden, CISWO, Mansfield).

So that was actually quite interesting, and my coming at the time the pit closures had been announced. It may sound a bit cynical but at that time the regional health authority and the general manager sort of said ‘lets do something on the impact on health’. You know the usual thing we will give you a years funding to do something in North Nottinghamshire. You know what will you do with a years funding. What will you do with a years funding on the impact this is going to have on health! Do you give a few more hours to a social worker or money advice or what do you do. (Christine Hopton, Public Health North Nottinghamshire)

Again, the short-termism was particularly problematic for the smaller community organisations creating strong feelings of uncertainty for the future. Many organisations rely on outside funding as their only source of income and when this is only available at sometimes a monthly basis long-term projects are not practical. Smaller organisations are also highly susceptible to the differing timetable of funders with many projects having gaps of several month with no money coming in.

5.5 Dependency

A further problem with funding is that it can reinforce a dependency culture within the coalfields. Such an argument suggests that need for a more diversified economy within the coal districts; something that the short term nature of funding does not allow. The idea that funding creates dependency is an interesting argument since a strong criticism levelled at mining communities is the dependency created by the mining industry. It could be then, that reliance on funding is sustaining the notion of a dependent economy.

Some of the agencies we talked with wanted to get away from a reliance on funding (other remained pre-occupied with getting funding):

the funding’s not going to be there all the time, the political swing has turned against the funding through the public purse so you have to go out and earn some money to

invest in the sort of social side...so it's striking that balance with earning money and then spending it and re-investing it for the good of the population.....but it is hard. (Lindsey Morris/Glyn Bowen, Wales Co-op).

And they return to this later in the interview:

They didn't actually put an application in...I think it was the management took the decision that we have to wean ourselves off the European funding because I mean it's going to come to an end, if not after 1999, then perhaps they'll have another 4 yrs after that if they're lucky, but after that it's gonna end, simply because the widening of the EU and there's gonna be other areas that were gonna be more appropriate for the funding. So I think they took the stance now as a way of preparing the long term strategy to . (Lindsey Morris/Glyn Bowen, Wales Co-op)

This general view was also shared by Business Link in St Helens:

My personal opinion in that objective one is a blasted nuisance. If it is channelled correctly then it is a huge advantage to the region. My own belief and I don't know who is going to hear this, my own belief is that there is too much duplication. I mean towards the end of the objective one period which finishes next year we are gradually getting it sorted, but it has taken us 3 ½ years to get to that point and there is still duplication now. I think also there was always this government hand out culture on Merseyside and objective one does not help it because we are still handing out money. (Peter Fletcher, Business Link St Helens).

The difficulty facing the districts in the future is how to continue without funding, thus raising important questions around the social and economic sustainability of these districts.

6. Discussion and conclusions

This paper has focused on the important issue of how regeneration is facilitated within the coal districts. Split into two main sections the paper addressed how both partnership working and funding are used as the main tools to facilitate regeneration.

The first section addressed the issue of partnership working. The nature of partnerships in each of the districts was outlined including a description of some of the larger ones. The partnerships tended to include a mixture of governmental bodies (LAs, health authorities etc.), quangos (TECs etc.) and community groups. Involvement from the private sector made up only small part of these partnerships. The motivation for partnership working was discussed and it was illustrated that although it presented a new and positive way of working most of the partnerships were formed in response to accessing funding. It was also stated that a number of motivations can be seen as underpinning partnership rather than just one. A further part of this section was to examine the power structures of partnerships. It was shown that some partners tend to be 'more equal than others' and that conflicts are a common part of partnership working. Conflicts can arise between agencies with very different agendas, between agencies responsible to different spatial boundaries, but a particular conflict seems to exist between small community groups and large organisations.

For most agencies in the coal districts partnerships present a new and useful way of tackling a wide a varied problems in terms of regeneration but it was indicated that true partnership working tended to be the exception.

The second part of the paper focused on the issue of funding. This section outlined that a further important part of facilitating regeneration is the reliance on external

funding for finance. The many sources of finance available to the districts were outlined in addition to the particular problems coalfields may have in accessing these. The section went on to outline some of the problems that are created by the reliance on external funding. The bureaucracy surrounding the funding regimes was seen as a major issue; the difficulties filling in forms, the time wasted, resources wasted. These issues were particularly acute for smaller organisations. The varying and variable qualifying criteria for funding also added a further bureaucratic layer to the process. The competitive nature of funding regimes was seen as problematic particularly when agencies that could be working together were competing against each other for resources. The amount of control funding regimes had over the shape of regeneration was also a concern. In particular the concern that regeneration is being shaped by the successful bids rather than what actually needs to be done. There was also a concern that funding led to short-termism because projects tended to be funded on a yearly or even monthly basis making long term planning difficult. A final issue was that of dependency, which was the concern that the districts continued reliance on funding would sustain a dependency culture rather than a sustainable economy.

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