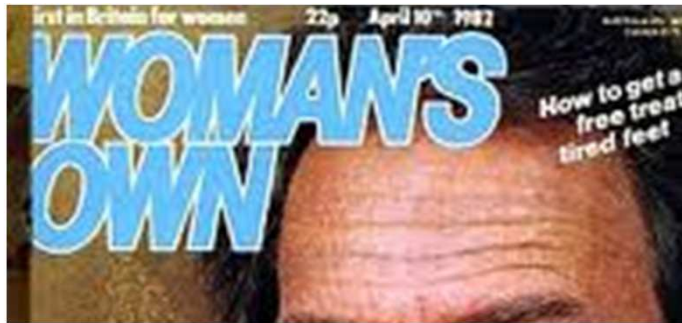


How do we talk about the “Big Society”?

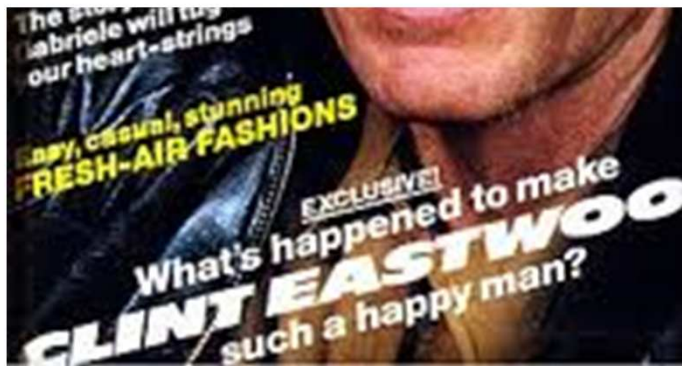
Paul Raynes

LG Group Leadership Board

Big Society used to be political language for detoxifying the brand



So we need a new approach: social responsibility, not state control; the Big Society, not big government. Only in this way will we tackle the causes of poverty and inequality, rather than just the symptoms. Only in this way will we transform the quality of our public services. And only in this way will we rebuild shattered communities and repair the torn fabric of society.



But now it's a government policy too

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Building the Big Society PM: This requires action from everyone

...of course, there is no one lever we can pull to create the Big Society in our country...

...and we shouldn't be naive enough to think that if the government rolls back and does less, then miraculously society will spring up and do more....'

...the truth is that we need a government that actually helps to build up the Big Society....

....If it unleashes community engagement – we should do it. If it crushes it – we shouldn't

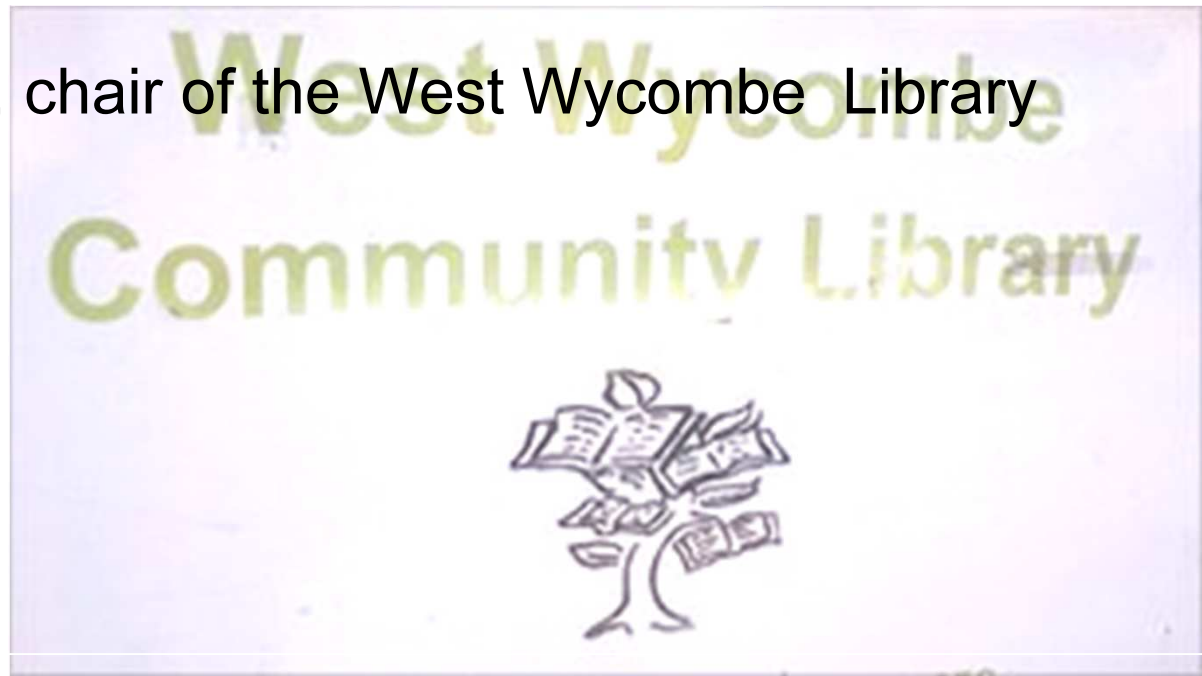
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Except that's not how most people who are doing it, see it

“It's being called an example of the big society - well actually it's not - it's just local people wanting to run their library”

The Rev Nigel Lacey, chair of the West Wycombe Library Committee



Councils have been doing it for years, because that's what they are for

- Asset transfer
- Working with and through the VCS
- Area forums
- Participatory budgeting
- Ward budgets
- Spin-outs
- Parish plans
- Etc etc etc

“Big Society” is simply what we do in Essex’

Good For Essex, A Big Society Prospectus

But it's not quite business as usual

- Budget cuts
 - Central government activism
 - “Through” or “around”?
-

Our aims - 1

- Make sure councils are seen as an “essential enabler of the Big Society” (Greg Clark) and the democracy is not gone around or marginalised.

Don Maynard

As the Guide explains, local government has two vital roles in the decentralisation agenda. Councils will be the beneficiaries of decentralisation as power is passed to them through the Localism Bill and they will have a vital role in passing power to communities and individuals. *Essential Localism* is therefore correct to characterise councils as an “indispensable enabler of the Big Society”.

with some adjustments

↳

Our aims - 2

- Secure the freedom for councils to get on with what they are doing without new interference
 - Make sure what councils are doing can survive any later change of emphasis by central government.
-

Suggested approach

- Accept that national media debate will be conducted in central government's language;
 - Focus on being understood and influencing rather than on trying to change the national-level discourse; hacks and the layman won't want yet another jargon to cope with;
 - For preference, talk about specifics where we can, but talk about "the government's Big Society policies" where we have to;
 - But in our own communications with councils, rather than use the government's language, refer to "reforming local services with and for local people" or "delivering different and better services for communities in difficult times".
-