

Building a World Class Third Sector in London Thames Gateway

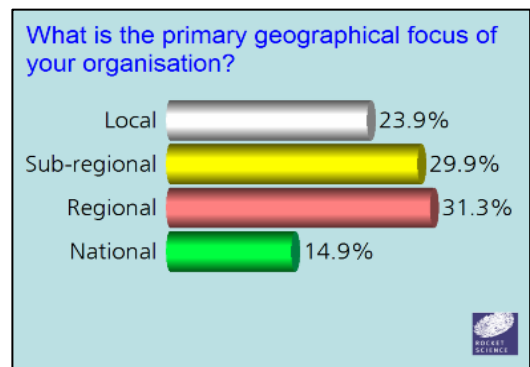
A one-day consultation event 5th July 2006 at the Rich Mix Centre, London E1

Summary Report

The Thames Gateway London Steering Group¹ has commissioned Rocket Science to collaborate with stakeholders on the development of a Third Sector Strategy for the sub-region. This will identify how partners can enhance the sector's capacity to contribute to the economic development, social inclusion and long-term sustainability of the London Thames Gateway. One of the initial stages in this process was a consultative launch event held on the 5th July.

A total of 98 representatives from the public, private and third sector (22%, 9% and 69%, respectively) attended the event to share and develop their vision for a world class third sector in the Thames Gateway. Organisations represented had a variety of geographical focuses as shown in the graph to the right.

The London Thames Gateway area is expected to undergo substantial change over the next 10 years. By 2016 the area is expected to incorporate an extra 90,000 new homes (35% affordable) with 150,000 new jobs created. Moreover 53,000 Ha of land will be protected and enhanced. The event examined the roles of the third sector in this social and economic growth, and how third sector organisations can be supported and enabled to take advantage of the opportunities it brings.



In devising a Third Sector Strategy for the Thames Gateway, the roles of the third sector have been divided into five broad categories:

- Strategic advisor and participant in local and sub-regional decision making
- Managing Agent and coordinator of partnerships
- Agent of service design, delivery and appraisal
- Route to those who are most at risk of social/economic exclusion
- Part of and contributor to a vibrant civil society

Much of the consultative work examined these roles, the opportunities they present and the support required in more detail. This paper summarises the outputs from the workshop sessions and represents the broad range of views that were expressed. It does not capture the totality of the information gleaned from the event, although much of this will be used in developing the final strategy

The vision of the role and responsibility of the sector in the next 10 years

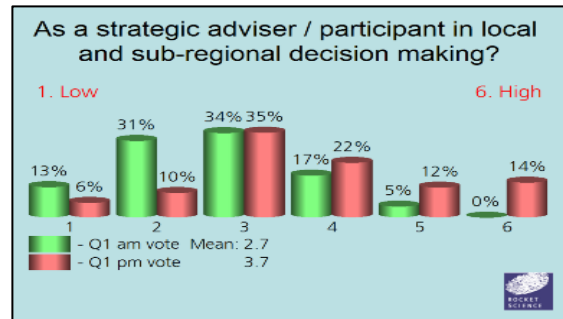
Strategic advisor and participant in local and sub-regional decision making

The third sector has a role in influencing policy and associated actions in order to ensure they reflect the diverse interests that the sector represents. For example, this often includes active involvement in Local Strategic Partnerships and significant input into shaping Local Area Agreements, resulting in a more equitable and inclusive society and economy. But how might this change in the next 10 years?

¹ The Partnership consists of: Thames Gateway London Partnership (Chair); Association of London Government; Learning and Skills Council – London East; Government Office for London; London Development Agency; City Parochial Foundation; East London Business Association (ELBA); BASSAC representing the Community Alliance/Community Sector Coalition; East London CVS Network – the sub-regional CVS network; Race on the Agenda; Southern Housing Foundation, representing RSLs in the Thames Gateway; The Housing Corporation

Delegates felt that the third sector has a role to play in influencing policy and strategy from grass roots level upwards. Above all else they articulated that the sector should act as a conduit of information to and from communities, continuing not only to articulate their needs but also identify solutions. They can also encourage members of the community to become activists themselves. The role should not, however, stop there and greater representation at a more strategic level was also cited in addition to the ability to help join up policy on the ground. This might require more confidence and conviction from the third sector at the negotiating table (which the statutory sector prioritised particularly highly), as well as inviting along more than just the ‘usual suspects’. It was also conceded that the sector has definite strengths and weaknesses around different policy areas, and organisations should be clear about where they are best placed to take the lead – social care was given as one example.

Discussion of the topic in detail did change the average perception of the extent to which delegates see a role for the third sector as a strategic advisor. As the graph on the right shows, the number of delegates predicting a high importance of this role was significantly greater at the end of the day (pm session) than at the start (am session).

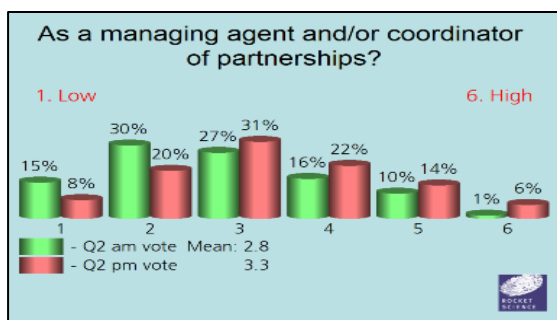


Managing agent and coordinator of partnerships

The third sector may have the potential to play a leading role in, for example, co-ordinating networks of third sector or cross-sectoral organisations; setting up collaborations between organisations for time-limited or longer term joint ventures; and leading, rather than simply participating in, cross-agency statutory partnerships (e.g. LSPs; LAA theme “blocks”).

Delegates felt strongly that the third sector should move from its current role of influencing policy to helping to create it; being included at a much earlier stage and possibly leading on particular areas. New mechanisms and frameworks for collaboration may be required to allow this.

Areas where third sector organisations may feel best placed to coordinate partnerships, or where they would like to be more involved in the management, included procurement and commissioning frameworks and the delivery of aspects of the Olympic Games. Interestingly, the statutory sector representatives differed in opinion from the third sector slightly in prioritising engagement in procurement and commissioning well above making a major contribution to the Olympics and its legacy. In this particular role, organisations need to be realistic, particularly about the

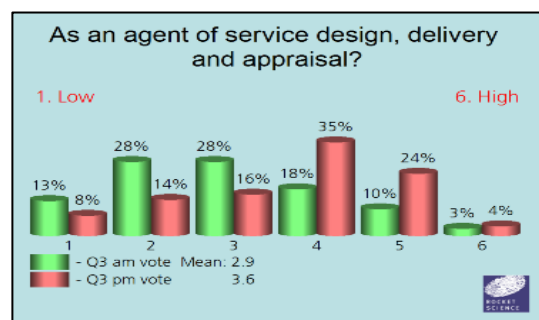


lifespan and usefulness of any partnership. Once again the projected role for the third sector in this area grew as delegates discussed the possibilities, as illustrated in the graph to the left.

Agent of service design, delivery and appraisal

The third sector is increasingly engaging with the designers and funders of statutory services and/or private sector contractors to influence the focus of service delivery, the people they target and the way they are delivered, to ensure that they effectively address and meet the needs of existing and new communities.

Delegates strongly felt that the vision for the Gateway should be influenced by social need and that the third sector has a role in clearly articulating this. To allow third sector organisations to participate fully in service delivery



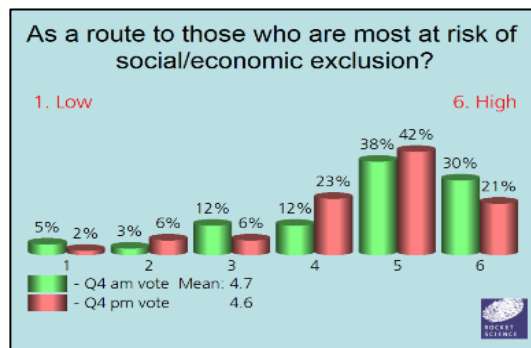
opportunities it is also vital that commissioners make contracts accessible to third sector organisations *and* support them to improve their capacity. This might include investing in shared workspaces / back office functions and development of financial and governance skills (the latter was particularly highly prioritized by third sector attendees).

Again, delegates' confidence in the role of the third sector in this area grew over the course of the day.

Route to those most at risk of social exclusion

The third sector has traditionally had a strong role as a route to those most at risk of social exclusion and the graph shown illustrates the high confidence at both points in the day about their capacity to deliver in this role.

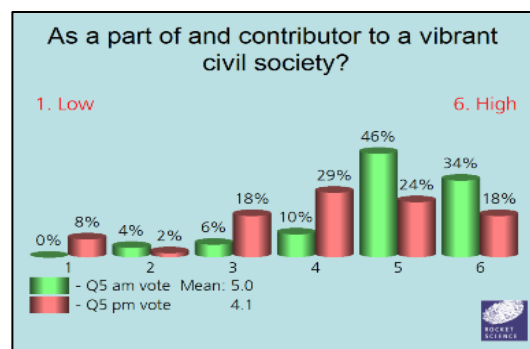
There were, however, still suggestions as to how the role could be enhanced. Whilst the third sector is strong at identifying those most in need, delegates also strongly agreed that organisations should work with *all* sections of the community, and not just those most disadvantaged. There should also be more emphasis on evaluating and demonstrating impact and communicating the value added by the sector, without seeing it as homogenous and statutory sector delegates were particularly keen that this evidence be widely available. Advantage should be taken of the different delivery methods that have and can be deployed by the sector. The third sector representatives also prioritised their being involved in planning agreements, although statutory sector attendees did not place as much emphasis on this role.



Part of and contributor to a vibrant civil society

Civil society refers to the product of organisations of citizens coming together voluntarily to pursue those interests, values and purposes usually termed the 'common good'. Civil society organisations normally refer to the range of institutions that occupy the space between the private sector and the state and are characterised by resourcefulness, community links, specialist knowledge and passion to protect and champion the interests they represent.

The third sector clearly has a role to play here, and importantly the delegates identified that the vision for the Gateway needed to be truly cross-sectoral and that initiatives should build on what works. The launch event itself was seen as an opportunity to get a third sector alliance up and running to drive forward changes in the sector. Accountability to users was a big issue for statutory sector delegates, whilst the third sector prioritised actions that avoided repeating past mistakes.



Interestingly, this was the only category in which delegates were substantially less confident in the sector's role at the end than at the beginning of the day.

What needs to happen in order to make the 2016 vision of the Gateway a reality?

The majority of the afternoon session was spent discussing what changes need to happen to deliver the vision discussed above, examining the potential roles of the third sector collectively, other sectors and sub-regional agencies working in partnership.

What does the third sector need to do for itself?

Prioritisation of tasks is vital. There is a danger that, in trying to do too many things, third sector resources will be diffused and quality will reduce as a result. To achieve this, the sector needs to get organised; well resourced networks are necessary so that they can create their own vision for the Gateway. This will require communicating that the sector is not homogenous, and indeed with the adoption of the broader term third sector (as opposed to voluntary and community sector) there is even more variation between types of organisation. Whilst there is a view that development in the Thames Gateway is still developer- and government-led, there is still scope for third sector organisations to get involved if they are proactive and open to working in constructive partnerships. The sector must act quickly and effectively, identifying not only problems but also solutions, whilst learning from past mistakes. (To this effect, the LDA invited workshop attendees to submit comments on the draft Lower Lee Regeneration Strategy). Third sector attendees in particular voted the creation of a clear and well-organised third sector vision for the Thames Gateway as vital.

Development of skills in leadership and lobbying may also be required and the sector needs to decide who is truly best to represent them at a sub-regional and regional level. Behind this advocacy must sit an effective, credible and accountable sector, which has the capacity to be competitive and not be embarrassed about it. The third sector can 'sell' the support they receive for capacity building as investment in the future added value, wider choice and greater efficiency of public service delivery.

Whilst funding is always an issue for the third sector, it must also become more knowledgeable about how to create long term revenue streams to sustain its future, such as through the judicious acquisition and management of assets.

Finally, statutory sector attendees in particular voted that collaboration should be an absolute priority and there is evidence to suggest that this is not the case at present. For example support for collaboration was one of the City Parochial Foundation's recent funding priorities but accounted for only 2% of the applications received. Interestingly the third sector representatives prioritised being open to partnership much lower.

What do other sectors need to do?

Funding is inevitably an issue, although that which exists can be channelled in different ways including investment in community infrastructure and in allowing organisations to engage in policy and strategy work. Whatever way the funding is used, however, it must be provided on fair terms, allowing full cost recovery and longer term security. The third sector should have a scrutiny role in this process. Similarly contracts must allow a 'living' rather than minimum wage. Investment in infrastructure is also required and there was a realisation



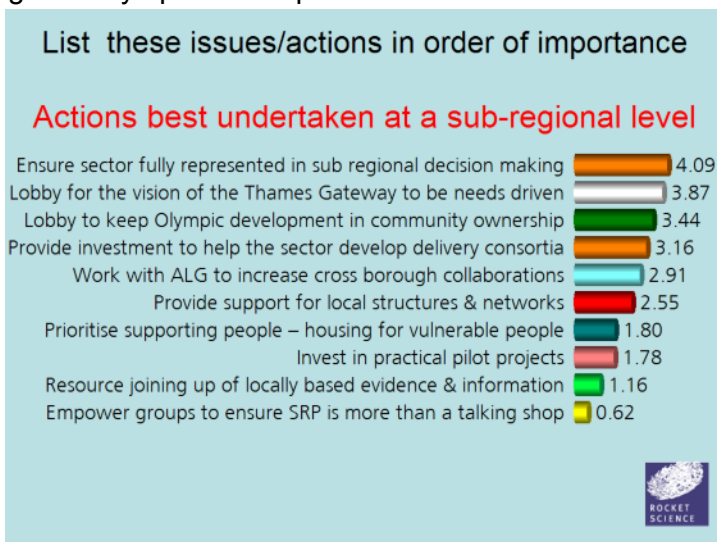
that CVSs might not always be the best vehicle to deliver in every situation.

Local authorities in particular need to engage with the sector to look at rolling out creative ways to sustain the sector, including community asset transfer and management. Risk needs to be more evenly distributed and shared with statutory agencies and the private sector.

What is best undertaken at a sub-regional level?

The three highest priority answers to this question all regarded lobbying and setting strategic direction at a sub-regional level, particularly concerning the Olympic developments. There is a desire in the third sector not only to be consulted, but to be actively engaged from an early point in key policy developments. Activity at a sub-regional level also supports cross-borough collaboration (many borough boundaries are not contiguous with communities) and the ALG has a key role to play in enabling this to happen.

The third sector can help developers to view the Gateway holistically, considering for example community assets (currently local authorities are selling these off) as well as transport and education. There is a fear at present that development is focusing on houses and businesses, without the facilities to support them. There is also particular confusion about the medium and long term ownership of the Olympic Games and its legacy. The LDA currently owns 90% of the land required for the Games and the remaining sites are the subject of ongoing Compulsory Purchase Order enquiries.



There is a wealth of best practice information available and, in line with the desire not to ‘re-invent the wheel’, this evidence can be collected and distributed across the sub-region (e.g. using sub-regional knowledge platforms such as the one developed by TGLP). Benchmarking quality provision should be part of this accumulation of intelligence. Organisations should not collect and re-collect information that is already available. Locally based evidence and information might be applicable far more widely than is currently assumed.

Next steps

You can get involved in one of the following ways:

1. **Contact John Griffiths at Rocket Science** for more information on getting involved in any of the consultation sessions or to hear more about the project in general (john.griffiths@rocketsciencelab.co.uk; 020 7253 6289)
2. Contact one of the **Local Authority Leads** if you are from one of the 12 Thames Gateway local authorities and would like to find out more, or share your views:

Corporation of London
Tower Hamlets
Dartford

} Contact Ruth Evans
ruth.evans@rocketsciencelab.co.uk

Waltham Forest Hackney	} Contact Annabel House annabel.house@rocketsciencelab.co.uk
Greenwich Bexley Lewisham	} Contact Janice Renowden janice.renowden@rocketsciencelab.co.uk
Barking and Dagenham Redbridge Havering	} Contact Kamila Zahno kamila@zahnorao.demon.co.uk
Newham	} Contact John Griffiths john.griffiths@rocketsciencelab.co.uk

3. Log onto the **ELCVS website** for regular updates on the project: www.elcvsnetwork.org.uk or the **Thames Gateway London Partnership** website: www.thames-gateway.org.uk
4. Further consultation events and focus groups will take place in early September. A draft of the Strategy will be available by the end of September and the final version available for publication by the end of October.

