

FbRN Executive Director Doreen Finneron writes

My overriding memory of the FbRN national conference in March is of the bustling networking room. Participants were taking full advantage of the opportunity to find out about organisations that could help them in their social action, catching up with old friends and learning about what is happening in other parts of the country. It seemed almost a shame to move them on to the conference room, but of course we also had a range of stimulating speakers and a superb panel. You can read a short report of the conference inside this newsletter, and the full report together with video highlights is on our website.

We are particularly grateful to our trustee, Fran Beckett, who so ably chaired the day and to Rob Weinberg, for helping us to get the best out of a packed panel session. Thanks, also, to the FbRN staff and helpers as well as the hospitable and obliging staff at Friends House.

A number of participants said that they would like to have a similar conference or event in their local area or region. If you would like to explore the possibility of running a regional or local event in partnership with FbRN, please get in touch.

Also, following the theme of the conference, we are pleased to announce that we will be working with Community Matters, a well regarded and experienced Community Sector Infra-Structure organisation, and Goldsmiths College, on a new Programme, Faith Communities Becoming VISIBLE. Together, we will be piloting a quality assurance framework for faith based organisations. More information on this news is on the back page.

You will probably already have received information about Inter Faith Week www.interfaithweek.org/ If you are planning events that you would like us to publicise on our email bulletin, get in touch. If you are thinking of doing something about faith based social action, community development, or regeneration, then maybe we can help. We look forward to hearing from you.

Doreen Finneron

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FbRN JOINS UP THE DOTS

Joining Up the Dots was the title of the FbRN national conference

Why have a 'joining-up-the-dots' conference?

Faith based groups often contribute to community cohesion as well as towards such communities' social and economic development. But, unfortunately, these groups often feel that they are small insignificant dots on the landscape. Some are well connected but working or co-operating with an even wider range of organisations might well improve their effectiveness.

The conference encouraged faith based groups to find out about what different types of organisation are doing and how their own work can benefit from linking in to it. The conference also enabled organisations aiming to increase their work with faith groups to: build their profile with faith groups; achieve greater understanding about faith groups' needs and establish links with them.

Who came and what did they do?

140 participants came to the conference at the welcoming and well-organised environment of the Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London. Most were from faith based groups working at community level, from a wide range of religions and from all regions of England.

The networking room, with its lively stands, was a buzz of activity with people taking advantage of the opportunity to find out more about the resources available and the organisations that they could work with. The stands were provided by:

- FbRN UK
- The Inter Faith Network of the UK
- The Development Trusts Association (DTA)
- The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)
- The National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA)
- The Regional Faith Forums
- The Community Development Foundation (CDF)
- Charity Bank
- Unity Trust Bank
- CCLA Investment Management Ltd
- Triodos Bank

Many other organisations took advantage of the extra space provided to display and distribute information about their work.

We were encouraged and challenged by key speakers:

Sadiq Khan, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government



"FbRN, is an important partner of CLG, It helps to bring the faith voice into the CLG's thinking about policies and programmes.

Faith groups play a vital role in communities, delivering services and supporting community cohesion, contributing to social capital and social justice.

Current tasks for CLG include, updating the Faith & Community guidance, originally published by the Local Government Association in 2002 and supporting the development, by a multi faith group, of a programme of religious literacy training for the public sector"



Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari
Secretary General, Muslim
Council of Britain



“One of the main roles for MCB is to help Muslims to participate more fully in all aspects of communal and political life in Britain.

The Government’s Preventing Violent Extremism strategy is of particular concern because it undermines the confidence of the Muslim community and creates division rather than social cohesion.

People of faith can help shape the future by developing social capital that will help to create a more humane, just, equitable and sustainable global economic order.”

Stuart Etherington, Chief Executive, National Council for Voluntary Organisations



“Conferences like this are a valuable opportunity for us to get together, to celebrate our achievements, to share our experiences, to learn from each other, to inspire each other. That is also what FbRN does on a daily basis, bringing people together to share and learn.

Faith based organisations are rooted in their communities, reaching and caring for vulnerable groups and individuals. They have much in common with the rest of the Voluntary and Community Sector and we need to consider how to learn from and support each other, without losing our distinctiveness.

We should work together to address issues such as recession, climate change, street crime and anti-social behaviour. We need to continue to focus on regenerating and revitalising local areas, promoting the long term financial security of local people and the grass roots organisations and networks that sustain them, ensuring that such challenges are not divisive but are opportunities to work together to shape our common futures.”

Down-to-earth presentations, from **Catriona Robertson** of Wellbeing in Wandsworth, and **Rauf Bashir** from Building Bridges in Pendle, illustrated the sheer variety and quality of faith based social action.

We engaged with an experienced and lively panel chaired by **Rob Weinberg** and including: **Alistair Burt**, Conservative MP for North East Bedfordshire; **Leonie Lewis**, Director of Jewish Volunteering Network and FbRN Trustee; **Jan McHarry**, Co-Director of Community Environment Association, a Western Buddhist and FbRN Trustee; **Fiyaz Mughal**, Director of Faith Matters and Adviser to the Leader of the Liberal Democrats on Inter Faith; **Andrew Robinson**, a Director of CCLA Investment Management Ltd; **Steve Wylor**, Director of the Development Trusts Association. Finally we had a choice of workshops to increase our skills in joining up the dots.



Some thoughts from conference delegates

Welcoming, well organised, excellent speakers

Stimulating and thought provoking

Inspiring

My first – I was really impressed

Good overview of the sector

You can find the full conference report and video highlights on our website www.fbrn.org.uk

CONFERENCE THOUGHTS FROM COMMUNITY BANKERS

Mark Herbert of Unity Trust Bank gives his views on the FbRN Conference.

I was delighted to attend the FbRN conference which gave me a fantastic opportunity to meet representatives from a number of faith based organisations.

Everyone I had the pleasure of meeting had one thing in common; they were all focused on working in their local communities and making a real difference to people's lives. This is something that Unity understands well. Our focus is to work very closely with real communities.

We now provide full banking services to a growing number of faith-based groups and, in recent years, we have been able to help a number of organisations buy their own premises by providing them with loan finance.

Please feel free to contact me on **07711 412865** or email me at mark.herbert@unity.co.uk if you require any further information about the services Unity offers to faith-based organisations.



Louise Davey, Relationship Development Manager of Triodos bank writes ...

Triodos Bank works with many different faith organisations, from Buddhist centres to evangelical Christian churches and Sikh temples. So we know well how much faith groups contribute both to their local communities and society more broadly.

It was great to see people from so many different faiths together at Joining up the Dots, sharing experiences and ideas about how to do even more for their communities. The energetic debate, honesty about the challenges involved in delivering more, and the sense of hope created by the success stories were an inspiration.

Visit www.triodos.co.uk to find out more.



Faiths, Public Policy and Civil Society Problems, Policies, Controversies

Adam Dinham [2009] Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

ISBN 978-0-230-57330-7

"It is to the surprise of many that **faith is back!**"

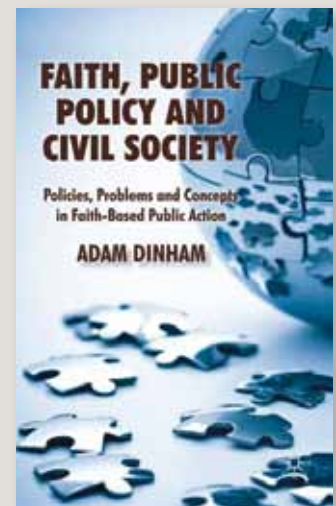
"Back where?" You might ask. "Back at the 'public table'!" comes the answer from Adam Dinham in his new book. The book is a good read whether you are involved in the processes and arguments of policy making or are looking on from whatever vantage point might be yours, within a particular faith, pursuing a particular political agenda or neither!

If you are involved in regeneration from a perspective informed by your faith there are discussions in this book that you ought not to miss. As you struggle to grasp the issues as government seeks to engage with you over the provision of services there is a valuable exposition that will help you think them through more fully.

It could be that you have become involved in local initiatives to help build better neighbourhoods and have people sitting on various boards or committees. The involvement of your faith communities in this 'extended governance' is likely to raise questions about representation, role and capability. Adam helpfully discusses these matters in ways that will clarify your thinking and practice.

The meaning of 'faith', 'faith community', 'social capital' and 'community cohesion' are unravelled expertly and accessibly.

Richard Farnell, Professor of Neighbourhood Regeneration, Applied Research Centre in Sustainable Regeneration [Surge], Coventry University r.farnell@coventry.ac.uk



COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE IS THIS FOR YOU?

Steve Wylor,

Director Development Trusts Association

All community organisations, large and small, are somewhere on a spectrum. At one end of this spectrum are those who see themselves as businesses which have a social mission, offer products for sale, compete in a market, and unashamedly set out to generate profits – not for private gain but to reinvest in their social mission. These are true ‘social enterprises’.

The best social enterprises benefit from entrepreneurial and inspirational leaders, whose businesses are informed from top to bottom by social values – doing their very best to ‘walk the talk’, for example employing people excluded from the labour market. Many would expect their performance to be judged by ‘triple bottom line’ accounting – not just financial, but also social and environmental results.

When these social enterprises have a strong community identity, whether community of place (ie run by people to benefit their neighbourhood or district) or community of identity (ie run by people who have a common characteristic, such as a faith group) – or indeed a combination of these - then the term ‘community enterprise’ is often used.

At the other end of the spectrum are organisations which really don’t see themselves as businesses at all. They rely on donations or grants and are opposed to the idea of charging for any of their services at all. They are there to do good, and depend on the generosity of those who

support their aims to keep going. These are not social enterprises, or community enterprises.

Of course most organisations, including most charities and probably most faith-based organisations, are somewhere between the two. The following indicators can help organisations to assess how far they are along the spectrum:

NOT AT ALL **Maximizing earned income** COMPLETELY

NOT AT ALL **Focus on social return** COMPLETELY

NOT AT ALL **Entrepreneurial leadership** COMPLETELY

NOT AT ALL **Value based operations** COMPLETELY

It is a revealing exercise to compare with colleagues where you would place your own organisation on this spectrum. The real question however is the direction of travel. Do you want to travel towards the right hand side of these indicators?

For some the answer will be no, and that’s fine. But for others, the answer will be yes, and if so, they are probably somewhere along a community enterprise journey.

No-one should expect the community enterprise journey to be an easy one. There are risks and challenges in running any form of business, and community enterprises are no exception. The business skills required – entrepreneurial leadership, marketing, product development, cost analysis, competitive bidding, business networking, accessing new forms of finance – need always to be accompanied by a robust and sustained social

vision. When this is successful, the results can be remarkable.

Support is available, most importantly from others travelling the same journey. The Development Trusts Association is a movement of 470 development trusts (multi-purpose community organisations which use self help, enterprise and asset development to “transform their communities for good”) as

well as 160 associate members that are not development trusts but want to be part of a broad community enterprise movement. Recently the DTA established a category for ‘community of identity’ organisations, including faith groups, who want to join this movement.

There are practical benefits from DTA membership (small grants, reduced conference places, etc) – but the real benefit is to be part of a “give-get” movement, where people with a positive problem-solving attitude, ranging from those who have a lifetime of experience to those completely fresh to the movement, are constantly exchanging ideas, expertise, and inspiration, helping each other along this challenging and exhilarating journey.

To find out more please see the DTA website www.dta.org.uk or contact the DTA membership officer Rosy Hearn r.hearn@dta.org.uk

Stuart Etherington, Chief Executive of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), identifies how we can build on our strengths and meet the challenges that face us

Historically, faith has been an important motivation for voluntary action and remains so today. Across civil society there are a wide range of organisations working to build a fairer world; to transform people's lives; and to create stronger and more resilient communities. The diversity of causes, activities, motivations and organisations is astounding, but underpinning this is a common desire to make a positive difference, to create the good society.

If we look at the challenges that face us today, from the impact of economic recession and climate change to concerns about street crime and anti-social behaviour, it becomes apparent that our organisations need to work together to make that difference. There are many ways in which faith groups inspire social action – from promoting action to stop climate change to campaigning for social justice and a living wage for the lowest paid. To really drive forward the things that matter most to those we work with and for, we must ensure that the most vulnerable in our society have the support they need at this difficult time.

We know that the impact of the recession will be far-reaching, and that it will hit hardest those who are already most disadvantaged. Higher unemployment will place enormous pressures on individuals and communities. It could mean less demand for local shops and businesses; but higher demand for debt, housing and employment advice. Faith based organisations must feel able to tap into the resources and capacity building support offered by mainstream infrastructure bodies, such as the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), to help communities meet these challenges.

It is therefore vital that we continue to focus on how we can regenerate and revitalise local areas. How we can promote the long term financial security of local people and the grass roots organisations and networks that sustain them. And how we can ensure that the challenges that face us do not divide our diverse communities, but create new opportunities for us to work together to shape our common future.

That is why NCVO has recently launched our vision for the future, Civil Society, a framework for action. This identifies those issues which need to be at the heart of our work in coming years, if we are to give our sector the voice and support it needs to look beyond the current crisis to build a secure and sustainable future for all.

These include:

- creating real opportunities for people from different communities – and different faiths - to engage with each other and ensuring that they have a say in decisions that effect their lives and the life of their community
- ensuring that our sector actively contributes to debates about how welfare is provided, and how it contributes to individual and community well-being, as well as providing those services, in partnership with their users and members
- ensuring that civil society organisations can play a full role in tackling climate change and the problems it poses
- promoting financial security and access to finance for individuals and for civil society organisations.

This is an ambitious agenda and one that we cannot achieve on our own. NCVO will need to build new alliances and deepen existing ones to achieve the change we want to see. Many faith-based organisations are already working on these issues. Many also share our vision of a fairer and more sustainable world, where economic prosperity goes hand in hand with social justice and environmental security. Together, we can make this vision a reality.

www.ncvo-vol.co.uk



FAITH BASED ORGANISATIONS AND LOCAL ENGAGEMENT

Robert Beard, Improving Local Partnerships Policy Adviser for the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA), de-mystifies some of the government policy initiatives and shows how faith based organisations can get involved

The Policy Landscape

For the past decade, Government policy has been promoted as the devolution of power to make decisions about local issues. The idea is that there will be no more 'Westminster knows best', one-size-fits-all approach. The Government wants to make sure that local decisions are informed by the local experience, knowledge and expertise of third (voluntary and community) sector organisations, including faith-based organisations, as well as local authorities, public partnerships and private businesses.

Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements

Local strategic partnerships (LSPs) were set up in every local authority area to bring together representatives from the public, private and third sectors. Each LSP negotiated a local area agreement (LAA) with its regional Government Office, setting out the priorities for its local area – these were signed off in June 2008.

Faith-based organisations, working with other third sector organisations, through local infrastructure organisations including coun-

cils for voluntary services, can contribute much to the localisation of services; that is, the process of ensuring that services are designed and delivered in ways that are as appropriate as possible to the needs of the local area and local people.

Local faith communities, FBOs and their individual members have detailed knowledge, experience, expertise and track-record in providing services to those sometimes referred to as 'need to reach', the most excluded, marginalised and disadvantaged groups and individuals; they also often bring the strongest personal commitment to the local areas where they are residents.

FBOs can also help local authorities fulfil their new 'duty to promote democracy', by facilitating elected councillors' access to many 'need to reach' groups and empowering those constituents who are furthest away from the decision making processes, to ensure their voices are heard.

Comprehensive Area Assessment

Progress towards agreed local targets will be measured by the new comprehensive area assessment. CAA is a single assessment process, replacing the old system of Comprehensive Performance Assessment. It will be undertaken principally by the Audit Commission working with other HM Inspectorates.

Comprehensive area assessment is designed to put the experience of citizens at the centre of

the assessment process, reduce inequalities and address discrimination – all issues of concern to people of faith. Local councils, NHS trusts, police and fire and rescue authorities, children's trusts and other public bodies will be expected to demonstrate increasing partnership working to tackle many of the local challenges in which faith-based organisations are major stakeholders.

CAA reporting will use a straightforward system of green flags to indicate exceptional or innovative achievements from which other authorities and partnerships might learn, and red flags to indicate concerns about poor local performance or prospects. The assessment process began in April and the first results will be published from November 2009.

Faith leaders, faith-based organisation officers and faith representatives need to make sure they understand the agreements that have been made locally so that they can engage with the CAA process, in order to maximise the sector's continuing involvement in and influence on the design, delivery and review of local public services.

Further information

www.navca.org.uk

A more detailed version of this article and further references can be found on www.fbrn.org.uk

 **navca**
local focus national voice

Letter from the Chair of FbRN

the Hon Barney Leith



I was particularly proud to be Chair of FbRN's trustees on 31st March. Why? The great success of our first national conference for a couple of years showed how well FbRN has developed as an effective organisation under the guidance of our Executive Director, Doreen Finneron and our board of trustees.

In these uncertain times, voluntary organisations need steady leadership to shepherd their resources, to win new funding and to direct their work in the most fruitful directions. FbRN has benefited from all of this and continues to do so as we steer our course into the future.

Of course, the political landscape is being given a good shaking as I write. An upsurge of moral outrage shows that people still have a sense of morality to be outraged. Constitutional and systemic reform may be necessary, but they are unlikely to be sufficient. A purely managerial approach to government will no longer work (if it ever did).

A deep-rooted transformation to a spiritually and morally sustainable way of life will come about only when people, informed by a vision for the future, take charge of shaping their own lives.

Religion can provide that vision. And faiths and faith-based organisations provide communities of support to make visions into social and economic reality. It's this work that FbRN can and does support.

Faith Organisations Becoming Visible

A quality assurance framework for faith based organisations

Faith based organisations have great potential to increase understanding across cultures and assist people in improving the places where they live. They frequently reach the most marginalised groups in society. The main barriers which may prevent them from achieving this potential are:

- a lack of access to good practice
- other agencies often do not understand faith based groups, and may even be suspicious of them.

This Programme, funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, will use a quality assurance framework, VISIBLE developed by Community Matters, and pilot it with faith based organisations. We hope to produce a new version of VISIBLE that can be used by faith based organisations as well as by other community based groups.

If you know of a project that would like to be considered when we choose the pilots, please get in touch with us at admin@fbrn.org.uk

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| | |
|------------------|-------------|
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Using the FbRN website

We have been improving our website over the past year and it is, of course, an on-going process with new sections in development. You can send items for inclusion to me at valr@fbrn.org.uk or for jobs, events and news you can choose either to input them yourself or send them to me. Many of the items are also used in the e-bulletins which means that they reach a few thousand people around the country. And it's all free! *Val Rushton*

The Faith Based Regeneration Network UK

FbRN UK is funded by Communities & Local Government, the Church Urban Fund, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the MB Reckit Trust. The work of FbRN is supported by Goldsmiths College, University of London.

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