

English Inner City Policy : A Review and Evaluation

BY

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ABSTRACT

ENGLISH INNER CITY POLICIES : A REVIEW AND EVALUATION

After briefly reviewing the historical, socio-economic and political context of the inner city problems, this paper describes the major mechanisms of central government policy about the inner city. It also gives a critical assessment of these policies, especially in terms of lack of coordination, lack of imagination, excess of centralization and inadequation to local needs. It finally stresses the usefulness of bottom up initiatives as an alternative approach of the problem.

RÉSUMÉ

ANALYSE ET BILAN DES POLITIQUES DE L'INNER CITY EN ANGLETERRE

Après un bref rappel du contexte historique, socio-économique et politique des problèmes des inner cities, l'article décrit les principales initiatives du gouvernement central à ce sujet. Il donne ensuite une appréciation critique de cette politique, insistant notamment sur le manque de coordination et d'imagination, sur l'excès de centralisation et l'inadaptation aux besoins locaux. Enfin le développement d'initiatives locales est présenté comme une solution alternative possible.

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It is now almost thirty years since the then Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, initiated an inner city dimension to central government policy making in England. Britain now probably has a longer tradition of intervention within the inner cities than any other developed country other than the United States. This is not to suggest, as later discussions will make clear, that this tradition should be perceived as particularly successful in addressing the needs of the major cities and towns of the country. But because of its long standing nature, its variety, and its strong evaluative tradition English inner city policy offers an intriguing insight into the dilemmas of urban governance in developed societies.

This paper is an attempt to review aspects of inner city intervention in England. It does this within three major sections: a relatively brief discussion of some key contextual issues; an outline of the major mechanisms through which inner city policy has been implemented; and a discussion of some of the key issues in relation to evaluation.

Before embarking on this exercise a number of definitional issues should be clarified. This paper is concerned with inner city policy in England and Wales and not Scotland. This is an important point to make. Many of the principles which have underpinned inner city policy in England have applied to Scotland too. But there are differences in terms of policy implementation and organisation. These require separate consideration beyond the remit of this paper. Those interested should turn to some of the recent literature which does examine the Scottish tradition (Atkinson and Moon, 1994; Scottish Office, 1990; and G. Leydier's article in the present issue).

A second definitional point is that this paper is about central government policy towards the inner cities and not initiatives introduced by local government. Since the late 1970's many local authorities have attempted to alleviate conditions in the inner cities through a range of social and economic initiatives (Campbell 1990; Chandler and Lawless, 1985, Geddes and Bennington, 1992). These bottom up programmes can be seen to represent a different tradition to that reflected in central government's essentially top down and generally uniform approach towards inner city policy.

This issue in turn raises a third definitional issue: what is inner city policy? This is not as easy as it sounds. Clearly many, indeed virtually all branches of public policy impact in some way or other on cities. Usually however those commentating on inner city policy tend to define inner city policy as consisting of those spatially specific initiatives, introduced by central government and in particular by the Department of the Environment. Increasingly most observers would equate inner city policy with the government's « Action for Cities » initiative. In 1988 Mrs Thatcher's administration identified a package of measures which it argued collectively comprised urban policy (HMSO, 1988). This programme will form the focus of attention in this paper. It does not however equate with the totality of government action in and towards the major towns and cities of England. Other policy arenas such as health, education, transport and welfare provision clearly affect urban dwellers. It would be impossible however to address all of these issues in one paper.

Some Contextual Considerations

Before embarking on an outline of inner urban policy, a number of key contextual issues should be raised in order to locate inner city intervention within wider policy debate. This can best be addressed through three perspectives: the historical, the socio-economic, and the political.

A number of what can be seen as *historical* considerations need to be raised in assessing the scope and scale of English urban policy. The initiative emerged in the 1960's and was very much rooted in the social and political culture of that time (Lawless, 1979 ; 1988). It was seen as an attempt, however marginal in practice, to moderate the scale of urban disadvantage which was becoming more and more obvious. This was despite more than twenty years of a comprehensive Welfare State system originally introduced in the period of reconstruction immediately after the Second World War.

At the same time the initiation of an urban programme in the 1960's was seen by the Labour government as helping to address the particular problem of race which was beginning to become a real political issue in a number of English cities such as London, Bradford, Leicester and Birmingham. Residents from the New Commonwealth had been encouraged to emigrate to Britain from the 1950's onwards to help solve what was then an apparent labour shortage. By the mid 1960's immigration into the major cities had however

helped fuel racial tension and, at times, outright conflict. The urban programme was thus perceived as one device through which to moderate racial conflict in the inner cities.

Of course if Britain's racial problems appeared serious they were insignificant when compared with those of the United States. There, major urban riots had given rise to the formulation of a substantial programme of urban community and economic development projects which was subsequently to receive considerable adverse comment (Marris and Rein, 1974 ; Moynihan, 1969). The detail of that story is now of no more than historical interest. But it is interesting to note just how close Anglo-Saxon links have been in the evolution of both British and American urban policy. Many initiatives developed in one country have drifted over the Atlantic to the other (Jacobs, 1992).

Socio-economic issues represent the second major contextual theme. The key issue to raise here is the degree to which deprivation is concentrated within the major conurbations. Recent research has shown that deprived urban areas have higher rates of unemployment, lower educational qualifications and facilities, higher levels of poverty, and poorer health standards than does the country as a whole (Policy Studies Institute, 1992). Of course we need to be careful here. Not everyone in the inner cities is poor or deprived. All of the major conurbations contain areas of considerable affluence. At the same time too poverty is not contained within the older areas of the major conurbations. Some of the public housing schemes built on the peripheries of cities have a high incidence of unemployment, crime and drug abuse. And finally it is important to stress that not all cities suffer to the same extent. The government has recently produced a ranking of deprivation based on the 1991 Census of Population. All of the major cities appear as amongst the more disadvantaged local authorities in England. But of the 10 most deprived councils, 7 are in inner London, 2 are in and around Birmingham, and the tenth is Liverpool (Department of the Environment, 1994). Cities do contain a higher proportion of deprived people in both an absolute and relative sense than do other sectors of the spatial economy. But this distribution is not uniform within or between conurbations.

Finally the *political* dimension represents a third contextual theme which should be mentioned. The most important point to stress here is that of the changing structure of central-local government relations. Governance of the English cities throughout the 1980's and 1990's cannot be understood unless the accentuating nature of central government control is appreciated. Unlike the situation in many

other European countries, Mrs Thatcher's government's in particular adopted a series of measures which steadily eroded the power of locally elected authorities. The details of this transformation must be beyond this paper. They have in any event been discussed elsewhere (Cloke 1992 ; Edgell and Duke 1991 ; Stoker and Young, 1993). But in the context of inner city policy, this growth in central control can be seen as of considerable significance. In particular efforts to « explain » the introduction of initiatives such as urban development corporations (UDCs), discussed below, must invoke questions of central government control. UDCs, in common with other similar policy innovations in areas such as health, education and labour training, have in effect taken control of local issues away from elected bodies and been given to non-elected and centrally appointed bodies. Urban policy might be seen as attempting to satisfy a number of broader objectives. One of the most crucial, if often implicit, aim for Conservative right wing central governments has been the desire to extend influence and power within the, usually Labour held, cities.

English Urban Policy 1979-1994

The previous section attempted to provide some of the contextual background within which to examine inner city intervention in England. This part of the paper provides an essentially descriptive overview of the key elements of English urban policy in the fifteen year period 1979-1994. The earlier date has been taken primarily because this represents Mrs Thatcher's first electoral success. Most of the major inner city initiatives occurred after that date. Prior to 1979 a number of inner city initiatives had been introduced by Labour governments in the 1960's and later 1970's and by Mr Heath's 1970-74 Conservative government (Lawless, 1979 ; 1981). But two points should be made about these pre 1979 activities. First, many of the initiatives effected between 1967 and 1976 were essentially experimental, small scale and temporary. This era is in fact best seen as a period of « urban experimentation ». And second, when the then Labour government began to formulate a more formal process of inner city policy in 1977-78 after the publication of its 1977 White paper, *Policy for the Inner Cities*, (HMSO, 1977), there was only time for the introduction of a very small scale permanent urban policy. Virtually all of the major programmes post date 1979.

Table 1 outlines expenditure on seven of the key inner city programmes implemented by the Department of the Environment between 1988 and 1993 as indicated in the Department's 1994 Annual

Report. One other major initiative should also be mentioned here which for technical reasons is not included in the Annual Report : the enterprise zone experiment. Between 1981 and 1990 expenditure on enterprise zones amounted to about £ 500 m.

These 8 initiatives can best be seen to fall within four categories : co-ordinating initiatives ; projects designed to enhance enterprise and development ; the Urban programme ; and City Challenge.

(i) Co-ordinating Projects

Improving co-ordination has been one of the aims assumed by many urban projects. But one or two have really been primarily about integrating intervention within or towards the Cities. The Task Forces for example, of which there were 16 in 1993, act at the relatively local level to help improve job opportunities for inner city residents mainly by integrating and promoting existing employment creating and training facilities and resources in new ways. The eight City Action Teams (CATs) are designed to co-ordinate government activity in the major conurbations. Although several government departments can be seen to have an interest in the cities, much inner city investment comes from three of these. As would be expected the Department of the Environment is a central player here in that it is the lead organisation for many individual elements of urban policy. But the Department of Employment and the Department of Trade and Industry implement a range of programmes of particular relevance to the cities in fields such as employment creation, training, regional policy, technological enhancement, etc.

(ii) Enterprise and Development

During the 1980's a great deal of central government's inner city programme was designed to enhance physical development in the major cities. A major emphasis was placed on subsidising private sector property development especially in commerce and retailing. This was done in a number of ways. Grants were made available to help in the financing of particular projects. City Grant is paid directly to private sector developers to support projects which, because of their inner city location, would not otherwise have gone ahead. Derelict Land Grant is available to both public and private sector bodies to help bring derelict land into beneficial use. However although both the City and the Derelict Land Grants have been of value in helping to effect specific projects, much the most important initiatives in this general area of enterprise and development have been the enterprise zone (EZs) experiment and the UDCs.

By the early 1990's 21 EZs had been declared in England and Wales. One or two more are in the process of being approved. The EZ experiment was originally very much based on the idea that entrepreneurial skills were being dampened down in the United Kingdom because of heavy taxation and an over regulated land market (Hall, 1982). If the country was to encourage enterprise and hence boost economic activity it was essential that a more liberalised planning and taxation system should be introduced. These ideas were originally proposed by Peter Hall (1977) and others in the mid 1970's. The Conservative Party, then in opposition, was much taken by the underlying rationale. In the view of Mrs Thatcher and her colleagues excessive bureaucracy and high taxation had played a role in Britain's continuing economic decline.

Although there was little evidence to suggest that this analysis of the country's economic ills was at all accurate, the Conservative government elected in 1979 took immediate steps to implement EZs. Interestingly enough however many of the more radical proposals which the Conservative Party had discussed when in opposition were fundamentally watered down by the time the initiative was finally approved in 1981. During the late 1970's the Conservatives had talked about removing a wide range of health and safety legislation, the total removal of all forms of taxation, free immigration into Zones and so on. When finally implemented however the only major concessions were that for a ten year period no property taxes would be levied on industrial and commercial buildings and there was also to be a 100 % tax allowance on new industrial and commercial buildings. In essence EZs became a vehicle through which to encourage the redevelopment of selected parts of, mainly, urban Britain. Far from becoming an experiment in identifying the effects of more liberalised financial and planning regimes, EZs became an increasingly marginal programme in urban policy as a whole (Lawless, 1989). To a large extent they were used to dampen down some of the effects of unemployment caused by the localised impact of the closure of coal mines, steel works, ship building companies and so on. Indeed as Urban Policy evolved in the 1980's it became increasingly clear indeed that it was to be the UDC's which were to prove the vanguard of government intervention in the inner cities, not EZs.

UDCs are government appointed agencies charged with ensuring the physical and economic renewal of defined urban areas. They have powers over the reclamation, development and sale of land. They can install infrastructure and can provide direct financial assistance to proposed developments. They are funded primarily through

central government grant. By 1993 there were eleven in England and a similar Welsh initiative in the Cardiff Bay area. A further English UDC is to be created at Plymouth. Table 2 indicates the evolution of English UDCs and Table 3 planned expenditure in 1992-93.

There are several broad themes which should be stressed in relation to UDC's. They are primarily about physical development through land reclamation and the installation of infrastructure. As Table 3 points out they are not largely concerned with housing or social planning. They have all been set up in areas of industrial decline, about half in locations subject to substantial contraction in port related activities. They do however vary considerably in relation to size. The Teesside DC consists of almost 5 000 hectares; Central Manchester is just 187. And finally it is worth pointing out that UDCs have a finite life span. Some of the earlier ones are to last 12-15 years; some of the second and third generation ones only 5-8 years. Once terminated, all powers previously held by the UDC will revert to the relevant local authority.

(iii) The Urban Programme

The Urban Programme merits separate comment in that it represents the longest lasting of all urban initiatives and the one which overall has probably received most resources. This Programme was originally created in the late 1960's as a mechanism through which central government aimed to support 75 % of the costs of a wide range of social and community projects in areas such as help for the disabled, support for deprived children, language schools for immigrants and so on. In 1978-79 the Programme was to be amended and considerably expanded by the then Labour government. In the mid 1980's too the Conservative government was to re-orientate the Urban Programme away from social and community initiatives more towards local economic development projects. The net effect of these changes was that by 1992-93 the Programme consisted of about £ 240 m which supported around 9000 separate schemes in the most deprived parts of 57 predefined cities. About 75 % of this expenditure was allocated to capital, as opposed to current, projects. Slightly more than half of total expenditure went on economic objectives such as the creation of workshops and training schemes. In 1992 the government announced that it was running down the Urban Programme. Existing commitments would be honoured but no resources were to be made available for new schemes. After thirty years of supporting voluntary sector and local authority projects the Urban Programme will have disappeared by the late 1990's.

(iv) City Challenge

One reason why the Urban Programme is to be run down lies with the rapid growth in resources dedicated to the City Challenge (CC). Table 1 indicates that in 1992-93 more than £ 50 m was to be spent on this initiative. By 1995-96 this total will have increased to more than £ 210 m.

CC was originally introduced in 1991 when a selected group of 20 urban local authorities was asked by the then Secretary of State, Michael Heseltine, to submit programmes which would look to tackle the social and economic problems of defined parts of their administration. The emphasis was very much placed on the creation of innovative strategies which drew on the resources and commitment of the full range of actors and agencies available within cities. In successful bids these were to include the private sector, voluntary and community groups, the health authority, the police as well as the local council. 11 bids proved successful in the 1991 competition. In these localities interested parties were required to firm up their initial plans by devising five-year action programmes designed to sustain longer term economic, social and environmental regeneration. Successful bids were to receive about £ 35 m from the government over the five-year period. In 1992 a similar competition was opened up to all 57 Urban Programme authorities, of which 20 were eventually selected by the government.

English Urban Policy : Towards Evaluation

The previous section of this paper outlines some of the major initiatives emerging out of English urban policy. In this final section an attempt is made to tease out some of the key issues which can assist in evaluating urban policy. There are obviously difficulties here in that it is only possible to hint at some of the main themes. Many of these in turn raise broader questions which cannot be addressed in a paper of this length. At the same time however there is no shortage of material upon which to draw from here. The government, independent observers, and academics have all proved active in monitoring and/or evaluation of aspects of urban policy. Some of this work can be seen as routine monitoring of particular initiatives. There has for example been an intense monitoring of job creation and property development in enterprise zones (Tym and Partners, 1984). A considerable amount of evaluation work has also been commissioned especially by the government but also by other agen-

cies such as the European Commission into the wider effects and consequences of specific inner city initiatives such as EZs (PA Cambridge Economic Consultants, 1987; Segal Quince Wicksteed, 1990), and UDCs (National Audit Office, 1993). And finally there have been a number of broader reviews of inner city policy as a whole undertaken by the government (HMSO, 1994; National Audit Office, 1990), academics (Atkinson and Moon, 1994; Lawless, 1989; 1991; Robson 1988) and lobbying organisations (Association of Metropolitan Authorities, 1994).

A number of key themes emerge out of this rich and often critical mix of published material. Perhaps five issues are of particular interest here: lack of co-ordination and strategy; a static and limited perspective on the urban problem; over-centralisation; an inability to use community resources; and questions of resource allocation. Each of these is addressed in brief below.

(i) Lack of Co-ordination and Strategy

One consistent criticism of urban policy is that it has proved unable to provide a coherent and integrated programme for the cities. The government's own Audit Commission described urban policy as a « patchwork quilt of complexity and idiosyncrasy » (Audit Commission, 1989, 1). This is not of course surprising. The previous section of this paper outlines some of the Department of the Environment's urban schemes. When it is remembered too that other departments such as Employment, and Trade and Industry implement other schemes of direct relevance to the major conurbations then the potential scope for duplication and lack of co-ordination becomes obvious. It is difficult to devise a coherent package when so many programmes exist which tend not to share the same operational objectives, boundaries, time horizons and so on. The problem of securing an integrated approach to deal with the problems of the major cities out of a set of projects run by different government departments has never been resolved. The conurbations of England suffer because there is no Minister for the Cities.

In a sense exactly because of this lack of co-ordination, it has been equally difficult to devise a strategic overview for the cities. Urban policy is essentially driven by spending allocated to specific schemes. Each of these programmes has its own specific remit. And sometimes these can prove quite broad ranging. City Challenge for instance is designed to secure a sustainable programme of regeneration within certain defined localities. But on the whole most urban

schemes do not assume strategic objectives. Those who run them indeed are usually far more concerned with ensuring that spending commitments are met and immediate political demands satisfied. There is a strategic vacuum surrounding urban policy.

(ii) A Static and Limited Perspective on the Urban Problem

Following on from the above comment, it is not surprising to find that most commentators would not see urban policy as providing an especially dynamic or comprehensive perspective on the urban problem (Friends of the Earth, 1989 ; Lawless 1991). Care is needed here. It is certainly possible to point to occasions where an urban initiative has proved innovative. During the 1980's for example the Urban Programme funded some imaginative schemes in the field of housing renewal. But on the broader canvas there is little of imagination in most aspects of urban policy.

This problem emerges in a number of ways. But to give one obvious example take technological change. Many small and medium sized enterprises in the United Kingdom are not able or willing to adopt appropriate technology which will allow them to remain competitive on the world or European stages. This may be seen as one of, if not the most pressing problem facing the urban economies. Yet there is no strategic initiative to face up to this issue. It may be addressed through existing schemes such as City Challenge. But urban policy as a whole lacks an explicit technological thrust.

And unfortunately there are other areas which, whilst of profound importance to cities and their residents do not figure prominently in urban policy. Educational standards and levels of attainment tend to be lower, sometimes much lower, in the cities than in more affluent suburbs and smaller towns. Yet although there are a number of relatively minor initiatives in the field, it would be difficult to claim that education played an especially crucial role in urban policy. The same can be said of crime which has become a much more crucial issue for many in the cities. There is a small initiative on crime: the Safer Cities experiment. But again its overall impact is limited. Urban Policy has simply not proved dynamic. It has pursued certain themes, most obviously subsidising property development in one form or another, to the detriment of many other important issues. And it still retains an essential static view of the cities. It has not provided any dynamic guidance as to where the cities might need to reposition themselves in the twenty-first century.

(iii) An Over-Centralised Initiative

As a number of publications have pointed out English urban policy is heavily overcentralised when compared with both American (Barnekov, Boyle and Rich, 1989) and European experience (Le Galès and Mawson, 1994). There can be little doubt that, taken in its entirety, urban policy in England has been heavily dominated by Conservative central governments. Because the right has been in power in the United Kingdom for 15 years it has had an ideal opportunity to lay down the major alignments of urban policy. Bearing in mind the government's anti-state rhetoric, it is not surprising that urban policy has adopted what can be perceived in general as market orientated aspirations. Initiatives have for example tried to instil a stronger sense of « enterprise » in the cities. Some schemes such as the UDCs have assisted in the « privatisation » of urban policy by, inter alia, adopting « business strategies » for the cities, placing business representatives on executive boards and so on. The language of business has dominated urban policy since the late 1970's.

In general this slant on urban policy has not been especially welcomed by many policy makers and politicians in the major cities. Virtually all of these are controlled by the Labour party. Many Labour politicians are firmly rooted to what might be seen as more community based imperatives. Their agenda is dominated by issues such as poverty, inequality, the provision of basic services and so on. In practice however because central government retains so much power in England, many local Labour politicians have had to accept the hegemony of a Conservative government. Reluctantly they have gone along with many urban schemes. They have for instance competed for City Challenge and sat, in a minority capacity, on the boards of UDCs. And of course local authorities have some powers in all of this. They have been the prime mover in selecting projects for Urban Programme funding. They generally proved the lead players in City Challenge. And, in a period of very real economic recession in the late 1980's through to the early 1990's, many local Labour politicians would probably accept that their policies for urban development areas would not have differed in substance from what many of the UDCs have tried to do.

It could too be argued that there has been a modest weakening in central control in recent years. The apogee of centralisation was probably reflected in Mrs Thatcher's 1988 statement, *Action for Cities* (HMSO, 1988). This document failed to mention local government

at all. Yet by 1991 after her demise, City Challenge submissions were at least to be headed up by local authorities.

Nevertheless, although it is possible to identify a marginal weakening in central government's dominant position, it is still clear that the centre has driven and controlled urban policy. This has some advantages. Government ministers have obviously tended to support centrally inspired initiatives. But it has many disadvantages too. In particular urban policy has not sought to incorporate the powers, resources, experiences and commitment of local people and their political representatives. It very much reflects the leit-motiv of governance in the England of the 1980's: autocratic, over-centralised, and unimaginative. The government might argue for subsidiarity when it suits it on the European stage. It is most reluctant to pursue the principle down the chain of government.

(iv) Community Resources

Not suprisingly in the light of the comments raised above, it is evident too that urban policy has done little to tap the needs, aspirations and abilities of inner city dwellers. For many in the most deprived parts of cities, urban policy has little if any relevance. During the 1980's the government argued that, although subsidising the kinds of major property developments which transformed locations such as London's Docklands would not directly assist the urban poor, benefits would « trickle down ». These « trickle-down » benefits would occur, so it was argued in a number of ways. New service sector jobs would occur in areas such as cleaning, catering and security; there would be opportunities to train for employment in sectors such as financial services accommodated in the new commercial property which was being encouraged by urban policy; and everyone would benefit from new infrastructure such as roads, light rail schemes and so on.

In reality « trickle-down » benefits proved extremely illusive. Few locals benefited from the major « flagship » type of development. Throughout the 1980's it was consistently argued by the UDCs in particular that regeneration needed key projects which would act as major foci for subsequent developments. This approach, classically epitomised by massive subsidy for the Canary Wharf project in London's Docklands, proved of limited longer term value however. Some of the more ambitious proposals never came to fruition. Even when, as with Canary Wharf, projects were completed, severe recession dampened down demand from prospective tenants. And

of course all of this proved marginal in the extreme for poorer urban dwellers. Their chance of gaining employment from the Canary Wharf type of project was so marginal as to be effectively ruled out. Few had any of the skills needed for, say, working in financial services or advertising. Not many were to obtain employment in ancillary services. For them urban policy remained of virtual irrelevance. It is doubtful if more than a tiny minority even know about it.

(v) The Question of Resources

Resources allocated to urban policy remain limited. The Department of the Environment, the lead Department, plans to spend about £ 1,273 m in 1994-95. This represents of the order of 0.5 % of overall government spending (Nevin and Shiner, 1994). As has been alluded to before, other Departments also contribute to what might generously be called urban policy. But even if a more catholic interpretation of urban policy is adopted, the total cannot amount to even 1 % of spending. Moreover expenditure on the key urban initiatives is set to fall by the end of the 1990's.

Having said that, absolute resources allocated to urban policy over the last fifteen years represent a not entirely insignificant sum. Interestingly enough the government has recently published an important research paper which attempts to evaluate the overall, synergetic effects of all the major Department of the Environment urban initiatives (HMSO, 1994). As has been mentioned previously the government has funded numerous evaluations of specific initiatives. And academics and lobbying groups have published generalised reviews. But this 1994 publication is different. A large evaluation team was created. It employed statistical data to examine the overall effects of urban policy in the 57 Urban Programme authorities and also qualitative data to assess localised effects in three case study areas: Merseyside, Greater Manchester, and the Newcastle region. The results are not entirely surprising. There has been some narrowing in the relative deprivation of the conurbations when compared with the country as a whole. But « in the most deprived areas, and especially in the conurbation cores and in areas of high unemployment, policy has not been able to make significant inroads » (HMSO, 1994, xii). The Report concludes that urban policy needs to be re-orientated through the creation of more effective partnerships with local organisations and communities and by improving the coherence of urban intervention.

However because the Report was commissioned by central govern-

ment, it was unable to make any more reflective points on total resources allocated to the urban budget. But as virtually all observers would agree, it is not sufficient. The most acute manifestations of socio-economic exclusion are to be found in the major cities. The current allocation of resources is quite inadequate to meet these immediate and longer term problems. And it is not just Labour politicians saying this. Six years ago the Confederation of British Industry, a lobbying organisation for major business, argued for an immediate injection of fully £ 50 billion pounds into the cities (CBI, 1988). If anything, since then, resources have probably declined in real terms. But the real costs of urban decay will simply not go away. Housing standards will continue to decline, infrastructure collapse and public services generally deteriorate. In the present constitutional climate however it will probably need a summer of riots for anything to be done.

Towards a New Urban Policy Agenda ?

The kinds of criticisms discussed in the previous section have, arguably, had an impact on state urban policy in the post 1993 period. Two of the most persistent criticisms of urban policy in the 1980's were that it lacked co-ordination and coherence and that it was over-centralised. Partly in response to the intensity and consistency of these comments the government has recently introduced two new initiatives. In 1993 it launched an Urban Regeneration Agency which will work towards securing the regeneration of vacant or derelict land. It is to work in partnership with local authorities, the private sector and other organisations and it will incorporate a number of existing grant regimes, notably City Grant and Derelict Land Grant.

More significantly in late 1993 the government announced that it was to create a Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) (Department of the Environment, 1993). The SRB was designed to co-ordinate a new approach to urban funding which would mean that priorities were to be set in the light of local needs and priorities (Department of the Environment, 1994). In addition ten Integrated Regional Offices were to be created throughout England which were to administer the SRB by pulling together some of the functions previously delivered by the Departments of the Environment, Trade and Industry, Transport and Employment. The IROs were given an appropriate share of the SRB, the main elements of which are outlined in Table 4. It is crucial here to stress however that this is not new money but rather the redefinition of existing allocations. Within each region, authorities, in consultation with other local interests, are to create

local strategies through which to bid for any available resources to the relevant IRO.

At first glance this may appear to address some of the criticisms levelled at urban policy. The SRB is based on regional co-ordination of appropriate agencies ; it encourages the creation of local partnerships through which to implement strategies ; and it appears to give regions, as opposed to the centre, rather more say in what happens. In reality it is unlikely to change things to any great extent. There is no new money, indeed the elements which collectively make up the SRB are set to decline by the end of the decade. Because of existing commitments the amount of money available for new bids is insignificant, about £ 100 m for the whole country by 1995-96. And of course it is a competition. It is about bidding to regionally located, but nationally appointed, civil servants who will in turn decide the allocation of resources within their administration. Some local authorities will gain a little. Many will get nothing. SRB begins to address some of the principled problems constraining the introduction of a genuinely effective urban policy in England. However it provides few answers. What is needed is a much more imaginative and dynamic approach which fully utilises local resources and commitment. We need much more of a 'bottom up' approach and not the uninspiring imprimatur of a central government committed to the achievement of a few simplistic nostrums. In common with other aspects of constitutional governance in England, urban policy needs a total revamp to accommodate the needs and aspirations of contemporary urban society.

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Table 1

Urban and Regeneration Expenditure (DoE only) - £ million

	1989-90 outturn	1990-91 outturn	1991-92 outturn	1992-93 outturn
City Challenge	-	-	-	52.1
Urban Programme	222.7	225.8	237.5	236.2
Task Forces	19.9	20.9	20.5	23.6
City Action Teams	4.0	7.7	8.4	4.6
City Grant	39.1	45.4	40.8	44.3
Derelict Land	54.2	61.7	77.3	101.9
UDC's	476.7	607.2	601.8	515.0

Source: Department of the Environment Annual Report 1994

Table 2

Creation of UDC's

		Date Created
First Generation	London Docklands	1981
	Merseyside	1981
Second Generation	Trafford Park	1987
	Black Country	1987
	Teeside	1987
	Tyne and Wear	1987
Third Generation	Central Manchester	1988
	Leeds	1988
	Sheffield	1988
	Bristol	1989
Fourth Generation	Birmingham Heartlands	1992

Source: Department of the Environment Annual Report 1993

Table 3

UDC's Planned Expenditure including receipts, 1992-93

	Land purchase reclamation & environmental	Roads, transport & other infrastructure improvements	Housing & social facilities	Assistance for private sector development	Admin, promotion & estate management	Total £ million
London Docklands	14.5	237.3	16.0	0.3	25.8	293.9
Merseyside	25.0	5.0	1.3	3.2	7.6	42.1
Black Country	27.9	15.2	1.8	9.5	6.9	61.3
Teeside	31.7	12.3	4.8	12.4	6.8	68.0
Trafford Park	13.3	12.6		4.6	4.0	34.5
Tyne & Wear	24.5	5.7	2.8	10.1	7.1	50.2
Bristol	3.6	14.0			2.8	20.4
Central Manchester	11.0		0.5	6.2	2.8	20.5
Leeds	5.3	0.5		1.7	2.1	9.6
Sheffield	1.2	9.3	0.2	2.2	3.0	15.9
Birmingham Heartlands	2.5	1.0	-	0.5	1.0	5.0
Totals	160.5	312.9	27.4	50.7	69.9	621.4

Source: Department of the Environment Annual Report 1993

Table 4

Major Budgets within the SRB 1994-95

	£m
Urban Development Corporation	286
Housing Action Trusts	88
English Partnership	181
Estate Action	373
City Challenge	213
Urban Programme	83
Task Forces	16
City Action Teams	1
Safer Cities	4
TOTAL	
SINGLE REGENERATION BUDGET	1442

Source: Hansard 31.3.94, col 918