

Welcome to the Local Futures Network Newsletter. In this month's issue:

Latest Local Futures Network event: The geographical impact of an Economic Downturn

At our most recent Local Futures Network seminar, held in London on 26th November, we presented our latest research on the geographical impact of the recession on economies and communities in Britain. The findings were published in the 11th December issue of the [Local Government Chronicle](#). Conference presentations are available to network subscribers who log-in [here](#). For those who would like a fuller assessment of the implications for their own area we have developed a customised [workshop offer](#).

For more information please contact Phil Gregory at Phil.Gregory@localfutures.com

Local Futures Barometer

Our latest Barometer focuses on the geography of unemployment, highlighting those parts of Britain experiencing the highest rates of increase in unemployment as a result of the economic downturn. The analysis shows the South of England has a large concentration of districts experiencing the highest increases in unemployment rates, whilst Northern England, Wales, and Scotland are currently less affected. [More](#)

You can also view the report, together with an article by Phil Gregory, on the SocietyGuardian website. The link to the brief commentary is now live; look out for further reports in the coming weeks. [More](#)

Place Profiles

To celebrate the launch of our new Place Profiles service we would like to offer you a **free copy** of one of our new reports - there are over 140,000 to choose from, so to make life simpler just tell us which Sub-region, District or Ward you are most interested in and pick an issue from [this list](#). Place Profiles have been created to give you fast, low-cost summaries of the key issues facing your area and are designed to underpin a range of research and policy applications and to help tell a 'story of place'.

Local Economic Assessments

A new version of the Local Futures Audit has been developed to meet the needs of authorities preparing local economic assessments. Based on the latest thinking on competitiveness and sustainable development, it sets economic conditions within a wider social and environmental context. The knowledge economy theme is reflected throughout the analysis, which concludes with a summary report and key policy challenges. The report also uses economic and social typologies to assess conditions, identifying similar areas for benchmarking and policy development. [More](#)

New addition to the Local Futures team

This month there has been a new addition to our team. Georgina Barretta is an economic developer and planner joining us from Bone Wells Associates where she was involved in employment land reviews, eco-town development and tourist strategies among others. At Local Futures she will be contributing to our qualitative research and consultancy work.

Latest resources for Network members

The 'intelligence' and 'resources' sections of the Local Futures Network site are regularly updated. Some of the latest additions include new policy reports, the latest research and new drivers of change. [More](#)

Next Local Futures Network event: Creative Places

Our next Local Futures Network event will be on the topic of Creative Places. At the event we will explore the role of arts and culture in regeneration and the implications for economies, communities – and places! The seminar will be held on **Wednesday 18th February**, with all Network members entitled to one free place. Further details will be announced in the coming weeks, and updated onto the [Events](#) section of the website.

For more information, contact [Phil Gregory](#)

Merry Christmas

From all the team at Local Futures, we hope you have a very merry Christmas, and a happy new year. See you in 2009!

You are receiving this email because you are a Local Futures Network member. If you wish to unsubscribe, please reply to this email with 'Unsubscribe' in the subject field.

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New services for Network members

The members' area of the Local Futures Network site is constantly updated. If you would like to be notified of changes more regularly, please register to receive an [RSS feed](#). We have highlighted some of the new content included in the site below, but if you want to view all new content please log in to www.localfutures.com using your email address and user password.

Our new content includes additions to the following:

- [Policy](#)
- [Research](#)
- [Strategies](#)
- [Future drivers of change](#)
- [Barometer](#)

Policy

In the policy section we have included links to a range of recently published reports, including:

Reduction in UK poverty levels stalls

A recent report published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, entitled *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2008*, has identified worrying recent trends in a range of social indicators. The analysis monitored a range of subjects across the last decade throughout UK society – including crime, poverty, education and health – and assessed the Government's performance. The latest data has shown that improvement in several areas has slowed, or even stagnated, after an initial strong performance.

In particular, there is concern about the number of UK citizens still forced to live in poverty. Using 56 indicators to measure poverty the report shows that the Government initially made huge advancements in reducing UK poverty. Up to 2003 the majority of measures for poverty showed strong improvements. However, in the subsequent years this momentum has not been maintained, with, for example, the number of individuals living on low incomes increasing in both 2006 and 2007.

The report does contain some good news however, with strong growth in the number of 'decent homes', fewer pensioners in poverty, and significant improvements in child education levels.

Commission for Rural Communities: 'Is the 'Credit Crunch' impacting on your economy?'

The report draws from responses from a range of organisations and members of the public across England describing and anticipating effects on housing, employment, investment and finance, community impacts and much more.

New Local Government Network: 'Deal or No Deal? Delivering LAA success'

In this publication the NLGN evaluates the latest series of Local Area Agreements using extensive interviews and surveys with local authorities. It presents significant achievements through the process but also highlights important obstacles preventing the LAAs from working more effectively. The paper stresses the need for dissemination of best practice and experience at the national level and suggests a series of reforms for improving the process.

Improvement and Development Agency: 'New European migration: good practice guide for local authorities'

IDeA Knowledge provides in this new publication case studies, self-assessment questions and other information to help councils manage the local impact of migration from EU accession states. It provides councils and partner organisations with information, showcases the work going on in many councils and highlights the need for a clear vision on migration.

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Research

New reports included in our research section include:

Department for Communities and Local Government: 'England's seaside towns: a benchmarking study'

The purpose of this report by Sheffield Hallam University and commissioned by DCLG is to identify the level to which England's seaside towns are different from the regions in which they are located and from the country as a whole. The report benchmarks the performance of large English seaside towns on a series of socioeconomic indicators against regional and national averages.

The Young Foundation: Generating Social Innovation

The paper aims to guide and support the practice of all those who contribute to helping societies think, adapt and innovate, by providing useful concepts, inspiration as well as practical tools for social innovation. It is addressed to governments and policy-makers, foundations and NGOs, as well as entrepreneurs and innovators themselves.

Department for Communities and Local Government: Digital Inclusion: An Analysis of Social Disadvantage and the Information Society

This study investigates the extent to which social exclusion and digital exclusion coincide. It considers whether people who suffer significant social disadvantage also suffer digital exclusion and the key social drivers that contribute to digital exclusion.

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Local Strategies

We continue to update our library of local strategies and have recently included:

Leicestershire Sustainable Community strategy 2008

The strategy, developed by the Leicestershire Together partnership, proposes priorities for improvement in Leicestershire over the next 5 years. These are largely based upon two evidence base reports 'This is Leicestershire' and 'Places in Leicestershire'. The strategy also sets out the vision of the partnership for the county in 2026, that of Leicestershire comprising of thriving, sustainable, safe and secure communities.

Newcastle Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement (2008-11)

The vision for 2021 is that Newcastle will be a vibrant and sustainable city with a healthy, diverse, growing population. By 2021 Newcastle will be home to a thriving, high skills based economy with many companies trading in global markets and at the forefront of innovation. The strategy document also sets out 'five big challenges', aims, objectives and priority objectives that will guide the Newcastle Partnership in pursuit of that vision

Worthing Interim sustainable community strategy

This is the interim Sustainable Community Strategy for Worthing running until mid-2009 and is the first step to the Full SCS. The strategy consists of six goals and five cross-cutting themes. These set the overall vision for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area based on local needs.

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Future drivers of change

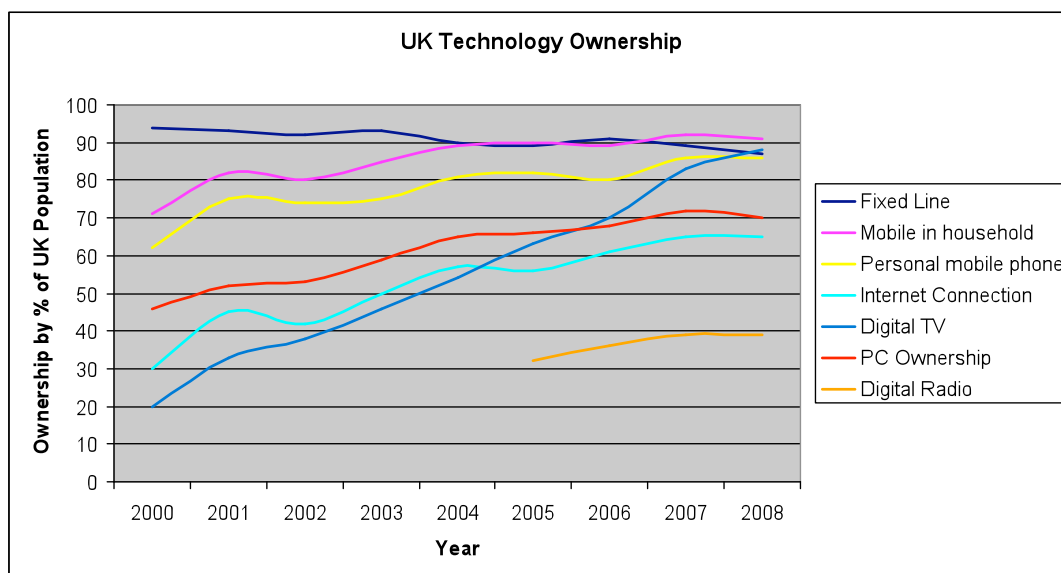
New drivers of change included in the 'Futures' section of the site include:

UK Technology Growth

Such has been the growth in popularity of recent multimedia and communications technology advancements that several mediums are now well and truly embedded in UK households, at the expense of more familiar and traditional technologies.

As recently as the turn of the millennium, 94% of UK households owned a fixed telephone landline. This figure however has now fallen to 87%, with household ownership of mobile phones far outstripping that of landlines, at 91%. Complementing these figures, personal ownership of a mobile phone has increased from 62% in 2000, to 86% in 2008. The shift in phone ownership may also be further impacted in coming years by the growing popularity of the internet based voice communication technology, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). Usage of VoIP has almost doubled over the last two years, with 10% of UK households currently making use of the technology.

Even the shelf life of relatively recent technology is proving to be limited, with the pace of technological advancement such that new introductions can be rendered redundant within 2 to 3 years. This is especially true of Dial-up internet connections. In 2005 over one third of UK households used Dial-up, compared with only 5 per cent in 2008. Broadband currently accounts for the lion's share of connections at 93%. However, with the introduction of new technology, in particular the work currently being undertaken by the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) on a fibre-optic cable network up to 10,000 times faster than conventional broadband, broadband may soon find itself joining Dial-up on the technological scrapheap.



Bleak EU and UK economic outlook

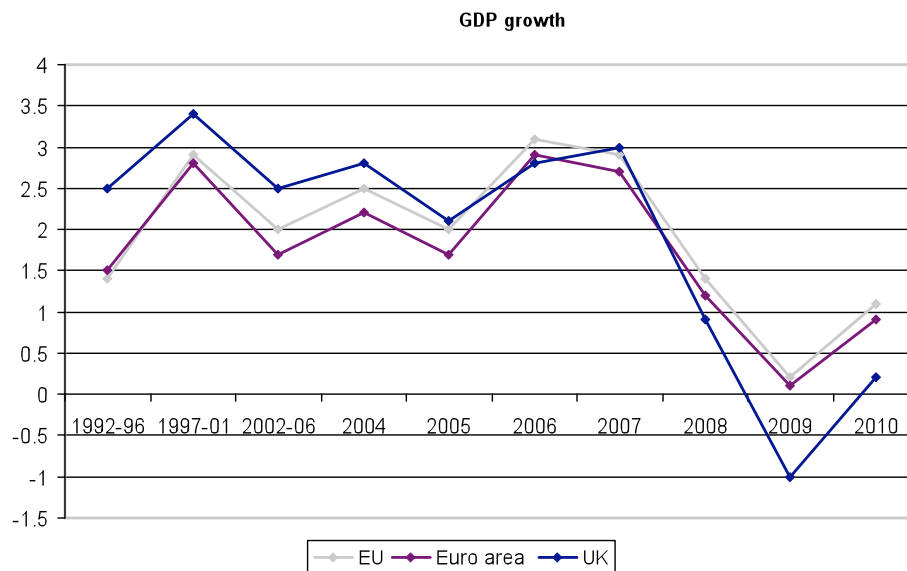
In its latest forecast, the European Commission painted a bleak picture of the state of EU economies and particularly the UK. The EC's predictions added to the latest concern over future economic stability in the EU, with projections that exceeded in pessimism previous forecasts. Britain is expected to fare least well among the large European economies, experiencing economic contraction and deteriorating government finances.

According to the report, growth in the EU would almost come to a standstill in 2009, dropping from 1.4 per cent in 2008 to just 0.2 per cent in a year. Similarly, the eurozone economies (the 15 countries with the euro as their common currency) would expand by only 0.1 in 2009, from 1.2 per cent this year.

The outlook for the UK was the gloomiest among countries of the EU – excluding Latvia and Estonia. The previous forecast for 2009 published in April was revised in November to a -1 per cent contraction in GDP. Added to that, the slowdown of economic activities that bring high tax revenues, the increasing unemployment and the cost of the measures to ensure financial stability are expected to have a considerable negative impact on public finances. The UK's deficit is assessed to reach 6.5 per cent of national income in 2010-11.

Unemployment in the UK is projected to increase by around 1.5 percentage points, despite the expected reduction in labour supply due to reduced immigration. It is also foreseen that consumer price inflation will remain high in the last quarter of 2008; however it will ease considerably in 2009.

The UK economy is expected to slowly recover in 2010, reaching an annual growth of 0.5 per cent. For the EU overall, a slow recovery is also foreseen, suggesting an acceleration of GDP growth to about 1 per cent.



Source: European Commission Economic Forecast, Autumn 2008

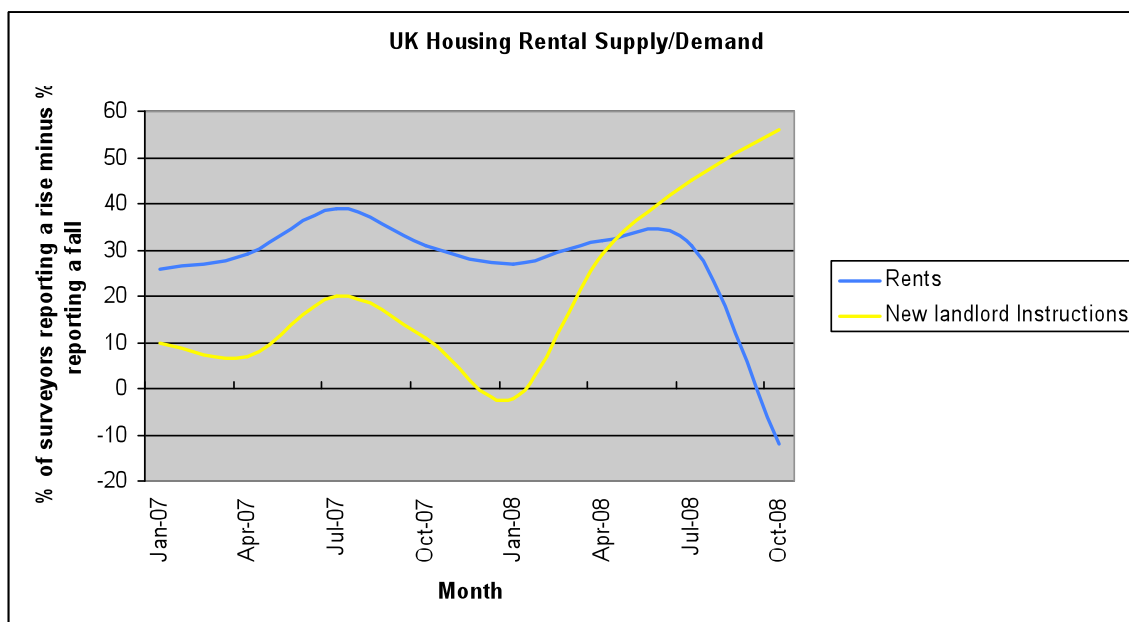
Fall in UK Lettings Values

The UK housing market is continuing to experience volatile conditions. The reduction in the availability of previously abundant mortgage deals has led to falling levels of sales, and record levels of reduction in house prices. As a result the trend had initially been for potential buyers to move into the rental market, seeking short to mid term housing solutions until lending conditions improved sufficiently in the sales market. The net effect had been a large rise in rental demand, and thus an increase in rental prices.

Likewise, such have been the difficulties for home owners in selling their properties, a large number have reverted to offering their property on the rental market to meet the apparent increased demand. However, it now appears the rental market has reached saturation point. For the first time since 2003 the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) is reporting falling rent levels.

The RICS Residential Lettings Survey for October 2008 shows that the number of surveyors reporting falling rental levels outstrips those reporting increases by 12 per cent. The cause of this fall is highlighted by the level of new properties available for rent, with the number of surveyors reporting increased levels of new properties rising from 11 per cent to 56 per cent over the last 12 months.

Regionally the worst affected areas are London and the South East, where falls of 39 per cent and 19 per cent have been seen. Conversely, Scotland, and the Midlands and Wales have fared the best, with levels actually increasing in Scotland by 5 per cent and in the Midlands and Wales by 6 per cent.



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Barometer: Unemployment

Our latest Barometer focuses on unemployment. Using the latest ONS data, the analysis shows a concentration of districts experiencing high increases in unemployment figures in the South of England, as well as a few areas in Northern England, Wales, and Scotland.

Despite the attention of the national media on redundancies in the City of London, the report shows the highest levels of unemployment within districts located in Hampshire, Dorset, Wiltshire, Surrey and West Sussex. It therefore highlights the fact that commuter flows change the pattern of unemployment when it comes to resident based figures.

The report also highlights how the industrial structure of districts plays an important role on the level of unemployment. Districts that rely heavily on sectors most at risk (financial services, construction, retail and tourism) for income generation are more likely to suffer the most.

Network members may download the report [here](#) (PDF doc, opens in same page), complete with case studies and a data annex of data tables and related maps.

If you are interested in accessing, at a regional and local level, the latest economic, social and environmental indicators see our [Local Knowledge](#) online system.

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