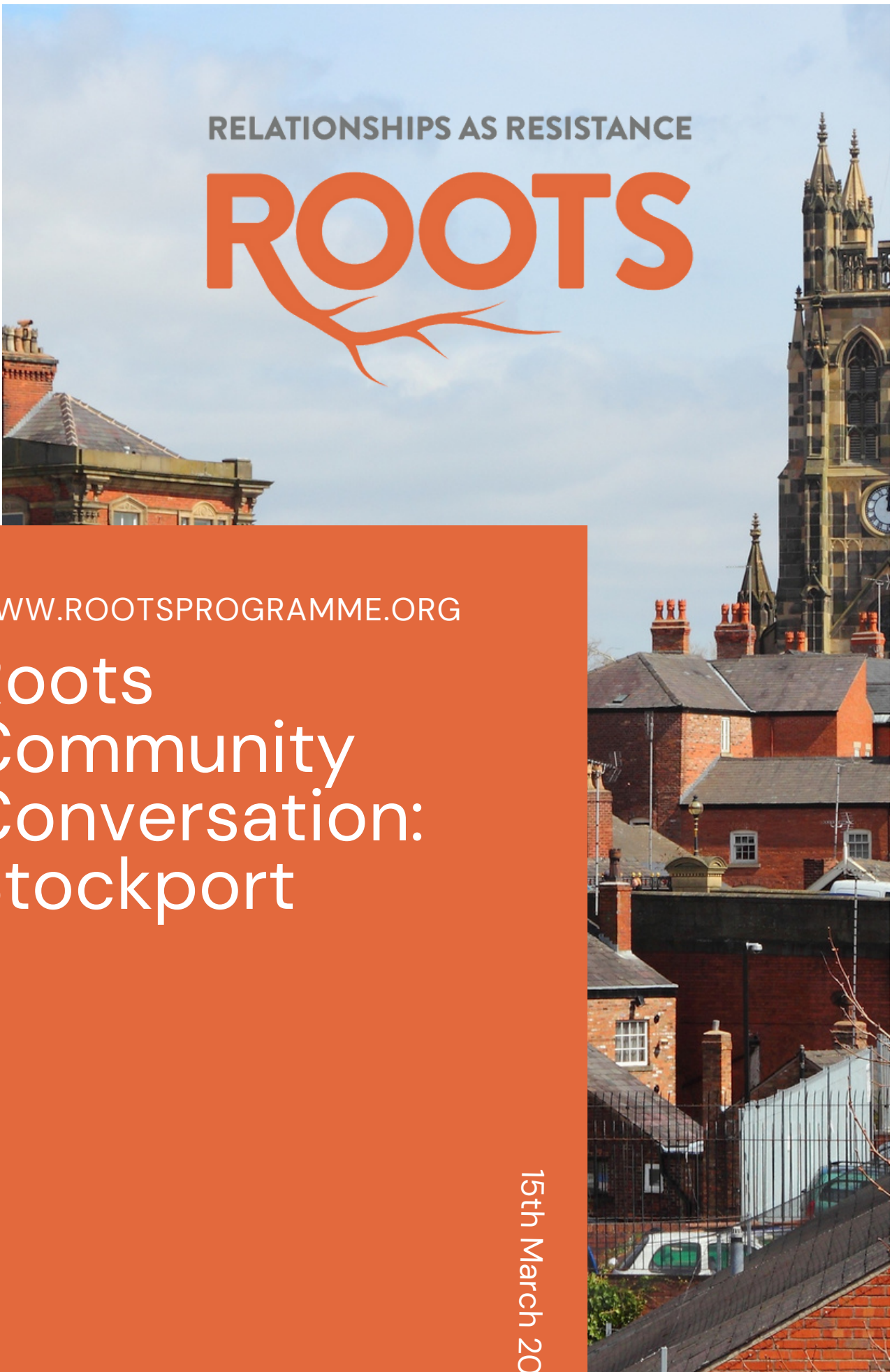


RELATIONSHIPS AS RESISTANCE

ROOTS



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Roots Community Conversation: Stockport

15th March 2024

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RELATIONSHIPS AS RESISTANCE

ROOTS



01 Introduction

The Roots Programme CIC is a small but mighty, grassroots organisation dedicated to bringing people together across our differences, in dialogue rather than debate, to connect with others who have a different experience to us living here in the UK.



Founded by Ruth Ibegbuna, Roots run several projects and it is through our Roots Community Conversations, we hope to engage the voices of residents in towns and cities around the UK to think about the place they live and consider what they may want it's future to look like – especially those who do not usually participate formally in local affairs.

Roots recognise that communities have capacities, knowledge and resources to make a real life difference where they live. We seek to create a space for listening, speaking, inclusion, respect for each other, agreement or disagreement, but more importantly, provide community members with informal opportunities to discuss ideas for action.

These Conversations are for residents to feed back to elected representatives about the things they care about on their own terms, rather than on set questions asked by the local council. You might not like getting involved in local politics, or even have the time, and this is another way of participating, comfortably.

Participants talk about concerns and challenges from multiple points of view and identify areas of common ground, providing a broader perspective. They can add their own recommendations for action that will benefit the community.

We are facing a cost of living crisis that doesn't affect us all proportionately, we saw the differing effects of Covid 19 across the country and we are still experiencing the polarising effects of the Brexit campaign. As we all sit tight for the next election, this is a time to come together, hear more from a broader section of the community and find new ways of doing things that will benefit the whole community and make our lives better.

Community members are the experts on the areas in which they live and instead of shouting at each other on Facebook, feeling we have no right to contribute because we don't have time to commit to volunteering or joining a formal community group, we still have valuable ideas that need to be surfaced and discussed calmly and compassionately.

Roots don't believe that engaging with locals when those with power need support on a development is enough. Roots believe that individual local voices should be heard regularly, through informal grassroots forums and listened to as trusted advisors by those we elect.

Roots can advise on regular, ongoing local conversations, managed by residents and for residents, with the simple structure and guidelines. We encourage local authorities to embrace and value ongoing dialogue with the community.

Contact clare@rootsprogramme.org

02 Overview

The main take-aways

- Stockport is a village!
- Historic Stockport is the oldest market town in Britain and was the centre of the Industrial Revolution – so much hidden history.
- Stopfordians are very proud of our multicultural diversity and want to remain a welcoming place.
- We'd like to have more sessions like this to have a say and feel heard.
- Stockport has its own unique identity and does not want to be swallowed by Manchester.
- We have a strong and positive sense of community in Stockport.
- Stockport people are proud of their parks, historic buildings and culture of friendliness and acceptance.
- We need to change the culture of littering.
- The issues of housing are important to talk about (rents, style and size of new builds and availability).
- The council listen, but how can we be sure we are 'heard'?



03 The Conversation

Stockport chats

Why Stockport for this Community Conversation?

The Stockport Community Conversation is one of a series of conversations to be held across the UK, whereby the different local communities within the area come together to discuss and deliberate curiously, compassionately and respectfully on matters pertaining to their community, the unique challenges they face and how these issues can be dealt with and overcome.

Roots has a unique connection to Stockport, because Ruth Ibeguna- the founder and CEO has lived there and retains strong links there, and our facilitator, Indie Morgan, also lives there.

Stockport is in the country's top ten most polarised boroughs in terms of wealth and deprivation, with pockets of deprivation hidden in affluent areas making it even less clear quite how divided the borough is.

The Sunday Times listed Stockport as "one of the most exciting towns around", praising its property prices and public transport connections, this weekend just passed. Many previous news articles in recent years have said the same – and we were fascinated to find out more from residents about how they feel in comparison to what is being projected by the media, and what THEY hope for, for the future of Stockport.



People who feel part of their community say the benefits include:

Having an opportunity to meet people (45%);

Improving their wellbeing (43%)

Having a greater sense of pride (40%)

Having a positive impact on their local area (36%).

National Lottery Community Research Index – a survey of over 8,000 UK adults designed to find out people's priorities and aspirations for their local community.

04 The Conversation

We asked, Stockport answered...

What do you think people who have never lived here may think Stockport looks and feels like?

Stockport is feet away from the countryside and the city. It's a bit like a village and feels quite safe, but there is a lot of crime in some areas here. There is great interest in the historic side of Stockport and the ongoing transformation and regeneration gets a lot of press, too. We have good transport links to the rest of the country, so it's easy to visit.

We have a great diversity of people and cultures here and also a great diversity in the architecture in the area, alongside many green spaces. We also have a good foodie scene, with the Foodie Friday street food market being a favourite place for visitors.

What are the real shining qualities that Stockport has that the rest of the country should know about?

There could be greater publicity of our historical trail and attractions to encourage visitors. Our Hat Museum and the brick viaduct are worth a visit, along with plenty of hidden history and architecture. We had the magic of Strawberry Studios and our musical legacy that still continues. Stockport market has been trading since the Middle Ages, now from a 19thC market hall, but is repeatedly mentioned as a real shining quality.

Welcoming other cultures here enriches our lives, Stockport's a place that celebrates community with the Women and Girls Network and the Make a Difference Award. An Arabic cafe here specifically makes an effort to welcome those with refugee and asylum status to the area.

We are not a rude community, we are welcoming and feel there is less racism here. We have a really good community spirit and quite a lot for families to do, good education, housing and health centres.

What gives you the greatest hope for the future of Stockport at the moment?

Meeting like this gives us great hope, and our amazing community and voluntary groups. as does immigration into the area – our big success. The transport improvements also give great hope, alongside some positive action on climate change matters here. The regeneration of the town centre is giving all of us hope.



05 The Conversation

We asked, Stockport answered...

Talking points



I live in a place that is open to change

People here are not afraid to change.
They are improving.

The community is strong and can make change.

We welcome everyone and try to forge new friendships.

We need to listen to our elderly and local people when it comes to change.



The British Government cares about Stockport.

The people who care about Stockport live in Stockport, we are well represented by our MPs though.

We just don't think this government cares about ordinary people.

They should treat refugees and asylum seekers with better respect and dignity.

Stockport has its own unique identity

Stockport has a unique diversity and a unique friendly and welcoming community.

Stopfordians are all individually unique.

Stockport has its own identity and cultural and heritage values that no other part of the country has.



People know that the council here listen to them

I feel communication is poor, they listen with closed ears.

It's often difficult to find the right person to talk to and hard to get things done.

They tick boxes but it has all been decided.

The bridge from the park was promised and has now been scrapped.

Sometimes you have to repeat yourself thousands of times.



O6 Keep, Scrap, Reimagine

In our conversation, participants were asked to think about Stockport and what they would KEEP, SCRAP & REIMAGINE

Keep...

- Our history
- Architecture
- Our open attitude
- Museums
- Open spaces
- Community spirit
- Keep our heritage
- Keep our identity
- Not to merge into Manchester
- History of start to present of Stockport
- Greens
- Parks
- Community Centre
- Frog's History Trail
- Foodie Fridays
- Labeary's
- Social and developmental history
- Culture activities
- Entitlement
- Voluntary groups
- Unique wildlife (need more protection)
- Heaton Norris Community Centre
- More benches in public spaces
- Library
- Shops – the hub – more in the old Argos building – keep our ticket office workers we need humans not machines.
- Keep our shops in Stockport
- Keep our parks and public spaces
- H.N.C.C "The Hub" The seating on the precinct – we need more play schemes for children.
- The positive approach we have here keeps our Stopfordian identity
- We want to keep the big stores like NEXT and many more
- We want to keep Stockport Women and Girls Network closer to know about all of their problems
- To keep the heritage safe now more electronically than in paper.
- Council community skips (have been cut) to help with littering
- Green spaces/parks / Reddish Vale
- Community centre/hubs
- Plaza / Guildhall / Good transport links, viaducts, Stockport precinct (shops), parks, good housing, river Mersey needs preserving



07 Keep, Scrap, Reimagine

Scrap...

- Cuts to our town (gov)
- Affordable social housing is only for affluent people
- Stop knocking down old Architecture to build rubbish buildings
- MP's, our politicians/increase in their wages
- Sculptures
- Too many nail shops
- Drugs and alcohol in public spaces
- Council making decisions about how our area should be run/organised – leave local people to take control
- Stockport College building (because it's a shame that they don't care about the appearance of the building)
- I wish they could rebuild it or improve it, It's an educational centre and its important I think for students as well as how clean or modern the building is.
- Stepping Hill to be redeveloped, need not to normalise drug addicts and alcoholic beggars!!
- Scrap people who are unaccountable for our biggest decisions MPs
- Racist people
- weed/drugs / public drinking/swearing language
- Dog poop in byways
- Too many cheap pop-up shops
- Expensive rent
- Bad housing
- Too many people littering
- Too many apartments not enough houses being built (Affordable ones and big enough to house a family)
- The damaged roads +pedestrian paths
- The dirty rubbish bins everywhere
- Change happening without listening to local people and acting for the views



08 Keep, Scrap, Reimagine

Reimagine...



- A good healthy future for future generations
- Ladies and girls wellbeing centre, sports facilities, mental health support
- More community officers for safety
- An end to child hunger
- More skills training
- More centres in each area like Heaton Norris community centre.
- Women Wellbeing Centre led by women and girls network.
- I would like to imagine Stockport with more play centres and activity centres for kids because there are so many places in Manchester!
- More clean streets
- More bins – maybe people can see them to put their litter in them!
- There are so many buildings that have been demolished and not been built yet like in Reddish Gorton road
- True Trust between public servants and the public
- A brand new women's centre
- Community hub in each little area
- A women and girls wellbeing centre
- More youth clubs for young boys
- Connect schools with community areas (Reddish Vale) to maybe learn about animals, plants, etc. A small part of the curriculum, more on green spaces.
- Teaching from an early age the importance of money and looking after each other.
- Better communications to strengthen community links, newspapers, etc.
- Not everyone can go online
- To be a multicultural suburb, because many nations/ different nationalities are living here – how to gather them to create something.
- Multi-purpose built community centre for each local area.
- Promote clean streets and public areas
- Promote healthy areas for access to all, subsidise spare and health facilities
- Council to be more involved on a voluntary basis, council members to put time into local communities

ACTIONS...



- More communication with the right people.
- Voices can be heard
- More government funding – recognise us as an ancient village (we used to have our own castle)
- Drop-in centres for the less well off, for meals and food.
- More training centres.
- Get the bridge built
- Promote the need for volunteers
- Regular community forums to look at the areas and suggestions for improvements
- Engaging more younger people – starting at the schools and teaching them about volunteering (the schoolmaster and teacher should be involved)
- Funding for community facilities for all ages
- More physical activities for grown-ups and for the children to keep them healthy
- Free buses within the town centre
- More soft play areas for kids
- Tramlines
- More family events and programmes for free of charge
- More medical facilities as there are big delays in appointments
- More accessible medical
- To support Women and Girls Network for their wellbeing
- To have more gatherings like this to come together
- Lobby the local council to get the bridge built
- To support the women and girls network to build, maintain and develop a women and girls health and wellbeing centre
- Lobby James – local councillor – to get the bridge built to link the new part
- More sessions like this – to be able to have a say and be heard.

10 The illustrated minutes



We use visual minuting – or graphic illustration – to create a record the Community Conversation. These combine a mixture of pictures, graphics and text, which we feel are often more easily absorbed and understood than words alone.

These illustrated minutes were produced post-event from participant's notes and are intended to be used to communicate with a wider audience to challenge, inspire and motivate action and ultimately change.

These visual minutes present a good overview of the tone, themes and activities across the Conversation.

11 We thank you for your support of our programme

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