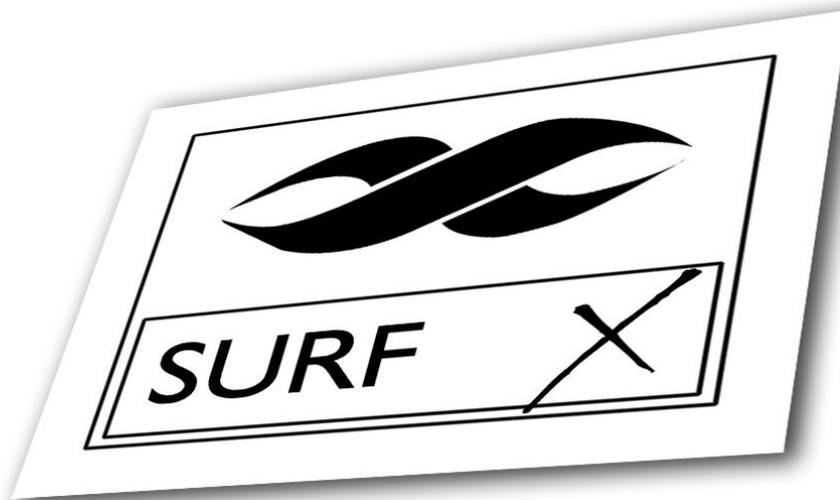




Scottish Urban
Regeneration Forum

SURF : sharing experience : shaping practice

Towards a Manifesto for Scottish Community Regeneration



**A Scottish Urban Regeneration Forum paper
22nd March 2007**

TOWARDS A MANIFESTO FOR SCOTTISH COMMUNITY REGENERATION

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper

This paper is intended to set out some key issues raised by SURF members as they work to regenerate Scotland's communities. It also poses some questions which political parties are invited to address in their manifestoes for the forthcoming Parliamentary election.

These issues and questions will form the background for an 'Election Question Time' event which SURF has organised in the Parliament building from 12-2 pm on March 22nd 2007, and which the six main parliamentary parties have been invited to participate in.

SURF's role

The Scottish Urban Regeneration Forum (SURF) is the independent regeneration and inclusion network, sharing information and promoting discussion so as to help shape, policy, opinion and the delivery of successful regeneration efforts in Scotland.

(More detail on SURF and its work is contained in the additional information at appendix 1)

Messages from SURF's members

The establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 boosted the opportunities to develop a coherent set of regeneration policies and support mechanisms designed to tackle the specific challenges and opportunities for Scotland's disadvantaged communities. A lot of progress has already been made in more closely identifying the challenges, and in setting out strategies for action. However, the Scottish Executive's own statistics on poverty, education, poor health and lack of social mobility are still daunting for those at the bottom of the pile. After decades of regeneration efforts some of the most intractable challenges remain.

Since 1992 SURF has been working to promote a more concerted and inclusive approach amongst all the players in Scottish regeneration. In recent years a consensus has emerged on the importance of partnership and community involvement, but often the rhetoric outstrips the practice. The main messages from the regeneration practitioners, academics, community representatives and policy makers attending the extensive ongoing programme of SURF Conferences, Seminars and Open Forums, include the following points and questions:

THE MAIN ISSUES

1 Poverty

The root issue underlying the most intractable challenges in regenerating our most disadvantaged communities is poverty. While significant improvement has been made in lifting children and families out of poverty, the gap between the relatively well off and those with least resources continues to widen. The most excluded

individuals tend to be trapped in generational poverty and in areas of sustained multiple disadvantage further compounding their exclusion from mainstream opportunities.

What more would the parties do to break down concentrations of poverty without simply displacing poor people and families?

2 Employment

Access to employment is still the most effective means of addressing poverty and exclusion. The Scottish Executive, its agencies and partners have made well-recorded progress in improving the rate of employment nationally. However, the quality of the jobs being created is highly relevant to the extent to which employment can improve the quality of life of previously excluded individuals.

A recent JRF report on 'Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Scotland 2006' confirmed that 'two fifths of all children in poverty are in families already doing paid work,' and that 'working age poverty for those without children is higher than a decade ago, despite fewer people being in workless households'

What steps would the parties take to enable people currently excluded from the workforce to access employment opportunities and, given that Scotland is a wealthy country, how would they ensure that those in lower paid jobs are able to increase their income and improve their quality of life?

3 Health

The continuing very high demands on the NHS in Scotland to treat already ill people can be seen as a reflection of shortcomings in previous regeneration efforts. Poor quality housing, jobs, environment and recreational opportunities all have a detrimental effect on people's health.

The NHS, as a massive organisation, can be a positive force in regeneration, particularly in terms of employment, procurement policies and practice. It is also important to promote a greater awareness of the wider, mutually beneficial, links between health and regeneration agendas. Some progress is being made through Community Planning and Community Health Partnerships but the general pattern of organisation and activity is too fragmented and complex.

What would the parties do to strengthen the beneficial links between the National Health Service, the broader health agenda, and regeneration priorities?

4 Housing

The investment in housing quality via the Scottish Quality Housing Standard is to be welcomed, but too much of Scotland's housing still falls well short of international standards for sustainability. This is a problem for residents on limited incomes as well as being environmentally wasteful.

The affordability of decent housing both in urban and rural settings is a key problem for a future parliament to address.

Locally managed Housing Associations have a potentially important role to play as 'Anchor' organisations within communities. Their experience, skills, and crucially collateral, are essential catalytic elements for developing wider action on real

community based regeneration by building community sustainability and capacity through social enterprise.

What approach would the parties take to improve the quality and availability of housing for people and families on lower incomes?

5 Transport

This remains a key issue in terms of national frameworks and local networks. A strong national policy lead is essential to promote access to jobs and services via local transport initiatives and to reduce congestion.

How do the parties think it is possible to deliver an effective transport strategy for supporting regeneration in disadvantaged areas within a deregulated providers market?

6 Small towns – evidence and action

Small towns contain nearly 40% of the Scottish population, yet there is a lack of policy focus for supporting the regeneration and development of these conurbations, in contrast to the continuing focus on cities and city regions. A great deal of evidence on the significant role of small towns and the challenges they face is available. It is now important to develop practical policies to meet the challenge.

What specific initiatives, policies and associated resources would the parties introduce to address the regeneration challenges of Scotland's small towns?

THE APPROACHES

1 Leadership

- Leadership has been a key theme emerging from discussions at SURF events and amongst its membership. SURF has completed a study for Communities Scotland's Scottish Centre for Regeneration entitled 'How can

we Make Community Leadership More Effective?’ The main points were the importance of establishing trust through a more open and frank dialogue about power and decision-making.

- A SURF seminar on Leadership in Regeneration in February 2004 and the SURF Annual Conference in November 2004 both stressed the crucial role of Local Authority group leaders in setting the tone for constructive leadership towards more effective community engagement. The potential benefits for sustainable community regeneration and the health of the wider political process were both emphasised.
- The role of local Councillors is also seen as key in the partnership approach to improving the delivery of public services. Many Councillors would benefit from greater support for their important role.
- While the intention to encourage local solutions for local challenges within Community Planning is broadly welcomed, some issues, like equalities, still benefit from a significant degree of national leadership.

How would the parties strike the right balance between strategic central leadership and supporting local approaches and initiatives?

2 Community Engagement

- Meaningful, rather than tokenistic community engagement is necessary to ensure continued community support in partnership efforts. Allowing realistic resources and timescales for building trust through effective community engagement is more cost effective in the long term.
- Real commitment to genuine partnership across main regeneration agencies is essential and ultimately beneficial to all players. Trust is a key element in the success of any partnership.

The rhetoric on community involvement in regeneration efforts greatly outstrips the reality. What plans do the parties have for achieving a more effective involvement of the community and voluntary sectors in regeneration decision making and service delivery?

3 Supporting Community Capacity

- Communities are diverse and a range of different approaches should be used to connect with the widest range of people. There is substantial evidence that arts and cultural based activities may offer a useful route to consultation with harder to reach groups. Cultural Planning has proved to be an effective approach for both engagement and strategic development at differing geographical levels.
- There is also substantial evidence of highly competent and valuable work being done by the community and voluntary sectors but relatively little evidence of this being recognised by senior decision makers. Mainstreaming of successful local innovative approaches remains relatively rare and this undermines trust and co operation.

- There needs to be a clearer distinction made between community engagement (consultation and information giving) and community involvement (decision making and service delivery). While there are resources and guidelines for engagement, there is no national Scottish organisation dedicated to supporting the development of truly independent community organisations in the way that Community Matters and the Urban Forum do in England.

What plans do the parties have for supporting the growth of independent community organisations?

4 Learning together

Capacity building needs to be done amongst professional colleagues as well as within communities. Learning organisations and partnerships linked to Community Planning structures are striving for a complete culture change within public service delivery organisations. The welcome drawing in of new players via the Community Planning approach offers big challenges and opportunities for shared learning. In this context evaluation should be supported as a learning tool as well as a means of monitoring and accountability.

What steps would the parties take to ensure that a real change in organisational cultures takes place to make partnerships work in a more effective way?

5 Planning

The recent changes to the Planning system, and the stated intention to facilitate greater input for communities on very local decision processes, are broadly welcomed. However, there is a significant degree of scepticism as to the availability of resources and processes to enable this to happen.

What additional resources do the parties think is required to ensure meaningful engagement with more marginalised groups on planning decisions that will affect their future?

6 Social Enterprise

Social Enterprise is a broad term for a range of activities that are intended to bring an entrepreneurial approach to activities which have social benefit rather than financial gain as their primary purpose. Social Enterprise approaches seem to offer greater opportunities for building financial and skills capacities within communities while delivering important services in a more effective and responsive manner.

The manifesto of the Social Enterprise Coalition offers some indication of how it might be possible to build on recent practical and policy developments, but Scotland is generally seen to be lagging well behind England in this field.

What steps would the parties take to get Scotland back up to speed on Social Enterprise?

CONCLUSION

The widely respected Scottish Historian, Professor Tom Devine, contends that many commentators are overly pessimistic in their interpretations of the nation's economic and social prospects. Soundings from the SURF membership reveal some encouraging indicators of optimism and enthusiasm. Much of the positive atmosphere appears to arise from the increased political priority and enhanced partnership approach for tackling regeneration and social inclusion.

There are, however, some real concerns that the corrosive effects of the widening gap in wealth, evident on a global and UK scale, are also evident in Scotland. There is also concern noted by increasing numbers of observers have also noted that too much effort may be going into the construction of partnership structures, without enough focus on delivering outcomes and meaningfully engaging the communities that are the subject of the partnership effort. There is also a very significant concern that the central issues of the distribution of power and independent community leadership remain largely ignored.

What would the parties do to tackle the increasing divide in wealth, power and participation that some commentators believe is at risk of undermining the democratic political process itself?

These are some of the issues and questions that will be of interest to those attending the Scottish Election Question Time event being organised by SURF in the Scottish Parliament on 22nd March 2007.

Appendix 1 – SURF'S ROLE

The Scottish Urban Regeneration Forum (SURF) is the independent regeneration and inclusion network, sharing information and promoting discussion so as to help shape, policy, opinion and the delivery of successful regeneration efforts in Scotland.

It delivers a regular and diverse programme of activities to:

- Stimulate constructive debate about community regeneration
- Promote and disseminate examples of current practice
- Maintain a high status for community regeneration on Scotland's political agenda.
- Inform improved regeneration policy and practice.

It uses its position as a truly independent forum for its wide membership of over 170 organisations and 2500 individual contacts, to explore current practice and experience. Through close links with the Scottish Executive and its agencies, SURF acts as a constructive channel for information, consultation and policy proposals based on the knowledge and experience of its membership and the wider networks it connects with.

SURF operates as a not for profit company limited by guarantee. Its core funding comes from its members. The small SURF staff team (2.5fte) is guided by a board of 20 voluntary directors who have a wide range of regeneration related experience and networks.

In recognising the varied nature of regeneration geography and challenges, SURF seeks to promote the sharing of ideas and experience across all sectors concerned with sustainable regeneration. However, in order to operate successfully as a cost effective independent organisation SURF concentrates its attention on regeneration targeted for the benefit of disadvantaged urban communities.

SURF is a forum for exchanging experience, ideas and for developing suggestions for further improving policy and practice. It is not a campaigning organisation and is strictly neutral in terms of party politics. SURF was founded, and continues to operate, from two basic principles:

- Successful and sustainable regeneration is only achievable when all aspects of physical, social, economic and cultural regeneration are addressed in a holistic approach.
- The people who are the intended beneficiaries of any regeneration effort must be meaningfully involved in the process if it is to be successful in planning, implementation and maintenance.

More information on SURF and its work is available by visiting the SURF website at www.scotregen.co.uk.

Appendix 2 - SOME OF THE EXECUTIVE'S EXISTING REGENERATION RELATED POLICIES

Since the instigation of the Parliament in 1999, regeneration has been a key priority. The Executive has developed a range of policies to address the challenges of achieving successful and sustainable communities throughout Scotland. Some of the main ones are listed below:

1 Regeneration Infrastructure investment

This is a huge programme of investment in roads buildings and utility services that dwarfs the more specific Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) budget of £318 Million over 3 years. It anticipates the spending of nearly £4 Billion over the same period, yet it is this much smaller partnership and innovation catalytic fund that tends to draw attention.

Particular efforts are being made by the Executive to bring the private sector into a more co-ordinated partnership on delivering much of the infrastructure developments.

2 Community Planning

This is the Executive's main policy for community regeneration. It is a nationwide framework of local authority led Community Planning Partnerships with the intention of improving the co ordination, targeting and responsiveness of public services. There has been a lot of rhetoric about how the Community Planning process will replace the pre existing, organisation focused, approach with a customer centred one by placing the community 'at the heart of the decision making process'. While there is some significant evidence of a more co-operative culture across main public service providers, the role of 'the community' remains largely one of consultees rather than real partners in decision-making. This gap between rhetoric and reality continues to cause problems while the central issues of power and trust remain largely un-addressed.

That said, it should be noted that the Community Planning structure represents a statutory national framework for inter agency co operation and community involvement that does not exist in England. Each of Scotland's 32 local authority led Community Planning Partnerships is obliged to produce its own Regeneration Outcome Agreement describing; how local regeneration challenges will be tackled, by who, with what, over how long and what the outcomes are expected to be. Communities Scotland has the responsibility for monitoring and reporting on these ROAs.

A recent Audit Scotland report gave some initial views of progress in Community Planning. It identified some progress in the establishment of partnership structures but also a need for more action in delivery and community involvement.

<http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/pdf/2006/06pf03aq.pdf#search=%22Audit%20scotland%20Community%20Planning%22>

3 Planning reform

Recent legislation to modernise the planning system in Scotland is intended to stimulate regeneration by simplifying and shortening the process by grading different levels of proposals and setting differing processes for handling them. At one end of the spectrum there are 'Strategic' planning decisions on matters of national interest

that can be decided upon by the Executive alone. At the other end there are local issues with the offer of earlier and stronger input from local residents. There is still some ambiguity about how the intention to provide greater opportunities for local community input will be delivered.

Planning Aid Scotland provides some relevant comment on the Executives proposals. <http://www.planning-aid-scotland.org.uk/mps.php>

4 Land reform

As a response to the historic imbalance in land ownership in (particularly rural Scotland), the land reform act seems to be largely symbolic, with only three actual transfers of private land to community ownership so far, but it is nonetheless a significant piece of legislation with considerable potential. In his tenure as Communities Minister for the Westminster Government, David Milliband showed great interest in how similar legislation might work for empowering community asset based regeneration in an urban English context. The first successful urban application of the act recently took place in a Scottish urban setting when the community of Neilston in Renfrewshire bought a locally significant bank building that was destined to go on the market. Some SURF members see considerable potential in this approach.

Appendix 3 - SOME RELEVANT STRATEGIES AND STATEMENTS

The Scottish Executive has also set out a range of statements and strategies to clarify how it intends to deliver its main regeneration policy goals. Some of these are listed below:

1 People and Place

This recently revised regeneration policy statement has a strong focus on place based regeneration efforts and the increased involvement of the private sector. It has been broadly welcomed as a very useful and concise summary of the Executive's current policies and initiatives. There has been some more critical comment on the statement's wholly positive interpretation of the role of the private sector in regeneration, and its relative lack of references to community development and rural issues.

The statement concludes with an intention to establish an action group on how to take forward some of the significant challenges noted in it. This group has recently been convened.

2 The Employment Framework

Workforce Plus, an Employability Framework, sets out the Executive's plans to tackle worklessness in the worst unemployment hotspots in Scotland. The document also provides a framework for all areas to focus their efforts on developing coherent employability services across agencies which help people to overcome the barriers they have in moving forward on to positive activity and employment. The Framework coheres closely with the UK Government's plans such as welfare reform and the Cities Strategies to help everyone who wants to return to the workforce.

The Framework sets out a series of stages for employability, coupled with 6 key themes and the 7 components of an effective employability service which can be adopted at a local partnership level.

3 A Social Enterprise strategy

A consultation document on how to grow social enterprise as a business model for supporting the delivery of better public services.

4 Regeneration outcomes of the 2005 Cultural Review

Considerations of how to link culture and regeneration more effectively. Guidelines are being produced by the Executive in consultation with CoSLA on how to implement Cultural Planning as a means of engaging communities on the positive traditions histories assets and networks of their area as a basis for locally meaningful regeneration strategies and activities. A number of pathfinder initiatives are also underway.

5 The Cities review

A review of the distinct aspects and challenges for Scotland's cities.

6 National transport strategy consultation

Recent new proposals for improving Scotland's transport systems, particularly following the rejection by Edinburgh citizens of their City Council's congestion charging proposal.

7 Architecture and Design Scotland

A body of architects and designers with a remit from the Scottish Executive for improving the quality and relevance of larger scale physical regeneration plans and projects across Scotland. This additional supportive resource has been broadly welcomed.

8 The Environmental impact survey

A unified system of assessing the environmental impact of regeneration activity. Again, this is an area in which Scotland appears to be ahead of colleagues in England in terms of national planning frameworks.

9 Indices of Multiple Deprivation

A national statistical data-base for identifying the most deprived wards in Scotland on the basis of standardised measures of deprivation in the field of Health, Education, Employment, Housing etc. This very useful and detailed information is the basis for the allocation of the Executive's Community Regeneration Fund. While it has some statistical limitations it has certainly been useful in promoting wider and better-informed debate on funding and priorities in the national and more local regeneration scene.

Appendix 4 - SOME EXISTING KEY REGENERATION POLICY MECHANISMS

The Scottish Executive has introduced a number of different regeneration policy delivery mechanisms in pursuit of its regeneration goals. Here are some of the main ones:

1 Community Planning Partnerships and ROAs (see appendix 2 above)

2 URCs - Urban Regeneration Companies

Three pathfinder URC projects were set up in Raploch in Stirling, Craigmillar in Edinburgh and Clydebank in 2004. URCs are intended to ensure greater involvement of the private sector (and the community) in the delivery of place specific physical regeneration initiatives where other approaches have been less successful. The Scottish version follows the longer established English model but with an added emphasis on community involvement.

The establishment of 3 more were signalled in the Executive's 'People and Place' regeneration statement in February 2006. An evaluation of the progress of the first 3 is planned for Aug 2006-January 2007.

SURF events looking at this model frequently attract considerable interest. Given the stated intention of the URC model, some queries remain regarding the level of both private sector and community input to some of the existing URCs.

3 Community Health Partnerships

CHPs are an Executive initiative intended to provide a focus for the co ordination of primary care and specialist services with social care and to ensure that local population health improvement is placed 'at the heart of service planning and delivery'. This has led to greater co operation between the two main service delivery bodies at a local level i.e. the 15 Health Boards and the 32 Local Authorities. Most observers would agree that improvements are taking place but sometimes from a very low base and not in a recognisably uniform way.

4 Social Housing Stock transfers

This process is encouraged by the Executive with a view to releasing local authorities from the burden of accumulated social housing related debt which restricts their ability to invest in the improvement of their housing stock. It also fits into the agenda of building more mixed communities, community assets and social enterprises in the form of local Housing Associations. However, there is a continuing process of amalgamations of the larger Housing Associations leading to perhaps more efficient administrative systems, but also arguably, less local community control. Some still see this process as 'privatisation by the back door', while others welcome the possibility of Housing Associations using their stock as catalytic collateral to support wider local regeneration initiatives.

5 The Big Lottery in Scotland

This new body, responsible to the Executive, amalgamating the previous 5 National Lottery funding streams, is set to invest £257M over the next 3 years with a strong emphasis on Community Asset Building. Consultative work is ongoing to ensure that this 'new player' successfully compliments the work of other grant and loan making bodies while making the most of its distinctly flexible approach.

Appendix 5 LINKS TO SOME MAIN POLICY DOCUMENTS

Building a Better Scotland

Infrastructure Investment Plan: Investing in the Future of Scotland

The Scottish Executive, February 2005

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/36496/0024801.pdf>

The Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations

The Scottish Executive, August 1999

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library2/doc04/eia-00.htm>

People and Place – Regeneration Policy Statement

The Scottish Executive, February 2006

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/94244/0022669.pdf>

Local Government in Scotland Act 2003

Part 2 – Community Planning

The Scottish Executive, January 2003

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2003/30001--c.htm>

A Smart, Successful Scotland: Strategic Direction to the Enterprise Networks

The Scottish Executive in consultation with Scottish Enterprise, November 2004

http://www.scottish-enterprise.com/publications/smart_successful_scotland_refresh.pdf

A Smart, Successful Highlands and Islands: An enterprise strategy for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland

Highlands & Islands Enterprise, June 2005

<http://www.hie.co.uk/HIE-HIE-corporate-documents-2005-06/hie-sshandi-english-lowres-v5.pdf>

Partnerships for Care: Scotland's Health White Paper

The Scottish Executive, June 2003

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47032/0013898.pdf>

Homes for Scotland's People: A Scottish Housing Policy Statement

The Scottish Executive, March 2005

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/37428/0023276.pdf>

Better Communities in Scotland: Closing The Gap

The Scottish Executive, June 2002

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/46729/0031676.pdf>

A Social Enterprise Strategy for Scotland: A Consultation

The Scottish Executive & Communities Scotland, June 2006

http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/otcs_014470.pdf

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003

The Scottish Executive, March 2003

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2003/20030002.htm>

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Workforce Plus - an Employability Framework for Scotland

The Scottish Executive, June 2006

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/129285/0030791.pdf>

Financial Inclusion Action Plan

The Scottish Executive, January 2005

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/35596/0024808.pdf>

MORE ABOUT SURF

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<http://www.scotregen.co.uk>

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