



The 2013 SURF Annual Conference: Creative Alliances

5 July 2013; CoSLA Conference Centre, Edinburgh

Sir Peter Housden, Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government, on 'Policy Foundations for Creative Approaches'

SURF was delighted that Sir Peter Housden accepted our invitation to be a keynote speaker at its Annual Conference for 2013. Sir Peter provided a thought-provoking contribution on why national governments should support creative, community led regeneration processes, and what the current Scottish Government administration is doing.

Sir Peter has kindly shared his presentation notes from the conference, which follow below for the interest of conference guests and SURF's wider network. Those who weren't able to make the event are welcome to contact the SURF staff team on 0141 585 6848 for further elaboration on any of Sir Peter's main points.

Presentation Notes:

1. As Geoff Mulgan said, governments tend to over-estimate their potential for short-term impact, and under-estimate their potential for making a long-term change.

Perhaps inevitably, more comfortable and familiar with the policy tools for short-term change, than the more complex and demanding set for the longer term.

2. We've had a strong and consistent steer from Ministers to strike better balances here and your paper work for this event struck the same chord:

Creativity is a quintessential element for unlocking vital community connections and assets...often through unplanned, unpredictable processes. Where do we start in drawing together the different strands?

A great challenge: what would a government look like and how would it behave in this guise?

3. Say something first about our collective history. We would all be committed to an asset-based approach, identifying strengths and potential for growth. I am not one therefore to decry the achievements of the last 20 years in physical regeneration
4. The physical, visual and aesthetic aspects of the environment matter.

Some extraordinarily creative public-private partnerships.

Significant improvements and bold projects.

A skills base that is the envy of the world.

Enabling legislation: Community Empowerment Bill in Scotland – likely to include further measures on the acquisition of physical assets by community groups.

5. But for all that, there have been and are persistent challenges

Connection to employment

Levels of ambition and opportunity for young people

Pace and scale of change

Welfare reform

Imbalances in the UK economy.

6. Renewed vigour & determination – a rich notion of prevention.

Early intervention – focus on early years & childhood + early diagnosis / intervention for at risk populations.

Build assets and resilience, both of those at risk and of the communities of place and interest that sustain them.

This can only be done

- a) in partnership with people and communities
- b) and through the alignment and integration of public service organisations
- c) coming together to co-produce services and facilities
- d) which can be tailored to individual and community needs.

7. This requires

- a) empowered workforces,
- b) systematic approach to service design and implementation
- c) a new approach to first-line and middle management and governance structures to facilitate integration, innovation and adaptation.

8. This is the journey we are on.

Implies a shift in perspective. The old questions were essentially about money - 'How Much?' and 'For How Long?'

Now more 'How?' and 'With Whom?'

9. This is a genuinely creative challenge – for us and for you. In your engagement with governments, national and local.

Expand our imagination

Develop investable propositions

It's not about spreading best practice – its about building ambitious and creative networks – that's how innovation occurs.

End of presentation notes

Please visit the following SURF website link for more information and materials relating to the 2013 Annual Conference:

www.scotregen.co.uk/annual-conferences/

SURF Scotland's Independent Regeneration Network. Orkney Street Enterprise Centre, 18-20 Orkney Street, Glasgow G51 2BX
Tel: 0141 585 6848 / Email: info@scotregen.co.uk / Website: www.scotregen.co.uk

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