



Welcome to the to 2018 SURF Annual Conference

Some background to this SURF Annual conference

SURF and its members are longstanding advocates, and active supporters, of Community Led Regeneration. Since the Scottish Government's 2011 post economic crash National Regeneration Statement, communities 'doing it for themselves' has been the shared ideal of most practitioners, policy makers and academics.

A range of 'capacity building' and 'empowerment' measures, are targeted at encouraging more communities to 'take back control' at their local level, for their own purposes and in their own way.

Through its annual Awards process and its wider activities and networks, SURF promotes the most successful examples and then widely shares the learning from their experiences. That learning has highlighted the limits, as well as the advantages, of the community led model. It has also confirmed bureaucratic and resource barriers for harder pressed communities trying to use that ideal approach. The reality is that while genuinely community led regeneration is an inspiring sight, it is still a fairly rare one. In terms of scale, even some of the best examples still only have a limited impact on the bigger economic and social challenges that often have their roots outside the community. Too many have to spend too much time and effort just trying to survive.

Many leading practitioners are becoming increasingly concerned that unrealistic expectations, and insufficient support, is being invested in what is a still a relatively small, fragile and disparate model of regeneration. They argue that there are much bigger players and resources that could do more to help by delivering more targeted and effective regeneration support in what is an increasingly challenging climate for poorer communities.

Purpose

SURF agrees. Its aspiration is to help better connect all of the different regeneration assets, processes and resources that are essential for addressing poverty and inequality and developing more inclusive economies; nationally and locally.

As part of its progressive work programme to that end, the 2018 SURF Annual Conference will promote the real experience of authentic community led regeneration examples. At the same time, it will explore where these successes sit in the wider policy and practice landscape and what needs to change to make genuine community led regeneration a more connected and impactful reality.

On behalf of all of us at SURF, thank you for devoting your time, views and experience in helping us make the most of this shared opportunity.

Andy Milne – SURF Chief Executive – 23.8.18.

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