

**2010 SURF Annual Conference – Day Two
Sustaining and Reinventing Community Regeneration:
All Together Now – Policy and Practice**

**Thursday 25th March 2010
Roxburghe Hotel, Edinburgh**

Constructive Debates

This paper contains a selection of short articles by the ‘constructive debaters’ for the interest of delegates attending the relevant breakout session before lunch today.

Group 1 – Assets, Land and Politics

Stephen Maxwell, SURF

At one end of the spectrum the typical 'regeneration' community has few material assets. The majority of its residents will own little more than their household possessions. If they own their home it will likely be of modest value. If they have a pension beyond the state pension it will be small, paid out of a company or public sector scheme and unlike a Self Invested Pension Plan (SIPP) give them little control over how the fund is applied and managed.

Collectively too their community will own little, certainly not the land on which it stands. Through a local community trust it may have been able to take over the ownership of a local facility. Some of its houses may be owned by a housing association offering a measure of local control. But in material terms it will be an 'asset poor' community.

Then take a look at the other end of the spectrum of Scottish communities. The majority of its residents will be owner occupiers. In most years the value of their properties will increase. Most of them will be able to look forward to well funded public or private sector pensions: many of them will have the choice of a SIPP giving them a degree of control over the future of their funds. Yes, changes in Government policy (and in life expectancy) over the last ten years have creamed off some of the value of their pension funds and the economic recession has taken a bite out of property values. But if they have been investing in their property and their pensions for the last twenty years or so they will have made a good return over the period. A typical family in this community could easily have combined assets worth several £00,000s and not a few will top the £1m mark.

Consider the different ways in which the tax system has treated the two communities. The low income earners in the regeneration community will almost certainly have paid a higher proportion of their income in tax than the higher earners. The higher earners will have enjoyed tax allowances on their investments in property and pensions. The

increase in residential property values has gone virtually untaxed. Inheritance tax has been optional and Labour and Conservatives have competed to raise the threshold. Even before the Council Tax freeze successive Governments had funk'd the revaluation of property values.

The tax system needs radical reform. Income tax needs to be applied more progressively not just to those earning more than £150,000 but to the far larger numbers earning above £50,000. Above all capital wealth needs to be brought properly into the tax system. The increase in property values which usually owes everything to the community needs to be taxed with the aim of lightening the burden on low income households. Land value taxation needs to be considered. The proceeds of taxing land value more proportionately should be used to start building the individual and collective asset base of Scotland's 'regeneration' communities.

Robert McDowall, DTZ

We are, quite literally, in a new era.

The growth experienced in the past has been overtaken by a series of world and local events which mean what we have encountered in the past 2/3 years is likely to prevail for some time into the future.

The value of land and buildings has reduced dramatically across all asset types and our personal aspirations, built on the back of this unprecedented growth, have required to be reviewed – fewer foreign holidays, smaller house/car, later retirement and even the number of 'lattes' consumed in a day/week.

Where does this leave us in terms of community regeneration in 2010 and moving forward?

Well, the obvious starting point is money. Regeneration built on the back of the sale of assets (e.g. land for housing) can no longer be the driver as such development is smaller in scale and less leveraged than in the past. Government budgets are also now under strain (we have known about this for a few years) so it is no surprise to find that competing priorities are such that regeneration sits alongside other key policy areas.

Employment, which is often a key measure in regeneration situations, is showing some worrying trends even though employment, as a measure, is always likely to lag other indicators when recovery is underway. Unemployment rates are slightly better than the UK and the claimant count is down in January-February 2010 but this still feels 'very fragile'. Modern apprenticeships in the construction industry have exceeded target in 2009 but the storm clouds have already gathered regarding the longevity of such placements when looking to the prospects for the sector in 2010. Accelerated spending programmes are coming to an end and therefore future projects may well be scarcer than before. Industrial action is more to the fore now than in recent times – is this an indication of unrest which in turn will affect already established communities and/or some of the more fragile ones?

Politics – well thank goodness we are not solely overseen by Westminster. Our current political structure does bring a sense of order to the issues facing Scotland and with the

parties working in tandem (in the main), and better relationships between central and local government having prevailed for a few years now, we are better placed than many in having the opportunity for joined-up thinking.

At the end of the day, we are still likely to put money into regeneration that does not last a lifetime. However, in the current and likely prevailing climate, the key is to look at the financial and non-financial returns on investment over a period of years based on key target measures (e.g. employment, health, education etc.). We can then shape our future investment on the basis of the track record of those organisations who have truly delivered in the past.

Group 2 – Improving Services

Bob Christie, Improvement Service

The challenge - we won't be able to deliver current services at current levels.

- In 4 years time the gap between funding and demand for public services will be 20% of current spending.
- In 8 years time that gap between funding and demand will be 26% of current spending.

- In 6 years the number of people aged 85+ (and likely to need high levels of care) will have risen by 38% - and by 2013 by 144%.
- The working age population (payers of income tax) will have fallen by 10% in 6 years - and by 2031 by 18%.

- By 2020 we have to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 42%.
- By 2050 we have to reduce emissions by 80%.

So everything must change.

The opportunity – but we may be able to deliver better outcomes.

- Every Community Planning Partnership has agreed the outcomes for their area with the Scottish Government.
- The scale of the challenge rules out business-as-usual solutions.
- Scottish Government and local government are trying to base future budgets on outcomes – and on early intervention and prevention.
- Councils and their partners have to find new ways of working to achieve outcomes for – and with – individuals and communities.

But to realise this opportunity we need to understand what works – and stop doing what doesn't!

We are pretty good at doing stuff and we have got some excellent ways of measuring things. Our problem is that we do not always have measures for what we do and not all of the things which we measure are important.

That we live in a culture which is dominated by measurement is not in doubt. The question that we really need to ask ourselves is whether we are "measuring what matters"?

In terms of regeneration, our first serious focus on measurement on an area specific basis came with the Programme for Partnership. This was refined through the Social Inclusion Partnership, Better Neighbourhood Services Fund initiative and, latterly, Community Regeneration Fund.

This has resulted in staff with the skills and capacities to differentiate between inputs and outputs, outputs and outcomes.

Staff have also developed the skills and competence to frame measures in a way which is SMART.

The one key message that I would want to leave delegates with is that we need to ensure that what we measure is meaningful and that what we do, and how we perform is measurable.

I don't entirely hold to the view that "if it can't be measured, it can't be managed".

Over the last decade we have developed much more effective ways of managing information and measuring outcomes.

Where I think we still have a way to go is in ensuring that what we measure is what matters to those living in the communities we are seeking to regenerate.

The cost of originating data sets is enormous and as a result most Local Authorities rely on existing information drawn from a wide range of sources such as:

- the Registrar General Office for population statistics/projections etc.
- Census data
- Scottish National Statistical Office for Data on Deprivation (SIMD)
- Household survey data

At an Authority level, there will be service usage and performance data held by every service department.

Corporately, most Local Authorities will measure:

- Equalities data
- Environmental information
- Employment data
- Crime data

Through Community Planning Partnerships, partner organisations - particularly the Police but also NHS, Social Housing Landlords and others - are generating increasingly sophisticated access to information.

In terms of capacity, we have seen innovations around the presentation of data, its analysis and the spatial integration of different data sets through GIS.

At both a Local Authority level and through Community Planning Partnerships, the information capacity of Local Authorities has been built in the last decade.

The key challenges that face us today include:

- the identification and generation of relevant data sets, particularly where these are not immediately obvious.
- an over-reliance on historical information rather than predictive analysis of trends.
- a separation between those who manage and deliver services and those whose expertise is in information capacities, statistics and trends analysis etc.

Within Local Authorities the location of expertise and information capacities is not uniform. Some Authorities have chosen to create corporate information units serving both the Council, its service departments and, in some cases, its partnerships. In others, the information capacity is dispersed or devolved to service department level. This can make it difficult to identify where the capacity exists and represents a challenge in getting best value and shared access to what is going to be an increasingly scarce and expensive resource.

I would also argue that while there are good examples of partnership with Higher and Further Education they tend to be under-developed and under-exploited.

Today, it is possible to have access to the most sophisticated information via Google on a hand held Blackberry or iPhone.

The question as always is - what are we going to do with it?

Group 3 – It's Poverty, Stupid

Dr Carol Craig, Centre for Confidence and Wellbeing

Debates on the the west of Scotland's particular social and economic problems tend to focus on unemployment, poverty, housing and community. In my new book *The Tears that Made the Clyde*, I set out to show how inequality (and the type of analysis put

forward in *The Spirit Level*) accounts for much of the city's current problems. However, I was struck by the level of hostility and alienation between men and women triggered historically by overcrowding and male drinking. Relations between the sexes, and the health of the family, have suffered tremendously as a result. Could this be one of the reasons why well-being in Glasgow is so poor? In a city with acute problems with men's health should we not pay attention to international and UK research which shows that men's psychological and physical health is more dependent on their relationships with women than it is on employment and income? Should we also not acknowledge that we have one of the highest single parent family figures in the world? Indeed Glasgow has a much higher figure for single parent families than the UK as a whole yet it was the UK's figure which led UNICEF to conclude that the well-being of British children was the worst in the industrialised world. The report authors admit that it seems 'insensitive and unfair' to use family structure as an indicator of child well-being: after all some children are raised badly in two-parent families and children of single parents can be well brought up. Nonetheless the report states:

... at the statistical level there is evidence to associate growing up in single-parent families and stepfamilies with greater risk to well-being – including a greater risk of dropping out of school, of leaving home early, of poorer health, of low skills, and of low pay. Furthermore such risks appear to persist even when the substantial effect of increased poverty levels in single-parent and step-families have been taken into account

Dr John McKendrick, Scottish Poverty Information Unit

The same approaches to tackle the same problems in the same places with the same people¹. Strategies to tackle poverty and regenerate communities in Scotland are not working. Although there appears to be the political will to tackle 'the problem', there seems to be a culture of acceptance that the status quo will prevail. It's time to freshen up our approach to tackling poverty and regenerating communities in Scotland.

We need to speculate to accumulate. Our priority for community regeneration should focus on enabling and supporting our young people to achieve and prosper.

We need to invest *more directly* in our young people. For too long, we have accepted that child poverty should be tackled by driving up family income. However, tackling child poverty is too important to be left to families who themselves are struggling to make ends meet. We need to take collective community responsibility for developing our young people. We must ensure that our communities are properly resourced in order that they can present opportunities for *all* young people to prosper – including teenagers.

We need to embrace the potential that a consumer society affords. More of our young people need to be afforded the opportunity to experience personal gain through paid work. Why not afford every 14-17 year old the right to supplement² their pocket money with earnings from a community-based opportunity for paid work?

¹ Well almost! Although most of Scotland's poverty is persistent, there are subtle changes through time, e.g. the growth of poverty among asylum seekers and refugees in recent years.

² Although, more realistically for many, this would afford an opportunity to earn some pocket money, rather than supplement pocket money.

To achieve this, we must localise the scale of responsibility for tackling poverty. We should start with those communities who want to embrace the challenge.

Group 4 – Master-Planning and Sustainability

Alistair Scott, Smith Scott Mullan Associates

A Challenge For Scotland: Can Scotland create a leading example of a new piece of city, a place people would visit to see how the best is produced?

We have a number of good attempts and many current policies aim in that direction, but we need to focus on some frustratingly elusive issues in order to get up with the best.

- We need to focus on the **quality of the place**, rather than believing that if we set up a complex enough process, a good quality environment must surely follow.
- We need serious **political champions** at project level, to bring together teams of the best people and cut across the raft of conflicting organisational agendas.
- We need to have confidence in **long term planning**. It is the only way we can provide the infrastructure required.
- **Government** needs to take a more active role in city making. The private sector is vital, but the aspirations and the delivery of many of the elements are civic in nature.

My suggestion is to identify perhaps four “special waterfront projects” in the Scottish maritime cities. Assemble four different teams from public and private sectors and ask them to create four exemplary new neighbourhoods of about 5000 people. The result would give us a model for future developments and show the rest of Europe that the Scots are coming.

Petra Biberbach, Planning Aid for Scotland

Masterplanning is widely regarded as a positive and proactive process designed to understand the physical changes involved on a larger scale. It can deal with a multitude of issues who all play a part in making successful places.

There are 3 recognised stages of masterplan making:

- strategic framework – vision, analysis of data
- spatial masterplan – vision into three dimensional proposal
- implementation plan – costing, timescale

However Masterplanning should be more than a process done well; it must consider the whole sensory perception from seeing, experiencing sound, noise, smells and temperature to feeling safe, secure as well as addressing the history of a place and create a sense of belonging. Or in the words of Jan Gehl – it must start with people.

I would argue that this requires a much more proactive approach of conversing with communities affected by masterplan activities. Perhaps this is even more so needed in Scotland than in any other European country for two reasons:

- 1) there is a distrust of professional people to deliver
- 2) there is a distrust of politicians acting in the interest of communities

Masterplanning is a good and welcome approach and if it is used to facilitate greater partnership working including the communities than it really can assist in changing perception.

We live in times where new approaches and new ways of working are required. Masterplans can lead the way.

Group 5 – More Than Housing

Diarmaid Lawlor, Architecture + Design Scotland

The most important aspect of any place is the reason that people have to stay there. It's absolutely about more than housing. Buildings are only vessels to enable people to live their lives, their way. A building on its own can only do so much. To enable a community that works, we need to be concerned about the spaces we make and how they are managed, the services people need and the opportunities available to people to do things, to create value. The test of a community or place you want to be part of is when you open the door in the morning. What's there, who is there, what is going on? If the answer is nothing, and the reason is because it is someone else's problem to make this stuff happen, the answer is not good enough.

Everyone who puts a brick in the ground has a responsibility to at the same time build the foundation of a community that works. This means getting stuck into management and maintenance of public spaces, service delivery, social innovation and entrepreneurship. This matters because houses last a long time, but the ones that lie empty often do so because the house is in a desert where no one has any connection. It's always someone else's problem. Housing Associations are best placed to make places that people want to be in because they work with people, stay with places for the long term and can bring the right mix of entrepreneurial and management skill to make places that last. It is absolutely about more than housing.

Martin Pollhammer, East Lothian Housing Association

The role of housing associations has fundamentally changed. The problem is that not too many people working for them realise yet.

Housing Associations have been traditionally focused on development. This focus is now the wrong one. Development remains important, but the first priority needs to be about being a landlord first and a developer second.

This is a change in business planning model for housing associations. Growth may to some extent still include development, but better opportunities for growth exist in

providing products and services geared to our operating environments – the communities we work in and others that we may aspire to work with.

I do not see this as 'wider role' though. Too often, wider role supports projects that are not financially viable. We will serve our communities best if we develop products and services that are not only useful, but make money – to me, that is the definition of sustainable.

Housing Associations work in very disparate communities. All this means is that the range of services each develops needs to be different, to suit their local needs. Joint working is a waste of time involving long meetings and talking shops – but partnership – where there is a purpose – can help smaller associations to deliver a wider range of products and services by partnering with others. It is a case of knowing your strengths, delivering your own services on that basis – and seeking the strength of others to provide or share in the provision of your services where you are not as well placed to deliver.

Housing is simply the start. Housing associations in the future must be measured on the range and quality of the services they provide, not on how many 'units' they have.