



ROTHESAY ALLIANCE FOR ACTION

INTERIM REPORT AT DECEMBER 2015

1 ABOUT THIS PAPER

This is an interim report on Phase 2 of SURF's Alliance for Action programme focused on Rothesay on the Isle of Bute, funded by Highland and Islands Enterprise (HIE).

It is presented for the information of HIE as the core grant provider in the SURF-led Rothesay Alliance for Action initiative.

It begins by noting the initial Phase 1 feasibility study context and process, which was undertaken over 2014.

It then goes on to update progress in the first half of the Phase 2 grant period of implementation from March to December 2015.

In doing so, it summarises:

- The approach and activities undertaken in delivery of the phase 2 implementation process;
- Progress achieved so far;
- Some emergent learning points;
- Further activities and plans in hand.

A further interim progress report will be provided in April 2016.

A final report will be produced on the activities and outcomes of the full current grant period from April 2015 to September 2016.



2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of HIE, SURF delivered a well-received Feasibility Study over the course of 2014. It was approved by HIE and Argyll and Bute Council in February 2015. SURF then submitted a requested proposal for the implementation of an HIE supported Rothesay Alliance for Action Initiative in March 2015.

It specified four main aims:

1. Establish a SURF led Alliance for Action initiative focused on Rothesay,
2. Consolidate and further develop cooperative planning and practice, shared investments,
3. Record resultant information and activity, with a view to identifying and disseminating transferable learning
4. Build on previous SURF-funded research into the availability of, access to, and use of, community regeneration resources by initiatives and individuals in case study areas.

In subsequent negotiations, SURF and HIE agreed resources and process to deliver the first three aims. For mutually agreed reasons, HIE declined to invest in the fourth aim within this agreement.

In the first nine months of the present 18 month grant period, SURF has made good progress in the first two aims. Activity towards the third is planned for the first quarter of 2016.

Having successfully established community focused, cross sector awareness, confidence and practical cooperation; the prospects for further substantial progress on all three aims in the remaining 9 month period to September 2016 are good. The rest of this paper sets out the basis for that optimistic projection.

3 SUMMARY OF PHASE ONE

3.1 THE 2014 FEASIBILITY STUDY CONTEXT AND PROCESS

Context

SURF and HIE have cooperated to mutual benefit on several fronts over recent years, particularly in sharing information, practice and learning across urban and rural/semi-rural regeneration contexts.

Having noted SURF's successful Scottish Government supported cross sector Alliance for Action initiatives in Govan and Kirkcaldy, in March 2014, Highland and Islands Enterprise asked SURF to explore the scope for introducing a similar collaborative approach in Rothesay.

Process

Following discussion of relevant circumstances, partners and resources, SURF produced a proposal which set out a systematic methodology for undertaking a feasibility study to test viability and potential content of such a collaborative approach. It proposed the following five stage methodology:

Stage 1: Project Scoping

- Work planning.
- Information gathering.
- Engagement with relevant local and national contacts, including:
 - Meetings with HIE to identify key tasks, stakeholders and influencers;
 - Meetings with Argyll and Bute Council to determine interest in and appetite for the collaborative project and process;
 - Meetings with elected Argyll and Bute Council Members;
 - Meetings with community based representatives, organisations and businesses.

Stage 2: Research

- Identifying options and support towards a fresh collaborative approach.

Stage 3: Developing Alliance Options / Solutions

- Identifying initial options in content and process.

Stage 4: Report and Recommendations

- Testing options with potential partners.

Stage 5: Completion

- Ensuring that support for the proposals are adequately embedded.

3.2 SOME INITIAL ENGAGEMENT CHALLENGES

It had been intended that the above interactions would be followed by a collective senior stakeholder level workshop to identify the various opportunities for developing an Alliance for Action approach within Rothesay. This introductory engagement with senior partners was agreed to be important in confirming that there was adequate local community and institutional 'buy in' to the proposed collaborative process.

In practical reality, and for reasons outwith the control of SURF, this important aspect of early process was not able to be followed. The meeting with the Senior Management Team

of Argyll & Bute Council did not take place within the envisaged timescale and the senior level workshop did not happen.

This placed the intended study process and timetable at a disadvantage insofar as the extent of the committed 'buy in' of the Council as a key partner was difficult to determine. The fact that the senior stakeholders workshop did not take place, meant that insufficient clarity remained on the shared understanding and commitment of all key partners.

The meeting with the elected members took place through the medium of a short presentation under the busy agenda of a regular Area Committee meeting. The level of understanding by, and engagement with, elected members was also initially restrained by the fact that the already accepted feasibility study had not been circulated to elected members by officials at the council.

3.3 FEASIBLE RESPONSES

Notwithstanding these difficulties, various creative 'workarounds' were initiated by SURF and **stages 2 and 3** were concluded in the final months of 2014. An appropriate number and range of relevant community groups and members of the business community were identified and interviewed on their role, experiences, perspectives and ideas; as well as their potential interest in actively supporting a fresh collaborative approach to the regeneration challenges of Rothesay. Their responses were incorporated into the feasibility report produced under **stage 4**.

In January 2015, following revisions of an initial draft based on key stakeholder feedback, the final feasibility study was presented to HIE. Kerrie Grant and Douglas Cowan welcomed it. HIE's Head of Strengthening Communities, Rachael McCormack, confirmed HIE's further support via a negotiated agreement with SURF on resources for an initial implementation phase.

The agreed feasibility report was immediately presented by SURF to Fergus Murray, Head of Economic Development at Argyll and Bute Council. He also confirmed his support on behalf of that key partner for following through into the initial delivery phase. SURF, HIE and the Council all confirmed their mutual understanding that the practical feasibility of the delivery phase was dependent on the general approval and active engagement of the wider community stakeholder group.

The report and its associated recommendations was then presented in February 2015 to a SURF hosted stakeholder workshop. It was attended by 26 cross-sector participants, including a significant number of the original consultees. Following informative discussion and some helpful suggestions, the stakeholder group endorsed the broad thrust and main recommendations of the report. This successfully concluded **stage 5** of the agreed feasibility study process.

4.1 IMPLEMENTING THE FEASIBILITY STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

In May 2015, following some further discussion and agreement with HIE on resources and process, SURF commissioned Brian MacDonald Associates to deliver the first phase of an Alliance for Action initiative in Rothesay and Bute.

The **main aims** of that agreement were to:

- Begin the practical development of the Rothesay Alliance for Action process, specifically:
- To develop an adequately shared vision and a suitably relevant and coherent set of projects and priorities
- Take undertake that process via the Alliance for Action process and partners over the 6 Months to October 2015.
- To further consolidate and enhance the reasonably broad support and consensus gathered through the feasibility consultations.
- In doing so, to initiate a programme of collaborative consultations towards an adequately shared vision, process, and set of practical priorities.

In further discussion, HIE and SURF subsequently agreed to extend the timescale and associated resources for the initial implementation process to September 2016.

This revised agreement included a review of progress in October 2015, with a view to confirming adequate continuing support. The intention was also to gather consensus on an Action Plan which could be implemented in a progressive and reasonably sustainable manner.

The practical programme in the delivery above tasks involved:

- Five meetings of the steering group took place in the six months to October. The average attendance was 12 people.
- Two public meetings took place aimed at identifying the Action Priority. There were over 70 participants at the first meeting and 26 at the second.
- Two Council Area Committee meetings were attended to explain the Alliance for Action concept and to engage local elected members.
- Two Community Planning meetings were attended in addition to one Senior Management Team meeting. Explanatory presentations on the Alliance for Action concept were given and well received.
- An informal presentation on the process and shared aspirations was made to Brendan O'Hara MP as the local UK Parliament representative. A similar session with the Scottish Parliament constituency representative, Mike Russell MSP, is scheduled for 29.01.16.

- Various meetings took place aimed at ensuring adequate and effective engagement of young people. Meetings took place with the Council's youth workers, The Head Teacher of the Joint Campus, the Manager of Argyll College, and Achievement Bute. Specifically, meetings took place with representatives of the young people themselves who organised focus groups within the school and who facilitated the young people's response to the priority issue identification.
- Various introductory meetings took place with relevant national agencies to discuss potential engagement and investment in the Rothesay Alliance collaborative efforts. These included Architecture and Design Scotland, PAS (formerly Planning Aid for Scotland), Firstport (a social enterprise support organisation), the Scottish Futures Trust, the Carnegie UK Trust, Resilient Scotland, Children in Scotland, Visit Scotland, the Heritage Lottery Fund, NHS Health Scotland, and the Scottish Government's regeneration policy team.
- Formal bids were made for participative Community Charrette planning process funding and the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund.
- Community views were sought through a variety of media in August 2015. These included using the Isle of Bute Trust website and Facebook page. Significant assistance was secured from the local Buteman newspaper, both in print and through their on line presence. The editor was helpful with the distribution of hard copy priority issue questionnaires for those not able to access electronic communications media.
- Pro bono expert legal advice on local Alliance for Action governance options was accessed via Stephen Phillips of Burness LLP.

In summary, the meetings of the local Alliance have been well attended and positive in tone. Cross-sector participation has been helpfully frank and constructive. A core group of dedicated participants have maintained sufficient consistency of communicative involvement and accountability through the progressive series of meetings and decision making process.

At this interim point, two important activities are still being addressed by SURF as part of the present grant funded process. These are:

- Utilising various media to inclusively consult with, and draw in, other groupings of community involvement e.g. the artistic community. As part of that additional effort a 'Survey Monkey' process has been undertaken. The response was good with 194 replies received. Analysis of the responses is currently ongoing.
- Coordinating the process of forming the community's priority list into a sufficiently coherent and symbiotic action plan. Information gleaned from the above consultations will be an important part of informing that process and engaging more participants in further activities.

4.2 IDENTIFYING AND ACCESSING ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Making the Most of a Timely Charrette Investment

The context and early success of SURF's Rothesay Alliance for Action effort enabled it to readily take a timely and potentially important investment opportunity. In cooperation with Scottish Government colleagues, and with the support of relevant national Alliance partners, such as Architecture and Design Scotland, Scottish Futures Trust, Carnegie UK Trust and PAS, SURF has secured a £25k Scottish Government investment in a substantial and inclusive Community Charrette Planning Process focused on Rothesay town centre.

This has been supplemented with a further £5k investment negotiated by SURF with Mount Stuart Trust as a pro-active Alliance partner. Necessary administrative and procurement processes are being provided pro bono by SURF and Argyll and Bute Council as part of the Alliance for Action effort. The selection and briefing of the consultants who will deliver the Charrette process (Ice Cream Architecture Ltd) is being coordinated by SURF via the Alliance for Action Stakeholders group.

The prompt exploitation of this valuable immediate investment opportunity has involved in SURF expending significant amounts of additional time and effort out with the specific terms of the original agreement. However, if successful, the process will provide an even better basis for focusing the broadly shared, wider regeneration aims of various local and national partners via cooperative consideration of physical town centre assets, connections and challenges.

Alliance for Action Facilitator

SURF is simultaneously coordinating the recruitment, induction and support of a dedicated Rothesay Alliance for Action facilitator. An agreed person specification and job description is being used to identify the right person to provide sustained and inclusive support for the Alliance for Action programme and partners; in conjunction with appropriate continuing SURF management and networking support.

Sharing Experience and Perspectives

SURF is also in the process of ensuring a practical and inclusive framework for promoting shared understanding and cooperative learning and practice with SURF's more developed Alliance for Action initiatives in Kirkcaldy and Govan.

4.3 SOME SUMMARISED LEARNING POINTS SO FAR:

Process and Partnerships

- Authority and resources – the importance of helping all partners recognise the key role of, and particular challenges for, Local Authorities in the current political and economic context.

- Community concerns and cohesion – the importance of inclusive diplomatic efforts in establishing and sustaining sufficiently broad and unified community involvement.
- Diplomacy and networking – the value of an external objective coordinating agency with supportive connections and relevant resources.

Connecting People, Places, Policy, Projects and Priorities

- Local circumstances the shared macro context – uncovering and linking the particularities of local perspectives and assets with wider challenges in policy and resources.
- Island context and regional roles – exploiting the special learning value of a contained context while making regional economic and social policy connections. Exploring the possibility of a unique coordinated focus of SG resources in the contained island context.
- Town centres – using the upcoming Rothesay, and the recent Govan, Community Charrette processes to highlight shared and contrasting planning issues.
- Infrastructure investment and participation – comparing and contrasting experiences of the linkages between relevant physical infrastructure investments and gains (or otherwise) in social and economic regeneration e.g. Rothesay Pavilion plus (HLF/THI), Govan (THI and City Deal), and Kirkcaldy (RGCF in Gateway to Gallatown).

4.4 SUMMARY OF PROGRESS ON AGREED SPECIFIC TARGETS

N.B. The blue text in this section summarises progress against the agreed SURF/HIE targets stated in the bullet points.

Community Meetings and Leadership

- Establish a community based consultative reference group to inform and develop the Alliance for Action in Rothesay.
This has been achieved already, with a fluid membership of approximately 30 members which will be built upon over the following months, incorporating more community organisations and young people in particular.
- Assist in the process of finding appropriate mechanisms for identifying a vision and unique selling point for Rothesay.
Shared vision and main priorities successfully negotiated and agreed. Ongoing community stakeholder group processes will establish an appropriate set of inter-linked priorities and a practical action plan.
- Work inclusively with the broad community to identify an individual or group of individuals to take on a leadership role.
Robust stakeholder group identified and currently actively engaged on various development fronts. Further work ongoing to further enhance diversity of engagement and participation.
- Establish priorities, key performance indicators and leadership model, decided in conjunction with the community steering group.

Pro bono governance advice accessed via the renowned expertise of Stephen Phillips of Burness LLP. Agreement on the appropriate model and set of KPIs is expected to follow.

- Establish a process for delivering an Alliance for Action strategy.
In process via enhanced collaboration with an extensive range of resource holders and decision makers.
- Identify a process for ongoing leadership of both the strategy and implementation plan Public Sector Stakeholders Recommend how to best integrate the new strategy with existing Argyll & Bute Council, HIE and partner agency strategies, including the Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement Work with Argyll and Bute Council and Highlands & Islands Enterprise to establish mutually manageable and effective working protocols.
Active support of ABC now successfully engaged via individual, group and CPP engagements. Official and political representatives have been consulted both individually and in formal collective roles.
- Agree a communication strategy, including vision statement and information materials for stakeholders.
Gain consensus from key stakeholders on the implementation plan Provide appropriate professional facilitation and networking at all levels, engaging decision makers to enable projects to be delivered Present to Council Area Committee and Community Planning Partnership annually Project identification.
- Produce base line video and collect and analyse interview data.
To be undertaken as key induction task for the soon to be recruited Rothesay facilitator.
- Agree an activities programme following local review sessions to identify topical themes, areas of practical action and priority projects for implementation.
In process as above.
- Recruit a part time local development worker (expected Oct 2015).
Currently in process.
- Deliver a number of identified projects, to be articulated as an integral part of the process.
Specific activities subject to agreement on coherent priorities.

National Engagement

- Use SURF's networks and connections to engage with the national organisations already working in the existing Alliance for Action sites.
Those already actively engaged include; PAS (Planning Aid Scotland), Scottish Future Trust, Scottish Towns Partnership, Firstport, Resilient Scotland, Children in Scotland, Carnegie UK, Heritage Lottery Fund, Big Lottery, NHS Health Scotland.
- Work with the Community Planning Partnership and national organisations to ensure the Alliance for Action fits and supports their policies, and suggesting changes where appropriate.
Successful presentations made at CPP sessions and successful engagement with key officials made. Commitment to active cooperation and appropriate bureaucratic linkages secured.

- Engage with the Scottish Government to source and deliver support into the Alliance for Action process as part of their place-based policy approach.
Early and potentially important, success in securing £25k Community Charrette town centre investment via Scottish Government with match funding provided by Mount Stuart. Also 'in principle' agreement on a unique dedicated focus of all Scottish Government place-based support initiatives. Further consultation towards implementing that experimental investment approach will be undertaken in the coming months.
- Inform and develop cross-sector policy considerations on social justice and related concerns regarding community empowerment, economic development and public service reform.
To follow the present development, prioritisation and early delivery processes.

Evaluation

- Evaluate Phase two activity – SURF will commission a researcher to undertake a desk-based investigation followed by a programme of interviews with local contacts on the availability, access, relevance, and use of resources for supporting SURF 'Alliance for Action' Programme Proposal 2015-16
Yet to be undertaken in an appropriately timely manner, as above.
- Participate in a formal progress review meeting between its Alliance for Action team and Scottish Government and Highlands & Islands Enterprise representatives to review progress towards the end of 2015/16 financial year.
Yet to be undertaken in an appropriately timely manner, as above.

Phase 2 Measurable Outcomes

- Two part time temporary posts created.
One in place and one currently under recruitment.
- Three new/improved services/amenities delivered.
Under planning but yet to be delivered.
- One client engaged in research and development.
Investment secured and professional consultant (Ice Cream Architecture) led Charrette process begun.
- 50 volunteers.
28 different volunteers involved so far.
- 200 participants.
- 3000 beneficiaries.
Over 60 active participants at this stage. 3000 beneficiaries is a reference to the town population.
- One community supported.
Rothesay.
- One community group with increased capacity.
New Stakeholder group and enhanced Isle of Bute Trust – more to come.
- 25 organisations supported to deliver growth aspirations.
- Improved conditions for sectoral growth three clients engaged in leadership and management development.
More to come on this.

Wider Outcomes

- People working or volunteering in community regeneration initiatives in Rothesay have a better cross-sector understanding of roles, responsibilities, resources and processes in regeneration.
Good progress on shared understanding, aspirations and some early cooperative action.
- Accepted local leadership model for further planning and activity.
SURF has successfully supported the emergence/role of the stakeholder group which has established credibility and is currently pursuing appropriate development and governance options with free expert professional support accessed via the SURF network.
- Enhanced cross-sector understanding and cooperation focused on the regeneration of Rothesay.
Already good progress at Alliance stakeholder group, Council and CPP levels.
- Identification and promotion of more transferable learning for policy and practice.
In hand – the medium of food access and exchange, creative participation, and social enterprise are the currently promising shared themes across Rothesay, Govan and Kirkcaldy Alliances.
- Engagement with wider research, policy and practice development.
Well received presentations have been made to Scottish Government, Sheffield Hallam University, Scottish Funders Forum, Community Development Alliance Scotland, Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Architecture and the Built Environment, and the UK Committee of the Heritage Lottery Fund (among others).
- Changing perceptions of the operational context for community regeneration captured, summarised and presented through film.
Still to be undertaken.
- Regeneration Policy Alliance, the Alliance for Action learning reference group comprising a core of cross-directorate Scottish Government policy advisers and other policy, practice and academic contacts established, informed and supported.
In hand.
- Enhanced cross-border and international links capitalise upon through the sharing of Alliance for Action outcomes reports, the hosting of study visits, and contributions to relevant publications.
SURF's Alliance for Action learning so far was the top feature in the summer 2015 edition of the International Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal. Further opportunities anticipated via Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Carnegie UK Trust etc.

Based on SURF's previous experience of introducing its Alliance for Action model into the local practicalities and politics of Govan and Kirkcaldy, the process so far in Rothesay can be reasonably described as successful.

SURF has had to adjust some aspects of the originally intended process to accommodate particular concerns and circumstances. By maintaining and exchanging that patient and pragmatic approach in agreement with all parties, the Alliance is now set to move into a more practical and expansive delivery phase.

The relatively contained context of Rothesay and Bute offers additional potential for focused coordination of priorities, resources and efforts. SURF's good standing and contacts in the evolving national regeneration policy context will be engaged in making the most constructive use of shared learning and improved practice both locally and nationally.

The scheduled April 2016 and September 2016 reports on this SURF-led, HIE-supported, initiative will expand on practical progress in coordinated investments and activity. These reports will also highlight the resultant shared learning for the benefit of all partners concerned with more successful and sustainable community regeneration in these exceptionally challenging times.

End of Report

Andy Milne
SURF Chief Executive
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SURF Scotland's Independent Regeneration Network. Orkney Street Enterprise Centre, 18-20 Orkney Street, Glasgow G51 2BX
Tel: 0141 440 0122 / Email: info@scotregen.co.uk / Website: www.scotregen.co.uk

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