



## THE SURF AWARDS: LEARNING FROM SUCCESS

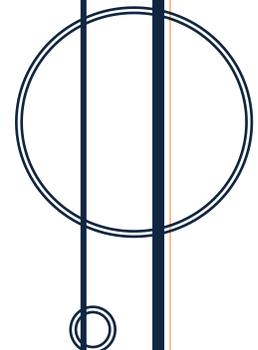
*An outcomes report from a series of SURF workshops in 2016*

SURF and the Scottish Government deliver the annual SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration to identify and share examples of high impact in addressing social and economic problems in Scottish places.

In the summer of 2016, SURF arranged a series of workshop events with representatives of the six category winning SURF Award initiatives from the 2015 process. The goal of these events was to explore, in some depth, what transferable lessons these projects can offer to regeneration practitioners working in other sectors and geographies.

This report presents a summary of the main outcomes from the three SURF Awards workshop events, and their respective themes:

- Community Linked Infrastructure;
- Place-Based Regeneration; and
- Youth Employability.



# The SURF Awards: Learning from Success

*An outcomes report from a series of SURF workshops*

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## INTRODUCTION

The annual SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration process is widely recognised as being the most prestigious awards in the broad regeneration scene in Scotland.

The purpose of the SURF Awards process is:

- To recognise and reward best practice;
- To promote and disseminate best practice across Scotland as means of sharing knowledge and experience and enhancing policy and practice;
- To highlight the role that regeneration projects and initiatives have in improving the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

2015 was the 18th year of the SURF Awards, and the 12th that it has been delivered in partnership with the Scottish Government.

Nominations to the 2015 SURF Awards were assessed by an independent panel of 24 expert judges drawn from national regeneration-related organisations and community groups in Scotland. Working in teams, the judging panel members agreed category shortlists, made site visits to these shortlisted projects, and collaboratively selected winning projects.

The six category winning projects for the 2015 SURF Awards were:

- **Community Led Regeneration:** Helmsdale Affordable Housing
- **Creative Regeneration:** Laurieston's 'Open Spaces'
- **Employability:** The Wheatley Pledge
- **Large Scale Infrastructure:** Ullapool Harbour Redevelopment
- **Scotland's Most Improved Large Town:** Kilmarnock
- **Scotland's Most Improved Small/Medium Town:** Barrhead

These winning projects were announced at a SURF Awards Presentation Dinner event in Glasgow in December 2015. The following year, SURF invited colleagues in all five winning projects to participate in a series of SURF Awards workshop events with regeneration practitioners from the SURF network.

The events were designed to explore and highlight the main factors that led to the success of the 2015 SURF Award winning initiatives that could potentially help initiatives in other contexts and places.

The following sections of this report highlight the main areas of discussion and outcomes from the following three events in the series:

- Community Linked Infrastructure with Helmsdale Affordable Housing and Ullapool Harbour Redevelopment. Held in Dundee Contemporary Arts on 18 May 2016;
- Place-Based Regeneration with Art & Living Laurieston, East Ayrshire Council on behalf of Kilmarnock, and East Renfrewshire Council on behalf of Barrhead. Held in The Teacher Building, Glasgow, on 25 May 2016;
- Inventive Employability with the Wheatley Pledge. Held in The Melting Pot, Edinburgh, on 2 June 2016.

SURF is grateful to the Scottish Government for supporting the SURF Awards and these workshop events. The 2015 SURF Awards process also featured the following additional partners on the delivery of thematic categories: Architecture + Design Scotland, Creative Scotland, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, PAS (formerly Planning Aid for Scotland), RTPI Scotland, Scotland's Towns Partnership, and Skills Development Scotland.

## TRANSFERABLE LESSONS: COMMUNITY LINKED INFRASTRUCTURE

With colleagues from two SURF Award winning projects:  
Helmsdale Affordable Housing and Ullapool Harbour Redevelopment

### About the event

The first workshop in the series involved the 2015 SURF Award winning projects in the 'Community Led Regeneration' and 'Large Scale Infrastructure' categories.

Both initiatives were managed by community groups in the Scottish Highlands, and aligned housing and transport infrastructure needs with a wide range of wider social and economic benefits for local people.

The half-day workshop took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2016 in Dundee Contemporary Arts, and featured presentations from project managers, an input from SURF Awards partner Highlands & Islands Enterprise, an open discussion, and a networking lunch. 24 participants were in attendance.

### Presentation Summary: Helmsdale Affordable Housing

This initiative constructed new family homes in the remote village of Helmsdale on the east coast of the Highlands, which has a population of 842.

Prior to the project, no affordable housing had been constructed in the village for 35 years, which was not the fault of local housing association but indicative of a more general lack of need and investment. A major community consultation, launched by the Helmsdale and District Development Trust community group soon after it was formally established in 2012, indicated that a lack of affordable housing was the second highest priority for local people. It was perceived, according the consultation outcomes, to be a structural cause of depopulation and decline.

Following analysis of need and funding models, the Development Trust approached local partners Albyn Housing Society, Highland Council and Highlands & Islands Enterprise to scope the potential for the Development Trust managing the construction of four new affordable family homes. Funds were raised initially from Highlands & Islands Enterprise and the Scottish Government, which supported needs analysis and scoping phases.



In early 2015, the then Scottish Government Minister for Housing and Welfare Margaret Burgess (centre) visited the new houses

A wide variety of additional funding and finance sources, from local authority street works funding to a loan from an ethical bank, were subsequently engaged to negotiate the complexities of managing the construction process. Albyn Housing Society, as the local registered social landlord, were particularly helpful in providing the project team with support and guidance. The Development Trust and Housing Society often acted together through an innovative joint approach which combined the community group’s freedom to “rattle the cages” by making effective direct approaches to various agencies and politicians, and the diplomatic experience of the Housing Society that helped “smooth the waters”.

“THE COMPLEXITY AND SHEER NUMBER OF GRANT FUNDERS – 18 – MADE THE CASH FLOW, PRIVATE FINANCE AND GRANT DRAW DOWN REQUIREMENTS VERY COMPLEX”

PAUL HARRINGTON

Four high-quality housing units were constructed by the December 2014 completion date, which was only eight weeks after the original September 2014 provisional deadline, a remarkable achievement given the level of complexities. Tenants moved in two weeks before Christmas, and the project won the 2015 ‘Community Led Regeneration’ SURF Award one year on after the judges were particularly impressed by the value and productive links drawn from the small numbers of homes built. For example, the

housing's solar energy panels generate more than £20k income annually, which is invested into local community driven initiatives such as tourism marketing and broadband development.

The project team identified a high level of community consultation as the key to its success. They also used 'BOGOF' (buy one get one free) approach to maximize value when negotiating with suppliers and contractors on elements such as double glazing and heating systems. They had the following advice to share for other community groups that are seeking to deliver ambitious and long-term physical regeneration projects:

- Be tenacious;
- Be positive;
- Listen to the experts, but don't simply accept 'no' as an answer;
- Keep the community updated;
- Keep funders updated.

*Presenter: Paul Harrington, Local Development Officer, Helmsdale & District Development Trust*

### **Presentation Summary: Ullapool Harbour Redevelopment**

The 'Large Scale Infrastructure' SURF Award category winner was a response to the lack of advancement in the transport infrastructure of Ullapool Harbour on Scotland's north west coast.

A historically significant port, Ullapool Harbour has provided a great deal of economic drive for the regional Highland economy, especially during the "Klondykers" era. Named after Scandinavian cargo vessels that regularly used the port in the 1960s and 1970s, this period was a major source of employment for the town and region, as thousands of local people were contracted to process caught herring, and related services.

While the major fishing era is now over, Scotland's west coast is still a significant European fishing area. Ullapool Harbour has also built up a busy cruise market in recent years, and caters for additional leisure and freight vessels. The biggest source of income is now Caledonian MacBrayne's Stornoway-Ullapool ferry, which was replaced following a 2012 decision to introduce a much larger £42m ship to serve the line. This development required a major redevelopment of the harbour facilities to extend the ferry pier, install a new passenger gangway, and redesign the passenger terminal, among other enhancements.

The harbour is owned by Ullapool Harbour Trust, which has 14 staff and seven Board Members drawn from the local community. As a community group, the Trust aims to run as a profitable enterprise but with any surplus reinvested for community benefit. The Trust successfully used some of the £19m Transport Scotland redevelopment funding to build in a level of versatility



**The redeveloped terminal now has a popular and flexible events space, which features a regular concert programme**

into the redeveloped harbour, and create a popular new space for community events, exhibitions and concerts.

In addition to meeting the key transport requirements of the redeveloped harbour, the Trust’s efforts to secure additional social and economic benefits have paid off substantially. Local people can now access and enjoy a permanent exhibition space for a community-owned museum, community meetings, concerts and album launches, special interest talks, and open film club sessions.

*Presenter: Edel Walsh, Lead Designer, Ullapool Harbour Trust*

## Open Discussion

Some of the main comments and areas of debate raised during the workshop on Community Linked Infrastructure are listed below. These views and opinions do not necessarily represent the views of SURF or the people and organisations present at the workshop.

- Community led infrastructure is a good fit with national strategies for the creative industries and inclusive economic growth;
- Despite rhetoric to the contrary, in many places in Scotland infrastructure tends to be delivered “to” rather than “with” the community – Helmsdale and Ullapool show a different way;
- It is a common issue for community bodies not to have the practical skills, knowledge or time required to deliver effective consultations and development plans;
- Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE) have a strong track record of empowering communities to acquire and manage and exploit assets such as land and broadband infrastructure for community benefit;
- The Scottish Government’s community capacity building programmes, delivered by HIE, the Scottish Community Development Centre and Development Trusts Association Scotland, is making a valuable contribution in supporting community anchor organisations to deliver infrastructure;
- The Scottish Land Fund, managed by the Big Lottery Fund in Scotland and HIE, is helping to realise opportunities for communities to buy abandoned and neglected land – obligatory sales could provide even greater opportunities;
- The debate doesn’t have to be about creating brand new infrastructure; the Ullapool Harbour experience demonstrates the value of building community benefits into what is already there;
- A ‘hard headed’ approach can be necessary to driving forward ambitious plans – it is difficult and messy, but volunteers that aren’t helping may need to be dropped and new ones recruited to broaden the skill-set and build on momentum;



**Ailsa Raeburn, Head of the HIE Community Assets Team, highlighted some of the infrastructure projects supported by the agency**

- While building four houses doesn't seem like bringing a massive change in the community, the Helmsdale experience demonstrates the power of a 'ripple effect' of a positive change in an economically fragile place;
- There is a major challenge for even major infrastructure projects such as Dundee's Victoria and Albert Museum to simultaneously deliver on labour market and community needs – too often we overstate the expectations of big developments;
- Tangible outcomes such as apprenticeships and commitment to employ from the local area are fundamentally important aspect of infrastructure developments;
- Examples such as the Greenock's Beacon Arts Centre show the importance of having 'buy-in' from the local community all the way through development;
- Projects applying to the Scottish Government's Regeneration Capital Grant Fund must demonstrate community involvement;
- There can be an issue in explaining to partners who 'owns' community infrastructure projects, such as a community broadband initiative in Fife;
- Participatory budgeting presents an opportunity to plant seeds and unlock the talent already available in our people and communities.

## TRANSFERABLE LESSONS: PLACE-BASED REGENERATION

With colleagues from three SURF Award winning projects: Laurieston's 'Open Spaces'; Kilmarnock Urban Development Plan & Barrhead Regeneration

### About the event

The second workshop in the series involved the 2015 SURF Award winning projects in the 'Creative Regeneration' and 'Scotland's Most Improved Town' categories.

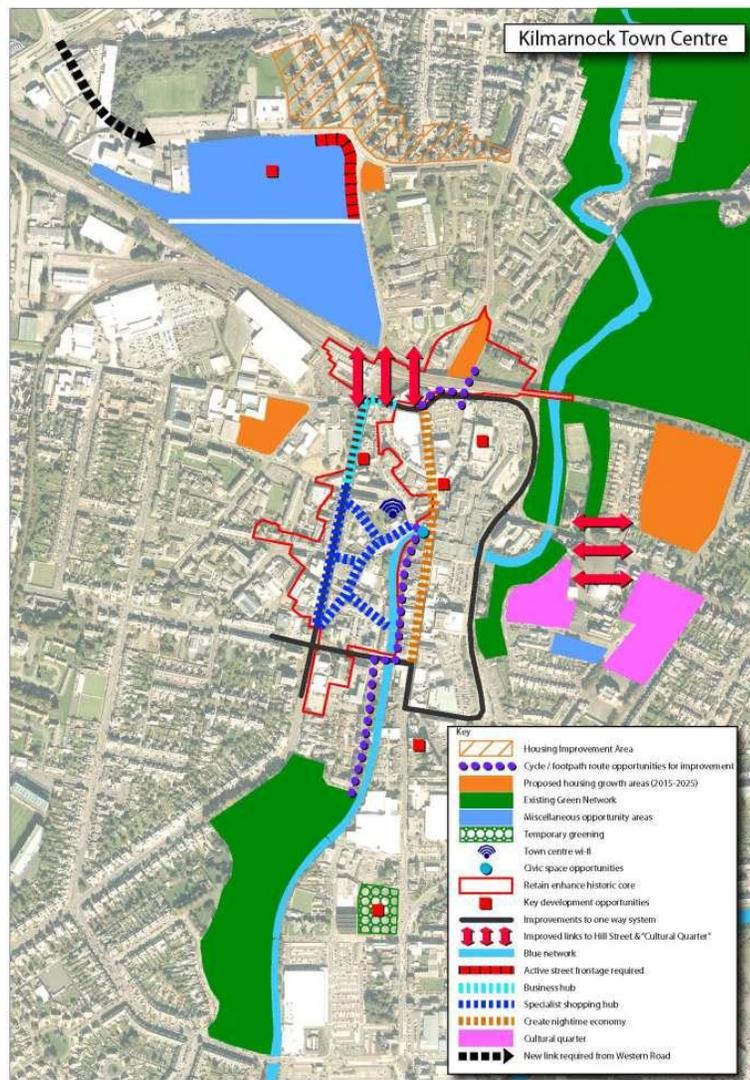
The three winning initiatives all demonstrated a high level of creativity, collaboration and commitment in seeking to address deep-rooted socio-economic challenges in urban spaces in the west of Scotland.

The half-day workshop took place on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016 in Glasgow's Teacher Building, and featured presentations from project managers, an input from SURF Awards partner Scotland's Towns Partnership and SURF delivery partner Glasgow City Council, an open discussion, and a networking lunch. 54 participants were in attendance.

### Presentation Summary: Kilmarnock

The large town winner of the inaugural 'Scotland's Most Improved Town' SURF Awards category was Kilmarnock. People who don't know the town well are likely to think of it as a failing unemployment blackspot, but those with recent knowledge are likely to view it as a confident, vibrant and award-winning place.

The development of some of these positive associations can be traced back to 1989, when a Kilmarnock town centre strategy supported by local government and European resources delivered a major investment in the town centre's public realm. This project was notable for using high-quality materials that were designed to last – the public artworks and granite slabs are still attractive today.



### Kilmarnock Town Centre Development Plans

A series of strategies this century incrementally built on good foundations and past successes. Chief among these were a 2003 East Ayrshire Local Plan; a 2003-15 Community Plan; a 2005-08 Townscape Heritage Initiative; a 2007 Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme launch; and an Integrated Urban Development Plan approved in 2011. The connective tissue running through these initiatives include a respect for heritage and an enthusiasm for developing economic, cultural and social activity in the town centre, including by locating East Ayrshire Council staff there.

The combined outcome is for Kilmarnock to be an exemplar of the benefits of the ‘town centre first’ approach. The holistic focus has delivered a vibrant town centre with a strong cultural and economic offer, a good quality of housing, a wide range of amenities and services, a strong and safe night-time economy, and distinctive experiences including independent

retailers on Bank Street, a ‘Global Market’ initiative, and a restored Palace Theatre.

There are five lessons behind Kilmarnock’s successful rejuvenation that apply to all long-term place-based regeneration projects:

1. A serious commitment of time, funding, and getting the right people involved is essential;
2. Do not underestimate the importance of delivery – the right team can ‘find a way’ to overcome setbacks and difficulties;
3. Regeneration is long-term, it needs confidence and commitment over 10, 20, 30 years;
4. Placemaking is central: the Scottish Government, RTPI Scotland and others are right to emphasise the importance of developing appropriate and sustainable places;
5. Integrate Community Planning with spatial planning – the silo approach is not helpful.

“DARE TO BE HONEST AND FEAR NO LABOUR”

*ROBERT BURNS, QUOTED BY ANDY COLVIN*

*Presenters: Karl Doroszenko, Development Planning and Regeneration Manager, and Andy Colvin, Manager – Vibrant Communities, East Ayrshire Council*

### Presentation Summary: Barrhead

The second winner in the 2015 ‘Scotland’s Most Improved Town’ SURF Awards category, for small/medium towns with a population under 20k, was Barrhead in East Renfrewshire. A post-industrial town with similarities to Paisley, Barrhead underwent a rapid growth in the industrial era as a result of a successful textile industry.

50 years ago, however, major employers started to leave. This left a familiar legacy of high unemployment and considerable social problems. In 2000/2001, East Renfrewshire Council responded to growing issues affecting the town, including low life expectancy and a visibly deteriorating town centre, by developing a range of responses.

Chief among these responses was a series of actions aimed at reinvigorating the town centre as an economic driver, using a masterplanning approach, led by the local authority and other partners but with a deep level of community engagement.

Sustained public sector input and investment, the creation of a ‘Better Barrhead’ communications strategy, and the location of a second East Renfrewshire Council



**Gillian McNamara shared the story of Barrhead’s regeneration project background and impacts**

headquarters on Barrhead's Main Street were among the key features of the regeneration strategy.

A number of challenges, such as getting political buy-in for a long-term regeneration programme, managing competing priorities within the Council, the impacts of the 2008 recession, and the general reputation of East Renfrewshire as a “leafy suburb” of Glasgow, all presented difficulties in maintaining momentum and delivering on objectives. The fragmented nature of the town centre also posed planning difficulties.

The project, however, continued to deliver high-impact achievements, as evidenced by the SURF Awards success. It delivered:

- A new £14m town centre health centre;
- The £4m Barrhead Foundry community hub building with library, sports centre and business hub, which launched in 2015;
- £1.4m of Town Centre Regeneration Fund public realm investments;
- A £22m new town square and town centre Asda superstore, opened in 2014;
- A more cohesive town centre linked by green spaces and footpaths, with greatly increased footfall.



**Barrhead Foundry launched in 2015**

Progress continues with the development of an ‘All About Barrhead’ Business Improvement District, Glasgow & Clyde Valley City Deal infrastructure investment plans and a range of strategic developments on peripheral brownfield sites in north and south Barrhead, including construction of 1200 homes, a railway station, and new roads.

*Presenter: Gillian McNamara, Economic Development Manager, East Renfrewshire Council*

### **Presentation Summary: Laurieston’s Open Spaces**

This project was developed with four key partners – construction consortium Urban Union, Gorbals Housing Association, Glasgow City Council, arts body WAVEParticle – and a range of local organisations. These partners are working together on a large-scale regeneration project in Laurieston, a historically undeveloped part of the Gorbals area of Glasgow.

To complement a major housing development featuring 800 new homes, WAVEParticle were tasked with delivering a long-term ‘Art & Living Laurieston’ cultural strategy. A key feature of this strategy is ‘Open Spaces’, which has successfully brought a diverse set of buildings and public spaces into use for creative artists and local community groups.

The suite of Open Spaces include: 23 railway arches close to the Citizens’ Theatre, which hold regular ‘Artists in Arches’ events and exhibitions; a newly created Laurieston Arena, which is an adaptable open circular space on the site of a former high-rise; and Alexander ‘Greek’ Thomson’s acclaimed Caledonia Road Church, which had lain vacant since a fire in 1962. The building was successfully reopened by WAVEparticle in 2014 for community theatre and other cultural events.

The project team coped with a wide range of issues – including technical issues, such as how to use generators in formerly derelict spaces, as well as planning concerns and understanding how people move from one space to the next – to foster a busy, inclusive and sustainable programme of grassroots activities.



**Open Spaces: Caledonia Church (centre); Laurieston Arena (centre); railway arches (right)**

All partners are clear on the value of arts and culture in helping to create a new neighbourhood and not simply new housing, and in driving social and economic opportunities.

The project has also demonstrated value in building community cohesion across local people of all languages and cultures, and encourages trial and error – if one activity proves unsuccessful, it is easy to try something else, and build on what works over time. It is being used as a role model to encourage further Stalled Spaces initiatives in other parts of Glasgow.

*Presenters: Peter McCaughey, Director, WAVEparticle; and Susan Hallsworth, Managing Director, Urban Union*

## Open Discussion

Some of the main comments and areas of debate raised during the workshop on Place-Based Regeneration are listed below. These views and opinions do not necessarily represent the views of SURF or the people and organisations present at the workshop.

- Partnership need clear understanding of roles, and mutual respect and trust;
- Councils can be friendly partners – not a stifler of progress, as they are commonly perceived;
- When a community group and professionals interact well together, this is the basis of a great partnership with positive developments, but not all projects can be winners;
- Local government cutbacks will always result in a changed mandate. Stakeholders are generally starting to accept that Councils can't do everything required to drive local regeneration, which is a positive development;
- It is difficult for Councils even with large budgets, like Glasgow City, to disproportionately protect some of their poorest communities under harsh financial settlements. There is also a knock-on effect involving cuts in the budgets of third sector organisations that also aim to serve poorer places;
- The size of local authorities in Scotland, and their distance from community level, contrasts sharply with most other EU countries, which tend to have smaller units of local government. This can hinder their ability to interact with community groups;
- Should local authorities be given responsibility for collecting taxes, and give some to the national government, rather than the other way around?

- In the novel *Generation X* by Douglas Coupland, there is an insightful quote that states individuals have to, “choose between pain and drudgery.” Regeneration practitioners must be bold in taking the more difficult “pain” option by championing and supporting place-based regeneration over the drudgery of cuts;
- Perhaps we should shift our mindset and think of the people as the resources of a place;
- Towns with small high streets, such as Arbroath, can have more than 20 long-term vacant units. Inspired by Laurieston’s ‘Open Spaces’, could these be given rent-free to artists and students for a limited period to help improve the towns’ health?
- We live in the digital age, and the Internet helps everyone to share information, planners and residents alike, but not enough is happening;
- Scotland’s Towns Partnership emerged from the Scottish Government’s Town Centre Action Plan and an acceptance that Scotland’s towns are falling in between the cracks between city and rural regeneration support mechanisms. Exercises like the ‘Understanding Scottish Places’ tool, encouraging MSPs to visit their town centres, and supporting the ‘Scotland’s Most Improved Town’ SURF Awards have helped improve the position of towns on Scotland’s political agenda;
- On arts and community development, there are some good local examples across Scotland, but perhaps it is time for a national strategy?
- Planners need to go way beyond planning into culture, economic development, and other professional areas. Bringing people together and breaking down silos is an old but persistent problem;
- Strategic mapping exercises are often presented as being different to a messy chaos of creativity. Is there a contradiction here?
- For some national government players, the message appears to be “we have no money left, it’s over to you [the regeneration community]”. This is a scary and exciting time, but the reality is that there are considerable national resources that could be deployed differently;
- Exemplar models like Barrhead, Kilmarnock and Laurieston provide inspiration for place-based initiatives. New housing developments need to be further encouraged to learn from flagship examples, but the under-resourced planning system does not currently support this;
- Glasgow City Council’s Thriving Places project is a notable example of a local authority attempting to do something different in a time of financial shortage. It aims to address high health inequalities in nine specific places of the greatest need by using community budgeting processes and other innovations to address pressing social issues such as homelessness, alcohol abuse and youth unemployment;
- A meaningful place-based regeneration project takes years and years, but it is simply not possible to achieve long-term support throughout political cycles, time-limited



**Scotland's Towns Partnership Board Member Craig McLaren (pictured) and Shaw Anderson, Partnership & Development Manager at Glasgow City Council, contributed additional presentations**

funding programmes and austerity policies. This results in a constant cycle of short-term regeneration lacking in impact, which is a big problem;

- In general, expectations on often under-skilled community groups around place-based regeneration are too high. More support is needed;
- Typical Council approaches to community engagement – such as comments cards, bland public meetings and information stalls – are woeful. There are lots of ways to meaningfully engage communities in creative forums such as street parties and charrettes;
- Kilmarnock and Laurieston are great examples of local people continuing to deliver regeneration once the developers have finished their projects;
- Demographics, employment patterns, migration levels fluctuate and change. This makes regeneration constant and continuous, rather than something that can be marked finished.

“COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY  
CAPACITY BUILDING, INCREASING  
SOCIAL CAPITAL AND EMPOWERING  
COMMUNITIES IS ESSENTIAL”

*SHAW ANDERSON, GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL*

## TRANSFERABLE LESSONS: INVENTIVE EMPLOYABILITY

With colleagues from the Wheatley Pledge and Creative Pathways initiatives

### About the event

The final workshop in the series involved the 2015 SURF Award winning project in the ‘Employability’ category – The Wheatley Pledge – and the Creative Pathways programme, which also featured on the category shortlist (the second shortlisted project, Scottish Waterways Trust’s Canal College, were invited to present but were unable to send a representative).

As the event title indicates, these projects demonstrated innovative approaches towards helping young people that are often some distance from the labour market into sustainable and rewarding forms of employment.

The half-day workshop took place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2016 in Edinburgh’s Melting Pot, and featured presentations from project managers, a presentation from Lou Donnelly, Learning Provider Support Executive in SURF Awards partner Skills Development Scotland, an open discussion, and a networking lunch. 42 participants were in attendance.

## Presentation Summary: The Wheatley Pledge

The Wheatley Group is a consortium of eight bodies – housing associations, social care organisations and commercial companies – that operate across central Scotland. The SURF Award winning Wheatley Pledge project started by targeting all companies – legal, finance, construction – that Wheatley Group consortium members, including Glasgow Housing Association and Dunedin Canmore Housing Association, contract out to on a regular basis.

The project is targeted at Wheatley Group customers, including those living in social housing in deprived communities. It has provided all partners with a fuller understanding of the issues around youth unemployment. An original three year project life cycle has recently been extended to five years, with a renewed target of 500 employment or training opportunities.

Initially, some of the external partners that the project team approached said: “we obviously couldn’t employ a Wheatley customer.” There was an unfair perception that Wheatley customers lacked the desire to work. This perception has now been challenged. The project shows that informal social networks and positive role models help to nurture employment skills in young people.

Unemployed Wheatley property residents and those leaving training programmes are all eligible for inclusion in the programme. 70% of apprenticeship places in external suppliers are now ring-fenced to Wheatley customers. The Wheatley Group has been pleasantly surprised by the range and scale of jobs on offer. They are not just entry-level. Some participants are, however, nervous of putting themselves forward for higher-quality labour market opportunities, and require deeper levels of support.

The Pledge has resulted in other social benefits, such as free trade time and cash from contractors to resolve, for example, emergency plumbing issues in community facilities. Wheatley Pledge partners have also directly funded some community events.

*Presenter: Lynne Guthrie, Community Renewal Manager, The Wheatley Group*

## Presentation Summary: Creative Pathways

One of two runners-up to the Wheatley Pledge in the 2015 SURF Awards Employability Category was the Creative Pathways programme, founded and managed by Impact Arts, a social enterprise that seeks to use the arts to deliver social change.

Its Creative Pathways employability programme has been running since 2006. It is market-led, and goes where employment opportunities in the creative industries exists. It operates in several delivery locations across central Scotland and is looking to expand further.



**Angela Constance MSP, now Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, launched the Wheatley Pledge in August 2013**



**The project operates an attractive retail space in Glasgow's Merchant City**

Creative spaces are used instead of classroom settings to deliver training sessions. The project manages a popular 'Factory 45' retail space in Glasgow's Merchant City. Street performances and creative approaches are used to build confidence in participants.

There is a heavy emphasis on retail skills and the 'sale' of creative pride, which is not only economically useful but also engenders an improved sense of self-respect.

The project operators use a "tough love" approach to encourage attendance, which can be a problem. The project invests heavily in staff training, assisted by a psychologist to help staff deal with challenging behaviour.

The project itself is about finding a 'pathway' to employment in the creative industries, so a good deal of energy is invested in learning more about where future jobs in the sector will be coming from.

An environmental programme is a main area of future growth. This is supported by a UK Big Lottery Fund five year grant.

*Presenter: Fiona Doring, Acting Director, Impact Arts*

## Open Discussion

Some of the main comments and areas of debate raised during the SURF Awards workshop on Inventive Employability are listed below. These views and opinions do not necessarily represent the views of SURF or the people and organisations present at the workshop.

- Wheatley Pledge demonstrates a great use of scale and procurement processes to deliver real impact;
- Impact Arts has a creative, organic approach to employability that is realistic and tightly focused on the job challenge;
- There is too much policy focus on the under-25s. What about the over 40s and over 50s, who have perhaps more to lose from being unable to access the labour market?
- Skills Development Scotland's 2017 programme will focus on support for long-term unemployed in all age groups;
- The Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities, Keith Brown MSP, is initiating an "end to end review" of skills and employability, with a view to refocusing policy on fair work practices and the equalities agenda;
- Mainstream employability provisions may be failing ethnic minorities. For example, in one local authority area there are more than 4k Muslims, but only 0.04% of employability programme clients in the region are from ethnic minorities. Is there a targeting and engagement problem?

- Local knowledge on what works in employability sometimes doesn't translate or scale up at a national level – how do we develop this? Good exploratory work is happening in Fife and Edinburgh;
- All employability programmes, regardless of impact, come to an end for one reason or another. Why can't we sustain the most effective ones?
- Businesses struggle to keep trading in what is still a difficult economic climate. Is it time to give hard-pressed employers a break and shift the focus towards employability projects that can genuinely create new positions, like Community Jobs Scotland?
- Transport is a big issue for connecting vulnerable communities with employers. In Fife, for example, big employers like Amazon and Marine Harvest have opportunities, but people without cars in many Fife areas can't get there for early shifts by public transport. Many of these jobs are instead being taken by people living outside Fife, such as in Edinburgh and Dundee;
- Dedicated employers provide major contributions to the Scottish economy, and also do a much better job at retaining their staff, who feel valued;
- Employability projects in general find it difficult to access employers. Only some are members of umbrella organisations like the Federation of Small Businesses or the local Chamber of Commerce. Engagement often requires travelling to business premises directly and knocking on doors, something employability workers may not enjoy doing;



**Participants discussed business engagement, rural transport and age-targeting issues**

- Despite its decline in the digital age, the Yellow Pages and similar directories provide a great resource, especially for industries like construction;
- In the Skills Development Scotland employability pipeline, geography, transport, accessibility and engagement are all big challenges. There is also a rural/urban divide, with greater challenges and fewer opportunities outside the cities and large towns.
- Service users like one-to-one engagement models, but there is a question mark over whether the public sector can afford this in all programmes;
- Connectivity is the problem. Is more resources the answer?
- One organisation widely publicised an attractive new apprenticeship programme for 16-25 year olds in an area of high youth unemployment, They expected 30 applicants at a minimum but only got five. They didn't understand why this was the case;
- In general, it appears that employers are perceiving further education as more valuable than modern apprenticeships. The 'modern' prefix may have reduced its value;
- There is limited alignment of third sector and public sector funding partners, and too much bureaucracy in project funding applications. Skills Development Scotland is exploring these issues;
- Stage One of the employability pipeline is the most difficult. People with barriers are difficult to reach and engage with. With a loss of support mechanisms as

programmes are wound up, it is also becoming harder to make referrals e.g. to mental health or drug-and-alcohol support programmes;

- Demographics are changing in Scotland. This is creating a language and ethnic diversity challenge for employment services;
- In the Wheatley Pledge, it is psychologically difficult for some potential clients to walk into Wheatley Group buildings. As many have grown up in workless households, they lack confidence and aspirations around the world of work;
- The reduction in employability support funding has been considerable, and is getting worse – the “glory days” of generous resources for training providers are over. Employability programmes now need to be delivered as part of a wider income-generating initiative to be sustainable;
- Only big organisations can bid for big employability tenders, which can hinder local economic development as local SMEs/social enterprises are excluded. Smaller players have to make do with cocktail funding, and as they lack staff they find it difficult to network and collaborate with others on potential joint bids for bigger grants;
- We have now had decades of Community Planning in Scotland, but there is limited interaction between that and the employability sector. The rising pressures on local authorities creates a fresh opportunity to look at more intelligent resource-linking;
- There has been a general swing away from the public sector and towards the third sector in employability support provision. This is a welcome move for small towns as a third sector organisation based in the town tends to have more local knowledge and trust than a more distant public body;
- The reality is that employability programmes must adapt or die. The hard reality is that not all of them deserve to survive and with less resources and more demand only the strongest value-for-money projects should be maintained;
- People with barriers are now seen as ‘high risk’ in the current context. Employability projects working to strict targets are in some cases being discouraged from working with such clients;
- There is an unwritten rule that programmes “can’t give employers shit”, i.e. that they present their best clients for consideration so that they build a good relationship with the employer. But where does this leave clients not among the programme’s best, who are in greater need of support to enter the labour market?
- Some feel that the third sector lacks professionalism around employability. This is largely unfair. Public-third sector collaborations can help third sector bodies survive and improve their reputation as service delivery vehicles;
- Skills Development Scotland have the appropriate structure and knowledge to align employability objectives with the Scottish Government’s renewed focus on equalities; but there are some big challenges coming in the Westminster/Scottish Government transfer of power;
- Consortiums are the way forward for all players seeking to help people into work. There is a reasonable argument that some third sector bodies could present themselves better to potential partners.

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### About the SURF Awards

SURF’s annual awards process, delivered in partnership with the Scottish Government, is open to all community regeneration projects in Scotland that are currently in place or that have been completed within two years of the closing date.

The purpose of the SURF Awards is:

- To recognise and reward best practice and innovation in community regeneration;
- To promote and disseminate best practice across Scotland as means of sharing knowledge and experience, and thereby enhancing future policy and practice;
- To highlight the role that regeneration projects have in improving the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

The SURF Awards offers an opportunity for regeneration projects of all sizes to demonstrate value to funders and partners, support team-building and develop a national profile.

The 2016 SURF Awards process is open for nominations from 21 June to 19 September 2016. There are five categories of entry:

- **Community Led Regeneration**
- **Creative Regeneration**
- **Large Scale Infrastructure**
- **Scotland's Most Improved Town** (with small, medium and large sub-categories)
- **Youth Employability: Removing Barriers**

SURF is grateful to partners [Architecture & Design Scotland](#), [Creative Scotland](#), [Highlands and Islands Enterprise](#), [Scotland's Towns Partnership](#), and [Skills Development Scotland](#) for their additional support of the SURF Awards process.

Further information is available from the SURF website: [www.scotregen.co.uk/surf-awards](http://www.scotregen.co.uk/surf-awards)

## About SURF

As Scotland's regeneration forum, SURF draws on its extensive, cross-sector membership of over 250 organisations, to share knowledge, ideas and experience in community regeneration.

SURF provides a supportive, neutral space to facilitate this sharing of perspectives and ideas through a diverse programme of activities. This includes seminars, conferences, policy exchanges, lectures, study visits, practical local/national alliances, awards for best practice and the distribution of information and comment in a variety of formats.

Constructive feedback from this varied interaction with SURF's membership and wider contacts is used to influence the development of more successful regeneration policy and practice; principally through SURF's close links with key policy-makers in national and local government and other relevant agencies.

Further information is available from the SURF website: [www.surf.scot](http://www.surf.scot)

## End of Report

*Derek Rankine, SURF Policy & Participation Manager, 31 July 2016*

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