



Biographies

Robin McAlpine | Director | Common Weal



Robin McAlpine is Director of Common Weal, a Scottish 'think and do tank' which campaigns for social and economic equality, participative democracy, environmental sustainability, wellbeing, quality of life, peace, justice and cooperation. He has worked for over 20 years in journalism, public affairs, political strategy and policy. He writes for a wide range of sources on Scottish politics.

Councillor Alison Evison | President | COSLA

Alison Evison was first elected in 2012, becoming the first Labour Councillor in Aberdeenshire. In 2015 she became Chair of Education, Learning and Leisure and in 2016 Co-Leader of Aberdeenshire, in partnership with the SNP. Alison has served on Aberdeenshire's Community Planning Board since 2015 and has been part of the Aberdeen City Region Joint Board.



Councillor Evison was elected as the 15th President of COSLA and only the third female President of the organisation in June 2017. Alison is also Deputy Leader of the Opposition Partnership in Aberdeenshire. She is a Champion for Looked After Children and for Equalities. She is also currently Chair of the Scottish Association of Labour Councillors.

Before becoming a councillor, Alison had worked as a teacher of History, Modern Studies and English for 25 years. She has worked in England and Germany as well as Scotland. She looks forward to working hard as President, with her cross-party political team, to represent all of Scotland's 32 Councils which together make up COSLA.

Andy Milne | Chief Executive | SURF



SURF is Scotland's regeneration forum for practitioners, policy makers and academics. By sharing and channelling the experience, views and ideas and of its extensive membership of over 280 cross-sector organisations, SURF helps to inform better policy and practice for more successful and sustainable community regeneration throughout Scotland. SURF is primarily concerned with shared efforts to tackle the causes and degenerative impacts of poverty and inequalities.

Andy became Chief Executive of SURF in 2003. Since then, it has expanded its capacity, range and influence. In addition to its extensive networking activities and information outputs, SURF's Alliance for Action programme delivers practical and shared learning benefits across a range of place based, cross sector, community regeneration collaborations.

Prior to his SURF role, Andy spent 10 years as co-ordinator of the Wester Hailes Representative Council; frequently cited as a model of genuinely community led innovation, representation and service delivery. He found his way into independent community development work via studying architecture and an interest in politics. He is a director of the Community Development Alliance Scotland.

Jamie Ballantine | Vice-Chair | SURF



Jamie Ballantine is Social Regeneration Manager at Queens Cross Housing Association. The Social Regeneration Team is involved in a wide range of activities spread across the following themes: Youth and Community Work, Digital Inclusion, Equalities, Health & Wellbeing and Volunteering. Jamie also works closely with the Garscube Community Foundation - a local charity involved in fundraising and grant giving to individuals and community groups in North West Glasgow. This month at the UK Housing Awards, QCHA were announced as winners of the "Outstanding Approach to Equalities & Diversity" for their Sharing Lives Sharing Spaces project, which works extensively with the Chinese community in Woodside.

Jamie also worked as Customer Engagement Manager at Maryhill Housing Association for 5 years, where he was instrumental in supporting local people to set up active residents associations across the communities that make up Maryhill. Facilitating this community led action resulted in a range of neighbourhood improvements including obtaining significant funding to pay for new play areas, growing spaces and improved landscaping. Jamie also worked closely with Maryhill and Summerston Community Council. Prior to this Jamie worked at the Tenant Participation Advisory Service for 10 years, for the most part as Head of Projects.

Jamie joined the SURF Board in 2015 and was appointed Vice-Chair in June 2017.

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