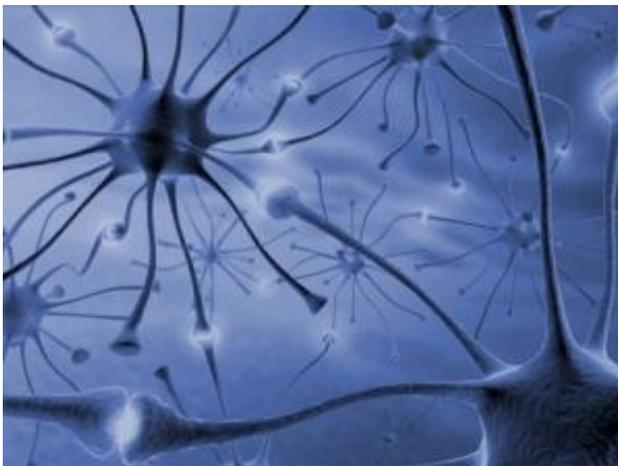




# SURF Alliance for Action: A Feasibility Study for Langholm



## 1 ABOUT THIS PAPER

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The purpose of this document is to provide information on a feasibility study that will explore the potential for extending SURF's *Alliance for Action* programme to the town of Langholm in Dumfries and Galloway.

## 2 BACKGROUND TO THE ALLIANCE FOR ACTION

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SURF's *Alliance for Action* programme is a community regeneration initiative that supports the enhanced coordination of local assets & aspirations, while productively linking them with relevant national policies & resources.

The twin aim is to support better practical outcomes locally, and to draw out learning in support of improving wider national policy and practice.

The *Alliance for Action* programme, which is supported by the Scottish Government, is focused on a coherent set of selected places with shared and distinct regeneration challenges.

In all *Alliance for Action* sites, SURF works to enhance successful community regeneration activity and shared learning. It does so by establishing, facilitating and working with an alliance of willing, cross-sector stakeholders.

The *Alliance for Action* programme began in 2013 in two sites: Govan in Glasgow and East Kirkcaldy in Fife. It has since extended to focus on six communities in 2017/18.

Further information on the *Alliance for Action* programme, including thematic learning reports, summary publications, and short films featuring local Alliance priorities and partners, is available on the SURF website: [www.surf.scot/alliance-for-action/](http://www.surf.scot/alliance-for-action/)

### 3 LANGHOLM

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To maximise productive value from its *Alliance for Action* programme, SURF seeks to ensure that there is a balanced portfolio of places in the programme, which can help it offer transferable lessons to comparable settings and activities in the rest of Scotland.

SURF's programme currently includes a range of sites across urban/rural, mainland/coastal/island, and small town/large town/dense city neighbourhood contexts. They share the broad challenges of dislocation and degeneration but have distinctive priorities based on locally relevant approaches, assets and aspirations.

In discussions with the Scottish Government about the further development of SURF's *Alliance for Action* activity, it was agreed that the scope of the programme would benefit from the introduction of a semi-rural site in the south of Scotland. The intention is to focus on and engage with regeneration partners' efforts in a geographical context which, as SURF's 2016 Manifesto for Community Regeneration highlighted, has not benefited from national regeneration policy and investment coordination, in contrast to city regions and the Highlands & Islands.

After initial informal consultations with Dumfries & Galloway Council and other local regeneration partners, SURF agreed that the town of Langholm, in the east of the region, presents a reasonable option for the intended additional *Alliance for Action* site.

Following confirmation of adequate support for undertaking that initiative from the Scottish Government and from Dumfries and Galloway Council, SURF will test the scope for applying the *Alliance for Action* model to Langholm. It will do so by undertaking a five stage feasibility study process, as described in the following section.

## 4 FEASIBILITY STUDY: PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

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### 4.1 STAGE 1 – PROJECT SCOPING

- Work planning
- Information gathering
- Initial engagement, featuring:
  - Meetings with Dumfries and Galloway Council's Communities Department and Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway to accrue information on local stakeholders and influencers.
  - Meetings with The Eskdale Foundation, Excel Project, Langholm First, Langholm, Ewes and Westerkirk Community Council, The Langholm Initiative, and other local community groups to determine interest in, and appetite for, potential project participation.
  - Meetings with relevant Dumfries and Galloway Council Elected Members.

- Meetings with the local Health and Social Care Partnership, the University of Glasgow's Crichton Campus, and The Stove Network to provide additional regional context.
- An initial stakeholder level workshop to identify the various opportunities for developing an *Alliance for Action* approach in Langholm, supported by an open public invitation promoted through an advert in the local newspaper and an online activity.

## **4.2 STAGE 2: RESEARCH**

- Further exploring the local context, including through the:
  - Production of a statistical profile of Langholm & Eskdale with details on demographics, deprivation indicators, amenities, assets and regeneration-related activities.
  - Review of relevant reports identified by SURF, Dumfries & Galloway Council, the Crichton Institute and other partners;
  - Review of mainstream budgets affecting Langholm & Eskdale;
  - Review of extant and proposed project bids.

## **4.3 STAGE 3: DEVELOPING ALLIANCE OPTIONS**

Analysing options for an *Alliance for Action* approach. Specifically, engaging further with local stakeholders to investigate viability and opportunities, with a view to identifying:

- Interest in the *Alliance for Action* model;
- Local issues and priorities;
- Methods for responding to these issues and priorities;
- Potential development barriers;
- An implementation plan.

## **4.4 STAGE 4: REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Testing *Alliance for Action* development options with potential users, including:

- Clarifying deliverability;
- Presentation of draft report to stakeholders in a second Langholm public workshop to discuss findings;
- Evaluating key partners' views and responses.

## **4.5 STAGE 5: COMPLETION**

Ensuring that the *Alliance for Action* proposals are embedded in wider processes. SURF aims to achieve consensus from key stakeholders on the implementation plan. Strategic goals and key performance indicators would be developed and a process established for delivering an *Alliance for Action* strategy in Langholm.

As part of this work, key recommendations could be made on integrating the new strategy with existing Dumfries & Galloway Council strategies, including the Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement; as well as addressing the local leadership of the *Alliance for Action* implementation plan.

In the event of the feasibility process resulting in a recommendation to proceed, based on local consensus, future implementation would depend upon Scottish Government agreement to extend their support of the *Alliance for Action* programme into 2018-21.

## 5 TIMESCALE

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In line with SURF's other *Alliance for Action* sites, the feasibility study is expected to take around six months.

The timescale for delivery is:

- September 2017 – Commencement of Stages 1 and 2
- January 2018 – Commencement of Stage 3
- February 2018 – Commencement of Stages 4 and 5
- March 2018 – Conclusion of feasibility study.

## 6 SOME EXAMPLES OF ALLIANCE FOR ACTION OUTCOMES

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In its existing *Alliance for Action* sites, SURF has been able to connect and deliver different forms of support, relevant to the local context and partners' shared priorities and aspirations.

That support has enhanced beneficial regeneration outcomes in the local physical environment, enterprise activity, community engagement, and cultural & social opportunities. In this section we highlight some specific examples of such outcomes which have emerged from SURF's *Alliance for Action* collaborations.

In **Govan**, in Glasgow, SURF has helped to support and promote greater cooperation between a large number of local actors and agencies. Having facilitated increased consensus on shared and complementary priorities, SURF has been able to promote productive connections with the policies and resources of regional and national partners. These have resulted in new and additional regeneration investments.

Perhaps most notably, SURF had an influential role in the now-secured plans for a new pedestrian and cycling bridge over the River Clyde, connecting a regenerating Govan with the affluent West End. The commitment to build the bridge at the Water Row site (pictured right) from Glasgow City Deal resources, has encouraged new planning applications for vacant nearby sites, which will provide new housing, retail and cultural facilities.



SURF's interventions and approach has also engendered a more collaborative and efficient approach to anti-poverty and social enterprise activity across Govan. SURF has facilitated cooperation between Glasgow City Council's centrally conceived 'Thriving Places' programme with the knowledge, resources and aspirations of local assets and initiatives including Central Govan Action Plan, Jobs and Business Glasgow, Govan Workspace, and the continued evolution of community led participation projects such as Govan Community Project, Galgael, the Kinning Park Centre and The Portal community arts hub.

In **East Kirkcaldy**, in Fife, SURF collaborated with local activists, Kirkcaldy East Regeneration Forum, Fife Council and Inspiring Scotland to enhance the case for substantial investment in a coherent programme of physical and social improvements. These improvements included a new community centre to better serve the increasing aspirations of local residents. The Scottish Government subsequently provided a £950k capital investment from its Regeneration Capital Grant Fund programme to build Overton Mains Community Centre, which opened in summer 2016 (pictured below).

SURF also sourced and managed resources from Creative Scotland, Fife Council and the Fife Cultural Trust to deliver a community run participative budgeting process. As well as providing direct investments in the activities of local creative groups, as allocated by agreement amongst the groups themselves, the process increased cohesion and cooperation across the previously disparate groups and with Fife Council and the Cultural Trust.



In **Rothesay**, on the Isle of Bute, SURF delivered an *Alliance for Action* feasibility study in 2015. The local stakeholders group, who supported and engaged in this study, comprised local residents, business owners and community organisation representatives. Based on the success of that fresh cooperative effort, they subsequently decided to become a constituted charitable regeneration organisation, called the Bute Island Alliance (BIA).

SURF now has a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the BIA, under which SURF supports and learns from BIA's work in delivering a range of services while developing its business strategy for longer term sustainability and diversification. In that evolving process, SURF is ensuring adequate resources continue to be available for BIA's part-time Coordinator, whose independent facilitation role remains vital in advancing local community-focused, cross-sector regeneration activity and the further development of the BIA.



SURF has already helped the BIA to deliver a number of successful projects. These include research and investment opportunities in support of increased local entrepreneurialism, promoting the town's deep heritage assets, planning and investing in a more attractive and lively town centre, and increasing the range of family-centred activities. SURF is also working with Argyll & Bute Council on making the most of connections to the historically significant Rothesay Pavilion arts venue, currently undergoing a major £14m restoration with support from 18 funding agencies. In a recent visit organised by SURF, the Scottish Government's Housing and Regeneration Minister, Kevin Stewart MSP, visited Rothesay and highly praised the early success of the *Alliance for Action* programme and the practical learning it is bringing to national regeneration policy and resource considerations. (Mr Stewart is pictured above, second from left, with SURF's Andy Milne, left, Bute Island Alliance Coordinator Paul Duffy, right, and Chair Reeni Kennedy Boyle).

In the still early stages of SURF's *Alliance for Action* work with partners in **Dunoon**, in Argyll, SURF has secured resources for, and managed the delivery of, an intensive and participative planning process known as a Charrette. This involved engaging urban design specialists Austin Smith Lord, in early 2017, to design and facilitate a series of interactive discussions and creative processes focused on the assets and challenges of the town centre and the practical opportunities for improving its physical, social and economic infrastructure.



The Charrette events engaged with 520 local individuals (one workshop is pictured right). As well as increasing community awareness, cohesion and commitment, the process resulted in cross sector agreement on priority projects under seven objectives. These included enhancement of the town's tourism offer, its economic diversity, and the attractiveness and accessibility of the town centre. SURF is now working with a local stakeholders group, and with supportive partners, including Argyll & Bute Council, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and the Scottish Futures Trust, to take the practical projects forward.

These are just some specific elements of benefits accruing to local and national partners involved in SURF's *Alliance for Action* work. SURF would be happy to provide to Langholm stakeholders contact details of local community residents and local agency officials in the above sites who can elaborate on the support SURF provides to their local regeneration endeavours.

## 7 FURTHER INFORMATION

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The feasibility study will be managed by Andy Milne, SURF Chief Executive, with support from the following SURF team members:

- Derek Rankine, Policy and Participation Manager;
- Elaine Cooper, Practice and Learning;
- Emma Scott, Information, Events and Communications Officer;
- Christopher Murray, Research and Administrative Assistant;
- Alison Boyd, Financial Administrator.

Andy Milne would be pleased to discuss any queries about *Alliance for Action* plans for Langholm. He can be reached on:

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Further information on the *Alliance for Action* is available via the link in section 2. General information about SURF and its work is available on our website: [www.surf.scot/what-we-do/](http://www.surf.scot/what-we-do/)

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