DELIVERY OF REGENERATION IN SCOTLAND INQUIRY – CALL FOR WRITTEN EVIDENCE

Angus Council welcomes the opportunity to respond with written evidence to your inquiry on the delivery of regeneration in Scotland. We believe that this is a timely inquiry given both the current economic situation facing local government and the advent of welfare reform which we believe will have a significant impact on some of the most disadvantaged people in our community.

The regeneration strategy – ‘Achieving a Sustainable Future’, provides a useful definition for regeneration –

‘regeneration is the holistic process of reversing the economic, physical and social decline of places where market forces alone will not suffice’.

It is to this definition that our evidence is aligned.

Traditionally, regeneration activity has been focused towards those in the worst 10-15% areas of deprivation as determined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. In an Angus context, this measure is not always helpful in determining where best to target regeneration activity as poverty and disadvantage in a towns and rural context does not necessarily aggregate in sufficient numbers within a designated geographic area. However, we know that poverty and disadvantage does exist in Angus, and wish to collectively tackle the inequalities that can arise as a result.

The balance between urban and rural regeneration we believe needs to be reconsidered. We are actually a nation of small towns and this needs to be considered in the context of community resilience.

Strategy and Policy Issues

1. **How can the linkage between the various strategies and policies related to regeneration be improved?**

   We believe that there is now an opportunity to re-assert the formal policy position to align regeneration activities strategically with partnership efforts at the local level through the development and delivery of the Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement (CPSOA). The CPSOA helps to bring together policies and strategies in the context of delivering better outcomes for individuals and communities. The approach to mainstreaming regeneration activities with the demise of a dedicated resource, latterly Fairer Scotland funding, has worked in some areas but not in others. Additionally, we know that a number of strategies and policies contribute towards regeneration activities, but this is not necessarily attributable to a focus only on regeneration eg the development of affordable housing or through the provision of new schools.
Town centres have declined not just in Angus but all over Scotland and beyond due to changing market forces. We believe that there is a strong opportunity for the committee to give consideration to how we might best redefine our town centres. This needs to link to our land use planning system and in particular focus on reimagining our town centres which many not result in the same changes for every town. Also, due to shifting purchasing patterns through increased use of internet shopping, in five years time we may also have to rethink retail park outlets in our communities. Regeneration policy in Scotland needs to anticipate and respond to changing patterns of behaviour as well as trying to influence behavioural change in terms of smoking, obesity, alcohol etc.

There is a requirement to consider equalities and sustainability within the development of single outcome agreements, with the former now being further embedded through an equalities outcomes approach and the other being less defined at a strategic level by government. The link between these and regeneration could be enhanced in the legislative development for partnerships as a whole.

The financial situation faced by the public sector can put regeneration activity at risk as budgets are reduced and there is a retrenchment to ‘core’ business.

In terms of the demise of dedicated funding for regeneration activity, both capital and revenue, regeneration has become a bit lost in the system of late and in some instances has become the victim of cuts. A reversal of this approach is underway with a renewed focus on preventative activity following the Christie Commission’s report and recent guidance from government in terms of the development of single outcome agreements linking resources to outcomes. Often regeneration activity is of a preventative nature eg employability and skills development, tackling health inequalities etc and it may be helpful for the committee to be explicit about a focus on regeneration as part of this preventative approach.

In Angus, the community planning partnership has identified a number of cross-cutting issues that it wishes to focus on and improve over the coming year. These areas relate fundamentally to regeneration and include the economy both in terms of opportunities for young people and economic growth locally, as well as tackling poverty and disadvantage. In particular, health inequalities, early years, alcohol and drugs issues and addressing the impact of welfare reform.

2. Can physical, social and economic regeneration really be separate entities? The committee would find it useful to hear about projects distinctly focused on one or more aspects, and with direct and indirect outcomes on such activities.

Our answer is principally no but we believe that this is a fundamental question with a wide scope - at one end focussing on individuals and their social needs, while on the other focussing on potentially large infrastructure projects which are either economic or physical. An example of physical/economic regeneration in Angus is that of South Montrose which has at its heart improving opportunities by way of better access to the docks to help support and grow local business in that area. Similarly, the recently concluded Townscape Heritage Initiative in Brechin, while principally of a physical nature had many positive outcomes in terms of employability. Also, the civic pride resulting from this project should not be underestimated. We believe however, that this disparate nature ie economic, social or physical, makes regeneration activity quite difficult to grasp and there is therefore a need for a holistic approach. But, we also believe that we have to start somewhere and usually this is with one aspect but expect
consideration of the other two aspects ie one impacts on the others, for example housing regeneration has always taken account of the social impact.

A recent townscape heritage initiative project undertaken in Brechin which is focused on physical regeneration is linked to improving skills in the workforce. In terms of employability a large focus for the partnership has been to ensure that people get closer to the market in terms of the skills, experience and knowledge that they have to offer. The Towards Employment team in Angus is wholly focused on this and broader employability work with good outcomes being achieved, particularly for young people.

Much of the work undertaken by our Children’s and Learning Partnership has been focused towards getting it right for every child and this has included more emphasis on those children and young people who are identified as having additional support needs for example approaches taken to 16+ learning choices. Also, the Angus Community Planning Partnership has more recently been looking to improve opportunities for modern apprenticeships.

We have reviewed early years provision with an understanding that life circumstances impact on outcomes for people in the very early stages of life, and the development of a parenting project is beginning to have some real impact albeit this has to date been dependent on short term funding.

We would like to highlight that some of the stronger social networks are actually more active in disadvantaged communities in Angus and this has been borne in and evidenced from recent citizens surveys.

It is our fundamental belief that there is a need for more resource to be focused on economic regeneration as real jobs create life changing opportunities for individuals.

3. **Are we achieving the best value from investment in this area? If not, how could funding achieve the maximum impact? Could the funding available be used in different ways to support regeneration?**

This is a particularly interesting question and is particularly difficult to answer because we actually don’t really know what investment we are making currently on regeneration in the round in order to the see the bigger picture and make shifts towards more preventative activities. We are beginning to tackle this within the context of the SOA and national policy priorities for example early years and older people. Change funds help to different degrees here as they create an approach of targeting resources to provide a catalyst for change. In this context we are trying to fundamentally understand the difference between mainstream and targeted resources generally, and being explicit about the need to closing gaps, in relation to regeneration. In order to do this effectively we need to understand better what works. Previously funding targeted towards regeneration for example Fairer Scotland funding was often of a short term nature but was quite often focused on effective preventative activities. However, we are still trying to grapple with mainstreaming for example our Friday Night Project which used ring fenced regeneration funding to become established. The evidence we have is that this project makes a real impact in our communities but the project is still not mainstreamed. This need for evidence of what works is something the partnership is focussing on through strategic assessment at the thematic partnership level, but also with communities at the local level.

Changes nationally that centralise services eg Police and Fire reform need to be thought through to ensure there is no reduction impact locally. Unfortunately officers
taking on back office functions creates a risk of less resource being available to tackle regeneration diversionary type activities.

A further issue in identifying if we are achieving best value from investment relates to short, medium and long term change. While it is possible to identify output from particular projects over a short and sometimes medium term, longer term changes from for example focussing on early years will take a significant time to demonstrate that there has been an impact in relation to eg attainment, crime levels, health etc.

An audit of spend across all partners may be particularly relevant to determine the relationship between cost, spend and impact but that requires a consistent approach towards deferring activities which contribute to regeneration and partners recognition of their roles.

**Partnership Working**

4. **What delivery mechanisms, co-ordination of and information on funding that supports regeneration are required, to facilitate access by all sections of the community?**

Generally partners want to work in a different way with communities in Angus. In order to do so a new Working With Communities partnership group has been established to ensure there is leadership and direction and a co-ordinated approach to achieve this different way of working. We can provide further evidence of our review of this area of our partnership’s business should the committee wish to see further detail.

Currently the partnership has a range of local community planning activity in the geographic areas of Angus and there are a number of activities being progressed either with the business community or communities generally eg pupils, older people etc.

What is clear is that there is a need to take account of the political environment locally and to involve elected members in finding solutions to tackle some of the more entrenched regeneration issues within our community.

With respect to community ownership, there has been an emphasis on looking at how this might be progressed in relation to asset transfer. Our response to the government’s consultation on the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill provides further detail. However, it is important for us that any assets transferred are indeed assets and not liabilities which would only set up communities to fail. Engagement of Local Business in supporting the development and operation of community assets, will help engender a more commercial and sustainable approach.

A principal exercise that is underway in Angus is the development of the second iteration of local community plans which are built on extensive engagement with communities and capacity building activities. An example of this is an exercise to establish a vision for Brechin which has helped to inform the local community plan for that community. A key concern for the Brechin community is that of their town centre and despite many and varied attempts to regenerate the town centre through dedicated resource, the development of the Townscape Heritage Initiative etc there is still work to be done.

In fact, Brechin is not the only town in Angus where the economy of the town centre is depressed and requiring a targeted regeneration approach. Again, the currency of the
term regeneration is not necessarily explicit within this local planning environment with communities and it may be that the committee would wish to re-prioritise regeneration thinking within the wider community planning partnership approach to ensure that an explicit focus is given to regeneration.

Locally we have some funding that is used to facilitate community participation and involvement through community grants type activity and we would wish to see communities becoming more involved in helping to prioritise the allocation of funding. Indeed, Angus Council has recently carried out consultation and market research on its budget setting arrangements that has not only involved communities in prioritising areas of budget allocation but has helped inform elected members' decision making processes.

There is we believe a direct relationship between funding and the ability for both partners and communities to deliver effective economic, social and physical regeneration within places.

5. **Should funding be focused on start up or running costs? What is the correct balance between revenue and capital funding? Please indicate the reasons for your views.**

We are not sure about the emphasis behind this question. Is the question designed to focus on a project based approach ie inputs and outputs or is it about working with communities and releasing their assets? We recognise that communities already do a lot in relation to regeneration activities and would wish to nurture a relationship with communities to do more. For example in terms of individuals there is a project under way in Angus that is focused on tackling long term conditions. Many people with a long term conditions such as asthma or diabetes are themselves engaged in changing the way that they manage their own conditions and some people are also supporting others. This fundamentally impacts on social regeneration, as many long term health conditions arise as a result of life circumstances and choices.

Other community style projects include local people managing a facility for example a village hall or running a club locally for young people. Again, these types of projects have very much impacted on the social and physical regeneration of an area and it is often the community that can lever in funding from other sources than government to develop a physical asset and thereby help to regenerate their community, whether that be skate park or a community hall. We would wish to continue to support communities in their endeavours.

6. **How can it be insured that regeneration projects are sustainable in the long term?**

In order to ensure that any regeneration projects are sustainable we need to invest in working with communities. As previously referenced the term regeneration project does not necessarily have much currency following the demise of a ring fenced regeneration budget, therefore, projects or indeed mainstream resources need to be focused on delivering better outcomes for individuals and communities. Targeting resources towards those who are more disadvantaged or at creating economic/physical changes to an area that will impact on people’s lives by having a job, within a vibrant community that both supports and celebrates its people would help make regeneration sustainable. Again, involving people in finding the right solutions for them is important but this often requires resources to help facilitate and co-ordinate the kind of capacity building activity within communities that is sustainable.
There is, we believe, a real opportunity to develop the concept of community enterprise that will definitely help to ensure that regeneration projects are sustainable for the long term. This concept recognises that we need to work more effectively with communities and local government and indeed the public sector should not provide all the answers/services for communities. A new empowering relationship is called for.

**Practical Issues**

7. **What actions could the Scottish Government’s forthcoming community capacity building programme include to best support communities to do regeneration themselves?**

We believe it would be best for government to include a commitment to funding, either by creating a national fund that communities can bid into or by devolving resources to local partnerships to join up community based regeneration funding with other community based funding resources.

There is a need to be explicit about supporting local outcomes and align this with current capacity building good practice such as the national standards for community engagement.

Locally there is a strong third sector presence in Angus and we believe that there is an opportunity to build on local interface arrangements between the third sector and community planning partnerships rather than with the third sector at a national level. This is because local third sector organisations are crucial in supporting community enterprising activities. Voluntary Action Angus is our local interface organisation and they are highly focused on tackling inequalities locally and supporting people to improve their own lives through for example the Praxis Life Skills Centre.

8. **What role should CPPs play in supporting the community in regenerating their communities?**

There is a need to understand the makeup of community planning partnerships and the role they play in tackling economic, social and physical regeneration already, alongside the need to harness a cohesive approach to working with communities. When we talk about communities it is essential that they focus not only on geographic communities, but also the business community and the communities of interest which focus on individuals.

9. **How can CPPs best empower local communities to deliver regeneration? Please provide any examples of best practice or limitations experienced that you think the committee would find useful in its scrutiny?**

We believe that creating the environment through the development of local outcomes that are shared by all sectors and all partners including the community is the way to achieve the delivery of regeneration that empowers communities. This is often limited by the availability of resources at the local community level.

10. **How can the outcomes of regeneration truly be captured and measured? What are the barriers to capturing outcomes and how should the success of regeneration investment be determined?**

It is inherently difficult to capture and measure outcomes, but we need to, as a first step, understand what evidence tells us. The Angus Community Planning Partnership
is approaching this through the development of a strategic assessment and this calls for both research and analytical skills on the one hand, but importantly the need to measure satisfaction and perceptions on the other.

One example of measuring perceptions is in relation to getting it right for every child. We have developed locally a well being web that is based on the SHANARI principles of Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Response and Included. This tool enables young people, and particularly those with additional support needs to track their own progress against these principles and hopefully track improvement over time. The well being web is also available to parents so they can track their own progress over time. This is particularly relevant for example when measuring outcomes for children affected by parental substance misuse, but can also be used in other settings. It is this kind of measurement and understanding of individual and community stories that will help us as a partnership to determine the impact of our collective efforts.

A further exercise that we undertake locally each year is to assess the impact of our community engagement activity and this helps us to measure both the tangible as well as community perceptions.
We believe that the success of regeneration investment can best be measured through a growing economy, more jobs available locally, vibrant town centres, less crime and fear of crime in a community, improved learning and life circumstances etc which very much links to the outcomes approach that is being progressed by the partnership in Angus and indeed partnerships elsewhere in Scotland.

Yours faithfully

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