COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT BILL – CALL FOR EVIDENCE

SUMMARY OF CONCERNS

➢ No obligation for councils to work with community groups beyond consultation. This is a very tokenistic approach to community empowerment; one which does not put enough emphasis on involving under-represented groups.

➢ Too great a focus on Asset Transfer. Whilst some community groups could benefit from such legislation; access funding and also upskill their volunteers to take on a bigger responsibility, it fails to address the real needs of the thousands of youth groups, community groups and other organisations, let alone the individual volunteers who are constantly fundraising to full capacity for their group and also developing their employability skills through volunteering. Such groups would struggle to maintain additional Assets. Therefore, Asset Transfer maybe seen as being service led and not needs led. This may be seen as privatisation of the third sector.

➢ No requirement for Local Authorities to support under-represented groups, for example ethnic minority groups, non-Christian faith groups, youth run organisations or LGBT groups.

➢ Whilst it is good that multiple organisations are working together such as Community Planning Partners. These do not seem to effectively include the third sector as true partners.

➢ Scottish Ministers seem to be granted too much power by the Bill. There should be a grass roots approach to community empowerment which cannot be fully achieved from a top down approach or centralised powers.

Though not specifically to do with the Bill, I am curious why the call for evidence from the Scottish Government asks respondents to consider the ‘advantages and disadvantages’ for public sector organisations, but not for third sector/community organisations?
SUGGESTED ADDITIONS:

- Grant additional powers to community councils. For example, allow a community council representative to all council planning meetings that affect their area.

- Raise funding given to community councils to allow them to have a greater impact on local communities.

- Identify under-represented groups and create an obligation for Local Authorities to meet with representatives to discuss ways that the Community Planning Partners could work to improve the representation and conditions of these groups.

- Make funding applications from Government/Community Planning Partners easier to understand, or create an obligation for Local Authorities to assist community organisations to help with funding applications or similar forms.

- Create a greater emphasis on Community Learning and Development staff working to support existing community groups and projects.

- Creation of community hubs, where Social Workers, Nurses, CPNs, Community Wardens, etc. are given a specific area to work in. They could all use a community centre or a similar building which is accessible to the community. This could allow for the community to raise concerns they had more easily, strengthen partnership working across third sector and public sector organisations, and allow services to focus on the individual needs of an area.