Clerk to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee
Committee Office
Room T3.40
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

26 August 2014

Dear colleagues

Local Government and Regeneration Committee call for evidence:
Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill

The Carnegie United Kingdom (UK) Trust welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee call for evidence on the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill. The Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work.

We warmly welcome the introduction of the Bill and we have been pleased to participate in the Reference Group which has helped to support its development. We believe that the proposals set out in the Bill provide a unique opportunity to significantly alter how we organise our society in
Scotland and deliver major improvements in our collective wellbeing. We have chosen only to respond to the questions where we have experience and relevant evidence. Further information on our work is available on our website [www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk](http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk).

1. **To what extent do you consider the Bill will empower communities, please give reasons for your answer?**

The Bill and its legislative framework is an important step towards empowering communities, as it gives them the right to acquire assets and new opportunities to become involved in shaping and running local services. However, there are other steps which governments can take to support individuals and communities to achieve positive change and ensure that the most vulnerable are not left behind, such as working to an outcomes focussed approach and building capacity in disadvantaged communities.

2. **What will be the benefits and disadvantages for public sector organisations as a consequence of the provisions in the Bill?**

Communities know best about their own situation, aspirations, preferences, interests, knowledge and capabilities, and giving them more opportunities to take part in the community budgeting and planning process will lead to improved local outcomes. Empowering individuals and communities with the opportunity to become involved in setting national and local outcomes will give them more flexibility and autonomy to improve their own lives.

3. **Do you consider communities across Scotland have the capabilities to take advantage of the provisions in the Bill? If not, what**
requires to be done to the Bill, or to assist communities, to ensure that this happens?

There is a real risk that more affluent communities have the most to gain the most from these new opportunities and that other communities are left behind. It is crucial therefore that the Bill is accompanied by investment in disadvantaged communities, including financial support for the means to buy assets or participate in services, support for access to skills, knowledge, training and social capital and support for co-production at the national and local level. The development of a review programme would ensure that national outcomes are improved over time and that the package of support to disadvantaged communities remains relevant.

4. Are you content with the specific provisions in the Bill, if not what changes would you like to see, to which part of the Bill, and why?

We would like to see the introduction of a national asset register used by all public sector bodies, which is publically available, accessible and can be modified over time. Community bodies may have an interest in a wide range of public sector assets and a publically available database of publically owned assets which details where the asset is; what it is currently used for; which public sector body owns it and who to speak to about it would be very helpful.

We hope that you find these comments helpful. If you would like to discuss our response, or would like to find out more about our work please contact my colleague Jenny Brotchie, Policy Officer at jenny@carnegieuk.org or by telephone 01383 721 445.
Yours sincerely,

Martyn Evans
Chief Executive