Whilst Scottish Enterprise no longer has ‘regeneration’ within its remit, how do they link their ‘economic development’ activities to community and social regeneration outcomes?

The principle way in which this is achieved is through partnership. At the strategic level, through Community Planning Partnerships and other structures we use our knowledge of economic and employment opportunities to help inform the employability and regeneration plans developed by Local Authorities. A good example of this is our work with the three Ayrshire Councils to explore the Energy sector opportunities for the area. One of the objectives of this work is to use our sector knowledge to help partners equip local businesses and residents to benefit from employment, training and business opportunities in the sector.

At an operational level, the relative outcomes (economic, community, social, physical etc) are set by the nature of the project and the needs of an area. The nature of each individual project is that different aspects of regeneration will be prioritised at different times. For example, the Dundee Waterfront had a considerable period focusing on physical regeneration before any focus on economic regeneration could take place. Due to the current economic climate it is difficult to determine the specific skills that will be required by the businesses that will locate there until later in the process. As these details emerge, the social and skills-related regeneration outcomes will move into greater prominence.

With reference to your key projects, what advice and information do you look for in a business case with regards to speculative building?

The central question is whether there is market failure and a need for SE support. This would involve HM Treasury Green Book analysis to an appropriate level and our own internal project appraisal steps.

Our appraisal requires demonstration of need, market rationale, strategic fit, commercial case, financial case, and economic and equity appraisal.

The Demonstration of need and market rationale come from our evidence base. For example, the SE Business Infrastructure team recently conducted a significant research project, led by Ryden, to consider the current state of the high quality city centre office market across the UK. If it would be useful for the Committee, we can share a copy of this work.

To the extent possible, we share our research evidence with Local Authority partners, both to inform their own decision making and to make clear SE’s position in relation to any interventions.