Strategy and Policy Issues

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

The Scottish Government’s Regeneration Strategy “Achieving A Sustainable Future” gives a reasonable overview of the various regeneration related strategies and initiatives at that time. However the plethora of both initiatives and funding can make a joined up approach to regeneration more difficult, requiring multiple funding applications with different criteria. An option may be for Local Authorities or Community Planning Partnerships to have a clearer role in leading regeneration in their area, developing and overseeing implementation of wider regeneration programmes with an ability to apply for funding on a more strategic basis ie to a collection of funds with one application.

2. Can physical, social and economic regeneration really be separate entities? The Committee would find it useful to hear about projects distinctly focussed on one or more aspects, and the direct and indirect outcomes of such activity.

Physical, social and economic regeneration require to be joined up to maximise the benefits to communities. They should not be separate entities. There may, of course, be a requirement for these to be done over time such as decontaminating land in advance of building homes or workplaces, with training available for local people when construction commences and workplaces are occupied. Ideally, this regeneration pipeline should be planned in advance.

There is a wealth of evidence that supports developing outcomes and asset based approaches to tackling disadvantage. Where physical regeneration activity isn’t linked to social and economic regeneration it is likely that more disadvantaged individuals, families and communities will benefit least.

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?

There is a lengthy history of time limited funding for both people and place based regeneration activity in Scotland which has not best supported the long-term interventions required to successfully address entrenched disadvantage. The longer term approach adopted for Urban Regeneration Companies and, previously, New Life for Urban Scotland was beneficial although overly focussed on housing. A longer time-frame and funding commitment for community and social regeneration initiatives would be welcomed as this would better support longer term change arising from an asset based approach.
Partnership Working

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

Current arrangements are, or appear to be, complex and many voluntary and community based organisations find information and funding difficult to obtain. Recent regeneration funding streams such as the People and Communities Fund appeared to favour larger organisations with significant staffing and financial resources rather than community based organisations working at grass roots level, and greater resources to “pump prime” and subsequently develop local organisations such as community development trusts would be welcomed.

The funding landscape could be clarified by greater co-operation and links between funders, for example a standard basic application form could be developed for submission to a central point where it could be forwarded to funds and funders likely to be interested in the project. Given that larger projects often require a combination of funding from a range of funders, the central funding information service could support small, medium and large organisations.

The need for longer term funding is well known, and the requirement for match funding is often problematic especially where funders want to be “the funder of last resort”. Funders should be encouraged to commit funding where they see value in the project, perhaps with a deadline by which match funding would have to be confirmed.

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

There clearly needs to be a balance between start up and running costs and, separately, capital and revenue funding. There is a need to support smaller voluntary and community organisations to set up and establish themselves, which may well mean revenue funding to cover running costs over a number of years. However for larger organisations revenue funding should be linked to development and growth and for a limited period of time, possibly on a tapered basis.

Capital funding is clearly required for most physical regeneration, and is the major input into large scale developments. In many cases this can be obtained by loans against future income streams and this should be encouraged where the business case supports this.

However capital funding is also needed by start-up and growing organisations for the procurement and development of assets which could contribute to their future viability. It would be useful if capital funding could include an element for future repair and maintenance as it is not uncommon for organisations to be unable to meet these costs for new or refurbished properties.
The overall balance will often require more capital funding, particularly over the short to medium term, with less revenue funding required although it may be needed for a longer period. An holistic approach to physical, social and economic regeneration could establish the specific (indicative) capital and revenue funding requirements over the length of a project for the extended duration of any significant regeneration initiative.

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

As indicated above, an holistic approach to physical, social and economic regeneration offers a better solution to the long term sustainability of projects. An obvious example is that of new social housing where significant capital investment is not matched by investment in the social and economic infrastructure with the potential that the regenerated physical area becomes run down and afflicted with the same difficult social issues. Investment in good design; facilities including play areas, green space and high quality landscaping; community facilities; support to tenants groups; and effective housing and estate management, at a fraction of the construction costs, will greatly support the longer term sustainability of the regenerated area.

It is necessary to consider the longer term requirement of any regeneration project, rather than to make the “quick fix” and move on. Any new community or business or project requires time to become established and this applies to regeneration projects whether this is of people, or place, or a combination of both.

Practical Issues

7. What actions could the Scottish Governments forthcoming community capacity building programme include to best support communities to “do regeneration” themselves?

There should be a commitment to providing support to individuals, families, organisations and communities involved in any regeneration activity. This should involve the community from the earliest stages, support them through the process in which they must be included, and ensure that there is capacity within the community to continue this involvement after the formal completion of the regeneration initiative. Specifically, the support should be available before, during and after the initiative to maximise the community’s opportunity to contribute to, and benefit from, the regeneration.

The long term aim must be to support groups in the regeneration area to be effective and sustainable, but this is not something which will necessarily happen on its own. The active involvement of support organisations to assist with community engagement, asset mapping, organisational development and asset transfer, must be made available at an early stage, continuing until it is no longer required.
8. What role should CPPs play in supporting the community in regenerating their communities?

One of the main aims of Community Planning (CP) is to make sure people and communities are genuinely engaged in the decisions made about public services which affect them. A further principle which CP is based upon is the ability of CPPs to improve the connection between national priorities and those at regional, local and neighbourhood levels. This is vital when looking at CPPs role in supporting communities to regenerate themselves. CPPs have a role to play in setting the strategic direction upon which local plans will be based.

Regeneration is a complex process that brings together social, economic and physical factors. It’s cross cutting nature means that it can only happen if a range of agencies work together at both national and local level. CP brings together a range of partners, albeit at a strategic level, who by working in Partnership can add value through joint working and sharing resources. For example, the local authority, social landlords, fire and police services, and the local community working together can much more effectively undertake estate management and ensure small problems are dealt with quickly to stop them becoming big problems.

Recent developments in Community Planning mean that CPPs are being asked to ‘Understand Place’. This is a key requirement of CPPs and this is about having a clear understanding of the needs and challenges facing local communities based on robust evidence and intelligence. This is also about having closer relationships with communities and working more closely in partnership. West Lothian CPP has completed a strategic assessment that allows us to more clearly focus on our priorities and develop a new Single Outcome Agreement that enables a more specific plan for place. West Lothian CPP has adopted the theme tackling inequality – by taking a partnership approach at a strategic and local level, we have more ability to really make a difference to communities most in need.

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.

Improving links between community planning and local teams who deliver services by working with communities is key to enabling successful regeneration. Community Planning must impact at a local level as well as strategic level, and it is this which gives local communities the capacity and opportunities to be involved in decision and the development of services. Community Planning Partnerships must support local structures, and ensure that local regeneration work is valued and encouraged. A commitment to community engagement at a strategic level is also important.

In some cases the wish to link regeneration to national and local outcomes through the Single Outcome Agreement whilst well meant is counter-productive. Smaller scale initiatives will have limited impact at the CPP level, and the focus can shift to what is more easily quantified eg number of houses built, number of people supported into employment, etc rather than the impact on the improved quality of life for local people.
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?

There are clear challenges around measuring outcomes and the impact of investing in enhancing community capacity and social capital. However, there have been significant inroads into demonstrating the value of regeneration activity through logic modelling, the increasing understanding of the longer term benefits of preventive action and earlier interventions and improved focus at national level on the value of partnership working and co-production to deliver positive change.

By developing a flexible and agile regeneration strategy, we are able to respond to the changing environment, economy and our own diverse communities and needs. The measure of success must be about the improvement in the lives of individuals, families and communities in the regeneration area rather than any physical changes. The measures have to be around quality of life and community resilience, and these are both longer term and harder to reach. For this reason the development of social capital should be a key outcome for the regeneration process, as this is key to the longer-term success of any regeneration initiative.

ENDS.