Planning Aid for Scotland (PAS) is an independent organisation, working across Scotland to help people shape their local environment and improve the way people engage with the planning system. As an independent organisation, impartiality is PAS’s most important guiding principle – and this will never be compromised. All of PAS’s services are delivered with an impartial and professional approach.

PAS has built up a wealth of experience and tapped into the local knowledge of communities all around Scotland and their experiences of the planning system and regeneration processes. In the twenty years of its existence, PAS has worked with a wide variety of stakeholders in the planning system, including seldom heard groups - helping individuals and communities understand the extent to which they can influence decisions about their local environment.

PAS’s services are delivered by a volunteer network of more than 335, most of whom are planning professionals. PAS also works with legal experts, communications specialists, facilitators, architects, community artists and others. They offer their time and professional skills in order to enable people to engage proactively with the planning system.

PAS achieved Investing In Volunteers accreditation in 2008 and again in 2011, recognising our professional approach to working with volunteers. Volunteering is at the heart of PAS and our volunteers add a unique value to our services - something widely appreciated by our clients and partners.

PAS is a charitable organisation, operating on social enterprise principles.
Introduction
Planning Aid for Scotland welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence on the delivery of regeneration in Scotland.

PAS believes that successful regeneration must begin with effective engagement and involvement of local people (of all ages, and including young people) at the outset and throughout the process. The Scottish Government’s 2011 review Community-led Regeneration: A Review of Literature stated that: It is now acknowledged that without community engagement and participation through support and initiative, effective regeneration is difficult, if not impossible. It also recognises that the complexity of the planning system and delivery of new development can be a barrier to communities becoming involved in planning and regeneration proposals.

Large regeneration initiatives can have a huge impact on the future of any area – but equally the improvement of a single neglected building, ideally with effective consultation and genuine community involvement, can rejuvenate a previously a deprived area and act and act as a point of community focus potentially leading to further community-led regeneration initiatives at grass roots level. If the process is led by the community for the community the sense of local ownership will be even stronger.

With the imminent publication of a draft Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill which will look at, amongst many other matters relevant to regeneration, asset transfer and potential community ownership of buildings and of service-delivery, informed communities with the ability and desire to get involved in regeneration processes will be even more important that before.

Theme 2: Can physical, social and economic regeneration really be separate entities?
PAS would argue that any successful regeneration process must start by engaging the local community and therefore would not agree that social, physical and economic regeneration can be treated separately – they are all integral parts of the process. All three aspects are taken into account by the planning system in aiming to develop successful places which people can enjoy and so should all be addressed in a holistic manner in any regeneration process.

Partnership Working & Practical Issues
PAS would like to focus its further comments under the following above “themes of interest”.

The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 has the dual aims of creating a more efficient and inclusive planning system. This process is still on-going following the
implementation of secondary legislation in 2009, with the planning system being the key delivery vehicle for regeneration projects.

PAS, as a key partner in up-skilling communities, community councils, elected members and planning professionals, aims to improve engagement skills and planning knowledge throughout Scotland. In order to do this it requires PAS to work in partnership with local authorities and with community organisations and local people.

PAS builds capacity, enabling communities to become involved in and influence regeneration in their local area on an on-going basis, and where appropriate take the lead in delivering development proposals themselves. One-off engagement and consultation exercises, while useful in themselves, do not represent the culture change sought by the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006. What is required is that skills, knowledge and confidence do become embedded within communities – this is real capacity building. To ensure that regeneration projects are sustainable in the long-term – continued public involvement and sense of ownership is essential.

PAS is currently undertaking several initiatives that will support regeneration led by communities:

**Charretteplus** – PAS is currently working in partnership with Fife Council to deliver a pilot for a new kind of charrette (funded by the Scottish Government) which will draw on local knowledge in the widest sense. Charretteplus brings together land-use planning and community planning to deliver a community led development approach by making more efficient use of time and resources, utilising the silks of PAS’s volunteers, but also tapping into expert knowledge and insight within the local area.

**Planning Mentoring** – this scheme offers community groups taking forward a development access to planning support. Where possible, one dedicated PAS volunteer (a qualified planner) will be assigned to each group to provide on-going support over the duration of the project. Volunteers are encouraged to meet with groups on-site and as required thereafter to develop the relationship and leave a legacy of increased knowledge.

**Community Visioning** – PAS also undertakes community visioning exercises whereby local people will be facilitated to think about the future development of a particular site, building or wider area, again with the aim of making people’s needs the starting point for any regeneration discussion, and combining the “people” element with physical and economic matters.

**PAS Education** - PAS’s education programme includes a range of resources for engaging young people in the built and natural environment. IMBY™, YEP! and Planning to Act™ are all useful tools which can be used to engage young people at
the outset of any regeneration process, encouraging them to think about how they would like their area to develop and the wider issues involved, and most importantly empower people to do it themselves!

**On-going support to communities** - PAS also provides a free and impartial planning advice service to help individuals, community groups and business start-ups understand engage with the planning system – this service can provide on-going support to communities throughout long and potentially complex regeneration processes.

The guiding ethos behind all of these in terms of regeneration is that if there is community buy-in at the outset to physical and economic aspects of a regeneration process, it is more likely that there will be genuine sense of community ownership of the process – however, if economic and physical aspects are divorced from the social aspect this may not be achieved.

Resources such SP=EED™ (PAS’s practical guidance on engagement and consultation in planning) encourage greater inclusiveness within the planning and regeneration processes.

**Conclusion**

PAS empowers individuals and communities to take a genuine interest in the future development of their local and wider areas, and provides much needed skills, knowledge and confidence to get involved. Where individuals or communities want to take the lead with a development proposal to regenerate their local area, PAS can equally provide support from the bottom up. By providing on-going support, we help build local capacity, increase knowledge skills and instil confidence.

PAS also recognises the unique local knowledge Community Councils can bring to the regeneration process. However, it is vital that they too have the skills to fully engage with all members of the community, and are offered appropriate training to deal with an increasingly challenging planning agenda, and furthermore, to be able to be involved with issues arising out of the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill.

It is essential that any regeneration process, whether community-led or otherwise ensures that the communities affected become more confident and empowered; and that skills and experience are transferred more widely into and between communities. While some communities will have residents with a wide range of useful skills, this will not be the case in other areas. Therefore it is essential that we help to build capacity for all.
CONTACTS

Planning Aid for Scotland would be pleased to respond to any queries with regard to this evidence and is always willing to consider a joint venture with the promoters of the call for evidence to take forward further research or training on any aspect of the subject which relates to the core business of PAS.

Petra Biberbach
Chief Executive

Tel: 0131 220 9733
Mob: 07812 103967
petra@planningaidscotland.org.uk