The Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations (GWSF) is the leading membership and campaigning body for local community-controlled housing associations and co-operatives (CCHAs) in the west of Scotland. The Forum represents 66 members in 10 local authority areas who collectively provide affordable housing for over 70,000 households. Our members also deliver factoring services to around 15,000 owners.

The Forum welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Scottish Government’s ongoing dialogue on its regeneration strategies. Our response has been developed by members of the Forum and reflects their experiences of regeneration in their local communities. We have answered the Committee’s specified questions but begin by offering some overall comments.

- The Scottish Government’s overall aim of ensuring ‘that all of Scotland’s communities are sustainable and promote well-being’ (Achieving a Sustainable Future, 2011) is a laudable one and is also an aim which can only be achieved through the delivery of holistic regeneration processes and strategies.

- In the current economic climate with the continued squeeze on public and private sector resources it is more important than ever to think innovatively and creatively about new and different models of regeneration. This discussion should not simply focus on ‘pots of funding’ but on new ways of doing things. For instance: better partnership working with communities and the third sector; local delivery mechanisms; and changes in culture by large public service providers; sustainability; and new ways of measuring impacts or outcomes. Our members are eager to engage with all of these.

- In ‘Achieving a Sustainable Future’ the Scottish Government recognised that ‘top-down’ regeneration programmes are no longer viable and that a shift towards community led regeneration is needed. We were particularly pleased to see the Government acknowledge the key role that members of the community based housing movement play in regeneration in their position as ‘community anchors’ (p45/6).

- We were, however, disheartened when the government’s consultation paper on its Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill did not build on that positive recognition of community anchors. In our view, future development of legislation seeking to promote community empowerment must rectify that, by setting out the important role of community anchors particularly in local communities where inequalities and gaps in outcomes are the most pronounced.
The need for new thinking and ways of working is greatest in our most disadvantaged communities and this is where the government should be actively promoting the development of community anchors. There are analogies here with Scotland’s community-controlled housing movement which thrived during the 1980s and 1990s because government set statutory responsibilities for promoting housing associations and reinforced this through its policies and funding.

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

Within ‘Achieving a Sustainable Future’ the Scottish Government sought to articulate a coherent and consistent policy message which ‘joined the dots’ between its regeneration strategies and its wider social and economic policies. The government also re-iterated its holistic approach to regeneration and acknowledged that the delivery of its regeneration vision relies on a wide range of supporting outcomes being achieved.

Furthermore, it acknowledged that these outcomes are ‘not unique to regeneration’ and that they cross over into other policy areas, including: economic development: planning and place-making; public health; justice; safety; housing; business support; education and skills.

This is a vital policy message which must reach from ‘top-down’ to ‘grass-roots’ and be heard not only by those who create regeneration policy but also by all those involved in delivering it and those whose daily lives are affected by it.

The Government’s Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill should be used as a vehicle for doing this. The rhetoric of community led regeneration can only be translated into reality when individuals and groups are allowed to have a real say in what happens in their neighbourhoods and decision-making processes are devolved to neighbourhood level.

It is also crucial that linkages between funding streams are highlighted and that these are transparent and easily accessible.

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.

Well-rehearsed discourses over the last few decades have placed increased emphasis on the impacts of neighbourhoods and communities on a person’s life chances. These impacts cover a range of spheres, including social, economic and health outcomes and embrace aspects of the physical, social/cultural and service environments within communities.

All of the above are closely interconnected and cannot be understood out-with the structural economic and social processes which sustain them. It is clear to us that regeneration activities which seek to tackle these issues must also be ‘joined-up’ in order to effect real, long-term change. We welcome the fact that the Scottish
Government’s regeneration strategy emphasises the importance of a holistic approach and its acknowledgement that these ‘elements cannot be delivered in isolation’.

CCHAs’ ‘bottom-up’ approach and the services and projects that they operate on the ground in their communities can help to meet or operate in tandem with bigger picture ‘top-down’ structural policy messages and initiatives. Strategies which encourage a two-way ‘flow’ between the two can only lead to improvements in the delivery of regeneration.

The myriad of projects, initiatives and services that our members deliver (either alone or in partnership) in their communities are examples of joined-up, holistic regeneration in practice. The sheer range of CCHAs’ activities illustrates two key positive factors: firstly, CCHAs’ commitment to improving their communities; secondly, their appetite for innovation.

The range of activities which our members are involved in span physical, social and economic regeneration in their communities, and include:

- Partnership working
- Support for other local organisations (Includes: developing or managing premises for others; providing IT, human resource or finance and audit support; ‘hosting’ other services – use of office space)
- Social enterprises (for instance subsidiary organisations like handyman/repair services which provide employment for local people)
- Health and well-being initiatives
- Employment and training
- Financial and welfare advice
- Neighbourhood management
- Support for independent living and reducing isolation for older people.

Our response to ‘Achieving a Sustainable Future’ highlights some of the excellent and innovative regeneration projects and services which our members provide. It can be accessed here:


We know the Committee is keen to meet with individuals and groups in communities who are involved in delivering regeneration to hear more about how it works in practice. We would like to invite the Committee to come and see some of our projects in action.

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 are various funding sources which support different strands of regeneration activity. These include:
o People and Communities Fund – wider role activity
o Third Sector Enterprise Fund – promotion of social enterprise, capital investment and income generation
o Community Spaces Scotland – development of land assets
o Big Lottery Fund – Growing Community Assets – physical regeneration projects
o Change Fund – supporting older people in their communities

Whilst this (and other) investment is welcome there are two key obstacles which currently prevent best value from investment in this area. These are the byzantine web of diverse funding sources and the lack of transparency about how to access these. In our view a more ‘joined-up’ approach is needed.

Potential solutions include: the representation of each fund in the Scottish Funders Forum; the streamlining of application, reporting and evaluation processes; the development of more cross departmental dialogue across Scottish Government departmental budgets in order to see if opportunities to match fund projects are available.

In our opinion, funding could be used more effectively to support regeneration if decisions about spending were made at a local level and involved local people. The governance model pioneered by CCHAs allows local people to be part of the decision making process on spending priorities in their communities. This model has operated successfully for forty years and could be built upon to develop participatory budgeting frameworks in local communities where decisions are made not only on regeneration but also on other areas like health and social care spending.

The Scottish Government should also look to local, ‘on-the-ground’ intelligence about regeneration priorities. Community organisations have the greatest local knowledge and are best placed to decide what the priorities should be. Two of our member organisations (New Gorbals and Govanhill Housing Associations) have recently carried out neighbourhood audits in their communities and it is this type of exercise which can help to identify priorities. The audits sought to:

- Review previous evidence of community priorities – and carry out focus groups
- Map community assets
- Assess the effectiveness of partnership work in the area
- Produce an integrated neighbourhood audit report – and set out how partners might have the greatest impact in delivering the outcomes the community want.

We would be happy to share more information about the neighbourhood audit approach if the Committee is interested in learning more about it.

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?
There are three different levels where policies and strategies operate. The first or ‘top-level’ is the Scottish Government where policies are formulated. The second is the ‘intermediate’ local authority level where Community Planning Partnerships sit; and the third is ‘ground’ level which incorporates community organisations and communities themselves. In our view, to create genuine collaboration and synergy between the three the over-arching policy vision needs to be clear and consistent and support needs to be given to shift the focus onto community-led regeneration.

This does not necessarily mean that the structures or framework need to be altered. It is more about effecting a culture change. This involves public bodies being prepared to adopt different and more flexible approaches and community organisations also thinking about new ways of working, and new partnerships. Essentially, our thinking on regeneration needs to be recalibrated in order to achieve better outcomes in the most disadvantaged communities.

As we have previously indicated GWSF welcomes a discussion about how housing associations can contribute more to local regeneration structures and processes, we believe that tensions exist between a ‘community’ and ‘strategic’ focus. The ‘geography of decision making’ is important here and many CPP areas are too large to be relevant to local people.

There has always been a serious mismatch between the scale of community planning and the scale at which community engagement is likely to be effective. In our view, there needs to be a recognition that it is not realistic for Community Planning Partnerships to have a neighbourhood focus and that effective community engagement only happens at the grass-roots level.

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

In our opinion a flexible funding system should be the guiding principle here. Getting the balance right depends on the project and attempting to apply a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach would be unproductive.

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

The Scottish Government’s regeneration strategy aims to put ‘communities first, effectively involving local residents in the regeneration process and empowering communities’ (Achieving a Sustainable Future, p.10).

We believe that this must be the case to ensure sustainability. It is imperative that regeneration projects are shaped by communities, for communities.

**Practical Issues**
7. What actions could the Scottish Government’s forthcoming community capacity building programme include to best support communities to “do regeneration” themselves?

We welcome the ‘asset-based’ regeneration approach taken by Scottish Government which focuses on the assets rather than on the deficits of communities. An asset-based approach can also help to overcome entrenched stigma and we think this is a positive step forward. The Government recognises that building community capacity plays a crucial part in this process.

Ideas around community capacity building and community engagement have been around for a long time. CCHAs and other community organisations have been ‘doing’ these things on the ground for forty years. The Scottish Government should tap into this wealth of experience and make use of this resource to engage with people in communities and to build their voices into local regeneration strategies.

8. What role should CPPs play in supporting the community in regenerating their communities?

See our response to Q. 4

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.

See our response to Q.4

10. How can the outcomes of regeneration truly be captured and measured? What are the barriers to capturing these?

Too often in the past, a ‘short-termist’ perspective have been utilised in attempting to measure regeneration initiatives. This has led to a ‘box-ticking’ approach which has not allowed scope for long-term outcomes to emerge and where less tangible, but very significant impacts of regeneration like reduced stigma, increased social capital, and better health and well-being outcomes have not been captured. We would suggest a move towards a more holistic approach.

As we have indicated throughout we believe that communities should be involved in the planning and delivery of local regeneration strategies. Similarly, communities should also be involved in defining the outcomes of regeneration and in the evaluation of these. Regeneration can only be described as ‘community led’ if this is the case.

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