Best practice and limitations in relation to the delivery of regeneration in Scotland

**Fountainbridge Canalside Initiative (FCI)** are a group of community activists and local groups working to ensure that a viable and sustainable new local community is developed on the former S&N Brewery site in Fountainbridge, Edinburgh. We are establishing the principle that community consultation and input is included in any and all development plans and are working with developers and the council to create a unique waterside neighbourhood - led, driven and supported by the community. [www.fountainbridgeci.org.uk](http://www.fountainbridgeci.org.uk)

1. **Strategy and Policy Issues - Improving the linkage between the various strategies and policies related to regeneration**

Encourage cross-departmental meetings between different fiefdoms in the Council, all those involved –whether as developer/masterplanner/urban designer etc and have an equal attendance from the community. It doesn't always have to be absolutely representative – all local people that care about a local area should be invited.

This encourages the cross-departmental thinking that you address in **Question 2 Can physical, social and economic regeneration really be separate entities?**

We organised a Community Design Workshop with support from the Glass-House Community led design trust inviting all those involved with the regeneration of the site. This has had a beneficial effect on creating a positive dialogue in which the “experts” and professionals realise that local people have something to offer that often helps to solve problems or create more innovative possibilities. So now we have developed regular Sounding Board meetings with all those involved to continue this dialogue. See Glass-House Report on our website [www.fountainbridgeci.org.uk](http://www.fountainbridgeci.org.uk)

Economic aspects are often thought not to be amenable to involvement by the community, but people have to manage budgets all the time, so we do know about the difficulties of working within constraints. A series of community meetings to explain and explore the economic challenges of a regeneration site should be encouraged. Exercises and “games” would be a novel way to try and work out what could be possible. Timelines are important here – some initiatives will pay back their investment in time, or – as we have argued on our site – making an area really attractive and lively with local industries/arts/activities/social enterprises makes a place people want to buy a home in or live in and visit – so developing the local economy. See “Compendium for the Civic Economy” supported by NESTA.
2. Partnership Working - What actions could the Scottish Governments forthcoming community capacity building programme include to best support communities to “do regeneration” themselves?

We were very inspired by the “Delivering Better Places” document produced by the Scottish Government but when we tried to find out who to connect with – it appears the department has been disbanded and re-structured (!!) There was an excellent idea of helping to develop the ideas in the report through a network where ideas and practice could be shared and built on. Somehow this hasn’t happened. The key idea we took from this document was that the Council should keep hold of our site and not just sell it off to any developer. To their credit City of Edinburgh Council has done this and are supporting our ongoing involvement through a regular series of Sounding Board meetings with all those involved. The work we have been doing as an example of good practice is in our Annual Report that follows and our initial report “Brewing New Life” - also available on our website.
In August 2011 FCI was formed at a public meeting at which local people expressed their views about the Fountainbridge site and local developments in the local area.

At this time the site was owned by Lloyds TSB. The group gathered information about their plans and made links with local organisations. Once it was bought by the City of Edinburgh Council in November 2011 the attention focused on the plans for building a new Boroughmuir School and FCI supported the Forth Canoe Club in their desire to have a clubhouse on the site.

2011 January 2012 FCI became a constituted body that would carry forward the wishes of local people. These were:

- To create a viable and sustainable new local community in Fountainbridge recognising the needs of local people by ensuring that community consultation and input is included in any and all development plans.

- To work with developers and others with a view to acquiring a space for a canal community hub, led, driven and managed by the community.

February 14th a Vision Day was held in order to generate discussion, support and ideas- and see what local people and groups thought most important. Over 80 people attended the day, 36 of whom were new to the group. A mailing list was created and Newsletters sent our regularly to inform people of unfolding events and actions.

In March the group made more contacts with local groups and community councils and began to meet with people to discuss possible uses for the old Rubber factory building and comment on the new school plans. Proposals to create mobile allotments on the Fountainbridge North site were taken forward and local interest developed into the Grove Community garden group. Interest groups took different ideas forward and more people joined FCI.

In April the report of the Vision Day “Brewing New Life” was printed with support from Scotmid and launched.
Cllrs, Masterplanners, council officials and developers were invited. This meeting was to outline the key concerns that had been put forward by the community and find out what the idea of ‘place-making’ would mean in practice.

Mailing list now over 200. Links made with parents at Boroughmuir School.

May saw the Local Elections and FCI held meetings with all local councillors and lobbied them for their views about the site. Our key local councillors Andrew Burns, Gavin Corbett and David Key were very supportive and have been an important resource and support to the group since then. A website was gradually developed and more Newsletters kept people informed.

Alliances were made with local organisations such as Dunedin Canmore who joined the Steering Group.

In June FCI helped with other groups to organise the Canal Festival.

Stalls were set up publicising our work and the idea of the Grove Allotment group. A publicity panel was designed and placed alongside the primary school children’s paintings on the hoardings along the canal.

Stalls were also held at the Meadows festival.

A Strategy meeting organised working groups looking at the rubber factory, social and housing needs, development & lobbying, local economy, environment, and recreation & leisure.

In July application was made to The Glass-House community led design, a trust which supports the power of community led design to transform places and to bring positive and lasting change for all. FCI applied for support to run a Community Design Workshop for local people and the key planners and officials involved in the development of the site. Support from the Leader of the Council, Andrew Burns ensured that all those involved were encouraged to attend.

Aug/September saw more meetings with councillors to press the case for the Council to retain the site and control its development for the public good rather than sell it off to the whims of the market. This strategy has been significant in influencing the ensuing discussions and the decisions that have since been made.

In October we went on a very useful study trip to Glasgow to look at the regeneration of the canal round Maryhill and Spears Warf. Masterplanners and council officials were invited to come along with us. The group were inspired by the way in which things had grown organically- with one development attracting similar projects or organisations to come onto the site and how different officials had worked together energetically and creatively to make things happen.

November Community Design Workshop - with all those involved in developing the site and FCI coming together to look at density and design. Playing with plasticine and making 3D models enabled a productive dialogue to develop between the community and the developers. All felt it was a useful day.

The Workshop capacity was forty people and so in December we organised a Drop-In at the Reunion Canal Boats offices so that more local people could see what had taken place, and add their views. Over 20 new members joined as a result of this event.

We also re-started the Grove Community Garden initiative after a hiccup with the original support. Grosvenor Estates are now actively funding the infrastructure required so that planting can start in the New Year. The community garden will be made from wooden pallets made into waist high planters which can be moved around with a fork lift. This means the garden will remain as the building site progresses. There is a big demand for allotments in Edinburgh and this initiative will show the importance of greening the site.
A report to contribute to and comment on the Masterplanning process, summarising all the views and ideas that have come forward this year was completed.

January 2013 saw the dialogue with the Council and developers go forward with the start of the first quarterly Sounding Board meetings in the Council chambers. These will be an informal means of continuing a dialogue between FCI and those involved in the development of this unique site.

A constructive and exciting start to the New Year!

Come and join us – you will be very welcome!

Fountainbridge Canalside Initiative

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