What does ‘regeneration’ mean in your area?

1. Regeneration for Dumfries and Galloway centres on strategic interventions which will make the most significant contribution to the wider regional economy, but also considers the roles of communities in this. This is outlined in our Council priorities as being Dumfries, Stranraer and the M74 corridor settlements of Gretna, Lockerbie and Annan. Regeneration Plans are in place which are based on investment to support physical change linked with people & communities: holistic place making.

2. We can provide examples of successful engagement / consultation in developing regeneration plans and would be pleased to offer more detail on:

   - Stranraer Waterfront Regeneration Masterplan
   - Dumfries Whitesands Charrette
   - Annan, Gretna and Lockerbie Town Regeneration Masterplans

3. The Beyond Chapelcross Project, we have developed with support from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, is an excellent example of a specific regeneration programme which seeks to mitigate the impacts of industrial change (the decommissioning of the Chapelcross nuclear power plant) through targeted interventions aimed at both people and place. Please refer also to the project website: www.cxproject.co.uk.

4. Our Council is also embarking on the development of a regeneration plan for the Upper Nithsdale and Cumnock Area in partnership with East Ayrshire Council. This is in response to our respective Councils' wishes to address the disadvantage caused by industrial decline in an area which crosses the local authority boundaries. Both areas share common economic socio economic challenges and have strong links. This would be an excellent opportunity for Scottish Government to work directly with Council Officials to bring forward additional knowledge and best practice to support the emerging proposals.

The regeneration strategy, resources and funding

5. Regeneration funding is a crucial issue for local government in Scotland. It has been and remains a difficult issue due to the previous targeting of funding and the need to balance targeted approaches/early intervention and prevention alongside the ability for all councils to access funding for regeneration. The range of funds being developed by Scottish Government, and the reference to the challenges facing rural areas, are very welcome.

6. The delivery of regeneration projects and programmes can lever in private sector investment and address market failure but there is a social / community benefit that must also be considered. Key physical investment may include: land remediation, enabling infrastructure and support for town centres. It is important to recognise that physical change cannot be delivered in isolation and should be part of a holistic approach to regeneration which also encompasses economic and social aspects.
Therefore it would be beneficial that projects funded from future grant programmes are able to demonstrate both economic and social benefits through any physical/infrastructure changes. This is especially important in the rural context, where high economic return is often a challenge but the community impact can be very significant.

7. The major challenge to the success of the programme is capital investment to ‘pump prime’ and enable projects to be delivered effectively (e.g. Stranraer Waterfront in our region). Regeneration needs public and private sector investment to make it work and deliver real ‘transformational’ change. The public sector role here is to invest to create the conditions which will encourage commercial investment. The challenge therefore is to be as innovative as possible in the way in which the required ‘up front’ public sector investment can be found. A real opportunity exists for Scottish Government to support rural regeneration through new public / private financial instruments, but there are specific challenges in implementing asset backed financial vehicles such as SPRUCE in rural areas.

8. It is important to stress that any new grant / loan funded programmes from Scottish Government be underpinned by practitioner knowledge and experience (to ensure that programmes are deliverable and add value, particularly in relation to town centres).

9. The development of the post 2013 EU funded grant programmes (for example Structural Funds) should be considered in relation to regeneration funding proposals and linkages made where possible in order to leverage additional resources.

Regeneration, equalities and preventative spending

10. As a starting point, regeneration development taken forward to create a ‘sense of place’ can be the catalyst for civic pride and improved community confidence and this should be a factor in all regeneration activity. This principle can support positive engagement and action in relation to anti social behaviour and crime and applies to all.

11. More specifically, the benefits of being in employment are widely recognised and include improvements in health and wellbeing, reductions in reliance on social work services, the criminal justice system, improvements in economic security and a reduced dependence on the benefits system. This again reiterates the need to ensure that people are very much at the heart of regeneration investment and that where possible job creation is a key factor in projects.

Regeneration and sustainable economic development

12. The Dumfries and Galloway position, as outlined in our Single Outcome Agreement, is clear that our regeneration activity must support sustainable economic development across the region by:

- Assisting to attract people of working age to the region
- Creating the conditions for inward investment
- Ensuring people have basic skills for employment
• Supporting entrepreneurial activity
• Ensuring there is a strong focus on supporting sustainability and growth opportunities for existing business within regeneration programmes.
• Providing opportunities for local business to tender for works packages arising from capital investment.

Community led regeneration and CPPs

13. The role of Communities in regeneration is vital and sustainable projects need to be founded on local engagement. However, capacity in communities to respond to calls for engagement is variable. Alongside the development of technical elements of a regeneration project there must be provision made to ensure that communities can activity participate and positively support investment on the ground. Community Planning Partnerships can help in this respect through bringing the public and community sectors together and taking a co-coordinating role if required. This would also support the delivery of national policies in relation to community engagement and participation.

14. A significant technical barrier to delivering successful regeneration involving CPP’s is the differing governance and financial regulations which are in place across the public sector. This is particularly relevant with regard to asset management and capital planning. The work of the Scottish Futures Trust in relation to bringing forward potential solutions to these issues is particularly encouraging.

Regeneration and climate change targets

15. Regeneration has a significant and central role to play in support of achieving climate change targets through both investment in buildings and related influencing of people. The Council is taking forward a range of activities which facilitate regeneration and also support climate change targets. This includes affordable housing projects based on sustainable design principles, rural transport initiatives and working with the Crichton Carbon Centre to provide bespoke support for businesses to promote the benefits of sustainable practices (please also refer to: http://carboncentre.org/carbonCMS/).

16. New development is guided by Planning policies which reflect sustainable development principles and is required to comply with the Building Regulations including sustainability labelling for new buildings. All new buildings have to comply with Part 6 Energy and Part 7 Sustainability. Altered and converted buildings have to conform to more onerous standards. Our approach to infrastructure asset management is based on adopting practices and using materials which are sustainable and we will be developing this further by investing in renewable energy to support street lighting.

17. I trust that you find this response helpful and please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.

Alistair M Speedie
Director Planning and Environment Services