SUBMISSION FROM EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

What does ‘regeneration’ mean in your area?

1. The Council would agree with the definition contained within the Scottish Government’s Regeneration Strategy but would give greater emphasis to providing assistance to individuals and communities to play a more active part in society.

2. A successful outcome is considered to be where there is a tangible change from the investment, for example, vacant buildings being brought back into active use, vacant and derelict land being brought back into use, members of our community given new skills and employment opportunities.

3. The Council has been involved in many successful physical regeneration schemes, notably:
   
   - the Newmilns Townscape Heritage initiative (THI);
   - the Newmilns Townscheme;
   - Town Centre Regeneration projects in Kilmarnock, Cumnock and Galston;
   - Former Johnnie Walker bonded warehouse, Strand Street Kilmarnock being refurbished for Council office accommodation;
   - Refurbishment of the Palace Theatre and Grand Hall, Kilmarnock: Ayrshire’s last remaining theatre;
   - Renovation of the Civic Centre in John Finnie Street, Kilmarnock.

4. In addition to the completed projects above, the Council is currently actively involved in other physical regeneration projects, namely:
   
   - John Finnie Street/Bank Street, Kilmarnock and the Cumnock Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes;
   - The John Finnie Street/Bank Street, Kilmarnock THI;
   - The Catrine Environmental Heritage Project;
   - Former Opera House, John Finnie Street, Kilmarnock, being refurbished for Council accommodation;
   - Development of a 2,100 sq.m speculative business and industrial unit at Moorfield North Industrial Park, Kilmarnock;
   - Development of serviced business and industrial plots within Phase 2 of the Moorfield North Industrial Park, Kilmarnock.

5. In terms of place-making regeneration, the Prince’s Foundation for the Built Environment, now the Prince’s Foundation for Building Community, undertook an Enquiry by Design process for four towns in East Ayrshire: Auchinleck, Cumnock, Mauchline and New Cumnock. The result of this process was the production of strategic documents for each town, focussing on physical and economic regeneration. Where appropriate the recommendations in these reports are being taken forward by the Council through the Main Issues Report for the new Local Development Plan or specific projects.
6. The Cumnock Town Centre Masterplan was developed jointly between the Council and a private sector developer with the purpose of securing the regeneration of Cumnock town centre. As part of the masterplan, the Council officially opened the new Cumnock Area office, in March 2012. The office represents an £10 million joint investment and co-locates the Council’s Housing and Social Work staff alongside, NHS services, the DVLA Driving Test Centre, Passport and other voluntary staff. It includes the Registrar’s Office and Marriage Suite as well a new community library. The Council is now moving forward with the other proposals within the masterplan. To date, the level of investment in regeneration initiatives in Cumnock has exceeded £14.6 million.

7. In Kilmarnock, the Council commissioned an Integrated Urban Development Plan in order to bring forward proposals which result in a viable future for Kilmarnock and the town centre, thus eliciting physical and economic regeneration. The proposals and actions in this plan are also being taken forward by the Council. It can be noted that investment in regeneration initiatives in Kilmarnock has already exceeded £52.5 million.

8. In relation to supporting local businesses 60 grants and 7 loans were provided to local businesses, a business breakfasting scheme has been introduced to enable networking and to deliver a programme of business support, a local supplier development programme has been developed and support has been given to 10 social enterprises.

9. The Council has an effective Skills Development and Employability Service which enables unemployed members of East Ayrshire Communities gain access to various training programmes (Skillseekers, Modern Apprenticeships, Get Ready for Work, and Training for Work) and job search facilities. Supported employment and Transitional employment are also offered to help people get back to work. In 2011/12 the Skills development and Employability Service worked with 947 participants.

10. The Council believes the reason for the success of regeneration projects within East Ayrshire is through the approach that the Council takes towards regeneration, which is as follows:

- A focussed approach to regeneration integrating physical, social and economic strands;
- Working in partnership along with strong leadership and clear visioning through the Community Planning process;
- Being able to attract additional funding (sometimes substantial) and meeting the timescale of funders;
- Engaging communities, partners and key stakeholders and using their knowledge to continue and inform the development and implementation of local regeneration initiatives/services.

11. In relation to reason for less successful outcomes for regeneration, it can be observed that whilst the Council acknowledges the work that has been undertaken to bring guidance on Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) into one concise document (Circular 6/2011) the process is still complex and very
demanding of resources. Under the present arrangements any potential CPO requires significant investment of time by staff within legal, planning, estates and potentially other services of the Council. Not only does the Council have to weigh the public interest but it must consider the costs associated with preparing a CPO with no guarantee of a successful outcome. Additionally it must also manage the time taken to undertake the CPO process with that required to assemble a potential funding package. Given the complexity of the CPO process and the difficulty of assembling funding packages that have their own timetables to meet and that can be fully aligned with the project, this can be extremely difficult to achieve.

12. The Council is of the view that consideration should be given to designing a two stage procedure whereby the initial stage involves consideration of the principles lying behind the CPO proposals and that these are assessed against any objections received. The purpose of this initial stage would be to examine the desirability or otherwise of progressing with the CPO and whether the public interest can be proven to outweigh private concerns. If sufficient justification is provided the CPO should be granted in principle and details with regards to ownerships, compensation etc thereafter assembled.

The regeneration strategy, resources and funding

13. At a local level, perception is that some elements of the strategy are being delivered well while the detail of others remains unclear.

14. Additional support from the Government is required to support delivery at a local level. The Council are aware of discussions with CoSLA in relation to the management of the various funding streams set out in the strategy, however, it is unclear how these will be distributed in future and indeed what the timescales are for concluding those discussions. There also needs to be some assurances that previous commitments to remove ring-fencing within the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund will be honoured. A lack of clarity around the funding streams and how to access them does create uncertainty about the projects which will be supported.

15. The principal barrier to delivery of regeneration is lack of available funding. Given the current financial climate, the Council welcomes the introduction of additional funding streams, as well as closer working arrangements with the SFT. We would welcome greater clarity on how the various new funding models will operate and would appreciate feedback on the type of projects being funded and those which are considered to be model projects which others can learn from.

16. In addition, housing is considered to be a key element of regenerating communities and further support is required to deliver affordable housing. Building new Council housing as proposed in East Ayrshire Council’s Strategic Local Programme bid, and in response to identified need, will not only support the Council’s Strategic Priority to promote town centre living as an aid to town centre regeneration, but will also augment the ongoing work of sustaining local communities by replacing stock lost through previous right to buy sales.
17. A total of 7 new town centre sites, providing 134 units are included within the proposed programme, in order to achieve best value and to direct investment in support of the Council’s strategic objective to promote regeneration through town centre living. Work to identify further sites to accommodate more units is also underway currently.

18. Additional support is also required to tackle the blight of vacant and derelict properties in our town centres and the Council would welcome a similar approach from the Government to these buildings to that being applied to empty homes.

Regeneration, equalities and preventative spending

19. Regeneration has an important role to play in respect of equalities and preventative spending, including delivering on the recommendations of the Christie Commission. The Christie Commission recognised that reactive approaches are heavily resource intensive and represent lost opportunity to have a more transformative impact. There can be no doubt that prevention and early intervention are central to current social policy in Scotland and are widely recognised as priorities for improving outcomes in our local communities.

20. Within the context of Community Planning in East Ayrshire, there has been a culture of early intervention and preventative spend and a commitment over time to shifting resources to prevention across a range of services.

21. One of the key messages of the Christie Commission is the need for people, communities and services to collaborate to build services around communities and to achieve positive outcomes. As such, a multi track approach to regeneration should ensure that local communities benefit from investment in the physical fabric of an area and that they are able to benefit from educational, training and community development initiatives.

22. The Council is working on a developing a new approach to working with our communities entitled “Transforming Our Relationship With The Communities We Serve.” The approach focuses upon empowering our communities and neighbourhoods and the need to move away from a culture of dependency to social integration, enhanced community cohesion, co-production and the promotion of local ownership, responsibility and participation.

23. The guiding principles of the approach are as follows:

- Taking a community development approach to our activity – working with rather than for communities;
- Listening to our communities and valuing their knowledge, skills and experience;
- Empowering communities and building their resilience;
- Focusing on reducing inequalities in our most deprived communities;
- Prioritising prevention and early intervention approaches; and
- Building sustainability into all activity.
24. The principle of empowering communities has the potential to contribute to the preventative spend agenda by ensuring that regeneration activity meets the needs of local people and tackles the social issues which often prevail in our most disadvantaged communities. The empowering communities agenda must also be delivered in the context that not all communities are equal and do not all have the same capacity to maximise their assets. Support is required to build that capacity locally.

25. The Council recognises that community engagement in the regeneration process is integral to ensuring that the needs of diverse groups are taken account of when devising policy and developing projects. Within East Ayrshire this is facilitated through the Community Planning Partnership (CPP).

26. A greater understanding of the assets of a community, rather than its weaknesses, and the involvement of the community in devising solutions to social issues reflects Christie’s aspiration to have greater integration of public services at a local level. The Council has strong partnerships through the Community Planning Partnership and those partnerships do challenge performance.

27. As identified by the Christie Commission, employability is a key action in tackling inequalities. Through the Delivering Community Regeneration Action Plan, the Community Planning Partnership supports the skills development and employability of our residents and improves the capacity of individuals to move into sustainable employment. As outlined earlier in the response, the Council has an effective Skills Development and Employability Service, enabling people to access various opportunities in relation to training and employment.

28. Further, the Council are engaging with the third sector to support the sustainability of community based social enterprises in recognition of their role in delivering long term change. In this context the People and Communities Fund is regarded as key to driving this agenda. The Council are also committed to delivering the aspirations of Equal Communities in a Fairer Scotland and our social policies reflect the need to tackle the inequalities which exist in our communities.

Regeneration and sustainable economic development

29. The Council has reviewed its Economic Development service and is developing a partnership strategy to address the weaknesses in our local economy and to stimulate local economic growth. The Council continues to provide support to our indigenous business base to grow, in parallel with efforts to attract inward investment. We also support skills development and employability across our communities, to complement investment in our towns and our business and industrial locations.

30. On an annual basis we provide £260,000 of business grants to local companies with growth aspirations: our Business Gateway contractors supported 279 start ups in 2011/12 and are targeted to support 340 in 2012/13. A partnership approach with SDI has led to an increase in inward investment enquiries to the
area and we continue to develop our proposition in an effort to translate enquiries into secured investment.

31. We support our principal town centres through a range of events and marketing initiatives and have implemented a number of regeneration projects, with a value of £40m, which have improved the physical fabric of our town. Our skills team provide support to around 700 people per annum to improve their skills and employability and to move closer to the labour market.

32. These actions are in line with the Government’s strategy to stimulate economic development.

33. The Government’s strategy also recognises that capital investment, including investment in infrastructure, transport and housing is important in delivering opportunities for economic growth, however there is a lack of available resource to support that capital investment and the competitiveness of our area is being undermined.

34. The Council has high levels of vacant and derelict land and regards access to the Vacant and Derelict Land Fund as key to addressing issues of dereliction which are undermining our ability to attract private investment.

35. We also require capital investment in infrastructure and property and have a range of projects with the potential to help transform our area but which require funding.

36. Previous ring-fencing of resources has resulted in a disparity between the competitiveness of areas and has at times stymied our economic development efforts. We would therefore welcome clarity about the future allocation of the Government’s Regeneration Funds and an assurance that East Ayrshire will be able to access these resources.

37. Our employability team and partners are working with around 700 local people a year to provide them with the skills and support necessary to move them closer to the labour market. There is a clear structure to that support and over the last four years much has been achieved in stripping out duplication of provision; ensuring a targeted pathway approach to enhancing employability and most importantly delivering positive outcomes.

38. East Ayrshire was identified as one of six local authority areas which would benefit from a share of £9 million from the Scottish Government’s Opportunities for All Fund. As a ‘youth unemployment hotspot’ we received additional resources totalling £720,000. The funding allows us to deliver additional support to our local communities, complementing existing activity and contributing to improving our local outcomes.

39. This funding is short term while the problems our communities face are inherent and require long term interventions. We would therefore seek commitment from the Government to a longer term financial commitment to this agenda.
40. Sustainable economic growth and improving outcomes for individuals and communities are inextricably linked, with economic conditions undoubtedly affecting our ability to improve outcomes. Reducing resources as a result of the current economic situation presents a significant challenge for local government and the wider public sector. At the same time demand for services and user expectations for service access, quality and performance continue to increase and make those challenges even more complex.

41. The Council’s estimated budget gap over the period 2013/14 – 2016/17 is £34 million. Scottish Government Revenue Funding to the Council is expected, at best, to flat-line in the short term, unavoidable cost pressures will present this as a real-terms cut with inflation, pay awards and demographic changes all expected to have a significant impact on future budgets. Further roll out of action in relation to enterprise areas; tax incremental financing; next generation broadband; infrastructure investment; job creation and skills development are imperatives to the delivery of economic development locally.

Community led regeneration and CPPs.

42. In East Ayrshire, the Council and its Community Planning Partners continue to recognise that the involvement of local people in making decisions about their local area and East Ayrshire as a whole, and in shaping the development and delivery of services which impact on their lives, is essential.

43. With regard to delivering community led regeneration, the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) is committed to involving local people in the development and delivery of regeneration plans for our communities. For example, ongoing and wide ranging community and stakeholder consultation and engagement has informed the development of town centre action plans for Kilmarnock and Cumnock, which provide a framework for the regeneration of our main towns. In addition, the Galston Community Development Trust has been established to take forward the regeneration programme in Galston, the key service centre for the Irvine Valley, in partnership with East Ayrshire Council.

44. The Council is committed, where appropriate, to the transfer of assets to support the implementation of regeneration plans, and, as previously outlined at Section 3 above, support is being provided to the Third Sector to build capacity within community based social enterprises.

45. There is an acknowledgement that capacity within communities varies and a commitment in East Ayrshire to supporting capacity building as set out in Building a Sustainable Future. The Scottish Government’s support to this agenda is welcomed.

46. Since August 2011, East Ayrshire Council has led activity through the “Transforming our Relationship with the Communities We Serve” agenda, also noted at Section 3 above, which is the Council’s refreshed approach to the delivery of community based services, designed to engage and support local communities. Work will continue to be progressed in 2012/13 in relation to taking forward this new approach linked to Community Planning.
47. The overarching Community Plan continues to provide the foundation for effective partnership working and sharing of resources to deliver a range of quality services, which improve the quality of life of, and make a difference to, individuals and communities in East Ayrshire. The work of all Partner agencies continues to be directed at delivering, or supporting the delivery of, activity to address the priorities and agreed Local Outcomes identified within the Community Plan and the associated Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) 2011-14.

48. The SOA builds on and strengthens the strategic priorities articulated in the Community Plan and ensures that Community Planning Partners and the Scottish Government are working together to deliver better services, outcomes and quality of life for local people across the East Ayrshire area.

49. The findings of the Accounts Commission in the East Ayrshire Council Best Value 2 Pathfinder Audit, published on 1 April 2010, highlighted that: “Partnership working in East Ayrshire is well established and effective. The council and its partners work together to understand the challenges faced by the community and address these actively. This is evident in initiatives across all of the thematic priorities in the CPP”.

50. Key actions to achieve the Local Outcomes identified in our SOA are detailed in our four Community Plan thematic Action Plans for the four year period 2011-15, namely:

- Promoting Lifelong Learning;
- Delivering Community Regeneration;
- Improving Community Safety; and
- Improving Health and Wellbeing.

51. With regard to Delivering Community Regeneration, the following Local Outcomes have been identified through work taken forward with our communities, our partners and other stakeholders as part of the 2010/11 Community Planning Four-yearly Review, and a range of associated performance indicators allows us to measure and report progress from an identified baseline on an annual basis as part of our consolidated Community Planning/SOA Annual Performance Report.

<table>
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<th>Local Outcome</th>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
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| Our town centres and villages are sustainably regenerated | • Percentage of vacant and derelict urban land  
• Number of vacant and derelict town centre buildings  
• Cleanliness of local authority streets and other relevant land |
| Local economy improved                             | • Business start up  
• Net number of active enterprises  
• Business survival rate (3 years after start up) |
| Skills development and employability improved      | • Claimant count unemployment  
• Employment rate |
| Leisure, culture and tourism potential promoted and developed | • Median weekly earnings for full time employees  
• Number of participants entering employment through the Skills Development and Employability programme  
• Number of participants entering education or training through the Skills Development and Employability programme |
| Connectivity and local transport solutions improved | • Growth in tourism revenue  
• Annual number of visitors to the area  
• Employment supported by tourism activity |
| Sustainable and affordable housing solutions delivered | • Proportion of pupils walking or cycling to school  
• Percentage of the road network considered for maintenance treatment |
| The natural environment protected, conserved and enhanced, and the negative effects of climate change mitigated | • Number and percentage of repeat homelessness within one year  
• Number and percentage of Council houses meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard  
• Proportion of municipal waste recycled  
• Tonnage of biodegradable waste land filled  
• Total new woodland created each year |

**Regeneration and climate change targets**

52. Sustainable regeneration contributes to the delivery of climate change targets. Re-use or redevelopment of contaminated land, vacant and derelict land and buildings can contribute to the delivery of sustainable climate change targets by incorporating micro-generation technologies (i.e. solar power), low carbon materials, sustainable design of new developments, better insulation etc into regeneration projects. Regeneration of our urban areas has also been undertaken with cognisance to the mitigation of the inevitable effects of climate change; for example, flood prevention measures have anticipated future peaks in river discharge arising from increased rainfall.

East Ayrshire Council