SUBMISSION FROM FIFE COUNCIL

What does ‘regeneration’ mean in your area?

1. Fife Council is working with the Scottish Government’s definition as set out in Achieving a Sustainable Future: “the holistic process of reversing the economic, physical and social decline of places where market forces alone won’t suffice” and agree that this is both an adequate and helpful description.

2. In practice this involves identifying areas of need and opportunities within these areas to build on existing strengths and to address underlying issues. This can cover a range of areas including physical improvements; facilitating changes of use in existing buildings or areas; support to community organisations; development of new housing, with a particular emphasis on affordable housing; improving existing facilities; supporting new and existing businesses.

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**Successful Regeneration in Fife – Lochgelly Case Study**

Pre-Charette – a number of physical projects mainly focused around Main Street/Bank Street intersection – public art; refurbishment of miner’s institute; demolition of poor housing and new affordable housing development; shop front improvement scheme. This was alongside a major strategic land allocation for housing expansion.

SSCI designation, closely followed by the charette process and resulting in delivery plans for short-, medium- and long-term initiatives. New projects include ongoing delivery of plans for the re-development of and derelict and vacant buildings around a proposed new town square.

Key Success Factors:

- Community involvement throughout
- Close partnership working within Fife Council and with a wide range of external organisations including community groups, commercial businesses, Ore Valley HA, private sector, charities and social enterprises
- Clear action planning and strong focus on delivery throughout

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**The regeneration strategy, resources and funding**

3. The criteria for the Vacant and Derelict Land Fund requires review as the majority of Scottish local authority areas (including Fife) are not eligible and cannot apply for any funding under the scheme. Similarly there are a number of areas in Scotland not eligible for capital grant fund, which only funds four URCs. Despite its significant regeneration challenges, Fife is unable to access any funding for physical investment in regeneration from the Scottish Government.
4. The town centre regeneration fund provided a much-needed boost, but could have better-focused and better-planned. The overall amount was too little and its one-off nature created some perverse incentives.

5. Understanding of SPRUCE is still developing, and to date Fife has a couple of SPRUCE bids in the pipeline – related to renewables sector. The advantages of this form of financing for regeneration of deprived areas is not clear, and as a form of local authority borrowing its usefulness is yet to be proven.

6. The People and Communities fund is an important plank in delivering the Strategy’s objective of community-led regeneration and the principle of community empowerment. But there is still much support required to raise capacity of community based organisations in the most deprived areas in Fife before such communities can adequately secure this funding.

7. Fife’s regeneration position is outlined in “Building Stronger Fife Communities” (April 2009). Following the publication of a national regeneration strategy for Scotland, this document is currently being refreshed.

Regeneration, equalities and preventative spending

8. Regeneration has a huge role to play in the preventative spending agenda. It offers the opportunity to break cycles of (physical and economic) decline and worklessness. Key areas where effort is most likely to deliver long-term savings and better outcomes are:

- Stimulating and supporting SMEs to provide a local employment base
- Improving housing conditions with subsequent benefits for physical and mental health
- Improving the quality of the physical environment including green infrastructure
- Facilitating targeted support for training, enterprise and employment for communities having low skills and/or high unemployment levels
- Raising aspirations among young people about what paths are open to them
- Supporting change in attitudes eg healthy eating / General Health Agenda and reducing reliance on benefits including incapacity benefits

Regeneration and sustainable economic development

9. Successful long-term regeneration relies on the stimulation of economic development including housing and infrastructure development and the creation of employment opportunities. Development of the Fife Energy Park (in the Methil area) is providing a number of new economic opportunities including job creation and the potential for a thriving energy related industries cluster. The challenge is to ensure that local towns and local people benefit from this opportunity sited in an area of high deprivation. To this end, there is a focus on developing and delivering short-medium-long term regeneration interventions to increase local communities capacity to capitalise synergistically potential opportunities unfolding at the Energy Park. This is being facilitated through the strengthening of partnership working across the sectors including the development of a local
community planning process linked to Fife’s Community Plan Partnership. Further public investment is required to deliver medium to long term actions focussed on raising skills, public realm and physical infrastructure.

**Community led regeneration and CPPs**

10. Community-led is a more realistic aspiration than community-delivered in most cases. There needs to be more explicit recognition of the business community as a legitimate community partner (where a range of business interests are represented e.g. business associations, Business Improvement Districts, etc) if economic development objectives are to be delivered. Finding appropriate delivery partners (with the required capabilities and more importantly capacity) in areas blighted by market failure is difficult and relies largely on local personalities. Some of the loudest voices may not necessarily reflect the balance of local opinion. Succession planning can also be an issue.

11. One of the challenges for Fife is in delivering both the Fife-wide Community Plan, (2011-2020), which is largely strategic in nature via a number (7) of local community plans that focus on specific delivery and align with / contribute to strategic priorities. These local community plans are at different stages of development across Fife but those furthest advanced do seem to offer a strong vehicle for facilitating partnership working and for involving the community across a number of areas.

12. Fife’s Community Plan (2011-2020) contains 15 local outcomes under three themes,

13. Three themes which between them contain 15 local outcomes (Pg4 of SOA):

- Reducing Inequalities
- Increasing Employment
- Tackling Climate Change

14. Fife’s regeneration actions seek to contribute to the achievement of these themes and their related local outcomes, in particular through the Regeneration Actions Plans (under Fife’s Building Stronger Communities approach). Some outcomes / indicators under these Action Plans include:

- Improved retail mix/quality and sustainable town centre businesses for Fife’s town centres
- neighbourhoods and local areas are well planned with accessible facilities
- Vacant and derelict land and property is addressed and heritage and built environment preserved for productive use
- Quality design and upkeep of buildings and space create a positive appearance

**Regeneration and climate change targets**
15. Regeneration has a key role to play in achieving climate change targets particularly through its physical regeneration actions. These include:

- Sustainable transport solutions for new & existing developments
- Energy efficiency and renewable solutions – social housing
- Supporting Social Enterprises based around recycling, green energy, etc. Local examples include Recycle Fife; Radical Rubbish

16. Fife’s is seeking to achieve the above by setting climate change principles and standards through planning policies and development design briefs, and also through the development of micro-renewable energy projects in new and existing communities.

Fife Council
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