SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Summary

- It is our view that genuine community-led initiatives are the key to successful regeneration
- Adopting asset-based approaches which utilise the strengths in communities will be vital to achieve sustainable regeneration
- The preventative spending agenda provides us with an opportunity to tackle poverty and inequality, and regenerate deprived communities
- To be effective the People and Communities Fund should have an entirely open remit which allows communities to dictate what the priorities are in their area and what methods they employ to meet those priorities
- In addition to the Christie Commission the regeneration strategy must also dovetail with other policy agendas such as the Community Empowerment Bill and the Procurement Reform Bill
- Community-based preventative approaches naturally lend themselves to stimulating local economies and wider development
- Many third sector organisations play a significant role in economic development and bring added value through volunteering and other forms of social capital
- Communities and third sector organisations working on regeneration initiatives must have the opportunity to contribute to the development of Single Outcome Agreements to ensure the right outcomes are prioritised

Our response

1. SCVO welcomes the opportunity to respond to this enquiry and would like to contribute to the following questions:

What does ‘regeneration’ mean to you?

2. SCVO favours a broad definition of regeneration which accounts for the importance of a mix of social, economic, environmental and physical approaches to regeneration. The focus of much regeneration work to date has been on physical regeneration with the hope that social and economic regeneration will follow. It is our view that this approach has been largely unsuccessful. A greater emphasis on social regeneration is required with communities at the centre of the process. This approach will build the fabric of communities and provide a strong base to deliver more positive outcomes, including increased economic development.

3. It is our view that the key outcomes identified by communities in their area should be given priority. This would recognise that communities are best placed to
identify the priorities in their area and lead on delivering the solutions. It is our view that these community-led approaches are the key to successful regeneration. However, it is important that this is not compromised to become simply community involvement in public sector-led activity. The regeneration strategy *Achieving a Sustainable Future* recognises this when it states: ‘However, the Scottish Government is clear that the involvement of local people in public sector-led activity is not community led regeneration.’ It is important that this commitment is carried forward and incorporated into delivery.

4. There are numerous case studies of regeneration projects available from the Development Trusts Association which adopt this community-led approach. The work undertaken by Twechar Community Action is a good example of a community anchor organisation which brings the community together and contributes to the regeneration of the area through a variety of projects which address the underlying challenges in the community. Twechar shows that once a community anchor organisation is established, connecting the community through social projects, then other enterprising activity follows with skills, community services and direct employment now taking place.

5. The reasons this project and others like it have been successful is the local knowledge which exists of the human and physical resources in the community and how they can be unlocked to tackle the problems which have persisted. Adopting these asset-based approaches which utilise the strengths in communities will be vital to achieve sustainable regeneration.

**The regeneration strategy, resources and funding**

6. With the exclusion of the People and Communities Fund the funding streams outlined above are mainly targeted at large capital investment programmes for physical regeneration which are not usually accessible to community groups. This leaves very little funding accessible for community-led regeneration which was the main focus of the regeneration strategy.

7. The People and Communities Fund (PCF) should provide the funds for community anchor organisations to take forward community-led regeneration. However, it is our view that this fund is not providing the flexibility required for community-led regeneration. In having only two priorities (employability and preventative action) it is missing the fundamental principle of community-led regeneration which allows communities to set their priorities and outcomes. To be effective the fund should have an entirely open remit which allows communities to dictate what the priorities are in their area and what methods they employ to meet those priorities.

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8. To encourage and support a new generation of community anchor organisations, funding will be required to help organisations become established. As can be seen by the first round of approved funding\(^4\), the majority of awards have been made to housing associations doing employability work. This is valuable and important work but not the breadth of activity required for diverse communities.

**Regeneration, equalities and preventative spending**

9. The UK programme of welfare reform will have a major impact on poverty, housing and inequality targets. Work done by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation\(^5\) suggests that if the current approach of Westminster continues along with current labour market trends, the impact will be increasing levels of poverty and inequality. This will have a significant impact on the most deprived communities and could stifle traditional regeneration efforts.

10. Community-led regeneration will be vital to mitigate the worst impacts of these reforms and ensure further decline does not happen in these vulnerable communities. The Cassiltoun Trust\(^6\) is a good example of a community anchor organisation's contribution to the physical and social regeneration of a deprived area.

11. Much of the Scottish Government's spending, including the health, care, housing and local authority budgets are in response to the high poverty and inequality levels prevalent in Scotland. The preventative spending agenda provides us with an opportunity to tackle poverty and inequality and regenerate deprived communities. Preventative approaches need to be given recognition for the potential they offer to our communities as well as the financial savings they produce.

12. The third sector is ideally placed to deliver on prevention. Examples include Barnardo’s ‘You First’ initiative, which delivers parenting sessions in Scotland’s most deprived communities.

13. The Christie Commission recommendation that: ‘public services are built around people and communities’ has particular resonance with community-led regeneration and the assets-based approach. The key messages from this recommendation fit well with the community-led approach to regeneration and recognise that the ‘essential authority of people and communities is acknowledged\(^7\)’. Funding initiatives need to recognise the value in these approaches and build on the strengths and capacities in communities, rather than adopting the usual deficit approach which has failed to tackle persistent problems.

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\(^4\) [http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/community/pcf/awards](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/community/pcf/awards)


\(^6\) [http://www.cassiltountrust.org.uk/facilities.htm](http://www.cassiltountrust.org.uk/facilities.htm)

\(^7\) [http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/27154527/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/27154527/0)
14. In addition to the Christie Commission, the regeneration strategy must also dovetail with other policy agendas. The Community Empowerment Bill, the Procurement Reform Bill, the Integration of Health and Social Care and the Land Reform Review, amongst others, will all have a role to play in regenerating communities.

15. The Community Empowerment & Renewal Bill (CERB) will be particularly important. If it can provide the tools for communities to take greater control of their affairs it could have a significant and positive impact on regeneration. However, the CERB will not be in place until the end of 2013 at the earliest, and we would not wish to see efforts put on pause in anticipation of new legislation. The principles of community empowerment should be adopted now with the existing powers and resources used to best effect.

16. The Procurement Reform Bill has a vital role to play in regeneration by improving the current system to make public procurement more accessible to community organisations. Prioritising collaborative approaches, such as consortia and recognising the added value delivered by third sector organisations working in partnership with each other and with other sectors, is vital. These reforms would help stimulate and benefit local economies and third sector organisations, in addition to helping deliver a range of social/environmental outcomes. This could include exercising community benefit clauses targeted to tackle local issues.

17. Thought also needs to be given to widening out approaches into areas such as self-directed support. Community-based preventative approaches naturally lend themselves to stimulating local economies and wider development. Community hubs, such as Community Care Assynt, a community-owned project which delivers lunch clubs, access to the internet, community transport, physical aids, healthy eating and laundry services, play a role in regeneration by providing a local anchor and source of knowledge, advice and mutual support.

Regeneration and sustainable economic development

18. SCVO are keen to support a shift in the public debate to making the economy and economic development more meaningful for people, communities and their environment. Spending solely designed to increase economic growth can have seriously negative social, environmental and even economic consequences.

19. Rather than aligning spending decisions and policy priorities with the purpose of achieving sustainable economic growth, we would seek to align decisions with outcomes that will deliver greater social, environmental and economic benefit to people. Oxfam’s Humankind index⁸ would be a good place to start in this regard.

20. Regeneration activity has a key role to play in this by setting priorities which better reflect the needs of people and communities. The role played by the third sector in economic development should also be recognised and supported. Many

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third sector organisations play a significant role in economic development and bring added value through volunteering and other forms of social capital.

**Community-led regeneration and CPPs**

21. As stated above, it is our view that provided regeneration is genuinely community led and delivered it can be very successful in transforming communities. However, the decisions must be taken at the community level. CPPs can often be inaccessible to communities, so they should focus on fulfilling a supporting role and helping to remove barriers by providing resources and expertise. Communities and third sector organisations working on regeneration initiatives must have the opportunity to contribute to the development of SOAs to ensure the right outcomes are prioritised and rooted in community needs.

**Regeneration and climate change targets**

22. Community renewable schemes are already contributing towards climate change targets as well as providing much needed finance for community-led regeneration. Initiatives such as the Fintry Development Trust show how ownership of community renewables can contribute to an area’s regeneration through a variety of carbon reduction techniques, home improvements and other projects which tackle fuel poverty. Further support is required to encourage more of these projects and find ways of ensuring urban communities also have the opportunity to benefit from renewable schemes.

**Conclusion**

23. SCVO favours a broad definition of regeneration which accounts for the different approaches required to meet community identified priorities. Adopting asset-based approaches which utilise the strengths in communities will be vital to achieving regeneration that is successful and sustainable. To encourage more community-led regeneration activity, funding programmes will need to be broad enough in scope to account for the diversity of community priorities.

SCVO  
1 October 2012

**References**

*Scottish Voluntary Sector Statistics 2010, SCVO*  