SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

Scottish Community Alliance
The Scottish Community Alliance is a coalition of Scotland’s community led networks and umbrella bodies. These networks extend their reach into communities the length and breadth of the country and are involved in a vast array of activities which touch on virtually every aspect of community life – for example social housing, health, horticulture, land management, arts and culture, community banking and renewable energy. While many of these networks have specific areas of interest and offer specialised support to their members, what they all have in common is a shared commitment to enhanced levels of empowerment for Scotland’s communities. This is the overarching theme which defines the work of the Scottish Community Alliance and which draws its membership together.

The national networks that are currently members are:

Evidence submitted is on the area of regeneration policy

Regeneration – what does it mean?

Definitions

1. The term ‘regeneration’ has traditionally held connotations of renewal and of reviving the health and vibrancy of an area. For a community to be the subject of regeneration, it implies that some form of social/economic disadvantage has befallen the area and that this needs to be resolved. In this context, regeneration is generally regarded as a ‘fixing’ tool of the public sector (with private sector support) and as such a mechanism to deliver top-down investment into disadvantaged areas.

2. During the property boom years, ‘regeneration’ evolved into a multi-billion pound industry across the UK. The model was predominantly a mix of public and private sector investment in the physical and built environment and was predicated on an assumption that regeneration benefits would ‘trickle down’ into the associated disadvantaged communities through a mixture of jobs, training, improved environment, housing etc.

The evolution of community -led regeneration
3. On the fringes of this mainstream regeneration activity, and in response to a perception on the part of communities that 'regeneration' was failing to deliver real and lasting change at a local level, a relatively large and but ad hoc movement of community led initiatives was evolving. Central to this was a growing understanding of the significance of communities owning and developing their own assets and generating new income streams that were independent of the state. These community led initiatives – led by local anchor organisations such as community based housing associations or community development trusts – have, over many years, addressed a wide range of local issues which are determined, in the main, by local people. Because the traditional top down approach to regeneration has been characterised by a succession of relatively short term, project based programmes of investment, these community led initiatives would consider themselves as being markedly different in the sense that they think of themselves as being 'for the long haul'.

4. Historically, there is a view that community led regeneration has evolved in response to a form of market failure – whereby either the private sector has been unable to make sufficient profits from a given activity or the public sector has been unwilling or unable to prioritise the necessary resources to deliver the service. This implies that in an ideal world (where the public and private sector serve all our needs) the citizen becomes an entirely passive consumer of services. However, in recent years this thinking has been challenged as more and more evidence comes to the fore which concludes that when local people become actively involved, the outcomes are consistently better.

**Double whammy**

5. Notwithstanding that much of the independent research and evaluation that has been carried out to assess the effectiveness of previous regeneration strategies has concluded that only limited success has been achieved in terms of meeting the desired outcomes, the regeneration industry has been hit recently by a double whammy – falling land values and deep cuts to public spending for the foreseeable future. These two factors, even if the research conclusions of the past 25 years of regeneration experience were to be disregarded, have determined that the status quo is simply no longer an option. The new focus of attention as set out in the new regeneration strategy Achieving Sustainable Places - has switched to the one area that has shown a much greater degree of success and durability over the years – community led regeneration.

**Recognising achievement**

6. There are many examples of where community led regeneration has transformed the fortunes of an area. A growing band of community landowners, development trusts, community woodland groups, locally controlled housing associations and other community based organisations are demonstrating that, given the right conditions, local community organisations are capable of achieving remarkable things, and in the course of it, are demonstrating a great deal of responsibility, enterprise and initiative. However, our experience has been that many people have great difficulty, until they see it at first hand, in being able to fully grasp the scale of achievements and the kind of issues that communities are capable of
tackling. People who learn of what is happening are, for the most part, genuinely surprised and highly impressed by what they discover as they find their preconceptions of the community sector being fundamentally challenged. It would appear that at a societal and governmental level, we do not have a widely held belief that communities can deliver large and complex projects and can display consistently high levels of competence. It is as if society would rather associate ‘community’ with the small scale, the marginal and tending towards the amateur. Yet recent experience wholly contradicts this and it is time that this began to inform a new policy approach which positively seeks out greater community involvement – not just in regeneration but in the delivery of public services and in growing the base levels of community resilience in the face of multiple future uncertainties (in terms of issues such as energy security, food security, global economic instabilities and the wider impacts of climate change)

The state – as an enabler of communities

7. This requires a fundamental shift in approach and in the style of intervention on the part of public sector bodies in particular. Whereas in the past, the state has played an enabling role to encourage private sector involvement in regeneration by investing in large scale infrastructure projects and in pump-priming investment opportunities, the state now has to consider a different type of enabling role for itself – one which is able to stimulate a whole new wave of community led regeneration activity.

The regeneration strategy, resources and funding

Funding contradiction

8. With the exception of People and Communities Fund, all funding streams that have been listed tend to reflect a top down model of regeneration that the strategy, Achieving Sustainable Places, indicates we should be moving away from. The People and Communities Fund was conceived of as a fund to support bottom up regeneration and as a source of investment for community anchor organisations. Disappointingly, at an early stage the Scottish Government chose to prescribe which areas of activity the fund would be targeted at – employability and preventative action – rather than allowing communities to determine for themselves what their own priorities should be – thus defeating the very principle of bottom up regeneration and self-determination that the fund aspires to support.

The need to build capacity

9. A fundamental gap in the funding landscape is the provision of effective support for capacity building for those communities that have neither the skills nor experience that would allow them to fully engage in the process of shaping their own futures. Currently the main resource that is available to meet this need sits within the CLD teams of local authorities. For whatever reason, community capacity building has been the least effective of the three functions of CLD (youth work, adult education being the other two) and, as things stand, it is clearly not fit for purpose in terms of meeting the demands from within the sector. It is our
contention that there is an untapped level of knowledge and expertise within the
community sector itself that this has been developed at the ‘coalface’ of
community led regeneration. It is this resource that we should be investing in in
order to build the capacity of other communities across Scotland. (SEE
APPENDIX 1)

Regeneration, equalities and preventative spending

Implications of Christie will be costly in time and money

10. The thrust of the Christie Review and the whole preventative spend agenda
assumes that within most communities there will be both an appetite and
enthusiasm to take on greater responsibility and a level of organisation with the
capacity which is required to do so. Clearly this is not always the case but where
high functioning community anchor organisations are present, an opportunity
exists to build dialogue and begin the process of discussing the transfer of some
of these functions to a local level. However more broadly, there is currently very
little understanding or acceptance within the general population for the need for
such radical reform of public services. Where no anchor organisation exists the
process is going to be much slower. While this may in the long run achieve far
better outcomes than are currently being delivered, it would be a mistake to
underestimate the amount of time and the cost of managing this transfer of
responsibility. Neither commodity (time and money) are likely to be in plentiful
supply in the coming years.

Not just money

11. A prerequisite for all this to occur is that a step change that needs to take place in
the quality of relationships that exist between a wide range of public sector and
third sector bodies that operate at a local level, in the levels of trust and in the
mutual expectation of roles and responsibilities, and in the systems that shape
these relationships such as public procurement practices.

12. One of the main challenges for public services has been to reach the ‘hardest to
reach’ parts of society and these are often the most vulnerable sections of
society. The subtle and diverse networks, both formal and informal, that operate
across all communities, represent a rich source of knowledge and expertise that
could and should be utilised much more effectively in order to reach the most
vulnerable. For this to happen, these networks need to be valued and recognised
for the access that they can provide and for the impact they can have in terms of
accentuating the impact of public services.

Regeneration and sustainable economic development

The role of community wealth

13. The Government is beginning to recognise the key contribution that community
ownership of land and others types of asset class can make to the local
regeneration process. The Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill will
hopefully go a long way to strengthening the position of communities as they look
to make further progress. While assets strengthen the balance sheet position of communities, of even greater importance is the ability to manage these assets in such a way that independent streams of income can be generated. The experience of the Community Ownership Support Service at DTAS suggests that a major impediment to more effective and larger scale transfers of public asset to communities, apart from those alluded to elsewhere in this response) are the broad interpretation of the rules contained in the Public Finance Manual and of the rules as they apply to state aid.

14. The one really significant opportunity to transform the economic fortunes of the community sector and by implication the stimulation of economic growth, relates to the potential benefits to be derived from the development of renewable energy. Currently the community sector is living off the crumbs from the table that the private sector is feasting at. This window of opportunity that exists will not be open for much longer and unless a radical shift in policy takes place very shortly (for instance, where community ownership becomes a built-in requirement of every renewable energy project) this once in a life time opportunity will be lost.

Community led regeneration and CPPs

Change the role of CCPs

15. Community Planning Partnerships have become effective mechanisms for high level, inter-agency service co-ordination and delivery. However they have fallen way short of their original aspiration that communities should be at the ‘heart of the process’. A huge amount of energy and resource has been applied to the task of trying to turn that aspiration into a reality but with very little success. In our opinion, a line should be drawn under this aspiration and instead the CCP could begin to define a new role for itself as the enabling state (as described above) with a local frame of reference.

Joined up funding streams

16. One of the principles that sits behind Community Planning is that it should result in much greater integration of effort. This idea of being more joined up needs to permeate the funding silos that sit within government and other government-directed agencies such as the Lottery. This is because one of the main barriers to much greater levels of community led regeneration is the presence of a fundamental disconnect between the different funding streams and the way that they are distributed and the rhetoric of working towards commonly agreed, joined up outcomes.

Regeneration and climate change targets

17. Across the community sector, the climate change and local sustainability agenda has transfused the work agendas of many networks and intermediaries. It would help to consolidate these links if the funding of work to reduce carbon emissions, for instance, was part of a wider pot of funding to support community led regeneration.
Appendix 1

Investing in community-led regeneration

Background

The Scottish Government acknowledges that current approaches to regeneration have either failed to deliver the desired outcomes or are now severely impaired due to the fundamentally changed economic circumstances within which regeneration has to take place. Despite the substantial sums that have been invested in a variety of regeneration initiatives over a sustained period of time, the key indicators of social and economic disadvantage that triggered this investment in the first place have shown little signs of improvement.

The conclusion to be drawn from the evidence of the past thirty years is that top down, physical regeneration does not, of itself, create long term and sustainable solutions. The underlying assumption appears to be that it is the job of government, both national and local government working together, to resolve the complex sets of challenges facing our most disadvantaged communities. It is this assumption that now needs to be laid to rest if the challenge of how to deliver community-led regeneration is to be met.

What is community-led regeneration?

Community-led regeneration means that the emphasis in the shape and direction of the regeneration process shifts from being determined principally by external stakeholders (local government, public agencies) to being determined principally by internal stakeholders (local people). Regeneration strategies in the past have typically incorporated some degree of community involvement with the aim of providing local people with an opportunity to feed into the process and to have their voices heard. Essentially, the role of the community in previous regeneration strategies has been consultative and passive. Community-led regeneration demands a much more proactive contribution from the local community and as such it is not necessarily an approach that will suit all communities.

Community-led regeneration can take many different forms and these will be determined by local context. However, where community led regeneration occurs a number of features are likely to be observable in each instance:

- one or more local organisations playing the role, or with the potential to play the role, of a community anchor (providing a degree of local leadership and offering support to less formal types of community activity)
- significant assets under community ownership or control
- community owned enterprises generating an income stream
- a locally conceived community plan or ‘charter’ which identifies the short, medium and long term priorities for action as determined by local people
a level of engagement with external stakeholders which reflects a sense of genuine partnership and mutual respect

an absence of top down, unilateral public sector-driven initiatives

Community led regeneration requires significant culture change on all sides. Communities need to realise that the public sector is no longer in a position to meet all of their needs or to ‘resolve’ many of the problems that they face. Public sector agencies need to realise it is neither appropriate nor realistic for them to imagine they should seek to be doing this. In essence, community-led regeneration requires the relationship between the state and communities to be recalibrated so that there is a much greater sense of mutual respect and equality of status.

Existing models of community-led regeneration

Examples of community led regeneration can be found in many different parts of the country – from the island based community buy outs where local people have assumed control over virtually every aspect of community life (Isle of Eigg, Isle of Gigha, South Uist) to more urban communities where various combinations of development trusts and community based housing associations have acquired control and ownership over a wide range of assets and enterprises and where local people are now instrumental in shaping their own futures (Renton, Neilston, Easterhouse). While all these communities are prime examples of community led regeneration they all share a story in common which describes many years of struggle in order to get to the stage of development that they are now at. In particular, all the community leaders involved would, in part at least, ascribe that struggle to varying degrees of opposition encountered from across a range of external stakeholders. While there may be some merit in the argument that the process of engaging in a struggle of some sort can forge a deeper level of commitment in the long term, the fact remains that community led regeneration has evolved as it has in spite of the attitude and behaviour encountered from external stakeholders – rather than because of them.

Successful community led regeneration should not be as difficult to achieve or as costly in human terms as it has proved to be in many cases. Nor should the whereabouts of the successful examples be as randomly haphazard and dependent on the fortuitous presence of key individuals or local circumstances. If the new regeneration strategy places an emphasis on community led regeneration, it will be essential that a more systematic and strategic means of achieving this is identified which can also reduce the length of time that the process takes.

Proposal – Investing in community-led regeneration

If the Scottish Government is committed to a regeneration strategy which is community led, then investment will be required to bring this about. Several existing policy initiatives are geared towards communities taking on more responsibility and control over what happens at a local level:
• **Encouraging the transfer of public assets into community ownership**
  - SG investment in the new DTAS service to support community ownership
  - Commitment to legislate to make it easier for communities to access under used public assets (Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill)

• **Renewable energy roadmap**
  - New target for community owned renewable energy of 550 mw by 2020

• **Christie Commission – Future Delivery of Public Services**
  - Focus on communities – the need to build autonomy and reliance
  - Focus on prevention – enhanced role for community transport providers, and others???

• **Zero Waste Scotland**
  - Targets for community recycling and reuse

• **Others policy links** -
  - **Food and Drink** - community horticulture, allotments, local food
  - **Greenspace development** – community woodland
  - **Land Reform** – current review
  - **Financial inclusion** – expansion of credit unions

However, the successful implementation of all or any of these policies is contingent on communities having a sufficient level of capacity and local organisation in order to respond. As argued elsewhere in this paper, experience tells us that the required levels of capacity do not necessarily exist in every community – indeed in the areas of most severe disadvantage and where the regeneration challenges are greatest, the required levels of local capacity and organisation are less likely to be present.

**Proposal has two key components**
  - Direct investment in communities
  - Training and development

**Direct investment in communities** that have been designated with priority status for regeneration. The investment would be used to cover the cost of engaging a local organiser in each community over a 24 month period (first cohort of 15 in year one, a second cohort of 15 in year two, a third cohort in year three and so on). For each targeted community, the key criteria in the selection process would be the presence of a locally run group (or network of local groups) which has the potential to develop into a fully functioning anchor organisation. Local organisers would ideally be employed locally but with the option of being employed centrally by Development Trusts Association Scotland and thereafter seconded to a local host organisation as and when appropriate. The experience of the Powerdown Consortium, supported by Community Energy Scotland and DTAS but led by community groups has some useful lessons to offer in terms of the value of networking, mutual support and the knowledge and skills exchange that occurred between the participating communities.
The principle functions of the local organisers would be:

- to listen widely to local people and to help them have conversations which lead to local people taking action to benefit their lives and their communities
- to develop and support networks of local volunteers who become involved in listening, research, planning and taking action in their communities
- to provide support to local activists in creating projects and enterprises which provide solutions to the problems that individuals, communities and wider society face
- mediating with external stakeholders from the political, public and business sectors to facilitate effective working relationships that support their communities
- to recruit and support local activists to take positions of responsibility within the governance of the local anchor organisations
- to support the development of a localised community planning process which engages with a wide range of local interests and external stakeholders and ultimately leads to a comprehensive statement of local priorities

The proposal is that local organisers would be local residents and it is unlikely that these individuals will have had previous experience of being in a role such as this. However it may be useful if they were to have some of the following skills or experience: knowledge of the community itself, community activism, community enterprise, working with groups, campaigning, negotiation, project planning, social/market research, fundraising.

It is proposed that the responsibility for developing the programme of training and support for the local organisers would be subcontracted to a national provider.

**Training for local organisers**

The first year would consist primarily of an experiential learning programme during which the local organisers will develop their skills and expertise. The training programme would commence with a three day residential experience during which local organisers will have an opportunity to get a much deeper understanding of their role and the methodologies to be used. Thereafter the organisers will return to their communities to begin putting their learning into practice. There will be regular opportunities for further reflection and development via distance/e-learning sessions, mentoring and peer support. In the second year, organisers will be able to pursue learning at a deeper level with options such as community business development, renewable energy, transport, land management, recycling etc depending on the specific needs and priorities identified locally in their respective communities.

Each local organiser will receive annual payment of £22,000 and carry a budget of £3000 as a management fee to the host organisation and £5000 training budget.
Draft Budget submission to LGR Committee

**Year 1**
450,000 Local organiser direct costs
50,000 Management costs
500,000

**Year 2**
900,000 Local organiser direct costs
75,000 Management cost
975,000

**Year 3**
900,000 Local organiser direct costs
75,000 Management cost
975,000