SUBMISSION FROM WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL

What does ‘regeneration’ mean in your area?

1. West Lothian Council broadly welcomes the Scottish Government’s Regeneration Strategy – *Achieving a Sustainable Future* and is currently considering how a West Lothian Regeneration Strategy can be developed.

2. West Lothian Council also welcomes the recognition in the Regeneration Strategy that whilst the regeneration vision and associated supporting outcomes apply to all of Scotland’s communities, some communities and people need additional support in order to become economically, physically and socially sustainable. It specifically mentions places in need of physical renewal, town centres and communities where there are significant issues across a range of social and economic indicators and we welcome that.

3. Regeneration in West Lothian, as across Scotland, has a number of intertwined strands. These include :-

   - Improving the life chances of residents in the areas of greatest need; broadly defined as those living in the worst 20% of data zones in West Lothian
   - Improving the environment and sustainability of towns and villages most affected by de-industrialisation and societal change, particularly the former mining communities in the west of the county
   - Planning for future population growth through the identification and master planning of Core Development Areas and other significant sites

4. Success would be thriving communities across West Lothian with significantly reduced differences in life chances between those in the worst 20% and the average.

5. We believe that there are some good examples of successful regeneration in West Lothian albeit it on a relatively small scale. These include :-

   - Housing led regeneration of the Kirkhill area of Broxburn
   - Community led regeneration of the Craigshill area of Livingston
   - Partnership led regeneration of the former mining village of Fauldhouse
   - Development led regeneration of degraded land at the former Polkemmet Colliery in Whitburn.
6. We also believe that some good examples of community based regeneration work are currently happening in the Mayfield area of Armadale and Boghall area of Bathgate, both of which involve significant community input and activity. West Lothian Council and its Community Planning partners continue to engage with and support communities to address local challenges.

The regeneration strategy, resources and funding

7. West Lothian Council welcomes the allocation of resources through the SPRUCE loan fund, People and Communities Fund, Regeneration Capital Grant Fund, Vacant and Derelict Land Fund and Community Ownership Fund although West Lothian has not benefited from VLDF or URC funding. We are aware that some analyses indicate that the overall funding pot has reduced and this is obviously a concern.

8. West Lothian Council would support a portion of the Capital Grant Fund being allocated to town centre support from 2013-14, and welcomes the recently announced Town Centre review.

9. We appreciate that it may take some time to have all these funding streams up and running, and that there are currently discussions about the structure and disposition of some of the funds. We would generally welcome more rapid deployment of funds, and longer term commitment to them as opposed to one-off interventions with short application time-scales such as, for example, the Third Sector Enterprise Fund. The regeneration potential of other potential sources such as TIF (Tax Increment Financing) should be recognised particularly where it can be used to forward fund the infrastructure necessary to support large scale redevelopment. Funding streams such as this could be used to support innovative initiatives such as the council’s local infrastructure fund which is successfully forward funding infrastructure to support development and regeneration.

10. The Committee will be aware that the funding climate is particularly difficult for small to medium sized community and voluntary organisations that often play a vital role in our more disadvantaged communities, and we suggest consideration could be given to specific easier access low value funding for these.

Regeneration, equalities and preventative spending

11. West Lothian Council is extremely positive about early intervention and preventative spend, and generally supports the recommendations of the Christie commission. Given the strong link between poorer life chances and living in disadvantaged areas it seems obvious that spend on early years, parenting, nursery and primary schools would significantly improve life chances and reduce costs to the public sector. This rationale applies at a number of stages in peoples
lives and West Lothian Council has identified some key “life stages” groups requiring additional and targeted support. There are 3 main objectives for the Life Stages programme

- Reducing inequalities by targeting services at those most at risk
- Shifting resources ‘upstream’ and reinforcing a prevention approach
- Ensuring maximum impact from expenditure

12. We have identified specific priority groups within each life stage who require additional support, viz :-

- The Early Years Life stage’s target population is children under the age of 5 (and in particular those aged 0 – 3) who are living with a parent or carer with a substance misuse problem.

- The School Age Life Stage’s target population are children and young people at risk of failing to achieve their potential owing to serious adverse circumstances.

- The Young People in Transition Life Stage’s target population is young people between the ages of 14 to 25 in need of additional support to achieve positive transitions.

- The Adults of Working Age Life stage’s target population is adults aged 25 – 40 on a health related benefit and women returning to the job market. The long term outcome for this population is

- The Older People’s Life Stage’s target population is people over working age who are most at risk of poor health outcomes and low quality of life, particularly during times of transition.

13. Our early intervention and preventative spend budgets and activities respond to these.

14. The regeneration policy, and associated funding, has to have as a priority the targeting of resources to those whose life chances can be most improved through early interventions, and evidence indicates that this is most effective in areas of most disadvantage.

**Regeneration and sustainable economic development**

15. West Lothian has one of the youngest and fastest growing population in Scotland, and a significant driver resulting from this of this is the requirement for new housing, schools, leisure and recreational facilities across the county. These
are being provided both through Core Development Area on largely Greenfield sites in Armadale, Winchburgh and East Calder and in new developments on Brownfield sites in Bathgate (former British Leyland plant) and Whitburn (former Polkemmet colliery).

16. The downturn in the global, national and local economy has clearly stalled much development, but the council’s development strategy has continued to be successful albeit more slowly than initially hoped. Development is underway at the Armadale CDA and house building in the Winchburgh CDA will commence this month. Development at East Calder is expected to commence early in 2013... The local economy continues to develop and adapt, with new employment opportunities being created. The completion of the new Airdrie – Bathgate rail link significantly improves travel to the west of Scotland and has opened up employment and learning opportunities, but there remains some concern about the adequacy of public transport more generally in relation to getting people to workplaces.

Community led regeneration and CPPs

17. West Lothian Council and its Community Planning partners are strongly committed in supporting and involving communities in designing and delivering regeneration. We continue to support groups in disadvantaged areas through our Community Regeneration team, and Fairer Scotland Funding has supported the creation of a number of local organisations in disadvantaged areas who provide local support and a local voice and whom we continue to fund. The future sustainability of these groups remains precarious given the modest levels of funding they receive, and whilst funding for additional project work is available and welcome this does not necessarily support the sustainability of these small organisations.

18. In a number of areas there are multi-disciplinary, multi-partner groups involved in regeneration and related activity and our sense is that partners are involved at appropriate level. The West Lothian Community Safety Joint Tasking approach has led to multi-partner “weeks of action” in target areas which have been greatly welcomed by local residents.

Regeneration and climate change targets

19. Regeneration provides the opportunity to improve the physical fabric and energy efficiency of buildings, including both new build and refurbished, thus reducing carbon use and emissions. Fauldhouse Community Development Trust recently employed someone to undertake initial energy checks of local homes for tenants and residents, advising them of improvements that could be made and linking them to local and national insulation and energy efficiency schemes.
20. We believe there are potential opportunities linked to engagement with active communities including bulk purchasing of energy, community ownership of renewable and other initiatives which could be supported through avenues such as the Climate Challenge Fund.

21. There are also potential opportunities for new initiatives around district heating systems.

22. There is a West Lothian Development Fund which distributes contributions from wind farm developments to local groups.

West Lothian Council