Local Government and Regeneration Committee

Delivery of Regeneration in Scotland Inquiry
Introduction and Background

Our communities are at the heart of Scottish life, and healthy and vibrant communities are central to improving the lives of the people of Scotland. In early 2013 the Local Government and Regeneration Committee began examining how national and local government and the wider public sector can work together more effectively to involve, regenerate and strengthen communities.

Regeneration is not new. Activity can be traced back to Roman times and is usually initiated by the State or local landowners. Regeneration, in our view, is generally “done to people”.

Regeneration is about people, and the Scottish Government’s regeneration strategy is aimed at reducing poverty, inequality and decline with a clear focus on people in the most disadvantaged areas.

Our inquiry, like the Scottish Government’s strategy, has a specific focus on the community angle of regeneration. We wanted to ascertain how regeneration activity is tackling and reducing poverty, decline and inequality of opportunity in areas of disadvantage and improving outcomes for those communities.
Throughout this inquiry invaluable evidence and fact finding visits have greatly informed our findings. We thank all those individuals who took the time to talk to us and contribute their views and experiences.

If our report has an overriding message it is that regeneration must involve the people from these communities, in design of activity through to delivery. Regeneration will only be effective if it is “done by people”, not to them.

We are clear that all partners are not placing enough emphasis on true community participation in regeneration activity, particularly in the design stage; and must place the community at the heart of decision making throughout.
Approach

Our inquiry sought to identify and examine best practice and limitations in relation to the delivery of regeneration in Scotland.

We saw this inquiry as a natural follow on from our work on public services reform, to ascertain how central and local government was co-ordinating its regeneration activities, and the extent to which actions are being driven with the involvement of people.

Our inquiry was launched during a fact finding visit in Cumbernauld on 15 January 2013 and we issued a call for evidence, which ultimately received 80 submissions.

We held six formal evidence sessions and undertook five fact finding visits. During each visit we observed local regeneration projects and spoke to members of the community in small round table groups.
Key Quotes

“Regeneration cannot be achieved overnight”
Dundee City Council

“Regeneration is about poverty, at the end of the day.”
SCDC and Community Health Exchange

“The voice of the people is integral to good governance.”

“place communities at the core”

“capacity can be built from within communities.”
Scottish Communities Alliance

“In the future, power will be as close as possible to those who will be affected by the decisions”
Margaret Burgess Minister for Housing and Welfare
Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

1. We see regeneration not as a ‘strategy’ or policy as such, but more a vision delivered through a focus of effort and strategic approach across all public policy areas to reducing deprivation, inequality and long term decline.

2. The successful delivery of the regeneration strategy is completely dependent on implementation of Christie Commission principles and effective public services reform-at a national and local level, notably: better partnerships and joined up working, a focus on prevention and reducing long term social and economic inequalities, alongside much greater community participation in public service design and delivery.
3. There is not a `one size fits all’ approach to tackling deprivation and inequality in Scotland. The Scottish Government’s regeneration strategy provides a `flexible framework’, and places the emphasis on local partners to determine and deliver the most appropriate models of co-operation and collaboration in regeneration activity.

4. However, we believe there is still progress to be made in embedding or `mainstreaming’ this community-led regeneration vision at both a national and local level.

5. The strategy rightly states there needs to be a strong focus on community led regeneration and community participation. The definition of regeneration in the strategy should focus not on ‘place’, but on the people within it. The strategy must also provide leadership or guidance on how community empowerment and sustainable community led approaches could be built into all related mainstream Scottish Government policy.
6. However, due to the broad nature of regeneration policy, many decisions about how and what to do to support the delivery of regeneration are best made locally, by those most closely engaged with their communities.

Community Partnership

7. We are clear communities do not yet feel that they are being placed at the heart of decision making by public partners, or are involved in the process timeously when it comes to regeneration activity, whatever that activity may be. They feel regeneration is done to them.

8. Strengthening communities’ role in the determination, design and delivery of public services can significantly contribute to public services reform and delivering regeneration in Scotland.
9. True community ownership and participation in public service delivery and regeneration activity relies heavily on building community capacity through: sharing of assets, best practice, good ideas, knowledge, information and expertise, as well as sufficient resources. That is effective partnership working across all relevant stakeholders, with communities playing a pivotal role.

10. However, nobody seems responsible for general oversight, co-ordination of activity, sharing of best practice and determination of impact across Scotland as a whole.

11. A strategic overview and leadership needs to be provided to all local authorities and Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs), to further support joined up, integrated approaches, and to ensure community ownership and participation is at the heart of local policy.

12. The National Community Planning Group (NCPG) should play a significant leadership role in ensuring the vision of the regeneration strategy is delivered across Scotland, that associated outcomes are embedded into mainstream local delivery and further develop a joined up approach, overseeing implementation of the strategy’s vision.
13. For regeneration to be truly community led, local authorities, CPPs and others need to give their confidence and resources to community groups, support risk taking and accept some failure.

**Regeneration Funding**

14. Due to the complex nature of delivering regeneration, the funding landscape is also unclear to communities and many other stakeholders.

15. Consideration should be given to the balance of funds supporting regeneration, and the models used to deliver that funding, across physical, economic and social regeneration activities, to ensure they are aligned and designed to best support community led regeneration.
16. Allocation of public expenditure should be reviewed to direct more of it to disadvantaged areas.

17. Longer term funding provides much greater stability to community projects, allowing them to establish sustainable income streams, making long term success much more likely.

18. The introduction of the Scottish Governments People and Communities Fund (PCF) is a signal of a greater focus of resource on community led regeneration. Oversubscription of the fund within three months is a sign of its success, but we also see this as a potential opportunity lost and it is clear more revenue funding for communities is required.

19. Eligibility criteria for awarding the PCF should be reviewed to ensure it does not encourage a `top down’ approach and provides as much flexibility for communities to use this funding stream to determine and deliver their own regeneration outcomes and activities.
20. The PCF should focus funding on grassroots community organisations. At a local level, partners should consider finding ways to transfer more core revenue funding to directly support community organisations, with as much flexibility as possible to use this funding as they see fit.

Anchor Organisations

21. The crucial role that community anchor organisations play in delivering ‘grassroots’ regeneration requires sufficient revenue support.

22. Any organisation that works in and with the community should be considered as an ‘anchor’.

23. Housing associations have substantial resources, together with a large workforce and evidence indicated they carry out valuable roles in relation to regeneration, particularly around people rather than property.
Housing associations have an appetite for more regeneration activity of this nature. There should be discussion and agreement with the housing association movement on a definition of wider roles and responsibilities appropriate for them to take up.

24. We also encourage the private sector to get involved with their local communities. Public partners should find ways of supporting the community to build links with private companies, to create a stronger and more cohesive link between physical, economic and social, community-led regeneration.

Support for Communities

25. We believe community ownership leads to more sustainable positive long term outcomes; however, more important than control of and responsibility for physical public assets are the resources necessary to establish and then sustain the activity within them.

26. All local authorities should have dedicated community officer posts to support community led projects.
27. Local authorities, health trusts, housing associations and other organisations should be encouraged to second staff to provide direct support and assistance to community projects.

28. Buildings for the use of community groups are in short supply. We believe more could be done across all partners to maximise use of existing public assets. In particular, the Scottish Government, COSLA and the NCPG should work to allow the use of schools, at an affordable cost, by community groups.

29. Direct support and resource is needed to build community capacity, particularly in communities facing poverty, inequality and deprivation. Direct support is a hugely beneficial preventative action and we welcome any strengthening of financial support for community capacity building.
30. The Scottish Government’s regeneration funding information portal should be extended to all sources of regeneration funding and act as a one-stop-shop for communities on regeneration resource.

Learning and Reporting

31. There should be a clearer link between national regeneration outcomes of reducing inequality, deprivation and poverty across Scotland and the Scottish Government’s regeneration “outcomes framework” in Single Outcome Agreements. The Scottish Government should report bi-annually on progress in delivering its regeneration outcomes.

32. Appropriate levels of scrutiny and accountability should be in place for CPPs, in monitoring their cumulative and individual contribution to the outcomes of the Scottish Governments regeneration strategy.

33. We note the need for further improvement in CPP performance which can be supported by a stronger legislative framework for all CPP partners. As part of the statutory duties, CPPs should demonstrate the amount of community participation and engagement that is taking place and what the impact has been.
34. The NCPG should take the lead to require the roll out of best practice of successful community-led projects to similar communities, so that success is spread across the country.

Community Empowerment Bill

35. In terms of its aims to enshrine community empowerment in legislation and strengthen the communities’ role in decision making, we welcome the general thrust of proposals set out in the Scottish Government’s draft Community Empowerment Bill and consultation.

36. We welcome steps to empower communities to own their public assets, as we believe community ownership leads to more sustainable, positive, long term outcomes. We look forward to considering detailed arrangements around asset transfer in the Community Empowerment Bill and anticipate that the Bill will allow flexibility for local authorities to set asset prices at other than market value where appropriate.
37. We agree with the principle that a legislative framework for CPPs is required and believe duties placed on all CPP statutory partners is absolutely essential to ensure that roles and responsibilities in partnerships are clear.

38. We will consider further whether true community participation in decision making processes would be better served by requiring local authorities/CPPs to involve or seek to involve such community bodies, rather than the onus placed on communities to have to apply. We are minded to support an ‘opt-out’ rather than opt-in’ approach. It will be for the Scottish Government to consider the practicalities of such an approach before introducing their Community Empowerment Bill.
What happens next?

The Scottish Government will respond in writing to the Committee’s report. The Committee will consider that response and decide what further work is required. The Committee expects to scrutinise the Community Empowerment Bill later this year.

This is a summary and edited version of the full report, which can be accessed at

www.scottish.parliament.uk/regeneration-inquiry
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