

Cross-Party Group on Towns and Town Centres

Wednesday 7th September 2022, 12.45 -13.45

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Neil Bibby MSP
Siobhian Brown MSP
Stephanie Callaghan MSP
Fiona Hyslop MSP

Invited guests

Katherine Brown	Blachere Illumination
Claire Daly	Sustrans
Phil Prentice	Scotland's Towns Partnership
Dr Emilie Wadsworth	Green Action Trust
Caroline Warburton	Visit Scotland

Non-MSP Group Members

Monica Allen	Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire
Rob Arthur	Paguro Ideas
Heather Ashworth	Keep Scotland Beautiful
Alison Baisden	Historic Environment Scotland
David Barbour	Scottish Community Safety Network
Chris Bateman	North Lanarkshire Council
Jacqueline Bell	
Ronald Beveridge	
Elaine Bone	Scotland's Towns Partnership
Rhona Brown	Scotland's Towns Partnership
Hollie Bruce	Scotland's Towns Partnership
Chris Churms	Dumfries and Galloway Council
Trish Connolly	Scottish Borders Council
Gemma Cruickshank	Visit Moray Speyside
Jim Densham	Cycling UK
John Doig	Dumfries and Galloway Council
Louise Dunn	Moray Council

Victoria Eccles	South Lanarkshire Council
Ewan Eccleston	Glasgow City Council
Todd Ferguson	Scottish Parliament
Graeme Finlay	Clackmannanshire Council
Doug Flett	ICCC
John Forbes	Communities Housing Trust
Luke Fraser	Aspire Orkney
David Gear	East Dunbartonshire Council
Linda Gillespie	Development Trusts Association Scotland
Leonard Gray	
Kimberley Guthrie	Scotland's Towns Partnership
Laura Hainey	Architecture and Design Scotland
Ainsley Hunter	Prestwick Business Association
Nicola Hutchinson	Scotland's Towns Partnership
Tony l'Anson	Milngavie BID
Alison Jones	Scotland's Towns Partnership
Marcelina Lekawska	The Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council
Scott Mackay	Midsteeples Quarter
Ian Malcolm	East Lothian Climate Action Network
Richard Marsh	4-consulting
Geraldine Masrour	Motherwell Shopping Centre
Debbi McCall	Scottish Parliament
Ojay McDonald	ATCM
Jane McGeary	Loch Lomond and Trossachs
Jain McIntyre	Lodestone Creative
Katey McKay	Angus Council
John McLaughlin	NewRiver REIT Ltd
Sheila McWhirter	Scottish Government Regeneration Strategy Team
Caroline Mitchell	Scotland's Towns Partnership
Simon Montgomery	Historic Environment Scotland
Hannah Moore	Visit West End BID
Peter Noad	Scottish Enterprise
Rachel Nunn	Scottish Parliament
Martin Ogden	MDCC
Carole Racionzer	Linlithgow Trust
Rhiannon-Jane Raftery	
Derek Rankine	SURF
Debbie Robertson	Aberdeenshire Council
Juan Pablo Rodriguez	The Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council
Colin Andrew Ross	Colin Ross Workshop
Mark Rowley	South of Scotland Enterprise
Euan Ryan	RICS
Maria Rybaczewska	Stirling University
Kate Samuels	Cycling Scotland

Laura Scott-Simmons	Benton Scott-Simmons
Nikita Shah	East Dunbartonshire Council
Saskia Singer	Narture
Stephen Smith	Aberdeenshire Council
Tom Sneddon	Development Trust Association Scotland
Prof Leigh Sparks	Scotland's Towns Partnership
Richard Todd	East Dunbartonshire Council
Nicola Tomkinson	
Draeyk van der Horn	Moray Council
Anna Watkiss	Argyll & Bute Council
Cheryl Williamson	South Lanarkshire Council
Robert Wills	Perth & Kinross Council
Derek Wilson	
Janice Worthing	Inverness City Centre BID

Apologies

Ed Archer	
Sophie Eastwood	Green Action Trust
Nicola Hill	Dumfries and Galloway Council
Calum Lindsay	COSLA
David Lonsdale	Scottish Retail Consortium
Hanna Lundtrom	East Lothian Council
Gowan Miller	SSDA
James Trolland	Sustainable Dunbar
Sunil Varu	Fife Council
Stephen Vere	Scottish Futures Trust

Agenda item 1

Welcome and Opening Remarks– Siobhian Brown MSP

Convener Siobhian Brown MSP welcomed all to the meeting and noted MSP attendance and apologies. She noted the meeting would focus on Climate Emergency and Towns.

Agenda item 2

Minute of last meeting and Matters Arising – Siobhian Brown MSP, Convener
Minutes accepted. Proposed by P. Prentice and seconded by T. Sneddon. There were no matters arising.

Agenda item 3

AGM Business

- Siobhian Brown MSP, Convenor nominated by Neil Bibby MSP and seconded by Stephanie Callaghan MSP.

- Deputy Convenors Megan Gallacher MSP and Neil Bibby MSP nominated by Siobhan Brown MSP, seconded by Stephanie Callaghan MSP
- Secretary Alison Jones, STP nominated by Siobhian Brown MSP and seconded by Neil Bibby MSP
- Treasurer Elaine Bone, STP nominated by Siobhian Brown MSP and seconded by Neil Bibby MSP

The CPG's annual report is to be submitted to the Scottish Parliament following this meeting outlining the previous year's topics. These included Culture and Place, Community Wealth Building and Towns, Towns Beyond Retail. The forward plan being to support the CPG secretariat with attendees encouraged to submit any topic ideas to the secretary or treasurer.

Agenda item 4

Overview: Phil Prentice, Chief Officer, Scotland's Towns Partnership.

PP introduced today's theme, Climate Emergency and Towns. Towns were originally designed to be ecotowns in Scotland and we need to move swiftly towards delivering on climate action using our towns as vehicles to help with this. The New Future for Scotland's Towns Report and the joint Scottish Government and COSLA response clearly outlines the need for more action around climate, energy and sustainability for our towns. We must think about net zero housing, active travel, the green agenda and in so doing, use the economic, social and environmental infrastructure of our towns to deliver the key outcomes around climate.

All presentation slides from today's contributors are available on the Scotland's Towns Partnership website with summary points below.

Agenda item 5

Delivering Environmental and Regeneration Outcomes for Scotland: Dr Emilie Wadsworth, Operations Director, Green Action Trust

The modus operandi of Green Action Trust is to use the environment to regenerate areas to deliver socio and economic benefits alongside this.

Example 1 provided from Copenhagen where regeneration of public realm does not have to be done with grey infrastructure. Following severe flooding in 2011, instead of simply improving drainage with underground pipes, Tasinge Square was completely regenerated – roads replaced by community green space creating social and economic benefits alongside.

Example 2 referred to the Oslo waterfront redevelopment. Since 2019, vacant derelict industrial land has been transformed to include social and affordable housing, green roofs, green walls, rain gardens and active travel links to both city centre and waterfront. This is one of many similar projects in the waterfront area.

Example 3 referred to the Greater Green Project in Sheffield and integrated active travel routes with rain gardens and other surface water measures reducing from dual to single carriageway.

Green infrastructure benefits include

- Climate mitigation and adaptation
- Flood mitigation, surface and storm water management
- Carbon sequestration
- Energy savings and improved building efficiency
- Water and air quality / pollution control
- Biodiversity and habitat
- Greenspace improvements
- Amenity and aesthetics
- Traffic management
- Encourages active travel
- Health and well-being, recreation value
- Volunteering, skills and training
- Improved public perception
- Increased property values

Agenda item 6

Liveable Places for Everyone: Claire Daly, Head of Policy and Communications, Sustrans, Scotland.

Cities consume 78% of the world's energy, produce 60% of world's greenhouse gas emissions yet account for less than 2% of earth's surface (UN Habit).

What makes a 'liveable city or town for everyone'?

- Has social connection at its heart
- Has most of what you need just a short walk away
- Has roots and celebrates its unique character
- Is easy for everyone to move around healthily in
- Has clean air and green space for all to live and play in

This links to climate emergency as the space used for cars could be better used for social connections.

C Daly referred to a graphic from the Town Centre Action Plan (TCAP) and highlighted areas which need to be addressed when tackling climate emergency in towns – transport, buildings, energy efficiency, greening, using space differently.

Decarbonisation of transport in town centres will not just support climate change mitigation but will also play a role in adaptation. Cars cause nearly 40% of transport emissions and even if every new car sold in Scotland in 2030 was electric, we would still have to reduce overall car mileage by 20% to reach our climate commitments. This is what is behind the Scottish Government's ambition to reduce 'car kilometres' by 20%.

'Transport poverty' is where household income is squeezed by the necessity to own and run a car as transport options are limited or where the opportunities to access work and other services requires ownership of a car. In 2017, Sustrans reported that 20% of people in Scotland live in areas of high risk of transport poverty and this was well before the current cost of living crisis. The worst affected areas were small, inaccessible towns.

C Daly then outlined tackling climate emergency through better use of space

- 20minute neighbourhoods
- Town centre living
- Intergenerational living
- Use of vacant and derelict land and brownfield sites
- Place-based approach to planning
- Liveability through green space, social connection and walking, cycling and public transport routes.

All of above are mentioned in TCAP however the key enabler has to be repurposing space for active travel which is currently used for car parking / car storage or routes through a city. If the focus is just the buildings and not on connections between spaces in a 'typical' small town which has grown around medieval town centre, Victorian suburbs then 1950s suburbs - this creates car dependency. A different approach is needed as to how we use our space and plan our streets.

Examples of projects where space is being improved in Glasgow to include active travel included Sauchiehall St, Garnet Hill, Connecting Woodside, Claypits and Stockingfield Bridge. In Hawick, Scottish Borders Council has developed a flood prevention area along the river which includes many active travel routes.

C Daly posed the question 'How do the streets you live on make you feel?' How can they be made better? Consider green space, play space, flashes of colour – not streets packed with cars.

Agenda item 7

Developing a Responsible Approach to Tourism: Caroline Warburton, Regional Leadership Director, VisitScotland (VS)

At a national level and tourism industry perspective, VS is looking to drive a more responsible approach to tourism.

Tourism is dependent on great places for people to visit and as such VS are integral to many of the considerations and changes in towns and town centres and benefit from many of the positive changes mentioned in previous presentations.

Two key policies which are currently in focus are Scotland Outlook 2030 and National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET).

Responsible Tourism considers not only the needs of the visitor and the industry but also the host communities and the environment.

Four pillars embedded in Responsible Tourism Strategic framework

- Support Scotland's transition to a low carbon economy – 3 pilot destinations supported by SG funding
- Thriving communities are key – ensure seasonal and regional spread
- Ensure tourism in Scotland is inclusive – available to all e.g., Scotspirit supported by recovery funding
- Support the protection and considerate enjoyment of Scotland's natural and cultural heritage e.g., visitor management campaign – Respect, Protect, Enjoy.

VS cannot single-handedly revolutionise the tourism sector so specific areas of influence and approach have been examined.

Industry - Influence and collaborate with the Scottish tourism and events industry to enable and encourage adoption of responsible tourism practices and development of sustainable experiences.

Destination Communities - Engage and support communities in shaping a responsible future for tourism

Visitors - Inspire, guide and inform current and future visitors to enjoy memorable and meaningful experiences and value Scotland's environment and communities

Internal - VS will take action in its own operations embedding responsible tourism practices across all activity.

Consumers are looking for more sustainable activities. A recent Booking.com Sustainable Travel Report of 30,000 people across 32 countries revealed 71% of travellers want to make an effort to travel more sustainably next year, an increase of 10% on the previous year. 78% intend to stay in sustainable accommodation however 31% did not know how to find them.

VS is beginning to shape content of promotions and campaigns to reflect the changing needs of consumers – including eco-tourism, reducing carbon footprint while travelling, travel Scotland by public transport, accessible holidays.

VS work in close partnership with a growing number of bodies including Scottish Tourism Alliance, Zero Waste Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Keep Scotland Beautiful and STP helping to create towns and places which people want to live in and to visit.

Agenda item 8

Protecting the Planet – Not Just an Option, Our Duty: Katherine Brown, External Affairs, Blachere Illumination UK

Blachere Illumination (BI) are well known for providing festive lighting however K Brown explained that they are also global leaders in provision of eco-responsible global lighting.

After sharing some disturbing statistics about plastic pollution which included mention of 'The 7th continent' – a vortex of plastic in the oceans, it was explained how existing plastic is now recycled by BI to become RecyPrint. This new process produces plastic crystals which are then used to make colourful innovative lighting displays.

Eco-whales are made from this new product and are available to house industrial bins in town centres. They are both practical and educational.

The number of plastic bottles used to make specific festive decorations was shared and should help encourage communities and businesses to carefully consider which form of lighting they choose to use in their displays.

A commercial partnership has recently been formed between The World Wildlife Federation and BI – specifically with actions to preserve the Mediterranean Sea. K Brown is extremely proud of this.

Agenda item 9

Discussion

N Bibby MSP made comment that public transport is key to tackling climate crisis. He asked C Daly her views on displacement from cities to towns with changes in Low Emission Zone (LEZ) schemes around cities. Lack of taxis and buses may encourage people to bring cars to towns. Nighttime economies in town centres are also suffering due to lack of public transport, are people more or less likely to access local town centres than big cities?

C Daly responded from an active travel perspective rather than wider transport perspective and commented that liveability and attractiveness of place is key to getting people to places. Copenhagen, Oslo and Amsterdam were mentioned as successful examples.

Making places more attractive to be in is key factor. Mobility solutions include a time management system of access for particular modes of transport to cities. Co-mobility solutions (car share clubs) also have to be considered. Night bus network and more taxis will support the nighttime economy rather than private cars with a designated driver.

T Ferguson asked if there is measurable data from successful projects that demonstrate how communities have adapted to new active travel initiatives? Many discussions have been had with constituents who have a real desire to move forward to better active travel and 20-minute neighbourhood principles, but the constituents often find it difficult to commit to change for a variety of reasons.

Dr E Wadsworth pointed this towards data which Sustrans will hold. The European examples which are regularly cited all have excellent transport systems which are regular and affordable and are linked with green infrastructure and active travel initiatives. It has not always been the case, so the first steps have to be taken. Oslo city centre is now entirely car free however this has taken 15 years.

C Daly supported that the process has to start – any route is only as good as its weakest junction. The Walking and Cycling Index is a major study by Sustrans which was highlighted and well worth reviewing.

The Convener asked P Prentice if there is anything in the new futures for Scotland's towns which could transform this agenda? P Prentice referred to Professor Sparks and the Review Group findings and the response from Scottish Government and COSLA. From the post covid and climate emergency landscape, it is known that we need to create denser residential neighbourhoods in our towns and cities. Houses need to be net zero, low carbon. Fiscal disadvantages need to be removed to prevent the sprawling new build landscape in green-field sites which remain car dependent while we punish the renovation and retrofit of existing property within town centres by charging 20%. Scottish Government is currently looking at various factors and fiscal levers to assist this – Housing to 2040 / National Planning Framework. The piece could be transformative – reducing our carbon footprint while creating better environments with economic and social cohesion.

The Convener thanked speakers for valuable contributions and all present.

Agenda item 10

Close of Meeting

The meeting was closed with a note that the next meeting will take place Wednesday 7th December, 12:45-13:45

