

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CROSS PARTY GROUP ON TOWNS AND TOWN CENTRES

HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 10TH DECEMBER 2014, 5.30 PM

COMMITTEE ROOM 6, SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Margaret McCulloch (MMcC) welcomed members to the meeting and thanked ATCM for supporting refreshments.

MMcC congratulated Phil Prentice on his appointment as Chief Officer of Scotland's Towns Partnership.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The Minutes were accepted by Craig McLaren (CMcL) and seconded by Leigh Sparks.

Presentations, Papers and future dates can be found on the Scotland's Towns Partnership website.

3. The Evening and Night Time Economy (ENTE)

In a change to the agenda, the Evening and Night Time Economy presentations will be delivered first, followed by Safety. MMcC thanked Ian Davison Porter (IDP), who will present on behalf of Alastair Mitchell (AM), who has tendered apologies due to illness.

3.1 Ian Davison Porter, Director, BIDs Scotland presenting on Falkirk BID

Main points:

- BID area consultation resulted in safety being key issue to address.
- Falkirk introduced taxi marshalls and Best Bar None scheme. However there was more to the issue that was affecting the public's use of the town. Local media created a perception of Falkirk being unsafe day and night. AM wanted to tackle this issue.
- SBCC worked alongside the BID and evaluated afterwards. It was found that savings on time on policing and NHS was evident. It was preventative spending on the streets. This demonstrates to that a Business Improvement District project such as this can address local and national government objectives.
- Dunfermline is another good practice case study. Using novel ideas such as issuing flip flops and lollipops – prevented common accidents caused by the mix of alcohol and high heels; and lollipops had a calming influence, preventing fights!
- The Dunfermline partners included the police, the council and local pastors. The first three months the project ran in Dunfermline, anti social behavior dropped by 50 per cent.
- A lot of BIDs deliver night time economy projects. However, last year saw the first purely evening economy BID – in Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow. Using the BID model in this diverse way is possible due to the difference in legislation in Scotland. Although what a BID delivers is now very diverse; the basics are still there – to be safe and secure.

Discussion:

MMcC shared similar perceptions of Paisley.

CMcL agreed that perception rather than reality seems the issue, and asked how that is tackled? IDP – as well as tackling the real issues, AM also engaged with media and got the good news stories out there.

Jim Metcalfe asked for a view on the proper mix in night time economy; moving from day to early evening, to night time.

IDP – Agrees there should be more of a mix. Examples of trying to bridge that are happening in Glasgow and Edinburgh with extended shopping hours. The environment is important. For example, good lighting, CCTV, safe car parking, safe public bus station, taxi marshalls. There is a huge mix that contributes to a town looking and feeling safe.

Tom Johnstone – asked for a view on pedestrianised town centres.

IDP – the infrastructure still needs to be right. As advocated by the Town Centre First policy, there should be a mix of residential and evening economy. Creating a balance between daytime and night-time business and keeping residents happy is challenging – a requirement met through the intensive management that a BID can harness.

3.2 Jonny Birkett (JB), Purple Flag Manager, ATCM (see presentation)

Main points:

- Purple Flag is the gold standard in UK/Ireland – equivalent to blue/green flag system.
- The award is the tip of the iceberg but important for economic development. Such as the preventative measures and results highlighted by IDP.
- There are Purple Flag teams all over the country. With over 50 purple flags in the UK.
- The ENTE is worth £66bn and represents 10% employment in towns. So it is important for economic growth, and viewed as the future of the high street. Need to increase dwell time.
- Purple flag academy is reflected internationally.
- In Scotland – Aberdeen and Dunfermline have purple flag so far. Recognise this is a significant gap which ATCM is working on.
- Contracted by the Home Office to encourage more diversification in towns.
- Purple flag is growing because it is built on partnership; bringing different people around the table. Public protection, infrastructure, industry, development and management coming together with BIDs/town centre management, and the public/consumers.
- The partners come together as a working group. Some in England are volunteer driven. It is not an unwieldy structure in terms of developing it - it is accessible.
 - o Agree the area.
 - o Snapshot document of the place, evidence based.
 - o Self assessment – proof that they have obtained a well rounded view.
 - o Strategy for progressing application.
- Basis for achieving the standard –
 - o Wellbeing of the visitor.
 - o Movement of people around town – at 4 key times.
 - o Broad appeal – balance of offering - not just about alcohol.
 - o Place – is it a vibrant and stimulating place to be – public realm.
 - o The policy envelope strategy.
- Performance indicators to benchmark –
 - o Crime and anti social behavior.
 - o Alcohol and health.
 - o Composition – mix and balance.
 - o Volume and value.
 - o Patronage – who's using, why.
 - o Perception.

- The scheme has integrity – independently assessed. Sixty volunteer assessors from, for example, policy, industry. They run own overnight assessment. This creates a cycle of improvements. Purple flag is not enough, it leads to a successful project – every 2 years it is evaluated. So the result is:
 - o Gives a place a genuine understanding of strengths/weaknesses.
 - o Gives focus and long term plan.
 - o Increases effectiveness of management.
 - o Better communication and partnership through joint sharing of information and working, and achievement.
- Statistics show:
 - o Get more people, footfall increases.
 - o Less crime – as much as 60 per cent, and you can promote that fact, then there's more activity, inward investment.
 - o Increases profile of place, positive news story.
 - o Perception change.
- Next Steps: making it happen isn't easy but everyone should take time/people to consider. Purple flag will help.

Discussion:

Sunil Varu who sits on the Purple flag award board, reinforced that this is robust process; adding that ATCM hopes to create an academy in Scotland, like that in Sweden.

MMcC queried why there are only two Scottish towns with the award.

JB – it has been a five year programme in the making and now beginning to see an appetite in Scotland.

MMcC asked members if anyone aware of their town doing it. SV confirmed that Paisley BID has it in its business plan. Especially important as Paisley has aspirations of culture and heritage and needs to change people's perceptions of the town. Stirling, Alloa, Falkirk and Perth are considering.

CMcL asked how much is about achieving a badge and how much is about continuous improvement.

JB - previously towns were not putting themselves forward so there was a lack of awareness to improve. Now, if they are undertaking the process, they have recognised they need to improve.

In response to MMcC, JB emphasized the annual process of assessment. The badge should lead to an action plan.

Jim Metcalfe – As blue/green flags influence family choice of destination. Do the towns want to influence people's behaviour or is it for practitioners and industry in the town?

JB – originally it was the latter but now very much want to use as influencer especially now it is international. ATCM is now looking to embed within universities prospectus to influence student/parent choice of study place.

SV agrees from personal experience that purple flag has influenced his choice of destination. Embedding in university will also impact on more than a focus on alcohol.

Tom Johnstone asked how they handle media sensationalism of bad news crime.

JB confirmed they work with the town, encouraging them to share the good news about the purple flag and what it's achieving for the town. On a national media stage and with the Home Office association, purple flag is now beginning to get that critical mass.

John Lee queried the main driver for wanting to become involved – a problem perceived or otherwise, or to grow the nighttime economy. Also, what is the role of local authorities and who 'owns the flag'?

JB – On the latter, it is a group approach – the group 'owns the flag'. They undertake it because they know they are doing good work, but that there is still more to achieve and the process helps them.

Alexander Nicoll commented that although different things work in different places, this scheme offers a recipe. It is not a league; everyone wins. Local residents involved - not just for 'B2B'.

CMcL asked if the Home Office approach is applicable across UK?

JB – The Home Office is working with 15 towns and cities with 20 key guidelines to make towns more diverse. JB will make guidelines available.

MMcC praised the scheme and hopes next year Scotland's towns will have increased in their number of purple flag towns.

4. Safety: Featuring USDAW Freedom from Fear Campaign – A Call for more protection for shop-workers.

4.1 Karen Whitefield, Campaigns Officer, USDAW

Main points:

- USDAW is the union of shop allied and distributive workers. Diverse jobs represented in private sector economy, best known as shop workers trade union.
- Freedom from Fear campaign runs during shop workers week. The campaign seeks to highlight and prevent violence against shop workers.
- Over 10,000 incidents against shop workers have occurred every day across Scotland in each of the last 12 months.
- Today 30 shop workers will have been assaulted simply doing their job. This came from a members survey in November. They do not have specific Scottish statistics but in England and Wales, incidents of violence have increased by one percent. The Scottish Government in 2007 stopped collecting this information as part of their crime survey – they remain to be convinced that it is worthwhile and Karen believes it should be taken seriously.
- 7000 shop workers are verbally abused and 3000 threatened. Of the 10,000, almost half are victims of abuse on more than one occasion in their working day. Each assault, threat or verbal abuse, simply occurred as the shop worker was doing their job.
- KW gave harrowing real life examples of store workers suffering grievous bodily harm; and yet the assailants were not convicted. Although such incidents do not happen every day, they do happen and action should be taken.
- The campaign works with policy, employers and individuals to make shops safer for staff and customers. Each year USDAW organises shop workers week (10 -14 November 2014), and shop workers run activities to raise awareness. The national campaign ran its event in Falkirk. Karen believes it is a safe place due to a lot of work by the BID but there were still stories to tell.
- Christmas can be a time when tempers are frayed. The campaign asks customers to keep calm – members may have seen some of their posters asking customers to respect the people who serve them.

- With up to 30 shop workers assaulted every day, raising awareness is not enough and USDAW believe a Protection of Workers Bill is needed to enforce stiffer sentences for those committing crime against shop workers. Parliament has given shopworkers the responsibility to enforce the law so they should protect them.
- USDAW tries to monitor crime and punishment and remain surprised at the leniency shown in the types of examples KW shared.
- Government must act. The message must be reinforced - assaulting a worker is unacceptable. Many staff don't report incidents as they feel it won't make a difference. They are being badly let down and there is not enough of deterrent for the abusers.
- KW called on group members to join with the campaign, in saying, this is simply not acceptable.

Discussion:

MMCC – could purple flag work in partnership with usdaw to tackle this. JB said yes very interested.

John Lee – The Scottish Grocers Federation is fully behind the Bill and would like to know why it is not happening following initial steps made by Hugh Henry.

KW – It is Hugh Henry's intention to introduce the Bill again in the lifetime of this parliament. The Labour Party has made it a manifesto commitment at Westminster level and anticipates likewise at Scottish level. The last Act introduced the Emergency Workers Safety at Work Act, which is effective because more victims are speaking out and more assailants being prosecuted because police know it is a crime.

MMcC asked group members to consider inviting KW to speak at events, and to share the campaign details. Contact KW at karen.whitefield@usdaw.org.uk

5. Town Centre Action Plan (TCAP)

MMcC called on group members' views as to future themes of meetings centring around TCAP; with potential to cover progress or otherwise.

Malcolm Fraser (MF) – Welcomed the appointment of Alex Neil as he brought the External Advisory Group (EAG) together originally. MF believes it is good for this group to monitor progress and to promote discussion around other issues such as land reform, Community Empowerment Bill, empty sites, land tax, community right to buy, asset transfers.

Phil Prentice emphasised that the Town Centre Review and Action Plan is clear in its objectives and Scotland's Towns Partnership is the organisation to deliver; working with almost everyone around the table on products and services such as the town typology tool, masterplanning toolkit, funding solutions – all of which will feature in a new portal by Spring.

PP and LS reported on the creation of and their meeting with a government cross departmental programme board. STP would be happy to report to the CPG on this. What is key is that in tandem with the high-level policy discussions, STP and partners are delivering operationally.

CMcL emphasised that there are three actions required – monitoring TCAP, reviewing gaps, i.e. issues that were in the mix originally but didn't feature in TCAP; and a space for new ideas. CMcL supports the offer from STP to provide a link for the CPG.

After discussion it was agreed that Malcolm Fraser, Phil Prentice and Leigh Sparks will meet the Cabinet Secretary in January and feedback at the next meeting of the CPG on 25th February.

MMcC invited members to share any further topics they would like meetings to cover. Contact the CPG Secretary at elaine@scotlandstowns.org

All ideas will be discussed at a forthcoming meeting of the CPG Office Bearers to be held on 21st January.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting which also incorporates the AGM, will take place on 25th February from 1 pm - 2.30 pm, in Committee Room 1.

The subsequent meeting will be held on 13th May from 6 pm – 8 pm, in Committee Room 4.

7. Any Other Competent Business

Jenny Brotchie mentioned the Carnegie Prize for Design and Wellbeing report launches tomorrow, 11th December. It shines a light on community led public space improvements in Scotland and Northern Ireland. 'Places that Love People' contains evidence review, case studies on the winners, (4 Scottish, 1 Northern Ireland). Jenny highlighted that Ballymena winner is relevant to the evening economy discussion – they introduced Shutters Up Evening when shops raised their shutters, put lights on and ran events, to enliven the evening economy. The report also contains five actions to ensure that more communities have access to well designed public spaces.

Jenny agreed with MMcC's suggestion that there could be a link to Purple Flag. SV added that Ballymena have worked with Purple flag.

SV highlighted that Broxburn about to receive a Great British High Street award.

Reflecting on both presentation themes, MMcC queried if there is anything in the Purple Flag scheme that would raise awareness of the safety of shop workers. JB confirmed there is a safety aspect and the town could opt to include this specifically in their application.

Appendix 1 – Agenda for Meeting held on 10th December 2014

Cross Party Group on Towns and Town Centres

5.30 pm – 7.30 pm, Wednesday 10th December 2014
Committee Room 6, Scottish Parliament

Agenda - Revised

Refreshments kindly supported by
Association of Town and City Management (ATCM)
“Helping People Make Great Places”

- 17:15 Meet in Parliament reception area
- 17:30 Networking Reception
- 17:50 Welcome – Margaret McCulloch MSP, Convener
- 18:00 Minutes of Previous Meeting & Matters Arising – Margaret McCulloch MSP, Convener

The Evening and Night-time Economy

- 18:10 Overview of Evening and Night-time Economy
With a Case Study of Falkirk Business Improvement District – Falkirk Delivers
Ian Davison Porter, Director BIDs Scotland on behalf of Alastair Mitchell, Falkirk Delivers
- 18:25 Safety Scheme: Purple Flag
Jonny Birkett, Purple Flag Manager, ATCM
- 18:40 Discussion

Safety

- 18:55 USDAW Freedom from Fear Campaign - A call for more protection for shop-workers
Karen Whitefield, USDAW
- 19:10 Discussion on K Whitefield’s presentation and Town Centre Action Plan & other town matters
- 19:25 Any Other Competent Business & Date of Next Meeting
- 19:30 Close of Meeting

Appendix 2 – Attendance list for meeting held on 10th December 2014

CROSS PARTY GROUP ON TOWNS AND TOWN CENTRES WEDNESDAY, 10th DECEMBER 2014 AT 17:30 COMMITTEE ROOM 6, SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

APOLOGIES AND LIST OF ATTENDEES

APOLOGIES

Jane Atterton, Scottish Agricultural College
Gordon Bell, The Retailer
Leigh Brown, Perth and Kinross Council
Callum Chomczuk, Pagoda PR
Graeme Dey MSP
Vivien Collie, St Andrews BID
Hew Edgar, RICS
Janice Gray, Paths For All
Andy Kennedy, Stirling Council
Stephen Leckie, Crieff Hydro
David Lonsdale, Scottish Retail Consortium
Rebecca Mather, Scotland's Towns Partnership
Geoff McCartney, miconex
Ian McLelland, East Kilbride Shopping Centre
Nikola Miller, RTPi
Alastair Mitchell, Falkirk Delivers BID
Maggie Mitchell, Dunfermline Delivers BID
Nairn Pearson, West Lothian Council
Peter Quinn, Keep Scotland Beautiful
Pete Reid, Falkirk Council
Dennis Rodwell, Dennis Rodwell Architecture and Planning
Heather Sim, Space Unlimited
Tom Sneddon, DTA Scotland
David Wood, PAS

ATTENDEES

Margaret McCulloch MSP (Convener)
Jonny Birkett, ATCM
Elaine Bone, Scotland's Towns Partnership and Economic Development Association Scotland
Chic Brodie MSP
Colin Brown, McClure Naismith
Shanaaz Carroll, ATCM
Joe Fagan, Scottish Parliament
Robert Ferguson, SDEF
Ian Fowell, Scottish Small Towns Group
Malcolm Fraser, Malcolm Fraser Architects
Keith Geddes, Pagoda PR/Representating Alliance Boots
Elaine Gorman, Scottish Business in the Community
Tom Johnston, Colliers International
John Lee, Scottish Grocers Federation
Peter Liddell, Heriot Watt University
Craig McLaren, RTPi

Flick Monk, CSPP
Colin Munro, miconex
Alexander Nicoll, ATCM
Phil Prentice, Scotland's Towns Partnership
Gordon Reid, Carlogie Ltd
Douglas Scott, Scottish Borders Council
Professor Leigh Sparks, University of Stirling,
Sunil Varu, ATCM Scotland
Karen Whitefield, USDAW