The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday 3 October 2012

Session 4

Wednesday 3 October 2012

CONTENTS

	Col.
DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE	1221
SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION	1222
Energy Performance of Buildings (Scotland) Amendment (No 2) Regulations 2012 (SSI 2012/208)	1222
Building (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2012 (SSI 2012/209)	1222
Local Government Pension Scheme (Administration) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2012 (SSI 2012/236)	1222
DRAFT BUDGET SCRUTINY 2013-14	1223

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE
21st Meeting 2012, Session 4

CONVENER

*Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP)
*Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab)
*Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con)
*John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
*Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Dr Allen Armstrong (CLEAR Buckhaven)
Cathy Brien (Garrion People's Housing Co-operative)
Susan Carr (Neighbourhood Alliance)
Jim Clark (Clyde Gateway)
Ian Cooke (Development Trusts Association Scotland)
Elizabeth Cooper (Gowkthrapple Organisation for Leisure and Development)
David Cowan (Scottish Government)
Wendi Cuffe (Stranraer Development Trust)
John Downie (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations)
Pauline Gallacher (Neilston Development Trust)
Fiona Garven (Scottish Community Development Centre)
Angus Hardie (Scottish Communities Alliance)
John Hutchison (Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust)
Jimmy McLellan (Bridgeton Steering Group)
Andy Milne (SURF)
Ann Nelson (Scottish Government)
Carolyn Sawers (Big Lottery Fund)
Frank Sweeney (Cunninghame Housing Association, Social Enterprise Scotland)
David Westland (Alloa Town Centre Business Improvement District)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

David Cullum

LOCATION

Committee Room 1

Scottish Parliament

Local Government and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday 3 October 2012

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 10:00*]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (Kevin Stewart): Good morning. I welcome everyone to the 21st meeting in 2012 of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee. As usual, I ask everyone to ensure that they have switched off mobile phones and other electronic equipment.

The first item on the agenda is to consider whether to take in private item 4, on our approach to forthcoming legislation. Are we all agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Subordinate Legislation

Energy Performance of Buildings (Scotland) Amendment (No 2) Regulations 2012 (SSI 2012/208)

Building (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2012 (SSI 2012/209)

Local Government Pension Scheme (Administration) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2012 (SSI 2012/236)

10:01

The Convener: Our next item of business is consideration of three negative Scottish statutory instruments. The Subordinate Legislation Committee considered all three instruments and has drawn the committee's attention to the Energy Performance of Buildings (Scotland) Amendment (No 2) Regulations 2012 (SSI 2012/208). The Subordinate Legislation Committee's comments are set out on page 2 of the clerk's paper on the SSI and relate to minor drafting errors in the instrument. The Scottish Government has confirmed that it will correct those errors at the next available opportunity.

If members have no comments to make on any of the instruments, are they content not to make any recommendations on them?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Draft Budget Scrutiny 2013-14

10:02

The Convener: Agenda item 3 is the first oral evidence-taking session in the committee's scrutiny of the Scottish Government's 2013-14 draft budget. This year, the committee has agreed to focus its scrutiny of the draft budget on regeneration policy. The committee set out a number of themes that it wished to consider in its call for written evidence. Copies of those themes are available on the committee table and on our website.

Given the breadth of matters encapsulated by our scrutiny of the regeneration budget, specific members of the committee will focus on key issues in their questioning. My colleagues Margaret Mitchell and Stewart Stevenson will examine the strategic and policy issues surrounding regeneration; John Wilson and John Pentland will explore issues around partnership working among the key players; and Anne McTaggart and Stuart McMillan will examine the practical issues of delivering a successful regeneration policy.

We get under way today with evidence from a panel of Scottish Government witnesses on regeneration. We will then move on to two round-table evidence sessions with community representatives and professional organisations.

I welcome David Cowan, head of the Scottish Government's regeneration unit, and Ann Nelson, deputy director of the Scottish Government's housing services and regeneration division. I ask Ann to make some opening remarks.

Ann Nelson (Scottish Government): Thank you, convener.

By way of background, I will say a few words about the regeneration strategy that the Scottish Government published in December 2011. The regeneration strategy is part of a bigger picture, which includes the Government's economic strategy, its cities strategy, its response to the Christie commission and a range of social policy and other frameworks.

There is a desire for communities that are economically, physically and socially sustainable. The strategy describes those as "supporting outcomes"—supporting in the sense that those outcomes need to be achieved if all places are to be sustainable and promote wellbeing. That is one part of the regeneration vision.

The other part is seeing that Scotland's most disadvantaged communities are supported. Where there is a persistent and concentrated absence of achievement of the outcomes that I mentioned, additional intervention or regeneration might be required. The nature and scale of regeneration interventions will vary. The outcomes—communities that are economically, physically and socially sustainable—tie in with other important outcomes, for example in health and justice.

It is not surprising that the delivery landscape for regeneration is often complex, involving different layers of government and partners depending on the circumstances, the processes and the levels and types of intervention that are required. The strategy therefore summarises the roles and responsibilities of the Scottish Government, local authorities and organisations from across the public, private and third sectors.

Regeneration is about joint working—working together and collaboration. The Scottish Government has a facilitation role in that regard. In July, Mr Neil, who was Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment at the time, chaired the first meeting of a high-level group that is intended to identify and overcome barriers to collaborative working and to place communities at the heart of the public sector approach. There is also the recently launched national review of town centres, which is chaired by architect Malcolm Fraser.

Improving joint working is one element of the Scottish Government's commitment to supporting the regeneration vision of a Scotland in which our most disadvantaged communities are supported and all places are sustainable and promote wellbeing. In some communities, the scale of disadvantage is so significant that it can be tackled only by agencies working together and with the communities to understand the full spectrum of need and to identify and deliver a range of solutions.

That takes me to another element in the strategy: community-led regeneration, which is about local action by local people. I think that the committee will hear a lot about that today. The Scottish Government is committed to supporting the development of community-led activity. For example, in May it launched the people and communities fund, to promote and support community-led regeneration through community anchor organisations.

A third strand of the Scottish Government's activity concerns focused funding and other support mechanisms. The strategy contains an extensive list of such mechanisms, which include: the vacant and derelict land fund, which is available to selected local authorities; the Scottish partnership for regeneration in urban centres—SPRUCE—fund, which is Scotland's joint European support for sustainable investment in city areas—JESSICA—fund and will provide loan support to revenue-generating projects; and the

regeneration capital grant fund, through which the urban regeneration companies have been funded.

At national level, the Scottish Government has a key role in setting the vision and strategic direction for regeneration in Scotland, and the process of developing the strategy and its implementation is the primary vehicle for doing that. The regeneration vision underpins the range of activities and interventions to which the Scottish Government has committed in the strategy. Public, private and third sector partners are encouraged to use the vision and the supporting outcomes to shape their delivery plans.

The vision is for a Scotland in which our most disadvantaged communities are supported and all places are sustainable and promote wellbeing. The supporting outcomes are that places are economically, physically and socially sustainable.

The Convener: Regeneration means different things to different people. You mentioned social regeneration, which is extremely important but, often, communities want a tangible change, which is normally physical regeneration. How do we get it across to communities that, sometimes, what needs to come first is not physical regeneration but social regeneration? How do we prove to hard-working community activists that that is key?

Ann Nelson: I will respond to some of your points but, if it is okay with you, I might well refer to David Cowan.

The Convener: Please do.

Ann Nelson: You make an important point. What one can see is what hits one in the eye, so one can understand why physical regeneration is important. One phrase from the regeneration strategy that I did not use in my introduction is "assets-based approach". Such an approach is very much part of the strategy. Assets are not just physical. The sense that people are the really important asset in a community is key to successful regeneration.

David Cowan (Scottish Government): The point is fair, as are the questions. In regeneration, every circumstance is different. Sometimes, physical regeneration might need to be prioritised, but regeneration—particularly community-led regeneration—can also be the catalyst for bringing people together. If a community or a sizeable voice in a community is concerned about the look of the high street, a play park or whatever and people come together because of that, we should not necessarily stand in the way of that and we should look at how to support that. Of itself, such activity can lead to social outcomes.

Every circumstance is different. As the Government, we would not want to say that there was one right way or wrong way of proceeding. If a community says something, let us listen to it and see how we can add more value to that together. If the catalyst is physical regeneration, we should ensure that the social aspects—and, as far as possible, the economic aspects—are thought through, so that we get as much value as possible from an intervention.

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): Good morning. Thank you for the comprehensive opening statement. To set the discussion in context, it would be useful to have your definitions of regeneration, outcomes and communities—those words have been used. Such definitions can vary quite a lot, so having your perception of what those terms mean would be good.

David Cowan: In the regeneration strategy, we have set out a vision: we want all places—whether they be villages, towns, cities or neighbourhoods in a city—to be sustainable and to promote wellbeing. For us, social, economic and physical regeneration cannot be separated; the approach must be holistic. As I said, every circumstance is different, but regeneration tends to involve tackling an area of deprivation in which significant and deep-seated social failures and—if you like—market failures have occurred. We are saying that people cannot go in and do just the physical or just the social. We want people to come together and think through the physical, the social and the economic aspects together. We have said in the strategy that that has not always happened in the past.

If physical regeneration is to be done, we must do testing to ensure that the communities that are ostensibly to be helped by the investment can take advantage of it. Plans must be integrated. When we talk to local authorities, we want to ask them how a physical investment fits into their wider plans for education, justice, health and the like. The aspects must be brought together. The approach must be not to assume that doing one form of regeneration will mean that the other form happens; the issue is how all that is brought together and doing the thinking properly in the first place.

Margaret Mitchell: What about the other terms? What do you mean when you refer to "outcomes" and "communities"?

10:15

Ann Nelson: There is quite an emphasis not only where I work but in the Scottish Government more generally on different levels of outcomes and emphasising the results. In the past, the focus was on what these days might be called inputs—what goes in—but an increasing emphasis is placed on striving for what one wants to achieve, which is why the outcomes are now expressed in

economic, social, physical, and sustainable community terms. The challenge is how that is measured and what is meant by "seeing it on the ground"—the impact on the lives of the people who live in a particular area. Further work will be carried out on that area over the next period.

Margaret Mitchell: Do you have an example of what a good outcome is?

Ann Nelson: That is a good question. I will let David answer that. I should explain that I am relatively new to my job, so if I turn to David it is because he has rather more detailed experience of regeneration than I have thus far.

David Cowan: A good example is the approach that the Scottish National Party Government took in the previous session with the national performance framework, which has 16 national outcomes. Outcomes are very much a way of looking at something differently. In the past, we ring-fenced budgets, made clear what should be delivered and then looked over our shoulder and made an assumption about how that would be done.

The outcomes approach frees us, if you like, to work with local authorities and other public sector bodies and agencies. We can say that we are all focused on the same thing, which is an improved outcome for a place, whether in relation to health or justice, for example. For regeneration, the suite of national outcomes probably applies. That allows us to sit down and talk together about what we want to achieve and how to get to that point together, rather than discussing the process and worrying about how to do it.

The outcomes that we are most interested in are, ultimately, those that support our vision of all places promoting wellbeing and being sustainable. We refer to outcomes in the regeneration strategy because it is a way of describing when you have reached a successful place or what you were aspiring to.

Regeneration is a long-term vision and the outcomes will not happen overnight—it may take 20, 30, or 40 years. Our challenge is how to measure progress to show that we are moving in the right direction. Outcomes allow us to cut through a big part of the conversation. If we are all agreed on where we are trying to go at the start, we can sit down and discuss how to get on with that.

The other advantage is that all local authorities, through their community planning partnerships and the single outcome agreements, are signed up to the same set of outcomes as the Scottish Government and other public sector agencies, and that is a useful starting point for our discussions.

Margaret Mitchell: My point is that the terms used are often off-putting to people on the ground. For example, referring to a national performance framework that has 16 agreed indicators does not mean much. We will be hearing from community groups later, so I was looking for an example of an outcome from a regeneration programme, such as a derelict building that, with community participation, has been developed to become a hub that provides various services. Perhaps we will hear more about that later, but if the Government could keep that in mind and use terms that people can easily understand, there would, I hope, be more engagement.

Given that we will be hearing from communities—with populations of 97 up to 1,600 to 1,900—I will not ask my last question about communities, but could you define what the term "communities" means?

Ann Nelson: I will tackle that by moving sideways to the housing part of my remit. Much of the work is in the social housing sphere and tenant participation is one of the topics that is talked about. A challenge in that area, which is replicated in the regeneration sphere, is that although some tenants may want to participate, for all sorts of reasons many choose not to.

There is a similar challenge when you talk about communities. Is the community that you are engaging with truly represented? Is a whole cross-section of the community for a project?

For example, on the way here this morning, I picked up conversations on the radio about Irvine, where it seems that some in the community are for what is happening there and some are not. I can quite see that it is very easy to trot out the word "community" and think that one knows what one means, but I imagine—I will be interested to hear from those who are here today—that it may well be quite a challenge for a community organisation to know that it is truly representing the community.

I do not know whether that helps.

Margaret Mitchell: It is helpful to have it on record that the Government is aware of that.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I have listened with interest to what David Cowan and Ann Nelson have said. However, while listening to the language very carefully, I have heard "We measure progress", "our outcomes", "our vision" and "our challenge". That is all the Government speaking. Who should decide whether you are successful? What is the Government's view on that? Is it the Government that decides that it is successful, or is it otherwise?

David Cowan: That is a fair question. There is no doubt that we will not decide whether we are successful or whether we have achieved what we

said; we will have to be held to account on that. On the suggestion that it is all within the Scottish Government's hands to achieve all this, I think that we are fairly clear that the regeneration strategy attempts to set the strategic framework and the direction in which we want to go, but it is very much up to communities, which in some places will mean local authorities, to achieve.

We would not want to tell communities how they should measure success or what their outcomes should be. Community-led regeneration is about trying to encourage and facilitate, but by no means do we want to impose our outcomes or our measures of success. When I talk about evaluation—I think that we have been talking to the high-level group about this—I am talking about how we measure whether we are making progress across Scotland rather than whether the Government is making progress.

Ann Nelson: You will not be surprised to learn—if this is news; I am sure it is not—that the strategies do not just come out of the air. A lot of work goes in beforehand in engaging with what are commonly called stakeholders across the country before a strategy emerges. As I mentioned, Mr Neil chaired the first meeting of the high-level working group and there is a plethora of working groups across the country in all sorts of spheres. There may be a plethora of such groups, but their purpose is very real: it is for the Government to be as engaged as possible and for other people to be as engaged as possible with one another. One cannot, I think, understate the power of networks for sharing understanding of what people are trying to achieve across the country.

Stewart Stevenson: To boil that down to its simplest level, the implication is that the community's view of what has happened will decide whether an individual regeneration activity has been worth while. Is that the Government's view?

Ann Nelson: You will have the privilege of hearing the minister give evidence later, so I think that you may want to ask such questions of the minister.

Stewart Stevenson: In terms of your support for the minister and your seeking to deliver on the minister's objectives, is that what you would understand the minister is likely to say to me?

Ann Nelson: I mentioned earlier that, in a sense, we have a three-pronged approach: one is to do with funding, one is to do with recognising that there are big-scale areas of difficulty in Scotland in which multiple communities might be involved, and then there are more local, community-led regeneration issues. The answer to the question is probably yes, but that might be slightly too simplistic, because when we are talking about a large geographical area, with multiple communities, it would be challenging to determine the worth of activity as simply as your question suggested it might be done.

Stewart Stevenson: You will be able to advise the minister of at least one question that he might be asked.

Let me turn the issue upside down. How well do communities understand the strategy to which they are party and which should deliver benefits to them? In considering the question, I invite you to think about the primary 7 pupil and the 85-year-old granny—I am thinking about the people who often find it more difficult to articulate their concerns. How broad are the attempts to reach such people and to listen to and understand them?

Ann Nelson: I have scribbled down "making things better"—a phrase that is not in the strategy and which I cannot say comes from the minister's mouth, but which I think might be how the granny or P7 child would understand it.

Margaret Mitchell: Given that budgets are constrained, how are priorities set, and might there have to be changes, in order to cope with the situation?

Ann Nelson: The relatively recent launch this year of the people and communities fund heralded a bit of a change of emphasis, in that similar funds previously focused on the social landlords sector—the housing associations sector—whereas the new fund focuses on community anchor organisations. That takes us into a bigger area, which includes development trusts and other types of organisations that are embedded in communities. The first awards from the fund are coming through. The focus is very much on the community-led side of things.

On the bigger funds—the capital funds—there is on-going work with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the direction of those funds.

Margaret Mitchell: Will preventative spend be a significant factor in determining where funds will be targeted?

Ann Nelson: Yes, it absolutely will. The people and communities fund has two main priorities: preventative spend and employability.

Margaret Mitchell: Will you define the term "preventative spend", so that we are all clear about what it means?

Ann Nelson: I will pass that question to David Cowan.

David Cowan: We have defined preventative spend fairly loosely, to be frank. The fund is there to support community-led regeneration. We are saying that it is for community anchor

organisations to propose projects and to explain how they would address the priorities of prevention or employability. A project might relate to health outcomes in a community, if the priority is to prevent ill health further down the road, through sport or some other programme that the community came up with. It might be about preventing people from falling further into poverty through some mechanism.

We have in mind prevention in its broadest sense: preventing worse outcomes among the people in the community.

The Convener: I used to chair a social inclusion partnership. I often find that when the community controls budgets it follows the public pound better than some elected politicians do. Has the Government done an analysis of how big a bang for its buck it gets when it gives people control over budgets?

David Cowan: We will have to check to see whether that has happened more broadly across Government. The people and communities fund was launched only in May, so we have not done that kind of analysis of it yet. Certainly the intention is that the money from the fund will go directly to community organisations.

The Convener: In these tough times when resources are scarce, I think that it would be worth your while to do that analysis—maybe not for the new fund, but for previous funds. I am sure that there would be unusual findings. Perhaps that can be followed up. We will maybe discuss that with the minister when we have the pleasure of meeting him.

10:30

Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP): I state at the outset that I am not aware of any organisations or companies that actually act in the way that I am about to describe. Mr Cowan spoke about the physical and social elements of regeneration. If a private sector organisation or business signed up to a local regeneration body or urban regeneration company, but was not fully signed up to the social benefits, what could the Scottish Government do to encourage that body to operate fully in respect of the social benefits, or to force it to do that if it has signed a contract to do so?

David Cowan: I will come at that from a couple of angles. The capital regeneration budgets are on different scales but, with reasonably sized contracts in URC areas or otherwise, although we cannot always force the private sector down the route of the social benefits, we try to do what we can through community benefit clauses in construction contracts. Urban regeneration companies across the piece are good at writing certain elements into contracts. For example, a two-year or three-year construction contract might include a requirement for apprenticeships. Projects might include an expectation that local employment targets will be met. There can also be consideration of broader community benefits. For example, there might be investment in a community centre or something like that. We can be clever in letting contracts by ensuring that there are community benefit clauses.

Ann Nelson mentioned our SPRUCE JESSICA fund, through which we seek to lever private sector developers into projects. We are in conversations to ensure that we take forward the community benefits angle, too. As you suggest, big companies would not necessarily be particularly interested in the social outcomes of their projects, but there are things that we can do and are doing on that front.

To come at the issue from another angle, I will say that last week we had our town centre symposium, which was about considering how communities can come together to tackle the issues that town centres face. That could include businesses in those town centres. The approach is about engaging businesses and showing how they will benefit, for a variety of reasons, if a town centre is regenerated and revived. That involves working with businesses to bring them into the discussion. Where they are willing, we want to ensure that they are part of the solution, and where they are not willing, we have other tools.

Stuart McMillan: Thank you. That was helpful.

My second question is about more localised regeneration activities. To an extent, in parts of the country, the mentality still exists that if something happens, it is the council's job to fix it. What can the Scottish Government do to get the message through, or facilitate the message, that actually councils do not do everything and do not have responsibility for everything? How can you help to get more people involved in local regeneration activities?

David Cowan: That is obviously an on-going challenge. As we say in the strategy, community-led regeneration is vital. We are working with local authorities and COSLA to explore that message where we can. Basically, when we work with local authorities, we need to stress the need to make space for communities so that they can produce their ideas and thoughts. Once we create that space, it is probably easier for communities to take on that role. The proposed community empowerment and renewal bill is, in essence, all about that. It is about ensuring that communities can get involved at a variety of levels, whether that be ownership or participatory budgeting.

All that is up for discussion. It is about considering how communities can be involved in developing local services. There is a big thrust behind that. In part, it is about creating space to allow things to happen, after which, we presume—or we hope—things will get better.

On the other hand, the strategy talks about what we call community capacity building. That is not unique to regeneration, but is being worked on across Government. That work is about ensuring that we do the right things to ensure that communities feel empowered and understand that they can take on some matters and make a difference. We are actively talking to people about what the community capacity building programme will look like, and about how it will add value and support what we are trying to do through the community empowerment and renewal bill and through local regeneration.

Stuart McMillan: The convener will be pleased to hear that my final question is on finance. We know that budgets are tight, but one key thing for any organisation is to try to ensure that money is spent wisely. That requires staffing continuity. Ann Nelson mentioned that she has only recently taken up her post. I dare say that, in local organisations across the country, there might be an element of staff changes. To ensure that we get the biggest bang for our buck, what does the Scottish Government do to try to improve continuity of staffing? Does the Government send messages to local organisations to encourage them to maintain staff?

Ann Nelson: I will comment on that issue from only one angle, because I am not sure that the Government can send a general message about it. I will give an example from the regulated social landlord sector and the role of the Scottish Housing Regulator. That is not exactly what you are talking about, although housing associations have a big role in many communities. One interest of the regulator is in housing associations' governance arrangements, and governance includes ensuring that a board's membership has appropriate continuity and refreshment. I am not sure that I can deal with the issue more broadly, because community organisations are not regulated.

David Cowan: That is correct, although there is a structure behind community organisations—they will have a board. We would be hard-pressed to get to the point at which we could ensure continuity of staffing.

Stuart McMillan: I am not suggesting that the Government should step in and micromanage organisations. I am asking about a general message.

David Cowan: We probably have not sent that out as a general message, but I am happy to consider that.

The Convener: Am I right in thinking that many community organisations are regulated by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator?

David Cowan: Yes.

Ann Nelson: Charities are regulated by OSCR—that is correct.

The Convener: I want to follow up on Mr McMillan's point about participation. Has any analysis been done of whether community participation is higher in areas where the community has control over budgets?

David Cowan: Again, I would have to go back and check that. Various analyses have been done on the types of areas where groups come forward, although that is more on a geographic basis and on the urban versus rural aspect. That gives us a better sense of hotspots and cold spots of community organisations, which relates to participation. On that specific point, I am not sure that an analysis has been done, although analyses are done of the areas where people are making bids to the various funding pots.

John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I record that I worked in Castlemilk 25 years ago, just prior to the creation of the new life for urban Scotland partnerships, which involved Whitfield, Wester Hailes, Ferguslie Park and Castlemilk, so from that background I know something about community partnerships and working with communities. I am glad to be revisiting the concepts of regeneration and community partnership.

I was interested in Mrs Nelson's response to Margaret Mitchell's question about the definition of the term "community". I want to ask about one big difficulty, which we have had for the past 20 or 30 years, as the Ferguslie partnership predated the 1988 new life for urban Scotland proposals and had been going since the late 1970s in a partnership with Strathclyde Regional Council. Will you clarify what you mean when you talk about communities? It sounded good that a community is the people who reside in a particular area and who get actively involved, but in the community planning partnership process, the term sometimes takes on a different mantle. In those partnerships, the community sometimes becomes a community of officials and agencies rather than the local community and its representatives.

Can you, on behalf of the Scottish Government, give me a definition that satisfies me and, I hope, the communities out there that are engaged at local level and in community planning partnerships? Some agencies and bodies that are

involved in the partnerships see themselves—rather than the communities that they are established to assist—as the community of interest.

David Cowan: I will come on to community planning partnerships but, broadly speaking, from a regeneration perspective, we are interested in communities in a place, although obviously there can be communities of interest that span the country or regions. For the purposes of community-led regeneration, we do not want to come in and define what a community is, because a community is very much an organic thing that sets itself up and defines its own parameters.

For the purposes of the people and communities fund, we talk about community anchor organisations. Organisations that apply to the fund must have certain characteristics, which we have set out in guidance. They need to have local representation. As they will be getting finances, they need to have a board and various governance structures. The board must be predominantly made up of local people. So, for the purposes of giving out funding, we are clear about what a community anchor organisation is.

The member will be aware that a review of community planning has been carried out and that a statement of ambition has been published. As I understand it, one issue that has been considered is about how community planning partnerships engage with local community organisations. My understanding is that one thing that is being considered is how to improve the engagement of community planning partnerships with local community organisations.

John Wilson: That point about community planning partnerships is interesting. When we start homing in on what communities—which might be geographic communities or communities of interest—are looking for, we might find that that conflicts with the Scottish Government's national outcomes. How does the Scottish Government square that circle? How do we decide between what geographic communities or communities of interest see as positive outcomes and the national outcomes as set out by the Scottish Government and/or local authorities and other agencies?

We are talking about how we can regenerate communities. I was interested in Mr Cowan's point that some of the outcomes might not come about until 30 or 40 years after the event. How do we address the outcomes that communities have identified and how do those issues get on to the agenda of community planning partnerships? We have 32 community planning partnerships, which mirror the local authority areas because local authorities are seen as lead agencies in the partnerships.

10:45

However, authorities such as Highland Council cover several hundred small communities, but there are also authorities such as Glasgow City Council and North Lanarkshire Council, the latter of which covers five major towns, all with different issues. How can we get to a point where, through the community planning process, communities can input into what they feel are realistic outcomes with regard to their own desires and objectives?

David Cowan: I accept that that is a challenge; indeed, I hear such views regularly. I am happy to talk to community organisations and to feed their views to my colleagues on the community planning review.

However, as I have said, the statement of ambition for the community planning review notes:

"CPPs must be able to engage closely with the needs and aspirations of their communities".

That is a strong message in the statement and, indeed, is one of the review's purposes. Engaging in that way—and demonstrating that they are doing so—will be an on-going challenge for the CPPs.

On the question of outcomes, I do not think that I said that we would not look at the outcomes again for 40 years.

John Wilson: To be clear, Mr Cowan, I did not say that.

David Cowan: All I was saying was that it will take quite a long time to get to the end point. However, CPPs are very much looking at the same set of national outcomes that I mentioned earlier, and which are set out in their single outcome agreements, and should be able to demonstrate how they have engaged in order to meet communities' needs. Discussions about where the community planning review is going are still being had, so we have to wait and see what comes out of that process. However, from a regeneration point of view, we argue that, when they are planning services in the areas for which they are responsible, CPPs should be looking at individual places, not the whole local authority area, and asking themselves how they might tackle this or that issue or how they might provide the services that a particular place needs.

John Wilson: I welcome those comments, but I record that I did not say that you said that the outcomes will take 30 or 40 years to deliver. The fact is, however, that some of them might well take that amount of time to deliver. I know that it takes that long for, say, housing or other sorts of regeneration to happen.

You mentioned your interface with local communities and our papers refer to the third sector interface, which brings in third sector

organisations. Where do tenants and residents associations and community councils fit into that process? They are not regulated by OSCR and many do not even see themselves as being part of the third sector, or as the kind of organisation that is defined by the term "voluntary sector". How do we engage at that level and convince them that this is a genuine partnership of ideas, ambition and opportunity and that they will be part of the decision-making process? People who are involved in partnerships of sorts tell me that their aspirations for an area often seem to be in conflict with those of the community planning partnerships, and feel that they are not getting the resources that they think should be ploughed into an area genuinely to assist its development. How do we take that forward?

You said that you expected community planning partnerships to work on a localised basis, but bearing in mind some of the national outcomes, how can we ensure that the 32 community planning partnerships, all of which have different ways of working and different substructures, truly reflect the outcomes that communities want?

David Cowan: All I can say is that that is an on-going challenge. I am not going to pretend that I can give you the answer to your question today. In the strategy that we published a year ago, we made it clear that community regeneration is an important element of how we want to take all this forward and we—and, indeed, others—face an on-going challenge in creating that kind of space in a fair way. I hope that, at some point, we will be able to shine a light on good examples and to convince others of the value of this approach.

John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab): Although they have been around for a number of years now, CPPs are still a relatively new concept. However, community groups and, indeed, CPP partners have raised with me concerns about the bureaucracy that they have to get through even to get a project started. Although I take on board David Cowan's comments about the removal of ring fencing, the fact is that it has been replaced by the various sources of funding that Ann Nelson mentioned such as the JESSICA SPRUCE fund, the regeneration investment fund and the capital investment fund. The situation is simply mind blowing to a community group that sits down and tries to look at these things. Might the Government be able to play a role in relaxing bureaucracy in order to encourage instead of discourage people who want to take projects forward?

David Cowan: I do not disagree with you. In the strategy, we are trying to simplify the funding regimes, although I will admit that it does not feel as if that has happened.

When we set up the people and communities fund, we tried to make things as easy as possible for community groups. First of all, we talked to various folk to ensure that the fund was broadly signposted, that people were aware of it and that the whole process was as straightforward and, through the team who administer it, as people friendly as possible. We are open to comments on how the process can be improved. Given that the fund is for communities, we also try to signpost those who submit unsuccessful funding applications to other funds and to ensure that they develop stronger relationships with the Big Lottery Fund and other sources of funding. We are trying to make the process user friendly, so that people are not just told no and that is the end of the matter.

The JESSICA SPRUCE fund is an entity in and of itself run by a private sector organisation, which has our money, applies commercial principles to the process and works within its own realm to ensure that the people who can access that fund know about it. As for the other sources of funding that you mentioned, we are trying to bring the regeneration capital grant fund, which was previously spread across local government, Scottish Enterprise and the Scottish Government, into a single pot to make things as straightforward as possible and ensure that people know where to find the money instead of having to lobby several different organisations for it. That work is on-going and I hope that we will be able to resolve the matter.

Overall, though, in response to your question, I think that we would all like to reduce bureaucracy and make things easier for people.

John Pentland: I want to follow on from Mr McMillan's question and ask about on-going revenue, which is becoming a serious concern, especially with regard to major regeneration projects. In some cases, a CPP has delivered a project but is now finding that the revenue costs are becoming an issue. My hope is that, somewhere down the line, the Government will identify revenue itself as a problem, because I am concerned that we are creating big white elephants that, after the community has agreed to their construction, will just lie empty. Are you taking on board on-going revenue issues?

David Cowan: That is certainly one of the issues that we are looking at with regard to the regeneration capital grant fund. With the £50 million SPRUCE fund, the whole point is that, with the involvement of the private sector and the use of private investment, proposals have to go through a due diligence process to determine their viability. I hope that we will be able to learn lessons from that fund to ensure that strong thinking lies behind the investment that we decide

to make through the regeneration capital grant fund and that we are pretty sure that projects are viable. As the regeneration capital grant fund is not as rigorous as a fund that is run by the private sector might be, we can be a bit more flexible and take more of a risk; nevertheless, I hope that some good strong thinking lies behind our decisions, so that we do not build what you call white elephants.

Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab): You talked earlier about reducing bureaucracy. How might you do that in order to make the process more user friendly for communities?

David Cowan: As I have said, we are trying to be as up front as possible about the criteria for the people and communities fund, so that people know whether the funding is worth applying for in the first place. We are quite happy for people to pick up the phone or drop us an e-mail. Indeed, we have said that we will, as best we can, respond to all applications within six weeks and all queries within a couple of weeks. We are trying to make the fund itself a people-based service. I hope that the fact that the application is in electronic form also helps the process, although I think that the software sometimes gets in the way. In any case, we are trying to reduce as much of the bureaucracy as we can around the fund within the rules that we have to follow.

That said, communities are in different places and face different challenges, and we in the Scottish Government simply cannot control the bureaucracy in each local area. However, through community-led regeneration, we are trying to look at the real and perceived barriers, to talk to communities and find out more and to see whether we can do anything about the issue, either through having a conversation in the local area or, if the problem is systemic, finding out whether the element in question needs to exist. That is very much the role that we see ourselves playing; we have embarked on that activity, but we could probably do more in that respect.

Anne McTaggart: I am not really sure that what you have suggested is happening to the extent that John Pentland and I want it to happen.

How successfully has the regeneration strategy been integrated into other Scottish Government policies?

David Cowan: We have had mixed success; I should note, however, that the strategy is only a year old. As I said at the beginning of the session, the Government is focused on the 16 national outcomes and, as a Government official who has to engage with other parts of the Government and influence where their policies go, I think that that is a very valuable place to be.

As for how successful we have been thus far, the justice, health, community planning, local government and economic development elements are all quite joined up with us in our strategy. There are no doubt areas where we could do better—and we will do better. As I have pointed out, the document itself was launched alongside the infrastructure investment plan and the cities strategy and we see all three as being connected and see the regeneration strategy as contributing to the Government's overarching economic strategy. We are reasonably well connected and hope to do more in that regard.

The Convener: We will finish off with two very brief questions.

John Wilson: Given that we are scrutinising the draft budget, is the vacant and derelict land fund likely to continue or will it be stopped? I should say that I was asked the same question on Monday morning.

David Cowan: The fund is likely to continue. Indeed, the fact that the next spending review sets out figures for its first year's funding sends a fairly strong signal in that regard. All I will say is that we have committed to reviewing the vacant and derelict land fund to ensure that we are all content that it is being used to tackle the problems that we want it to tackle, and that we are discussing the matter with COSLA.

The Convener: The final question is from Stuart McMillan.

Stuart McMillan: Given that there is not as much money around and that that is expected to be the situation for some time to come, is the range of funding available for regeneration being targeted correctly? Should more or less money from the pot be going to URCs or should more or less be going to local regeneration projects?

David Cowan: I think that the amount of money going to the URCs is just right. We have provided money for four URCs this year and three next year. I can break down the funding if you want but, in essence, Clyde Gateway will receive £19.55 million this year and £20 million next year; Clydebank Rebuilt will receive £450,000 this year; and Riverside Inverclyde URC and Irvine Bay URC will receive £2.5 million and £1.5 million each over the next two years. Obviously that represents a reduction in the funding that they have been used to, but that is because, as you have suggested in your question, we want to free up the pot for other local regeneration projects that are not in particular regeneration areas. That said, as part of our discussion with COSLA about funding from 2014-15 onwards for the regeneration capital grant fund, we are focusing on future funding for URCs and expect the fund to be accessible to those companies and others for specific projects. As I have said, we hope to be able to get to the

point where we will be able to do that thinking to ensure that projects are viable.

The Convener: I thank the witnesses for their evidence and suspend the meeting for five minutes to allow for seating changes.

11:01

Meeting suspended.

11:06

On resuming—

The Convener: We move to the first of our two round-table evidence sessions on regeneration in the draft budget. This session will be with representatives of community groups from across Scotland. We should have about an hour for discussion. Before I ask you to introduce yourselves and give your group names, I thank you on behalf of the committee for taking the time to come here today. It is the committee's intention to talk more and more to community groups. Do not be afraid to say what you have to say here. If you say as much as you did during our informal session earlier, we will be doing extremely well.

David Westland (Alloa Town Centre Business Improvement District): I am the chairman of the Alloa town centre business improvement district, which came into being on 16 October 2008 and is a five-year project. We levy the businesses in the BID's geographical area and our income is roughly £100,000 a year, so we will have £500,000 to spend in the town centre of Alloa in the next five years.

Dr Allen Armstrong (CLEAR Buckhaven): I am the secretary of the community association of Buckhaven, which is part of the deprived Levenmouth area. We have been running for five years. The area is run down and we have been trying to change it through environmental action—everything from flowers to school sessions and so on. At the moment, we have a budget of around £40,000 a year.

John Hutchison (Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust): Thanks for your invitation, convener. I am the chairman of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust. Pertinent to today's discussion is the fact that I am also a director of Community Land Scotland, and in my previous life I was involved in community planning. We might touch on that subject.

Jim Clark (Clyde Gateway): I am a senior manager at the Clyde Gateway urban regeneration company. We are a partnership between Glasgow City Council, South Lanarkshire Council and Scottish Enterprise, and we are funded by the Scottish Government. We will be five years old next month, and we were set up to regenerate the substantial areas of vacant and derelict land in the east end of Glasgow and across South Lanarkshire, linking into the legacy of the 2014 Commonwealth games.

Jimmy McLellan (Bridgeton Steering Group): I have been in Bridgeton for 40 years, and we are on the steering group for the Clyde Gateway URC.

Elizabeth Cooper (Gowkthrapple Organisation for Leisure and Development): Thank you for inviting me here today. I am on the management group of the Gowkthrapple housing association, of which I am also the chairperson, and I am the treasurer for the GOLD group.

Cathy Brien (Garrion People's Housing Co-operative): Good morning. I am the depute director of Garrion People's Housing Co-operative, in Gowkthrapple. We were established in 1992 and have 250 properties. Gowkthrapple is an area of multiple deprivation and we have been going through a regeneration project there.

Pauline Gallacher (Neilston Development Trust): I work as a volunteer projects co-ordinator at Neilston Development Trust. We have been working in Neilston since 2004 and we have a spectrum of projects, ranging from the community right to buy of a local asset to the production of a strategic visioning document for Neilston in the form of the town charter. We also have a cultural programme. I think that we have been invited to the meeting because we are the community partner in a joint-venture wind farm.

Wendi Cuffe (Stranraer Development Trust): I am an economic development officer and I support Stranraer development trust—I work for the local council. I am one of the main officers leading the strategic projects team that is taking forward regeneration in Stranraer and Loch Ryan.

Susan Carr (Neighbourhood Alliance): I work for the neighbourhood alliance, which is based in Craigmillar. There is a regeneration company called PARC, or Promoting and Regenerating Craigmillar, but the organisation that I work for has been going for about 20 years. We support tenants and residents associations, the community council and members of the community planning partnership, and we have recently set up a development trust.

The Convener: Thank you all very much.

Members may ask specific questions of specific folk during the course of the session. If panel members feel the need to come in at any point, just give me a signal and we will try to get you in.

I start by asking what regeneration means to the panel members. John Hutchison might like to answer that first, from the rural side.

John Hutchison: Regeneration is all about giving communities confidence. When we spoke earlier, a committee member asked about the population of the Isle of Eigg, which she thought was 67. That is interesting, because at the time of the buyout it was 63, and now, as of a couple weeks ago, we have 97. It has been all about confidence right the way through.

The proposed community empowerment and renewal bill is particularly interesting as it stretches the idea of land reform a bit more into urban areas. Our scales are very different. Those of you who are active in social networking will be aware of the data necklace, which is an idea that arose from a community workshop on Eigg, which is a very inspiring place. The data necklace is about creating a piece of merchandise, and the idea has reached the BBC and *The Wall Street Journal*. If you can put creative people together, regeneration ideas come up. In a small community such as Eigg, even improving someone's income and small business turnover from £5,000 a year to £10,000 a year—these sums are really small—is important.

It is all about establishing a creative atmosphere that encourages people and gives them the confidence to come up with ideas and take them forward. There is an interesting collection of people here—thank you for asking me to start off the discussion.

The Convener: Thank you. Some committee members had the pleasure of visiting Clyde Gateway the other week. Perhaps Jimmy McLellan could give us an idea of what Clyde Gateway and regeneration mean to him.

Jimmy McLellan: There are a couple of things that I would like to mention, including housing as well as regeneration.

We have been trying for 30 to 40 years to get Bridgeton and Dalmarnock up to scratch. Everywhere was deteriorating, including buildings, shops and land. We heard that the gateway was coming, and we were pleased that it asked the community to meet it to discuss what we wanted, not what the gateway wanted. We gave it a big list with things such as graveyards, buildings, Bridgeton Cross and railway stations on it.

All those projects are now nearly completed, thanks to the gateway. It is making people happy—more business is coming into Bridgeton and there is more employment because of the gateway, because of the contractors who are coming in. I went to one of the meetings to ask the contractors whether they would employ people from the area and take on apprentices, and they said yes. At the moment 60 people in Bridgeton are being employed because of that, plus 12 apprentices, I think. We are over the moon because of what the gateway has done.

11:15

The Olympia—an old cinema that was a theatre, a bingo hall and then a furniture place—was empty for years. Then somebody broke into it, slept in it and set fire to it so it was destroyed. I asked councillors and members of the Scottish Parliament to try to help us get something done about it. However, the gateway is getting support from Glasgow City Council, and lottery money is coming in, too, thanks to the gateway. It makes people happy that a property in our community is being restored to what it was—it makes a big difference. We can sit in Bridgeton Cross and talk to people—the way it used to be—instead of people coming out of their houses, just going to the shops and then going back home again.

By 2015, housing associations have to get their properties done, with new kitchens and new bathrooms, perhaps cladding and so on. However, people are complaining about the private sector and about landlords who do not put money back into their properties. Housing associations are getting clobbered to get their properties done, but private houses are not getting done. I know someone who is in a top-floor flat in Bridgeton. He owns the flat, but cannot sell it. The other flat owners let their flats and do not put their pot of money back into the property. I would like to see something done about the private housing situation.

About 30 shops in the area were empty but now only about 15 shops are empty, thanks to regeneration. People are getting the idea that perhaps with the Commonwealth games coming they can open shops—okay, they might be taking a chance but the shops are getting used again and that is absolutely fantastic for the people in Bridgeton.

The Convener: Thank you. You have the benefit of two butchers in Bridgeton Cross—I wish I had two local butchers near me.

Perhaps Pauline Gallacher can talk about the Neilston experience, which is somewhat different from some other projects in terms of buy-in.

Pauline Gallacher: It is interesting that regeneration is such a focus of the conversation—obviously there is a regeneration strategy and that is why we are here, but regeneration was not even on the table when Neilston Development Trust's space to live project got going.

Neilston was one of those small towns that had been forgotten about because it was doing well enough for it to not be up there with the top 10 deprived communities, as it were, but it was not

good enough to be considered for conservation status. You probably know the statistic that 30 per cent of our population resides in settlements of under 20,000 people. In common with many other such settlements throughout the country, these little places with their various histories—ours was post-industrial—were being left to just get on with it. When the small area statistics came through and it became clear to our local authority that there were significant pockets of deprivation in Neilston, we became part of the regeneration conversation. However, our project in Neilston predated that.

There was a conversation about what our place was about and where it was going, and whether there was a case for a strategic, community-led visioning document that would take us beyond the usual round of local authority spending but have a sound basis in local aspiration.

To cut a long story short, we are now in that position with our town charter, which the local authority has endorsed and which will be enshrined in some way in the upcoming local development plan. I suppose that if I had anything to say about the conversation it would be that regeneration used to refer to places with self-evident problems, but—I was glad to see this in the regeneration strategy document—the definition now is perhaps more about sustaining, celebrating and supporting the assets of places so that they do not slip into a deficit mode whereby we have to have regeneration.

I could spend a lot of time talking about Neilston—I am afraid that I am locked into that—so I would prefer people to ask questions. However, we now have a bit of a palette of projects that reflect a bit of luck, a bit of vision and a bit of serendipity. One of the nice things to be able to report—I think that this is where the invitation to today's committee meeting came from—is that we have a joint-venture wind farm that, over its lifetime, will bring about £10 million to Neilston. Neilston will be able to dispose of that money without so much as a by-your-leave from anyone else. As I am sure you can imagine, that raises massive problems around accountability, legitimacy and so on. However, Community Energy Scotland and the Development Trusts Association Scotland are with us in that debate, which is not peculiar or unique to us.

The Convener: Thank you, Pauline. I will come to everyone, but I think that Margaret Mitchell has one of the questions that Pauline was looking for.

Margaret Mitchell: You made a point about doing buildings up as you go along. That is really preventative spending, but did you look on it as such? Do you sell it in that—[*Interruption*.]

Pauline Gallacher: Sorry?

Margaret Mitchell: Did you say that you made sure that you look at the assets and—[*Interruption*.]

The Convener: Margaret, please move your mic, because folk are having a bit of difficulty hearing you.

Margaret Mitchell: Did I pick you up properly, Pauline? Did you say that the assets were properly maintained rather than allowed to fall into disrepair? It seems to me that that is a form of preventative spend, whether you term it as that or not.

Pauline Gallacher: Absolutely.

Margaret Mitchell: Out of interest, do you term it as that?

Pauline Gallacher: That point is interesting because it very much speaks to the criteria for people and communities funding. There is an issue about how broad the definition of preventative spending is. If we, as a needy community—we are a needy community as we have no core funding—are to qualify for people and communities funding, we will qualify under the preventative spend stream.

We must have some money for preventative spend in the first place, but I suppose that you could say that our endeavours are one big piece of preventative action, because we are talking about a place that is doing away—a place that has strengths and weaknesses: it is a classic commuter settlement that has a vulnerable retail sector and so on. If you want a definition, we are both regenerating and preventing.

Regeneration or any other intervention should be about good planning. If we had done our planning—in the widest possible sense of that word—better in the past, we would not need to take regeneration action. I take the term "planning" to include community planning, cultural planning, spatial planning and social provision, with communities at the heart. That was, I hope, a poised definition, but to get there is much more difficult.

It is immaterial whether you call it preventative action, sound planning or regeneration; the fact is that what we are doing in Neilston, in collaboration with our local authority and our local housing association, is to try to do an appropriately scaled, place-specific, rounded piece of community planning.

The Convener: Thank you.

Susan Carr is from Craigmillar, where the community controls some of its own budgets. Can you tell us a bit about that?

Susan Carr: Yes. Craigmillar has been recognised as a deprived area for 40-odd years,

and we considered for a long time how it could be regenerated. About 10 years ago, we started having discussions and it was decided that an urban regeneration company would be set up. There was a big consultation on that. The approach was—well, it still is—to have a profit-led business plan, which has failed to deliver and is still failing to deliver because of the economic downturn.

The sad thing is that the City of Edinburgh Council was quick to knock down all the houses, which dispersed the community. The worst outcome is that we have lost a lot of the community that we once had. There was nothing wrong with many of the houses that were knocked down, by the way. They had just become places where people did not want to live, so the council could not let them and all the by-products of their lying empty became apparent.

An urban design framework master plan was signed off seven years ago. There was supposed to be a 15-year plan to complete it, which would include exactly what was described earlier—social, economic and physical regeneration. So far, there is a lot of evidence of the physical regeneration, although we have achieved only about a tenth of the 3,500 houses that are to be rebuilt. The worry for us is that we have great swathes of land that will not be developed for some time.

A couple of years ago, the community went to the local authority and the urban regeneration company and asked what plan B was. The message that I would like to get out is that, if a body is starting something as big as a 15-year programme and does not have a plan B, it should go back to the community and ask it how it would like things to go if the programme does not work.

Our problem is that nobody has a plan B. We even got up as high as Alex Neil two years ago. His advice was to set up a community development trust, which we have done. We have made it clear that we want that trust to be part of the decision-making process for the future, not a consultee in a consultation that we have to go through every now and again.

We have proved that a community as strong as the one in Craigmillar can organise itself. That sometimes frightens local authorities a little, because we have structures, procedures, openness, democracy and representation in the one bundle. It is quite difficult to achieve that, but we have had quite a lot of time to learn and had to live through some difficult times to get to that point.

The fact that we have organised ourselves is self-evident. We have good participation at the community planning partnership level. We have two community representatives on the partnership board. They go along and take part, but they are under no illusions that the community planning partnership could not be better. However, it is seen as one of the better ones in Edinburgh.

For that reason, we have been able to demonstrate that we can look after budgets. I am not suggesting that the council should hand over all the money and let us get on with it, but we can direct the spend in the way that will benefit the most people best. Craigmillar has done that particularly well. We have had a small budget for—

The Convener: Has anybody come back to you for feedback on that? Has any audit or analysis been done of how you are spending the money?

Susan Carr: There is one every year. It goes to the local authority.

The Convener: Is it an analysis of outcomes?

Susan Carr: No, but we are putting that together ourselves, because one of the things that has come out of the fact that we are an active community is that we have been picked as a pilot for a total neighbourhood study. That study will examine the budgets of various partners within the community planning partnership area and how they can work better together.

That tells its own story. I do not think that we would have been picked for that unless there was reasonable certainty that we could deliver on it.

11:30

The Convener: I am looking at my colleagues, who I think agree that it would be extremely useful for us to catch sight of some analysis of the outcomes of the spend since your community took control of certain budgets. If you could submit that to the clerks and talk to them after the meeting, that would help us very much in what we are doing. Thank you.

Susan Carr: Okay.

John Wilson: Susan Carr has given a glowing account of Craigmillar. I asked earlier about community engagement and community planning partnerships. She said that there are two representatives from Craigmillar on the board. Is that the Edinburgh city-wide board, or is it a local board?

Susan Carr: No, that is the local board. We also have two reps on the urban regeneration company board, but they are non-voting members. The only opportunity that we have there is to influence—we do not have any decision-making power on that board.

John Wilson: That goes back to the earlier question that I asked Mr Cowan about how the community planning partnerships work. Susan Carr has given us an example of what happens in Edinburgh, where there are smaller community planning partnerships that feed into the Edinburgh city-wide community planning partnership. How much of the view of the community reps from Craigmillar is fed into the community planning partnership at the Edinburgh city-wide level? Sometimes, that local input gets lost or the message gets negated as it goes further up the community planning partnership process.

The Convener: Perhaps that is a difficult question for you to answer, Susan.

Susan Carr: I can give you my personal view.

The Convener: Please do that.

Susan Carr: We have tried to influence the Edinburgh community planning partnership through our local community planning partnership, but the Edinburgh community planning partnership probably sees itself as being much more strategic. Therefore, it is difficult for us to analyse where we have influenced it.

John Hutchison: An error has been made along the way in that community planning partnerships were never intended to be solely the domain of the local authorities and to operate solely at that level. They were meant to operate at a lower level as well. My experience is probably similar to that of Craigmillar. We need to remember that the community planning partnership's role is a strategic one but that there is a tactical level underneath that at which there is every opportunity for a local community to write a community action plan for its area. Public bodies have a duty to engage under the process and are audited on that.

I have direct experience of the community in Lochaber writing the Lochaber community action plan. Mr Wilson asked earlier what happens in the Highlands, and the Lochaber area is an eighth of the Highlands. We wrote a community action plan with the council, working in conjunction with the local council for voluntary service, Voluntary Action Lochaber, and the whole thing was turned inside out. The action plan was written for that community, with input from various bodies such as the police, the national health service, the fire service, the local authority, the enterprise network, Scottish Natural Heritage and so on. The process was commended by Audit Scotland when it conducted a review.

All hope is not yet lost for community planning if communities put their hands up and say that they would like to write their community action plans.

The Convener: The committee has taken evidence on CPPs. Some work extremely well and others are not quite at that level yet. I am sure that we will return to that subject again and again. No doubt it will also form part of what we are discussing today in the context of regeneration.

I ask David Westland to tell us about the business improvement district aspect of regeneration. I should say that I was once a director of the Aberdeen BID.

David Westland: Basically—for people who do not know much about BIDs—a BID is a defined geographical area. Once the businesses in the area have been balloted and the proposal is agreed to, a levy can legitimately be charged on every business or every landlord and business, depending on the method that is chosen. In Alloa, we levy the businesses pro rata on their rateable value, so a small one-man shop will pay £240 a year, while larger businesses—the multinationals—will pay up to £1,100 a year. That money comes in and the board of directors, in consultation with the businesses, decides how best to spend it to improve the environment and the wellbeing of the area.

We are going into our fourth year and the BID is working—we are getting positive feedback. Last year alone, we set up a grant of up to £1,000 per business. It was match funding, so businesses could spend £2,000 to get £1,000 back. That cost us £42,500, but it resulted in £170,000-worth of investment in the town centre from businesses alone. In addition, we put on events at Christmas and every Saturday, and we have installed street furniture, chewing gum posts and waste paper bins. We do anything that businesses think will improve customer feeling and, ultimately, their businesses.

Working with imagine Alloa, another council body, we secured part of the £2 million investment that the Government provided for the regeneration of town centres. Clackmannanshire Council added another £400,000 to that, so we managed to do a fair bit to the town centre—we put in new pavements and new shopfronts, which was fantastic. The downside to that is that another part of the town still needs to be pulled up to that standard. We are working on that.

Establishing a BID involves a lot of hard work, because not many people know what a BID is. In the view of Alloa and Clackmannanshire, once a BID is in place and gets working, it is certainly worth while.

The Convener: I invite Allen Armstrong to tell us what regeneration means to Buckhaven.

Dr Armstrong: Buckhaven is one of the neglected corners that Pauline Gallacher mentioned. It is a post-industrial, run-down area.

Five years ago, a group of residents took the initiative. They felt that the place was a bit of a tip, so they decided to take some action. To pick up on one of the themes of the discussion, our work was initially focused on physical action, from litter removal to the planting of trees and bulbs. Now, we have virtually a forest estate to run and growing space. We have always had a vision, but that has taken us into other areas such as work with the schools. We try to get them involved because a lot of vandalism goes on in the planted areas. As well as regular programmes with the schools, we are starting to venture into things such as heritage trails.

All that is taking place against a background of challenge and difficulty. I do not know whether this is the case just in that corner—I think that it might be universal—but there is a high level of apathy in the area. There are hardly any community councils functioning in the area and there are no other civic groups, although there are bowling clubs—civil society is functioning. We put on events and hold very high-profile open meetings, but it is still quite hard to get people along. I do not know whether that is because most of our events are outdoors. In the Scottish climate, it is a bit hard to get people outside. We face that sort of challenge.

We have had excellent support from the local council, not through the formal planning partnerships, but just through having an officer with initiative who is interested in collaborating in different ways. It serves the council's purpose very well to have a group that it can link with. We can speak to the community, because we are part of it—indeed, we are the community. Our only involvement is at community level. We have a vision, but the difficulties of funding, resources and so on mean that we cannot proceed smoothly towards realising our vision. We have to take opportunities as they arise.

At the moment, Buckhaven is the Scottish pilot area for the Alaska health model. The local health surgery can no longer cope with the pressure on the doctors, so a holistic approach is being taken, which is about getting people to be more responsible for their own health. We are in discussion with the NHS, which sees opportunities for us to try and take it out of its bubble.

There is much grand talk about working in partnership, but it is a little hard to break out of the officialdom trap. We face resistance from, for example, the parks department, which does not like us to plant trees, because that places extra pressure on its tight grass-cutting schedule and budget. We hit little obstacles like that all along the way.

I generally agree with what it says in the regeneration strategy, which mentions various small funds. However, in our experience, when there is a multipurpose grant to tackle a cross-cutting issue, it is still very much lip service that is paid to regeneration. Regeneration does not get the attention that it deserves. The strategy appears to be doing a lot, but in practice a lot of things are swept up in it that do not necessarily tick the regeneration box. I wanted to raise that issue.

Stewart Stevenson: You mentioned an officer with initiative. Do our witnesses agree that it is often individuals who are employed by local authorities or the Government who make the difference when they feel empowered—even if no one has told them that they are empowered—to focus on the needs of not their employer, but their clients? Would it be worth our exploring, in general terms, how that happens and what stops it happening? Those comments were the most interesting that I have heard today. Let me immediately say that I have heard lots of interesting things, but it was interesting to hear about what I call the power of one.

The Convener: Does anyone want to comment? Is it sometimes down to individual officers? I was going to bring in Elizabeth Cooper, because I have been dying to say "Gowkthrapple". Perhaps you can answer Stewart Stevenson's question and tell us a little about the regeneration work that you are doing.

Elizabeth Cooper: The Gowkthrapple Organisation for Leisure and Development—GOLD—started about six years ago. Before that, we had a regeneration group, which fell through. We work alongside Garrion People's Housing Co-operative. In the past year we have opened a new building, CentrePoint, which cost £2.5 million. We got £750 million from the Big Lottery Fund, Garrion put in £170 million, the Scottish Government put in £60 million and the remainder came from North Lanarkshire Council.

The Convener: You have a lot of millions there. I think that you meant thousands. We know what you meant.

Elizabeth Cooper: Yes. We have a lovely building, and along with the GOLD group we had a lot of open days, so that the tenants could come along and say what they thought and what they wanted from CentrePoint.

A lot of information came out of the open days, and we started up quite a few things, but our biggest problem was funding, which was not always available and was always cut. Sometimes we were turned down for funding, and when we did get funding we could afford to put on only taster courses. The children would say, "We love this. How can we not keep going?" We cannot make promises to the children; they will hold us to them. We had to say, "Look, we're in the process

of seeing what we can get," and we were not always successful.

Our problem is that, while we always get taster courses, we never manage to get a full year of a certain thing, whether it is the youth club, dancing or yoga. When we hold those sessions there are hall hire charges and people to be paid, so it is quite difficult to keep the courses going. The volunteers wonder whether each course is going to last.

We have always been strong enough to keep the tenants there, because we have always managed to get funding for something else. Our problem is the need to engage people in any project that we run and involve the community, and to keep the project running and get enough funding to cover it.

11:45

The Convener: With regard to Stewart Stevenson's question, is the help that you get sometimes down to the personalities of individual public authority officers?

Elizabeth Cooper: Yes.

Jim Clark: As a Clyde Gateway officer, I want to respond to Mr Stevenson's question. The importance of individuals depends to some extent on the scale and size of the community that is involved. I can speak only from Clyde Gateway's perspective, but, given the scale of the issues that we have to deal with, it is the organisation and not just an individual that makes a difference.

You might say, "Well, he would say that—he works for them." However, our chief executive preaches that we will deal with things in that way and focus on the local people, and that approach runs through every member of staff in the organisation. Regeneration is not a 9-to-5 job. It is a cliché, but we will go the extra yard or the extra mile—whatever is required—to work with the people.

In some areas where there have been previous efforts to regenerate the community or criticisms of previous approaches, we must hold our hands up and admit that mistakes have been made. That was one of the first things that we did five years ago; folk like Jimmy McLellan would remind us that there was a big effort to regenerate the east end of Glasgow back in the 1970s that did not work, and we said that we would learn from that.

In the first book that we put out, we said to members of the local community that they were quite right to be cynical about Clyde Gateway and not to trust us, but that they should believe us when we say that we will learn from what has happened in the past.

As a word of caution, I should say that if we do all that and increase community involvement, we also raise community expectations. Jimmy McLellan said a few minutes ago that that has been great. That is partly because we have promised that it will take 20 years to overcome the issues. It is interesting to hear what Susan Carr said about Craigmillar. We are five years down the line, and we have been very fortunate.

The original business plan envisaged that private sector money would come in to make things happen, but that has not materialised because of the economic conditions. However, we have to give praise to the three partners—the two councils and Scottish Enterprise—and the Scottish Government for continuing to fund us beyond what was initially regarded as the core funding. In addition, the funding will continue—as David Cowan said earlier—for another two years.

When we make promises to people and tell them that it will take 20 years, we have to allow the 20 years to happen. If we do not follow through on that, we will end up by replicating the failures of the 70s, and Jimmy McLellan's children and grandchildren will come forward and say, "We've been let down again."

The Convener: Thank you for that. There are hands up galore around the table, but I think that we should hear from Wendi Cuffe—last but certainly not least—about the Stranraer experience.

Wendi Cuffe: Stranraer has traditionally, for more than 100 years, been known as the ferry port and the gateway to Ireland. We now have a wonderful opportunity, as the Stena ferry terminal has moved, to reposition Stranraer—and Loch Ryan—so that it becomes an active and vibrant seaside town. I work for the local authority as the officer who is based in Stranraer and supporting its regeneration.

To go back to the previous questions, I believe that regeneration is about working in partnership with local people, businesses and all the organisations to implement our strategic vision for the area.

I am very passionate about Stranraer. Despite my English accent, I have lived in and around the area for 32 years and my children have all been brought up there, so I am really passionate. Being the local authority officer, I spread that passion through the town.

It is important that local people are involved. Although we want to reposition the town to encourage tourism, because that will help the town's economy, the people who live there need to be able to enjoy and benefit from the town and feel part of the process of change. My managers will look at the strategy for repositioning the town and

at the development briefs and they will talk to the investors—obviously, a lot will depend on inward investment and investors have a major part to play—but it is really important that the local people understand how that is moving forward and why we are looking at developments in certain areas. For example, there has been talk in the town about new supermarkets. People may say, "Oh, we don't want supermarkets," but we need to explain how we will develop those supermarkets so that they fit with the traditional look and feel of Stranraer as it is today.

We do not want to change Stranraer. We are in the very fortunate position that the sea is very close to the town so we cannot redevelop the waterfront area and forget about the town; we need to look at regenerating the town as a whole. That is the message to the local people and they feel confident that they are completely and absolutely part of the process. We are looking at how they can be involved in the different elements.

It is equally important to look at smaller issues and secure the funding for those so that the smaller parts of the town are regenerated. That may be for the overall strategic 20-year plan, but such areas can be important to the local people. For example, any upgrading to the parks in and around the waterfront area must meet the needs of the local people who visit those parks every day and any upgrading to the buildings must take into account how those buildings service the needs of local people as well as the needs of tourists.

Stranraer has a great future, and I and other local people are working very hard to deliver that.

John Hutchison: Stewart Stevenson's question was also asked as part of the consultation on the community empowerment bill. The consultation asked whether there should be a named officer. I commend to the committee the Community Land Scotland response to that consultation. In that response, we suggested that, although there is an inherent danger in having a named officer in an organisation in case everyone else gives up and feels that it is not their responsibility to link with the community, we believe that there should be a named officer within every organisation but that that person should be inward facing and should encourage the organisation as a whole to connect with the community.

Jimmy McLellan: I will back up what Jim Clark said about Clyde Gateway. In the 1970s, a company called GEAR—Glasgow eastern area renewal—came into Bridgeton. Just like Clyde Gateway, GEAR promised us everything, including the moon. Wee bits of land were dug up, bushes were put in and work was done on this, that and the next thing. That lasted two and a half years before GEAR had to walk away because it had no funding. The people were left stranded again, with nothing to back them up. We were back to square one, after trying to get something done in the 1970s, but now that Clyde Gateway has come along it is absolutely fantastic.

I will say something about old, private properties. There were three lovely properties in Bridgeton, one of which had to be destroyed because water had gone under the cellars. Nobody took care of that; owners did not take care of that. We lost five shops and 18 flats. People will not accept that—they are fed up with what is happening. Now, we have a guarantee that Clyde Gateway will do something about that.

The Convener: When folk promise something that does not happen, does that dent the community's morale?

Jimmy McLellan: Of course it does. People are born and bred in the area. When GEAR came along, it said, "Oh—we'll do this and we'll do that for you," but that lasted for only so long. The place that it dug up ended up being used by alcoholics and druggies.

John Pentland: I say for the record that Gowkthrapple lies right in the middle of my constituency of Motherwell and Wishaw.

The Convener: Lucky you.

John Pentland: Lucky me—you are absolutely right.

The Convener: You get to say the name regularly.

John Pentland: When people such as Cathy Brien and Elizabeth Cooper come to me for support or with complaints, it is a privilege to represent the area.

Elizabeth Cooper touched on an issue that I asked Mr Cowan about. If revenue streams started to dry up, that could have an impact on a major regeneration project. I am sure that Cathy Brien could expand on that when she speaks.

My question is to everybody around the table. We have heard that CPPs either work or do not work. The comments around the table have shown a level of success in what CPPs can deliver. Having heard about all the good things, I started to detect the suggestion that, because of the economic downturn and the cut in local government funding, the major players will be unable to provide the same support as before.

Significant challenges appear to lie ahead for everybody. How can the committee and the Government help you to overcome those challenges? Will you identify some of the short-term challenges that people face?

The Convener: We will not have time for everybody to answer those questions. Do a couple of folk want to wade in?

Susan Carr: I am happy to speak. Our community planning partnership—I am talking about the small local one—is probably unique in that it is there to support the community. We often say that we are like the personal assistant to the community. We go along, help to prepare papers and do all the things that a PA would do for the community representatives. We also take the information that we get from going to such meetings out into the wider community.

Our budget has not increased in the past 10 years—we have barely had cost-of-living rises. We have already cut ourselves as much as we can. The next cut will be in staff. In our area, one thing that ensures that local people can engage is their ownership of a small organisation that works for them and only them. That can involve simple, small things such as having photocopies made, but the issue is how communication takes place. We give our local representatives the ability to communicate with the wider community, because a resource is there.

I suppose that most people around the table would say that, sometimes, capital funding is easier to find than revenue funding, which brings its own constraints. Before anything is done on community engagement, an organisation has salaries, rent and all the overheads to pay, in the same way as local authorities have. Local authorities' budgets are being cut, but they will not be as dramatically affected as small organisations will be.

The Convener: I am aware of the time. It would be useful for the committee if our witnesses wrote to let us know what the pressures are. A key point that crops up is that finding capital funding is easy but finding revenue funding is not easy. It would be interesting to find examples of capital spend that has been used to reduce revenue costs, which can often happen.

12:00

Stuart McMillan: My first question is for David Westland. Would you encourage other areas of the country to pursue BIDs?

David Westland: Absolutely—yes we would. The Alloa BID has improved the area. In the town centre, the percentage of ground-floor units that are empty is around 9 per cent whereas the Scottish average is 10.5 per cent and the UK national average is about 12 or 13 per cent. The BID is working at getting businesses in, and we support them through offering them training and directing them to the business gateway. We have just run social networking and Facebook training for any businesses that were interested. It is hard work to get the lobbying out there, but ultimately it works very well.

Mr Stevenson asked about officers. We work closely with the local council and there is a Clackmannanshire business board that meets four times a year, which has on it council officers, elected members and people from every segment of the business community. Although it might not be an individual, it opens the line of communication between the different sectors and the local authority, which ultimately benefits everybody and helps them to achieve their goals.

Stuart McMillan: Mr Clark spoke earlier about learning the lessons of the past and delivering the promises of the future. What is Clyde Gateway's financial accountability? What type of audit trail takes place to ensure that the local community has genuine belief that what you are doing is robust and manageable?

Jim Clark: It is easier for me to explain how the community is involved with Clyde Gateway. Like PARC Craigmillar, we have two community representatives on our board. However, unlike in PARC Craigmillar, they have voting rights. Below that, we have a range of steering groups sitting within the communities—Jimmy McLellan sits on the one for the Bridgeton area. We say to them, "This is how much money we intend to spend in Bridgeton. Are you happy with that amount of money out of our budget? These are the projects that we intend to put it into." We are always up front about how much things will cost.

Scrutiny of our budget is carried out not by the community but by the three partners—Glasgow City Council, South Lanarkshire Council and Scottish Enterprise—through monthly reports to the board meetings and stakeholder groups. The community does not get down into the nitty-gritty of scrutinising how we spend our money, but we have an annual public meeting at which we throw everything at them in terms of where the money has gone, and at which we are open to questions, which we try to answer. Communities in the east end of Glasgow are not slow in saying when something is a waste of money, so we quickly realise that our priorities have to change.

Fortunately, in the five years for which we have existed, although I would not say that we have not wasted a penny—no one could ever say that—our priorities have always been what the community has wanted. We have never told people that something was going to cost £1 million only to go back to them later to tell them that it would actually cost £2 million, so we are not going to do it. Equally, we have not said that we are going to spend £5 million on something and then cut it back to £3 million by cutting corners. They get what

they are looking for within the resources that are available.

Cathy Brien: Elizabeth Cooper mentioned that CentrePoint, the new building, cost £2.5 million and that we got capital funding for that. However, a key issue for us is the on-going sustainability of a major regeneration project. Part of the bid to the Big Lottery Fund, to which we have to report at the end of every year, was that the GOLD group would manage the community side of the building. Engaging people to join the GOLD group is quite difficult, and we find that they do not get an awful lot of support from other agencies to improve their capacity building.

We are really worried about that, because we are frightened that the group might dwindle away. Where do people get support? They have been getting support from the local registered social landlord, because we led the bid for the building, but that takes up our resources. When people need to complete an application form for grant funding, they come to us and ask where they should go. We have to find out where they need to go, and we pass them on to that person. We are really quite worried about the support to the groups. That is a key issue that should be considered.

Susan Carr: I want to add to that. By the way, I am so jealous of Jim Clark. [*Laughter*.]

Once a consultation has been done and a master plan has been agreed, that raises the aspirations in the community. At that point, we cannot just tick the box and forget about it, because the aspirations exist. When things change in terms of ability to deliver—as they have done—it is important to go back and refresh the position. It is also important to be mindful that, in a regeneration area, there is the old community, which was consulted originally, and there is the new community that has moved in, which knows nothing about the consultation. That is a big issue.

We have found that the first things that go from business plans for joint ventures such as ours are the community assets that people most wanted—buy-in comes because of the community assets—and in our case, it was a new community high school, which has been taken out completely. People could argue that it is still there, but it is now 20 years away. If we have done the deal and then reneged on it, we must at least go back and explain why we cannot deliver.

Dr Armstrong: Our biggest problem is disengagement and disempowerment of the community. Getting people along is the primary obstacle, and obtaining sustainable funding rather than one-time or short-term funding is the secondary obstacle.

The problem is that it is in deprived communities that the gap is felt most strongly. There might be one or two places, such as Craigmillar, where people have managed over many years to address the gap, but we feel that we are trying to overcome a double burden to get things done, because we cannot count on professionals in the community. We cannot even count on many people coming along, no matter how we try to involve them. I think that that is what Elizabeth Cooper was hinting at.

The Convener: Thank you. We are giving you a lot of work, but we might ask you to write to us about what causes levels of community participation to go up and down and how community capacity training is being carried out. Beyond that, I am also interested to know the percentages of women versus men in community representation. If you could provide some information on those things in writing, it would be useful and would help us in our deliberations.

I thank everybody for taking the time to come here today. It has been extremely useful for members to hear your views, which it has to be said are not dissimilar to one another's, whether you come from a rural or urban area in the north or the south. We appreciate your taking time out to be here, and I hope that you will help us even more by answering in writing some of the questions that we did not get answers to today. Thank you.

12:09

Meeting suspended.

12:15

On resuming—

The Convener: We come to the second of our round-table evidence-taking sessions, which involves representatives of the professional organisations. I invite them to introduce themselves.

Frank Sweeney (Cunninghame Housing Association, Social Enterprise Scotland): I am the chief executive of Cunninghame Housing Association and a member of Social Enterprise Scotland.

Andy Milne (SURF): I am from SURF, which is Scotland's independent regeneration network. We are a member-based organisation that brings together organisations and individuals at all levels across Scotland to try to improve policy and practice in regeneration.

Fiona Garven (Scottish Community Development Centre): I am the director of the Scottish Community Development Centre, which

incorporates the community health exchange. We work mainly around areas of community capacity building, community engagement and community-led health.

Angus Hardie (Scottish Communities Alliance): I am from the Scottish Communities Alliance, which is a coalition of national organisations that have community-based memberships.

Ian Cooke (Development Trusts Association Scotland): I am the director of the Development Trusts Association Scotland. We are the national network for community-led regeneration projects and organisations, such as those in Neilston and Craigmillar, from which you heard in the previous evidence-taking session.

John Downie (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations): I am the director of public affairs at the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations. Perhaps of relevance is the fact that I am also the chair of Impact Arts, in the east end of Glasgow, which is one of the leading social enterprises in Scotland.

Carolyn Sawers (Big Lottery Fund): I am from the Big Lottery Fund. We distribute 40 per cent of the money that the national lottery raises for good causes, and our mission is to bring improvements to communities and people who are most in need. That makes us one of the major funders of the third sector in Scotland.

The Convener: I will start by asking the same question that I asked the previous panel to begin with. What does regeneration mean for you?

Carolyn Sawers: Thank you for coming to me first with that challenging question.

The Convener: Ladies first.

Carolyn Sawers: Obviously, this morning I have been reflecting on everyone else's answers. I hope that I can steal a couple of phrases from them.

To the Big Lottery Fund, certainly in Scotland, regeneration means improving people's quality of life and life chances and making their communities vibrant, prosperous, resilient and sustainable. That is a positive way of looking at the proposition.

I would also reflect what David Cowan said earlier: regeneration is also about acknowledging that we need a holistic process to work in places where there has been social and physical decline in order to try to bring about environmental, social and economic improvements.

I would highlight the organisations from Craigmillar and Gowkthrapple, from which you heard earlier, because they have been funded by the Big Lottery Fund. We see communities doing amazing things to turn estates around in cities, villages and small towns across Scotland. Our involvement in that is as a funder and a facilitator, through our support for communities to take on ownership of assets through our growing community assets programme, which allows communities to do exciting things in spaces and places that matter to them. To help communities to come together around a neighbourhood and set out the kind of vision that Pauline Gallacher talked about earlier, we have a programme called our place, which funds that kind of work.

We believe that, where communities take that leadership role, services are better, more sustainable and more able to meet people's needs.

The Convener: I will throw another question at you about funding for capital projects. We heard about CentrePoint at Gowkthrapple. When you give money for capital projects, do you examine their revenue costs and whether they are viable?

Carolyn Sawers: "Absolutely" is the short answer to that. If I am allowed time to say a little more, I will give two reflections on that.

First, we support communities to take on assets and we spend quite a lot of time working with communities and discussing the projects with them to ensure that they are taking on assets and not liabilities. The potential for a revenue stream is vital in that.

Secondly, in our experience of community ownership of assets over a number of years, the money to acquire or develop an asset is the first part of the story, but by no means the end. If you look back at how the Big Lottery Fund has worked in community ownership over the past 10 years, you will see that it has placed far more emphasis on, and made far more financial investment in, the revenue support to projects to follow on from a capital development. We rarely fund or support a community only with capital costs to acquire or develop a property. We always expect the community to put into the funding bid some revenue costs, whether that is for a key post to continue the project's work in future or services that will be embedded into the project. A mix of capital and revenue funding is the norm for us.

The Convener: We probably do not have enough time to go into it in any depth, but it would be interesting for the committee to examine situations in which you have made a funding award for a capital project, but the building has not been used to the degree to which it could or should have been used because there were revenue difficulties. It would be interesting to see what analysis you have done in such situations. If you could provide that in written evidence, it would be immensely useful to us.

What are John Downie's thoughts about regeneration?

John Downie: Our general approach to it is that the mix of social, economic, environmental and, to a certain extent, physical regeneration is important, but the key is people.

Regeneration must involve a people-led approach. Part of the problem with the regeneration strategy is that the Scottish Government has struggled to define community-led regeneration. What does it mean in different communities of different sizes and in different locations throughout Scotland?

We have talked about different funds. Most of the moneys within the mainstream funds are skewed towards large-scale capital investment. We have heard that the people and communities fund is about employability and prevention. However, the remit of all those funds was decided centrally by one level of Government or another or by an organisation. No one asked the people about outcomes and what they wanted the funding for.

That is where part of the issue lies. We talk a lot about community-led regeneration—we heard some examples of great and not-so-good community-led regeneration earlier—but we fail to address who is in control, who makes the decisions, the level of trust that some communities have and communities' expectations.

A number of weeks ago, I talked to a small community organisation that had struggled for a number of years to engage with its local authority at all levels, its health board and its community planning partnership. It was suddenly given a fund to administer—a very small amount—which, it is interesting to note, changed the dynamic in its relationship with every public sector player, because it was seen as a funder. It then got invitations to events that it would have had to fight to get into previously.

The key is the relationship between communities, the funding and the agencies. I was at the first meeting of the Scottish Government's high-level regeneration group. I took from that meeting a sense that regeneration must be people led, about which I was positive.

Stuart McMillan: Has the Big Lottery Fund had remarkable successes in any particular parts of the country with money that it has distributed? Are there any areas to which you know you are not giving a proportionate share of funds because of a lack of applications? Does a lack of applications indicate that other work needs to happen in the area to empower the local population? That touches on John Downie's point about regeneration of people.

Carolyn Sawers: Your question about remarkable examples is easy for me to answer because there are great examples throughout Scotland. There are some particularly strong examples in the islands, and in rural areas, where we are talking about community ownership and community-led enterprise and regeneration. One of the key shifts that we made in 2006 was to open up the opportunity for community ownership to urban areas. We have a number of really strong successes in that. You have heard about Gowkthrapple today. There are also strong examples in Govan and Maryhill in Glasgow.

It is fair to say that we and other representatives round the table have tried to work together to raise the profile of community ownership and committee-led regeneration in urban areas. In some ways there is a kind of momentum in rural areas and smaller communities. There are fair considerations to think through, for example on whether we can extend that momentum—certainly when it comes to community ownership and right to buy. That touches on some of the other issues that we have already spoken about today.

In answer to Stuart McMillan's question about fair shares, we reflect frequently on the pattern of spend from the Big Lottery Fund throughout Scotland. We work really hard in different ways to ensure that the spend responds to the various needs of different communities. We often offer more outreach and encourage more applications from particular areas. We keep a list of what we might call, in internal language, the cold spots, where we want to do more events, be more encouraging, do more outreach and offer more development support.

I touched briefly on the our place programme earlier. In a sense, that is a concrete response to analysis that suggested that parts of some local authority areas have not benefited as much as we expected, given their past levels of need. We put a programme in place with £10 million, which was based very much at neighbourhood level, in five neighbourhoods in local authority areas throughout west central Scotland. The offer was very different from the Big Lottery Fund. It was not an individual application process but chimed strongly with what Pauline Gallacher said earlier. It was about saying to the community, "We'd love to hear your vision for your community, and your needs and opportunities." We make a minimum £1 million commitment to a community if it can work with us to provide a package of projects that we think will make a difference. Our committee is making the last awards on that programme in November. That has been a long but really successful process with those five communities. We are currently developing our plans to do a second roll-out of that programme in new communities.

The Convener: Did you want to come in on that point, Andy?

Andy Milne: No. I was kind of twitching. If you do not mind, perhaps I could make a general point. I am looking at who around the table was going to speak before me and I am thinking that, quite recently and sensibly, a lot of the discussion here today has been focused on community regeneration, the role of communities, the input of communities, community planning, community development trusts and so on.

As an organisation, SURF thinks that all that is tremendously important, that there is a great resource and untapped resources there, and that there are unconnected resources that could assist with regeneration overall. However, the bigger picture is not about community input; it is about the allocation of existing resources, some of which are outwith the responsibility of the Scottish Government. It is about the broad economic framework, particularly the powers of the Department for Work and Pensions. However, some of it is within the power of the Scottish Government. I am thinking particularly of the £9 billion resources under the sustainable procurement considerations of the Scottish Government. The proposed sustainable procurement bill will decide how that £9 billion a year will be invested.

I contrast the impact that that allocation could have on communities, community economies, the health of communities and the ability of people to look after themselves with the concentration of discussion that we have had on the people and communities fund—a good fund of £6 million a year. It used to be £12 million a year when it was the wider action fund, and was allocated only to housing associations. That fund was cut by 50 per cent to £6 million, relabelled as the people and communities fund and set out on the terms that the committee has heard about. There are about 6,000 data zones in the Scottish index of multiple deprivation. If we take the 15 worst areas, we are down to about 1,000 data zones, so £6 million works out at £6,000 per data zone, which will not fundamentally regenerate an area and improve its health, wellbeing and economy.

12:30

It is about the wider framework. When we define "regeneration" we have to start with the concept of degeneration—what happens as we get older and as places get older, and things fall apart, thin out and fall off. Climatic changes take place, too. The general economic climatic change has had a profound effect, which tends towards degeneration in many areas. Another key factor in degeneration is upheaval. Large changes, such as large firms moving out, transport connections changing and wider infrastructure changes being imposed on communities, can result in the degeneration of villages, small towns and, in some cases, larger cities.

Regeneration's guru, Sir Patrick Geddes, was a biologist; he took a biological approach to planning and regeneration. In nature, regeneration happens naturally where places have the resources and the climate that enable growth. When the climate changes or resources are removed, it is difficult for places to regenerate naturally and intervention becomes necessary.

The regeneration intervention must be applicable to the particular conditions of the area. A factor in that regard is engagement of the community; another factor is proactive engagement from the substantial existing resources.

My last point in this rant is that although we will talk a lot about lack of resources, Scotland is part of the UK, which is the seventh-largest economy on the planet. It is about priorities, not resources. That is something that we need to bring into the discussion. Communities are important, but they are part of a much bigger picture.

The Convener: Thank you. I have never heard a rant that included a mention of Sir Patrick Geddes. I do not think that that was a rant.

Bending the spend in existing budgets has happened in some areas to a fair degree but not in other areas. As folk give their views, they might also express an opinion on that.

Ian Cooke: I agree with much of what Andy Milne said. Resources and priorities are important, but in Scotland we have more than 50 years' experience of regeneration and I am not convinced from this morning's discussion that we are not asking the same questions that we were asking 50 years ago. What have we learned? What works well? How do we move forward and do regeneration?

A couple of points that were made this morning clearly guide us towards community-led regeneration. There was a discussion about short-termism and succession planning. What will happen in five or 10 years' time? The one thing that is guaranteed and that will not change is the community. Governments, councillors and regeneration initiatives come and go, but the community will be there throughout. The community is the logical starting point for regeneration, which is why we support and promote community-led regeneration.

There is a lack of money for community organisations, but we have a culture of grant dependency in Scotland. Development trusts are very much about trying to break that down, so that

from the moment that a group is created it thinks about income-generating opportunities and how to be enterprising. We have 200 members, and we conducted a survey of members a couple of months ago. The average earned income of a development trust is 59 per cent of its overall budget. The trusts still use grants, but they develop their activities by being enterprising and opportunistic.

How we do regeneration is important and that takes me to the strategy. We were quite excited when the strategy came out. We loved the discussion around community-led regeneration, but it seems to me that regeneration takes place at different levels. We must acknowledge that communities cannot do everything, but the strategy is not clear about which issues are better dealt with by local authorities or by Government and which issues communities can make the biggest impact on.

Linked to that is the question of the connection between those levels. If we are saying that the community planning partnerships should provide that connection, I have to say that I am particularly concerned. If regeneration is to take place at different levels, what is the connection and how do we encourage it to take place so that we get an approach that is flexible but also coherent? We do not want different people trying to do the same things and coming into conflict with each other.

Finally, from our point of view, I think that we need to move forward based on the fundamental principle of community-led regeneration, and then see where we go from there.

John Wilson: I will ask about the definition of communities. Ian Cooke referred to communities remaining constant, but place names, rather than communities, are what remain constant. In areas such as Castlemilk, which I mentioned earlier, the population has changed. In the early 1980s, Castlemilk had a population of 60,000 and was the size of Perth, whereas now Castlemilk has a population of around 11,500 or 12,000. The regeneration that has taken place in that area has meant the displacement of communities, if you see communities as people. What is the community that we are talking about? Is it the place name, or is it the people who live in these areas? We have displaced a number of people around Scotland, for example, through the new towns programme, which was about displacing people out of cities. What definition of communities is Ian Cooke using? In my view, communities do not remain constant but are in a state of flux at all times.

Ian Cooke: The point is well made. We see the issue in quite simplistic terms, really. It is about drawing a line and saying that this is the physical community. I totally accept that, within that place, the dynamics and demographics will change over time. As you rightly say, such changes have often come about from previous regeneration strategies, which have been about not building the community, but trying to achieve economic benefits through housing policy or whatever. You have to start somewhere and it seems to me that a place is at least something that will not change. Whether it is a town or a big housing estate or an island, people will come and go. To find out what the community's view is you will need to keep revisiting issues to check whether the new people who have come into the community still hold that view. However, it seems to me that that is the most logical place to start.

The Convener: Before I bring in John Downie, I want to pick up on what you said about drawing lines. From my perspective on community regeneration in my part of the world, drawing lines has often caused quite a lot of the problems. I was the chair of a social inclusion partnership that covered an archipelago of very diverse communities in order to get funding. The drawing of those lines caused great grief. Is it really about drawing lines?

Ian Cooke: I think that it is for the communities themselves to determine where those lines should be. The problem in the past—I also worked in social inclusion partnerships—was that the lines were drawn from the top. It was top-down regeneration. Bizarrely, communities have been defined from above instead of letting people say, "This is a natural community, we relate to this particular part of the world and this is our neighbourhood or town." When I worked in a social inclusion partnership, the boundaries were based on parliamentary constituencies and local authority wards, which quite often cut across natural boundaries. A fundamental principle should be that communities should determine or define for themselves what their community is. There may be some discussion around that, but I think that it has to be the communities themselves who self-determine who they are.

The Convener: I must be honest and say that, if I went to the community that I live in and asked all my neighbours to draw the lines of what they see as the community, they would all be different.

John Downie: I think that that is the point, convener. They would all be different, but what people can coalesce on in drawing those lines is the outcomes that they want for the community and what they want to achieve. Part of the problem with the alignment of the regeneration strategy at the moment is that it is all about achieving sustainable economic growth rather than providing greater social, environmental and economic benefit to people in those areas.

What drives people is getting the right outcomes and the change that they want to the lives of the

people in their community. Urban and rural communities will be different in that regard and levels of participation are different in different communities. We need to find ways of sorting that. We can see, for example, what Oxfam did with people in Govanhill on participation. People were told what the budget was and that they could help define what would change in their community and what would be spent there. That changed community relationships and people felt in control and that they could achieve something.

I agree with Ian Cooke that change should be community led. Andy Milne's points about the proposed community empowerment and renewal bill and the proposed procurement bill are well made. We have a great opportunity through those bills to have a wider social impact, given that Europe is relaxing the rules and widening what is defined as a social impact. It is about not just community benefit clauses, but wider social impact, which can play a real part in regeneration. Other bills could also do that—for example, the proposed integration of adult health and social care bill—although the impact of welfare reform, as members are well aware, could blow a hole in all this.

Margaret Mitchell: It is clear from the discussion so far that it is all about projects coming from the people in communities, which we have always argued are more likely to be sustainable. However, to what extent do you measure the outcomes and monitor them? The CentrePoint asset is there in Gowkthrapple, with all its potential, but we have heard this morning that there are somehow problems. How much data is produced and how much monitoring is produced once the initial funding is put in place to ensure that the outcomes that you want are achieved?

John Downie: We need to think about how we will evaluate the outcomes that we want all the way through, rather than waiting till the end and then looking back. There are lots of different models. We use social return on investment and other models for our different projects; there are different models for community outcomes. People can see the real outcomes, so I do not think that we need to make the process bureaucratic. If it is about taking over an asset and ensuring that the change is sustainable for the next five, 10 or 15 years, people can see that happening and can work on it. However, if it is about changing young people's lives, for example, we need to see a progression from a particular stage towards a positive destination, whether that is employment, college or doing something else. There are models that can be adapted to measure positive outcomes. It is happening all over, but part of the problem is that the third sector has not got its act together as well as it should have in measuring impact.

Margaret Mitchell: I would like Carolyn Sawers to respond on that as well, particularly given the money that went into Gowkthrapple from the Big Lottery Fund.

The Convener: Please be as brief as you can, Carolyn, because we have a lot to get through.

Carolyn Sawers: I will be brief and make two quick points. We have a high-level set of outcomes that we look to be achieved in all kinds of projects, including those that you have heard about in Gowkthrapple and Neilston. However, the individual communities and projects must then tell us the detail of the outcomes that they hope to achieve. We will monitor that over as long a period as we have a funding relationship with them. It is worth mentioning that we have shifted in the past few years to offering up to five years' funding for projects across Scotland, which means that we have longer-term relationships that are more engaged, facilitative and enabling. Finally, it is crucial, as we heard from a particular story this morning, that funders respond flexibly to the kind of changes that we have heard about and continue to offer support. For me, the advice and support are as important as the money.

Angus Hardie: I think of regeneration as a historic fixing tool for the public sector that is applied in some way to an area on which social and economic disadvantage has fallen. As Ian Cooke said, we have been doing regeneration in this country for 30 or 40 years, so it is not new. Over that time, the model has been a mix of public and private investment delivered in a top-down fashion, principally for physical investment in the built environment. Somewhere in that is the logic that benefits will trickle down from that investment into the communities that are its subject.

12:45

Like John Wilson, I have experience of the new life for urban Scotland initiative. Some time ago, when I was a community worker in Wester Hailes, I saw a vast amount of money—well over £100 million—come into that community. It was mainly in the form of physical investment, but a lot went into short-term projects that the community had said it would like. They received short-term project funding. A lot of time has passed since then. If you look now at the indicators that drew new life for urban Scotland to Wester Hailes, you will see that all the differentials between Wester Hailes and the rest of Edinburgh are still there, in terms of health and educational inequalities, and unemployment figures. Some things such as the physical environment and housing have improved but, fundamentally, we got it wrong. We have heard about different perceptions of regeneration. If we, in Wester Hailes, had taken just 10 per cent of the investment—£10 million—and turned it into an

endowment under community ownership, we would have been left with something once the bandwagon of the regeneration partnership, or whatever it called itself, moved on to another area. That would have given us some long-term hope and an ability to convert all our work into something that could last in the long term.

We have heard that John Hutchison, from Eigg, and Pauline Gallacher, from Neilston, have managed to cross the fundamental line to ownership and long-term control of their destiny. Their experiences are not about what regeneration has been thus far, which was something—however well intentioned—that was done to communities. The urban regeneration companies have been doing it to communities. One hopes that they have been learning from the past and from Gigha and engaging with communities more sensitively but, nonetheless, they have been doing it to communities.

There is a fundamental difference here, and this is where we move into the area of community-led regeneration—if that is what we are going to call it. Community-led regeneration will be about giving communities ownership and control so that they do not have to ask, in any way, for permission to do what they do. It is a fundamental paradigm shift in how we operate. The state has previously been an enabling state for helping the private sector invest in areas. The state should move to become more enabling of community ownership so that communities can have more control of assets and their futures. That is how the state should adapt to the new era that we are in, which has partly been forced on us by economic circumstances, the lack of public finance and falling land values. We are also in a new era because previous attempts have failed. We need something new and we have success stories from all over the country, such as that from Neilston, where the fundamental feature is community ownership of assets—of land and the means of production.

Fiona Garven: I will come back to the original question about the meaning of regeneration. When we think about a regenerated community we think about strong, thriving social support networks and people who feel connected to the area in which they live. Regenerated communities are also areas where people have opportunities to be involved in and have some influence over what happens to them. We have been following the longitudinal research of the GoWell project, which is being undertaken by the Glasgow centre for population health and the University of Glasgow. The project is working in settled areas and areas of transformational regeneration. It is finding that there is a gap around social regeneration, which is something that we have talked about a lot this morning. We concur with the project's findings—we know that there is a lack of social regeneration.

For us, social regeneration means working in neighbourhoods, bringing people out of their houses and helping them to collectivise around issues and shared concerns and to build around common bonds. That is very much lacking at the moment. We feel that having a strong community means having strong community organisations. However, although there are fantastic examples of good, strong community infrastructure, certain pockets of the most disadvantaged areas of Scotland have quite a weak community infrastructure and, as a result, we want to promote the need for specific community-building interventions to build not only a sense of community and connectedness, but capacity, which means building skills and influence and helping community organisations to do what they do better.

I know that we are short of time, so I will finish by saying that part of our funding problem is that nearly all the funding in Scotland is expected to be put towards activities or physical assets. The fact that very little of it is for building strong organisations or communities or allowing communities to build their own capacity and sustainability represents a real gap.

Frank Sweeney: How do you follow that? Perhaps I will just try to sum up, convener.

I agree with Andy Milne that we should look closely at regeneration in light of the significant cuts in investment that have been made over the past couple of years. I say in response to Margaret Mitchell that, having carried out the Vineburgh social return on investment analysis—I see John Downie smiling; we collaborated with him on the very first social return on investment report, which was for Impact Arts—we certainly feel that, given the funding constraints, not all but certainly some major projects should be subject to that kind of monitoring report. After all, people genuinely need to know what a pound generates in such massive projects; the Impact Arts SROI report—which, as I have said, was the very first in Scotland—showed that every pound of Government funding that had been put into the scheme generated a return of £8.78. Link Housing Association has also carried out this kind of analysis.

As for the original question, having been involved in regeneration for 30 years now, I do not think that its basic principles have changed whatever in that time. Every 10 years or so, we try to rebadge it and come up with new buzz words and everyone says how great it is and everything else. However, regeneration itself has not changed. It is still about community, people, consultation and partnership—by which I mean a partnership that involves local authorities, RSLs, social enterprises, the third sector, the community, the police, the health service and whatever. The

tenemental rehabilitations in which I have been involved for 20-odd years in Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston and, prior to that, up in Glasgow define the basic concept of regeneration. I realise that we have been promoting Vineburgh in north Ayrshire—in fact, as the MSPs who have received our leaflet about it will know, we have been flogging it to death—but the basic principles are exactly the same.

One of the witnesses used a word that is very important in regeneration—and I will add another. Regeneration demands not only commitment but trust from all the parties. You cannot go to public meetings or chap on doors, promise the earth and then not deliver, and delivering regeneration requires skills, money and partnership backing. Moreover, coming back to governance and the amount of money that we are all spending, I believe that we must have transparency. You need all that—and committed staff. Cunninghame Housing Association is managed by a voluntary 16-man board; they employ professional people to provide advice and whatever else, but the fact is that Cunninghame is actually run by the community. Over the past 20 years, the number of its properties has increased from 65 to just under 2,400 and it has a turnover of £9.8 million and an asset base of £145 million. Given the right tools, the right people and the right help, the community can deliver. The same is true across Scotland; Cunninghame Housing Association is no different from other RSLs that operate in similar circumstances.

Andy Milne: I have a couple of brief points. Margaret Mitchell, among others, talked about the necessity of measuring outcomes. One key word that has been used is “happy”. Jimmy McLellan from Bridgeton said that the community is happy now. We need to measure happiness, but can we? Well, yes—Oxfam has done good work with the humankind index as a means of measuring how people feel about themselves. The GoWell project, which Fiona Garven mentioned and which is the biggest regeneration research project in Europe, has something called the WEMWBS system. It does not matter what that means but, basically, it is about how people feel about who they are. It is about their identity, their sense of belonging and purpose and their connectedness in the community. We can measure those outcomes, and that should be the final focus of what we are trying to do.

My second point is about what works. We have been doing regeneration work for a long time. Somebody on my board has a theory that the regeneration world is divided into evolutionists and creationists. The key to the substantial successes in the Highlands and Islands is that people there believe in evolution. For 25 or 30 years, Highlands and Islands Enterprise has been linking up economic, social, cultural and place-based regeneration. The area is not a political hotspot, so it has been allowed to get on with that and has had significant success. Urban central Scotland is a political hotspot where people seem to believe in creationism and that we have to change everything every five years. Politicians have a responsibility in that respect.

Two years ago, the Scottish Parliament had a debate in which there seemed to be broad agreement among all parties on the basic foundations—the resources and policies that need to be in place to support sustainable regeneration. The foundations are there, but we need to build on them in a sustainable and continual way in urban Scotland, rather than change and relabel everything every two or three years for other purposes.

John Wilson: I will try to follow Andy Milne in my train of thought. I am going to be a bit naughty. In my experience of the work on regeneration, one issue that came up was that we had outcomes, which were to be measurable, but also outputs. Some people who have been around for a number of years will know about the debate that took place. An organisation or agency will have a set of outcomes that it wants to achieve, but it might achieve different outputs. The issue is how to measure the outputs. In my experience, we sometimes found that the outputs were better than the set objectives, or outcomes.

I throw that issue open to the panel for discussion. Should we rigidly measure outcomes, or should we look at some of the outputs that might bring better benefits to communities than the set outcomes in the original package or funding programme that was put together and that the agencies are trying to achieve?

An individual whom I worked with in Castlemilk talked about social engineering—he would not admit to that at the time, but in later years, he did. The language of social engineering was used. Officials and agencies saw themselves as manipulating people and socially engineering them into what they perceived to be a community.

Frank Sweeney: John Wilson is right, but I would go a stage further. We should look at the inputs that have an impact and the outcomes. He is right that, sometimes, you look at impacts and say, “Oh, right—I didnae realise that would happen.” You get confused between an impact and an outcome. I have done that for years, but Hugh McGhee, our head of social and economic development, put me right. We have to look at the whole picture, which means what we are putting in, the impact of that, and what comes out at the other end. The social return on investment method does that.

Fiona Garven: I would be concerned about a move back to an exclusively output-driven measurement. We can use outputs as indicators against outcomes, but the difficulty with measuring outputs only is that it does not answer the "So what?" question. There might be X number of people in employment and X number of buildings, but we do not know what actually happened in terms of people's health and social outcomes. A number of tools are available. Social return on investment is a good tool, but it is onerous for small organisations to use—it is quite scientific. There are better ways of doing that.

One of the main failings in how we measure outcomes is that we do not tend to do it in a participatory way. We support participatory approaches to planning and evaluation processes in which all stakeholders are involved and communities are involved from the start.

13:00

John Downie: I agree with Fiona Garven. Recently, I had a discussion about a number of health pilots that involved a local authority official and a health board official presenting on the results of trying to change the lives of people in a community. The issue was that, because of their bureaucracies, they could not work in partnership as well as they should. However, the biggest point of the day was that one of them said, "We didn't ask the community what outcomes they wanted, so we were doomed to failure from the start." We have to get that right. Those outcomes will differ—they might be jobs, access to services, or even the physical environment. One of the issues that has not been addressed, especially in an urban context, is the environmental aspect of space with regard to people's health and wellbeing; someone from Bridgeton talked about that earlier. That issue comes up time and again, and the private sector and the third sector have done great work in that regard.

The Convener: Andy Milne?

Andy Milne: Sorry—I was just listening to what John Downie was saying. I will let Frank Sweeney talk while I gather my thoughts.

Frank Sweeney: John Downie's point is relevant. I give North Ayrshire Council credit because it asked the community in Vineburgh a host of questions during various seminars and so on and came up with a master plan for Vineburgh before it put out the work to competitive tender, which my organisation and three other RSLs were involved in. That is the first time that I have seen a local authority take the time to do that. The council spent 18 months developing the Vineburgh area master plan, conducting roadshows and so on. We did presentations for tenant groups, which helped our presence in the area to take off, because we were part of the first strand of that consultative work. Actually, some of the tenants were on the interview panel that picked us.

Andy Milne: I have overcome my senior moment. One of the reasons for that senior moment was that—like others, I am sure—I find this all terribly complex. I have been involved in this area for 30 years, from grass-roots independent community development work to running SURF, and I know that the issues are complex and that they change all the time.

The point that I was going to make is that that complexity should not mean that we do not act. We should not get lost in trying to create something perfect. We should spot the opportunities for what Phil Hanlon calls authentic action and seize them when they arise. We know what success looks like when we are standing in it and living in it, and we know where the opportunities are. The committee, in its excellent work, should focus on what works, rather than on the perfect.

The Convener: I will take advantage of my position and ask a devil's advocate question of Angus Hardie, who said that the situation in Wester Hailes has not changed.

I live in what was the 35th worst data zone in Scotland—I do not know whether it still is; I think that the SIMD rating might have changed. Mr Hardie, do you think that a huge number of the folk who got the social regeneration aspect of the work that was done in Wester Hailes upped and left and went elsewhere? Do you agree that one of the key aspects of regeneration is ensuring that folk are happy to stay in their communities? Far too often, I have seen folk who have bettered themselves—as they would say—decide that it is time to up and leave.

Angus Hardie: That is true. When the regeneration work took off, Wester Hailes had the tag of being a transit camp—people who moved there were immediately on the waiting list to be moved somewhere else. It was a very unstable population. I do not think that we ever monitored whether that slowed down or continued.

My sense is that, although the place looks much better now, the parts of the scheme that really work are the ones that are run and owned by the local, community-based housing association, which has an entirely different relationship to its tenants than existed previously—it is run by them. As you walk through the scheme, you can tell the bits that people feel ownership of—the feeling is palpable. The sense of ownership is important.

Some people were involved in the decisions around the things that were done to the scheme,

such as the high rises being knocked down and so on, but most people were not. That is a problem.

The sense of ownership is important, as I said. It does not have to be about there being a physical title; what is important is the sense of being in control and having the levers of power at your disposal. Some communities, certainly in the Highlands and Islands, have achieved that. We need to import that into central Scotland.

The Convener: I thank our witnesses for their evidence. You have given us food for thought.

13:06

Meeting continued in private until 13:34.

Available in e-format only. Printed Scottish Parliament documentation is published in Edinburgh by APS Group Scotland.

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk

For details of documents available to
order in hard copy format, please contact:
APS Scottish Parliament Publications on 0131 629 9941.

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000
Textphone: 0800 092 7100
Email: sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

e-format first available
ISBN 978-1-4061-9696-2

Revised e-format available
ISBN 978-1-4061-9711-2

Printed in Scotland by APS Group Scotland