



SURF
Scotland's Regeneration Network

SURF : sharing experience : shaping practice

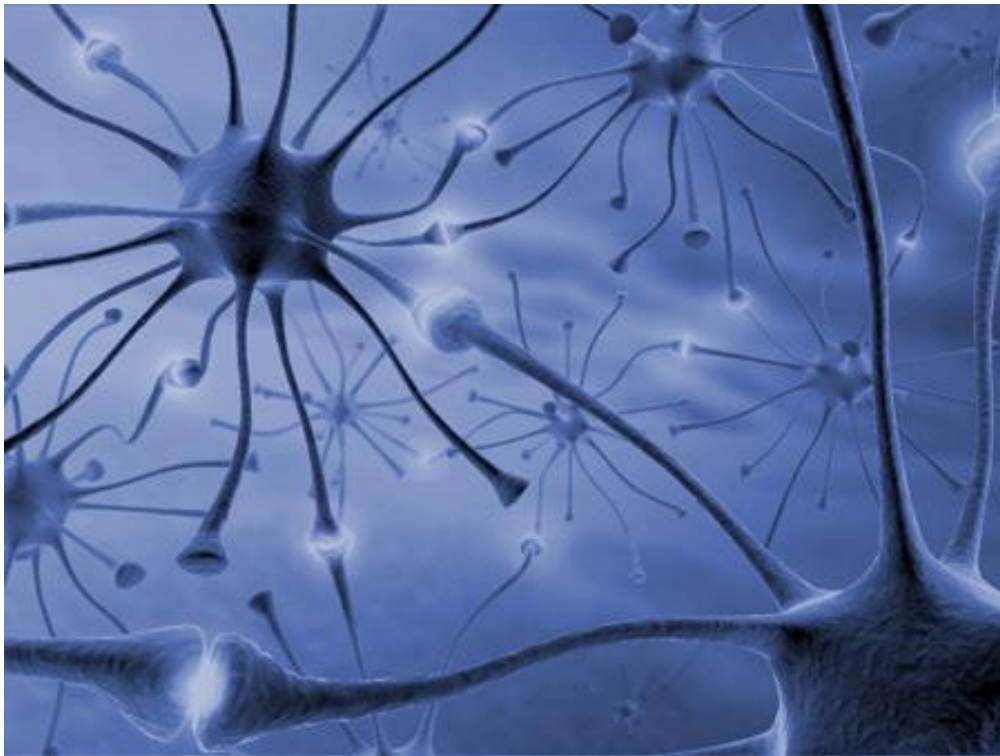
Exploring an 'Alliance for Action' for Dunoon



A SURF Feasibility Study for Highlands & Islands Enterprise

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1. SURF – Scotland’s Regeneration Network

SURF has been commissioned by Highlands & Islands Enterprise to carry out a feasibility study into establishing if there is sufficient cross sector interest in Dunoon for pursuing an Alliance for Action approach there, based on the existing SURF model and activity in Govan, East Kirkcaldy and Rothesay.

The SURF led Alliance for Action is a collaborative activity and shared learning programme that SURF is coordinating in the three case study areas of Govan, Glasgow , East Kirkcaldy, Fife and Rothesay on Bute.

In all of these communities, which have differing contexts but similar challenges, SURF is working with relevant local and national partners to:

- Build local capacity, strengthen resilience, increase practical outcomes and improve the wellbeing of local residents;
- Link local knowledge, initiatives and assets with national networks, policies and resources in support of more coordinated and holistic regeneration activity;
- Draw out transferable learning towards more successful and sustainable policy and practice in community regeneration.

The SURF approach goes beyond conventional short term development solutions to seek out and develop medium and longer term sustainable ones which successfully engage the assets of the people, place and cross sector partners. It focuses on resources and development opportunities that will have a real impact on the way of life in local communities, enhancing the opportunities for all residents, organisations and businesses .

SURF works on the basis that ;

- ❖ regeneration is a long-term challenge which requires sustained and coordinated commitment.
- ❖ it is important to protect and invest in marginal places and projects in challenging times
- ❖ public sector action and resources are of crucial significance and greater use of its powers and assets are required to meet shared regeneration challenges and opportunities
- ❖ there is a need to work **more** in partnership
 - to minimise the degenerative impact of of public sector budget cuts
 - to accrue shared investment benefits from limited resources beyond departmental silos.
- ❖ The knowledge and energies of local groups and initiatives can be encouraged and engaged as a catalysts for more successful and sustainable community regeneration.

2. Dunoon Feasibility Study

Section 2.01 Executive Summary

This summary is based on

- Meeting with Bute and Cowal Area Committee Argyll & Bute Council
- Meeting with Bute and Cowal Community Planning Partnership
- Meetings with Officers of ABC
- Meetings with
 - Community Based Individuals
 - Local Business
 - 3rd Sector Organisations

The above list does not purport to be representative of any of the groups but were individuals identified by the Council and HIE as being individuals who would be interested in being engaged in discussion.

To date, the study has identified 3 main themes.

(a) Current Activity. There is a significant range of activity however

Dunoon's functioning is affected by

- The look of the town. This is recognised to be improving but there appears to be no clear strategy for how to consolidate the improvements made to date and to continue to make progress.
- Lack of modern hotel
- Cost of getting there. The ferry fares were almost universally described as a barrier to growth and the regular uncertainty of the A82 at the 'Rest and be Thankful' contributed to the notion that the town was at the end of a cul-de-sac.
- Current council policies are not felt to be as supportive as they could potentially be in moving the town forward.

(b) People – Dunoon has significant civic life however

Despite there being a large number of voluntary and community groups there are concerns about adequate focus:

- i. There was an acknowledgement that there was no group that had the specific interest in the development the town centre.
- ii. There was no clear vision for the town and its future that people could understand and get behind
- iii. There was no identifiable USP for Dunoon beyond Tourism and an acknowledgement that the Tourism was not achieving as much as it could

(c) Process Dunoon has a number of issues which need to be tackled

Despite being part of mainland Argyll and Scotland, Dunoon and in close proximity to Glasgow, Dunoon can appear as isolated as an island. Many respondents commented that it feels that it is at the end of a geographical and administrative cul-de-sac and is managed (it is said) remotely.

- From the perspective of Argyll and Bute Council,
 - i. It is part of Bute and Cowal Area Committee.
 - ii. In Community Planning terms it is part of Bute and Cowal Community Planning Local Group.

However;

- Forward Dunoon is the Councils local committee
- The Council is introducing a “Town Team” approach to Dunoon
- With Community Planning Partners the Council is examining service delivery options for Dunoon
- The Council has aspirations for a Charrette for Dunoon but at this point in time has not identified the vehicle through which it might be delivered
- Overall, there appears to be activity focussed on Dunoon but uncertainty on the extent to which it is understood in Dunoon or whether this activity is coordinated to best effect for Dunoon.

As a result;

- There are issues of Leadership. Consultees were clear about the need for leadership but no views were expressed as to who it could be or if any individual could provide that leadership, or whether a group or organisation already in existence could fill this relative vacuum. There were a number of views as to who it should not be.
- There was a perceived lack of coordination. There appeared to be no evident relationship between the various investments in the Town which, in themselves, were recognised as significant and which paradoxically were felt not to have much impact on the functioning of the town.
- There is no Masterplan or Action plan for the Town notwithstanding the major capital investments in the Timber Pier, The Burgh Hall and The Queens Hall and the establishment of PA23, the town’s Business Improvement District
- The ongoing and forthcoming major projects are understood as stand-alone projects. The prospect of catalytic collaboration is not yet seen as the larger scale opportunity it could be for future of the town.

(d) Conclusions

Dunoon, like Rothesay seems to a location which would benefit from a more holistic approach to Town Centre Developments. Such an approach could be the basis of a cross sector Regeneration project which sought to maximise the opportunities for, and the benefits of, greater community participation. Many of those interviewed were aware of the Alliance Activity in Rothesay and saw this as a potentially suitable model for Dunoon.

Argyll and Bute Council has indicated that it is considering developing its Town Team approach. With its Community Planning Partners and the Scottish Futures Trust, it is working on a service redesign process which might offer significant advantages for Dunoon and a more co-ordinated and wider regeneration approach.

3. The Study, Objectives and Programme

Section 3.01 Initial Approach

In pursuing its approach to meeting HIE’s request for this feasibility study, SURF proposed the same methodology which had worked well in Rothesay, but tailored to the specific circumstances of Dunoon

Stage 1 Project Scoping

- ❖ Work Planning
- ❖ information gathering
- ❖ Dunoon engagement

Stage 2 Research

- ❖ identifying options for a new approach

Stage 3 Report and recommendations

- ❖ testing options with potential users Developing Alliance Options / Solutions
- ❖ identifying options

Stage 4 Completion

- ❖ ensuring that the proposals are embedded

(a) Stage 1 – Project Scoping

- Meetings with HIE to identify key tasks,
- Meetings with ABC to determine interest in and appetite for the project
- Meetings with Elected Members (To be confirmed at meeting with HIE)
- Meetings with Community Groups
- senior stakeholder level workshop, to identify the various opportunities for developing an alliance approach within Rothesay

(b) Stage 2 - Research

- HIE Reports on Dunoon
- ABC Reports on Dunoon
- Other Relevant reports (as identified by HIE)
- Mainstream Budgets (not pursued as a result of the separate CPP/SFT service redesign initiative)

(c) Stage 3 – Report and Recommendations Options Development Meeting with HIE to

- Report on viability and opportunities, identifying
 - Interest in Alliance Model
 - issues and options
- identify methods of taking forward developments
- identify potential barriers
- development of implementation plan

- clarity about deliverability
- Evaluate potential users’ views.
- Meetings with Stakeholders in Dunoon to discuss findings

(d) Stage 4 - Completion

We would aim to achieve consensus from key stakeholders on the implementation plan. Strategic goals and key performance indicators would be developed and a process established for delivering an Alliance strategy. As part of this work, key recommendations could be made on integrating the new strategy with existing Council, HIE and partner agency strategies, including the Community Plan and Single Outcome agreement; as well as addressing the ongoing leadership of both the strategy and implementation plan.

Section 3.02 Process

In broad terms, the outline detailed above has been achieved

Following a helpful meeting with the Senior Management Team at Argyll and Bute Council, the Council’s support for the Feasibility process both in Rothesay and Dunoon was established. At this stage the Council identified Fergus Murray as our senior level contact we were assisted by a variety of Council staff at a local level.

Through these colleagues we were able to arrange meetings within the Council, Bute and Cowal Area Committee and extensive contacts at the local level in Dunoon. Our thanks are due to these individuals for their support and for their efforts on our behalf.

Likewise, through Kerrien Grant at HIE we were able to access HIE staff and reports and were pointed towards local businesses whose support was very welcome.

To date, the process has involved face to face interviews with a number of individuals drawn from the Community Council, the 3rd sector, local small businesses, major employers, members of the Community Planning Partnership and officials of both HIE and Argyll and Bute Council. In addition to this, there have been several telephone interviews. All of these submissions have been detailed and well thought through and are a really helpful contribution to the process. This group does not purport to be representative of the community but is rather a snapshot of the views of significant individuals in the community. SURF would like to record its thanks to all of those who contributed by whatever method.

SURF has approached this commission from HIE by asking the following questions;

- Which is the best way to improve the social, economic and physical environment in Dunoon?
- Can Dunoon mobilise local knowledge, skills and enthusiasm into a coherent approach to regeneration?
- Is there a way in which the special character and heritage of Dunoon can be protected consistent with efforts to approach modernise its economic functioning and establish sustainable economic growth?
- Is it possible for Dunoon, the private sector and the public sector acting as local partners establish and articulate a shared vision for the town?
- Which approach to delivery suits the Dunoon circumstances and how does the Town ensure that its chosen approach can be sustained over time?

- Can the “Alliance for Action” approach enhance Dunoon’s approach to regeneration?

4. Dunoon: Trends, Drivers, Conditions and Prospects

Section 4.01 Dunoon in Context

Prior to embarking work on Dunoon, it is necessary to put the economic functioning of Dunoon in context. The following tables show the position of Dunoon in comparison with the rest of Scotland.

Comparator	Dunoon	Scotland
Population Change 2001 - 2011	+1.6%	+4.6%
Population over 65	23.8%	16.8%
Economically Active	64.4%	69%
Part Time Employees	21.4%	19.3%
Claimant Count *	5.8%	3.7%
JSA Claimants (m) 16-24*	8.1%	5.4%
JSA Claimants (m) 25-64*	4.8%	3.3%
Out of Work Benefits (working age population)	20.2%	12.9%

Source HIE Dunoon PROFILE May 2014

Additional significant statistics for Dunoon were that, relative to the Highlands and Islands and Scotland, Dunoon had:

- A higher share of employment in caring, leisure and other services, sales and customer service, and elementary occupations.
- A lower share of employment in professionals, associate professional and technical occupations, and process, plant and machine operative occupations

These figures suggest that there are significant issues which require to be addressed. Whilst all of the figures are significant, there is, perhaps, one which stands out in particular. At a time when the population of Scotland rose by almost 5%, the population of Dunoon rose by 1.6%.

The issues of the small towns in the West of Scotland were recognised by the Government some time ago.

“A decade from now if present trends continue, Glasgow will (at least proportionately) no longer be Scotland’s great urban problem; rather it will be the small towns of the West.....there is a wide arc of towns that will be losing some of their economic base, but will be unable to compete with thriving service growth at the core of the City Region.

We need a new vision for these towns set in the context of their city-region to deal with these emergent issues.

Review of Scotland’s Cities- The Analysis, Scottish Executive 2002

The Scottish Agricultural College 2011 vulnerability index of Scottish Towns listed Dunoon as amongst the most vulnerable of Scottish small towns

The Argyll and Bute Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement recognises the issues detailed above and contains a number of targets for dealing with these issues the next 10 years. The process for dealing with these issues suggests that there may be scope to include Alliance for action within the overall strategies.

Outcome	10-year aspiration	Progress to be made in 3 years
1) In Argyll and Bute the Economy is thriving	Regeneration activity in Dunoon and Rothesay has transformed them into thriving local economies	A clear strategic and holistic focus on the Regeneration challenges in Dunoon and Rothesay will begin to show positive results and opportunities through improved connectivity being realized, increasing activity in the housing market and inward investment success
6) people live in safer stronger communities	Our town centers are thriving and vibrant. Regeneration of the built environment enhances the competitiveness of Argyll and Bute	Communities and public sector partners work collaboratively to make the best use of our natural and built environment and our culture and heritage with clear plans for development in place and investment underway

Section 4.02 Feasibility Study

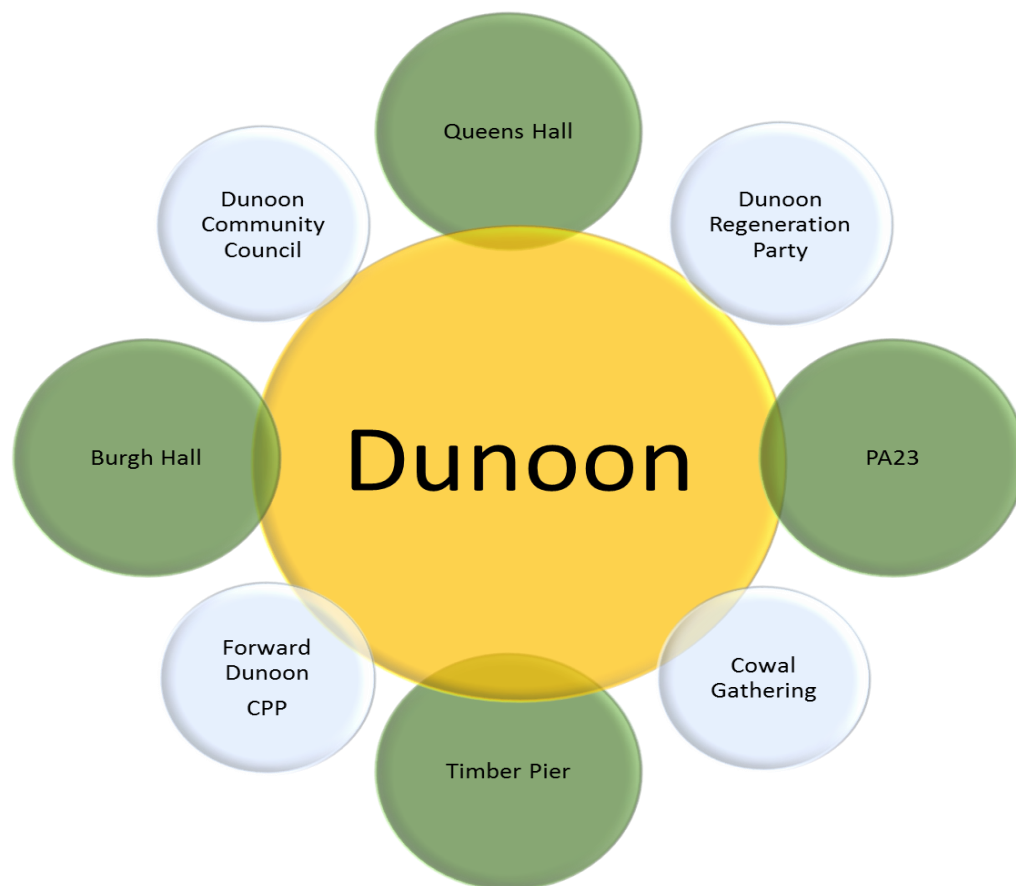
The feasibility study process has involved face to face interviews with a number of individuals drawn from the Community Council, the 3rd sector, local small businesses, major employers, members of the Community Planning Partnership and officials of both HIE and Argyll and Bute Council. In addition to having an open conversation, the interviews sought to identify the 5 or 6 key issues as identified by the respondents.

Previous studies have been conducted, including the PA23 BID consumer survey, which indicated that Dunoon is perceived as a TIRED town where there is little to do and, The Scottish Agricultural College Report in May 2012 put Dunoon equal last among 90 Scottish rural towns in terms of its vulnerability.

In broad terms there was agreement amongst all the respondents that the major issues facing were: Current Activity, Revitalising the Town Centre and Tourism

(a) Current Activity – There is a significant range of activity however

Dunoon’s development is affected by the range of significant activity which is uncoordinated and appears disconnected.



PA23 Dunoon BID

The aim of the BID is to deliver a series of projects and services that will improve the trading environment in Dunoon to benefit businesses, their customers, clients and visitors.

The objectives of the BID are:

- To create a well promoted and vibrant town centre.
- To increase customer spend
- To attract more visitors
- To increase the number and size of events.
- To create a place in which businesses thrive.
- To raise Dunoon's profile by improving people's perception of the town centre.
- To provide a strong local voice for businesses in the BID area.
- To help businesses make cost savings.

In pursuit of this the BID created "Dunoon Presents" to bring events to the area. In the period between May 2016 – October 2016 Dunoon Presents has a schedule of 7 events on its website.

Dunoon Burgh Hall

Dunoon Burgh Hall Trust is in the midst of its project to reclaim what is one of the town's most important civic buildings. A major refurbishment programme is underway completion is scheduled by Autumn 2016. Dunoon Burgh Hall Trust has delivered a growing programme of events, exhibitions and activities and plans are now well developed for the major refurbishment needed to improve the building significantly for the future.

Dunoon Burgh Hall Trust is committed to returning the Burgh Hall to the heart of the community as a sustainable, accessible arts-led venue and will achieve this by encouraging and inspiring current and future generations to engage in diverse cultural opportunities and work together to create a thriving facility. There have been 7 events thus far this year

Dunoon Wooden Pier

In the past few years, the pier has been undergoing extensive structural repair and refurbishment carried out by Argyll & Bute Council. Argyll and Bute Council has spent £2.83million making structural repairs and refurbishing buildings on Dunoon Pier.

The original pier was built in 1835, but the current structure dates back to 1895. The Council committed to exploring any and all opportunities to preserve this iconic structure for future generations.

The Bute and Cowal Area Committee of Argyll and Bute Council wishes to work in partnership with the Dunoon Pier Community Trust (DPCT) to ensure that the historic Dunoon Pier is refurbished and brought back into use in a manner that reflects the community’s views on what the pier should be used for. There also exists the possibility of examining how the Pier might make a contribution to marina type developments.

Queens Hall Refurbishment

A project based on over £8million investment .The project will revitalise the Queen’s Hall, giving people exciting gathering place both inside and outside. Construction of a new purpose built fitness & training suite, a new home for Dunoon’s Public Library, co-located with Skills Development Scotland, refurbishment of the main auditorium, lighting and sound systems, ‘Green’ rooms, provision of a children’s soft play area, catering facilities - cafeteria, functions, conferences, weddings - a new road layout, new public realm with paving and soft landscaping

Dunoon Regeneration Party

Based on a Facebook initiative, the group describes its page as” A page designed for the people of Dunoon, Argyll. We want our town to be beautiful again and with people power behind us we can achieve so much”

The group have taken on a number of tasks in Dunoon which attract contributions and participation from people in the area. The Jingle Bus event which was recently taken over by the Dunoon Regeneration Party after the existing organiser was no longer able to continue with the event.

- Rose Gardens Dunoon – Works have been undertaken to improve the general look of the area and proposals are in place for the Dunoon Regeneration Party to purchase the gardens, local library and public toilets in order to create a community centre and pavilion for use by the local community.
- Crazy Golf, West Bay Dunoon – Members of the DRP undertook a clean-up of the crazy golf area. The Dunoon Regeneration party are currently in the process of forming a SCIO which will lead to them forming a community development trust.

Dunoon Community Council

Dunoon Community Council have a remit for a significant range of activities in Dunoon.

The Community Council’s Strategic Plan has as one of its components a 10-point plan on Town Centre Regeneration. This document spells out in some detail the options which the Community Council wishes to pursue.

The Cowal Highland Gathering

The Cowal Games attracts more than 3,500 competitors, with many coming from overseas countries, including Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Dunoon regularly welcomes around 15,000 to 20,000 visitors for the Games, doubling the town's population for the weekend. In 2016 Cowal Highland Gathering will be held on 25th, 26th and 27th August.

(b) Revitalising the access to the town centre

- i. The built environment of the town is recognised to be improving but there appears to be no clear strategy for how to consolidate the improvements made to date and to continue to make progress. Changes are proposed as part of the Queens hall developments
- ii. The absence of a “Town Plan for Dunoon is perceived as a barrier to community participation in making improvements to the Town Centre, there appears to be no clear direction of travel which can be agreed on. The roles and responsibilities of the BID are understood in part but there appears to be a disconnect between the BID and the wider community
- iii. Developments within the town are welcomed but there is an agreed perception that, the developments of the Burgh Hall, Queens Hall, Timber Pier and BID could be major catalysts for the regeneration of the town if it consolidated within a wider plan.
- iv. The Council’s role in the Queens Hall and Timber Pier are recognised and other significant schemes is recognised and welcomed

(c) Tourism

It is perhaps worth noting that the issue of Tourism was one which was mentioned by most people interviewed. Tourism was recognised as being one of the routes by which Dunoon might deal with some of its issues. Tourism is recognised as a sustainable development themes which has become a popular economic development tool in many countries today. Tourism related activities are widely regarded as key tools for rural development, especially in locations such as Dunoon. Locations such as Dunoon with specific natural or social cultural appeal have strong potential for attracting tourists from close or far off areas and this can have significant role in economic development ***if well planned and integrated.***

The Visit Scotland July 2013 Tourism Development Framework for Scotland noted 2 key drivers and 8 key themes

Improving the Customer Journey

- Theme 1 - Digital Connectivity
- Theme 2 - Transport
- Theme 3 - Accommodation
- Theme 4 - Food & Drink

Providing Authentic Experiences

Theme 5 – Nature, Heritage & Activities

Theme 6 - Destination Towns & Cities

Theme 7 - Business Tourism

Theme 8 - Events & Festivals

Dunoon interviews suggested that there were several responses to the issue of tourism.

- Digital Connectivity

Dunoon has several websites which seek to attract attention. A simple google search identifies Cowal Marketing Group, Dunoon Presents, Visit Scotland and others. Each of these present information but it is difficult to find one website which is prominent on Google and presents all of the activities in Dunoon in one location.

- Transport Issues.

The term which was used by several people was “cul-de-sac”, intended to convey the notion that Dunoon was not on the road to anywhere else and that tourists had to want to be there. The vehicle ferry going to Hunters Quay was felt by some to be part of the problem in that Dunoon was now by passed and that therefore there had to be sufficient activities and attractions in the Town to bring them and hold them.

The example quoted was that of coach trip operators who had taken Dunoon of their itinerary’s citing the town’s lack of attractions.

As the **Argyll Economic Forum report** noted, *“A recent HIE commissioned study into transport connectivity, which is still not complete, has considered the road infrastructure, (as well as fixed links and other transport modes). It is expected to recommend various upgrades. These are in addition to the vital work to upgrade the main road entries into Argyll, the A82 and A83. If we are to achieve more off-season tourism, it is essential that Argyll and Bute is viewed as having open access in all weather conditions. The A83 problem, with an increasing number of closures from landslides, needs to be fixed once and for all. It is Argyll’s front door. The Scottish Government has so far spent £10 million on tackling the problem – only to have the Rest and Be Thankful closed again at Christmas 2015. A permanent solution is absolutely required. On the whole, the ferry services are viewed as a success story in Argyll and Bute with increasing passenger and vehicle numbers over recent years. That said, there are challenges including capacity, booking facilities, reliability, the age of the fleet, and the pier infrastructure. The town centre passenger ferry link between Dunoon and Gourock however is also a concern for the people of Dunoon”.*

The ferry fares were almost universally described as a barrier to growth. Alongside the issue of cost, the reliability of the ferry service particularly in the winter was seen as an issue which made it difficult for people to commute from the island and which might have an impact on the population issues. Transport Scotland has now published the Scottish Ferry Services: Ferries Plan (2013 - 2022) which sets out the future of ferry services until 2022. This plan recognises that “Enhancing the take-up of Scotland’s ferry services and related infrastructure are key to supporting business and employment opportunities generally as well as the visitor economy”. Its section on Dunoon will not however meet every aspiration for improvement mentioned by the respondents.

In addition to issues about the ferries and the Rest and be Thankful, some respondents mention their interest in pursuing the option of a fixed link from Dunoon.

HIE to undertake a study in relation to transport connectivity and the economy in Argyll and Bute with a particular focus on the southern part of the area, including Bute and Cowal.

- Accommodation Lack of modern hotel, in so far as tourism was concerned, the lack of a significant modern hotel, a destination in itself, was cited as a major barrier to tourism.

Other barriers to Tourism were described as

- The lack of a specific USP for Dunoon tourism
- The lack of a joined up approach to Tourism on the part of the Public Sector.
- A tourism approach which was backward looking and nostalgic

There appeared to be a need to liberalise some of the conditions and restrictions surrounding the tourism industry and support entrepreneurialism which may aid growth by bringing skilled, understanding entrepreneurs to Dunoon allowing them to use their ideas and capital and develop the area as a viable tourism site with benefits for locals and visitors alike. An important element of this is that to embrace the rural heritage and natural environment as a way of facilitating sustainable tourism promotes based on the success of some of the events promoted by Dunoon Presents but developing these as part of a series of events linked in to other activities in the Town and local area.

In relation to Visit Scotland’s themes 5, 6, 7, and 8 Dunoon has some significant advantages and possibilities. As identified above, many people commented that the natural and historic environment around Dunoon was without parallel and that events such as the Cowal Gathering are significant for the locality.

The recent activity development by Dunoon Presents is an example of seeking to use the natural environment as an attraction to Dunoon and to develop it as a destination. The Burgh Hall is putting on events which whilst appearing local might also attract visitors.

The issues are of coordination, sustainability and gathering Community support. Dunoon’s outdoor activities are one of the attractions for the area but resources and facilities to support the development of these activities require further exploration if they are to make a sustainable impact on the area.

There are organisations which aim to deal with the issues of coordination one being the Argyll and the Islands Tourism Co-operative (AITC) which aims to take a lead role in the delivery of a sustainable, private sector led tourism model in order to grow the sector in Argyll.

It was set up in 2012 as the delivery arm of the Argyll and the Isles Strategic Tourism Partnership (AISTP). This partnership aims to bring about a step-change in Argyll of a scale that will ensure the sustainability of the sector into the future. AITC will deliver strong collaborative work between individual enterprises, leading to effective local marketing groups and sectoral networks

d) Focus

- i) There was an acknowledgement that there was no single group or body which had the specific interests in the development the town centre.
 - There are a significant number of groups in the area, large and small. There are also 3 significant capital projects in the town within the same time frame and a Business

improvement district whilst not quite working in isolation have not yet developed a coordinated approach.

- Despite this significant level of activity within the area, there is no organisation, other than the community council, focussed on Dunoon
 - Almost all of the respondents thought that a group, an alliance, Community led, focused on the town in a holistic way was necessary to drive any meaningful change in Dunoon.
- ii) There was no clear vision for the town and its future that people could understand and get behind
1. One of the most significant issues was that there was no cohesive clear vision for the Town.
 2. It was generally agreed that in the absence of a shared vision, a variety of projects and strategies could be pursued in isolation and potentially of each other.
 3. Notwithstanding the significant endeavours of all of the groups such as the Dunoon Regeneration Party and the Community Council it was felt that more could be done if there was a shared vision for the town.
- iii) There was no identifiable USP for the area other than Tourism and an acknowledgement that the Tourism was not achieving as much as it could
- Dunoon issues in respect of the Tourism market and the response to it has been mentioned elsewhere. There was a view however that,
 - a. Despite the significant and obvious assets in and around Dunoon, their potential was not being exploited.
 - b. The agencies responsible for supporting and promoting tourism did not appear, to the respondents, to have a coordinated response.
 - c. Dunoon’s image was perceived to be a problem in some market, at the end of the road, difficult to get to, and not competing particularly well in a modern tourism market.
 - d. Beyond Tourism, the respondents felt that it was difficult to imagine what businesses could be attracted to Dunoon at present, particularly if those businesses were heavily dependent on the ferries. Little appeared to have been done to explore alternative businesses or companies could be attracted to Dunoon.

It was broadly agreed that there was scope for engaging the community in the process of defining a new future for Dunoon.

e) Process

Dunoon faces a number of issues which need to be tackled

- Dunoon, despite being part of mainland Argyll demonstrates many of the characteristics of being an Island with specific needs this is particularly so in relation to access by ferry, the time tables and costs of ferries. Adding this to the roads issues, as others have noted, can lead to a sense of isolation It also, to many feels like it is at the end of a cul-de-sac and that there have to be attractions to bring people to Dunoon. It feels managed (it is said) remotely.

From the perspective of HIE, NHS and Argyll and Bute Council’s position it is managed from Lochgilphead. In addition, from the perspective of Argyll and Bute Council,

- i. It is part of Bute and Cowal Area Committee.
- ii. In Community Planning terms it is part of Bute and Cowal Community Planning Local Group.

However;

- Forward Dunoon is the Councils local committee
- The Council is introducing a “Town Team” approach to Dunoon
- With Community Planning Partners the Council is examining service delivery options for Dunoon
- The Council has aspirations for a Charrette for Dunoon but at this point in time has not identified the vehicle through which it might be delivered
- As a result, there appears to be activity focussed on Dunoon but uncertainty on the extent to which it is understood in Dunoon or whether this activity is coordinated to best effect for Dunoon.

As a result;

- There are issues of Leadership. Consultees were clear about the need for leadership but no views were expressed as to who it could be or if any individual could provide that leadership or whether a group or organisation already in existence could fill this leadership vacuum. In terms of identifying an individual from the community, there were some recognised difficulties.
 - i. Would the individual have the backing of the community?
 - ii. What process would be used to identify the individual
 - iii. Would the individual have sufficient support to pursue the task
- There were a number of views as to who it should not be. Some took the view that the legitimate leadership role should lie with the Council. It was not clear how this might be achieved with 3 elected members on Cowal.
- There was a perceived lack of coordination. There appeared to be no relationship between the various investments in the Town which, in themselves, were recognised as significant and which paradoxically were felt not to have much impact on the functioning of the town.
- There is no Masterplan or Action plan for the Town notwithstanding the major investment in the Wooden Pier, The Queens Hall and the Burgh hall. The absence of a plan is felt to be a significant issue which can give the impression that things happen in a haphazard way based on the aspiration of individual groups or the availability of funding.
- This comment was not made to denigrate the efforts of individual groups, far from it, but was expressed as a desire to take a wider town based approach to the process.
- The catalyst roles of all of the major projects are understood as stand-alone projects however they appear to be isolation from each other and the prospect for collaboration is not yet seen as the opportunity it can be for the town. It was broadly acknowledged that the investment by the council and its partners had, over time, been substantial. The major issue raised by the respondents was that notwithstanding these efforts, there appeared to be little connection between them as far as could be ascertained by the community. There remained much to be done in the Town but no clear method by which the Community might influence the choice of priorities.

5. Dunoon’s Regeneration is there a Vision?

Almost all of the Consultees agreed with the notion that Dunoon required a shared vision for its future and that the wider Community should be involved in the development of that vision. One process which might identify that vision is the use of the Scottish Governments Charrette programme as a vehicle working towards a Town Centre Action Plan which could develop a shared vision and could highlight a range of proposals and opportunities identified by the community and stakeholders that can deliver regeneration in the town centre. The Council has indicated an interest in pursuing this without being specific about the vehicle which delivers, this creates the opportunity for fundamental community involvement in a charrette and subsequent action plans.

The purpose of the Action Plan could be to provide a steer for the projects that could be delivered should funding opportunities arise, or where planning applications might help to make these a reality. The Plan could also take account of the opportunities that may be presented through changes to public service provision in Dunoon, for example the work currently being undertaken by the Community Planning partnership in relation to facilities. There is also a need to protect and enhance the town’s significant built heritage for the benefit of both local community and the tourism industry.

Although the current economic climate makes it difficult to deliver town centre improvements, this plan could be important because it could place Dunoon in a strong position to compete for funding opportunities that arise. It also enables community groups to lead the regeneration of the town centre, working closely with public sector partners and land owners. It is not appropriate here to state what that vision should be in the absence of the Community having been invited to define that vision, it is nonetheless appropriate to describe what that vision might need to take account of and which strategies might be appropriate.

Without a common, agreed vision, then everyone and or each group is left to their own devices to imagine one—a scenario that results in not insignificant proposals being pursued with considerable effort on the part of those pursuing them producing meaningful and worthwhile outcomes. However, a common understanding of the vision allows all stakeholders to align their improvement efforts. It is the absence this shared vision which was commented on by most of the Consultees many of whom also commented on the difficulty of establishing a vision which was predicated on the issues significant to one group.

Despite there having been previous attempts at a coordinated approach to the issues of the town, there was an almost universal view that people would support another approach to the issues. Many of the respondents were able to point to previous example of attempts that failed or were never followed through. It was suggested that some of these efforts failed because they lacked broad support, were not embedded in the community or were not pursued. Any new approach would need support and have broad support from and be based in Dunoon. There was a view that facilitation might help move issues forward.

The Argyll Economic Forum report 2016 noted that “There is a need for an officer to focus on the wider regeneration of the area: we noted the clear energy supplied by these individuals in Campbeltown and Helensburgh. Such facilitation might also include the day to day support, such as that which, in the first instance, helped develop the group created to drive Rothesay forward.” Several respondents took the view that, in view of the above, and the process of developing a new strategy for Dunoon would benefit from external facilitation.

The consequences of this absence of coordination, engagement and facilitation of local people has been identified elsewhere.

"There are numerous examples of physical urban regeneration which have failed to improve wellbeing.....because local people were not also part of the journey. Community-led design is a design process that recognises the value of engaging and involving in the transformation process and which place people at the heart of the decision-making process. In community-led design, the involvement of citizens goes beyond consultation: local people are actively involved in every stage from vision setting to implementation, while professionals such as architects and planners take on new roles as facilitators and enablers rather than directors and managers. "

Carnegie Trust Places love People 2014

To develop this vision and the strategies for the town there is a need to include the significant projects already underway but to also find a mechanism by which these projects can be considered in terms of establishing a foundation upon which the future development of Dunoon can take place, acknowledging the rich history, the built heritage and the tremendous asset of the natural environment surrounding the town, analysing the legacy of previous endeavours and learning lessons from the past

In the absence of a clearly defined, shared vision, it is likely that the mistakes and false starts of the past will be recreated.

To avoid this being repeated one of the early tasks would be the creation of a vision for Dunoon which was based on the Community having the major role in the development of that vision.

6. Framing a Transformational Strategy

The fact that Dunoon has not yet established a vision for itself, does not mean that there is not agreement on a series of Strategic Themes have emerged through the consultations which could form the basis of work towards a shared vision.

1. Defining Dunoon

- a. Built Form: Place-mending
 - i. Dunoon’s Cars project,
- b. Building on a Sense of Place.
- c. Redevelopment of significant buildings
- d. Increased public use of space
- e. Community and Voluntary organisations involved in reusing spaces vacated by other organisations moving into the Queens Hall

It is generally accepted that the most successful public spaces are those that community play a role in developing and shaping and that offer continued opportunities for participation. There is work underway deal with some of the built environment issues in Dunoon. Other opportunities might usefully be pursued via a Charrette

2. Distinctive Dunoon –Strategies to create a Distinctive Town for Residents and Visitors

- a. Emphasis on Culture and Environment
 - i. Culture is key to our sense of identity as individuals in our communities
 - ii. Cultural factors encourage visitors and locals to visit towns, part of growing town economies

- iii. Using the natural environment and the opportunities that it offers as a way of developing a USP for Dunoon
- iv. Meeting and gathering spaces, sense of history and progress, area identity and imagery.

Acknowledging that the Burgh hall and Queens’s hall will offer different opportunities for the development of Art and Cultural Activities.

3. Developing Dunoon – Driving Enterprise and Innovation.

- a. Supporting Existing Business
- b. Investing in Business Infrastructure
- c. Enterprise, Business Start Ups
- d. Skills

In Dunoon, work with Argyll College, HIE, Vital Spark and the Council

4. Dynamic Dunoon– engaging Dunoon’s Community Promoting an Inclusive Community

In their report on Resilience and Public Health, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) argues that 'social infrastructure' – the physical structures that allow communities to come together, network and build relationships (social capital) are critical to 'enabl[ing] people to improve the quality of their lives'. This is because they support the development of so-called 'resilient communities' – communities with the ability to 'bounce-back' and adapt successfully to economic, social and environmental change, uncertainty and adversity.

"Approaches such as this are required to build consensus across the 3 major stakeholder groups, Community, Private Sector and Public sector and encourage participants to get involved in the process early. These approaches could benefit by taking regeneration out of 'mainstream' public sector activity and making it an activity for the whole town to be involved in. The establishment of a strategic plan supported by the local community and a range of stakeholders may provide a lasting mandate as the local political landscape changes over time."

Renaissance Towns Scottish Government 2010

There are many examples of transformational strategies which are highlighted and promoted by many organisations, including the Scottish Government. The government has in the recent past promoted "renaissance towns" as one method of encouraging Town Centre Regeneration.

• Learning Point 69 Renaissance Towns 2010

- i. This learning point was developed from an event held in February 2010 to explore the Renaissance Towns approach to regeneration. The approach focuses on re-imagining what a town will be like in the future and is focussed, in part, on setting a long term vision. It recognises that the community should be involved in the regeneration process from the outset and that there should be shared decision making and that the approach should take a whole town holistic approach. Options derived from this approach include
 1. Town Team cross cutting group of citizens, stakeholders and decision makers
 2. "Charrettes" open planning events involving the whole community drawing in expert help.
 3. Town Charter, a mandate for the Town which can be adopted by the Council as supplementary planning advice.

The more local example of the Development of the Alliance for Action on Bute, now developed into Bute Island Alliance has shown what can be done in an area similar to Dunoon when time is taken to support community capacity building and allowing space and support for the group to develop into an organisation which can bring an entrepreneurial vision to a town.

7. Reviewing the Alliance for Action Options, Conclusions and Recommendations

Focus and empowerment will be required to drive the implementation of an Action Plan and development and attainment of a vision.

To be successful, local community partners must be fully engaged ensure that they have the organisational capacity to deliver. ‘Making things happen’ is not always about physical projects-it can be about people and commitment.

SURF’s Alliance for Action activity in Govan, Kirkcaldy and Rothesay has already produced significant benefits in enhanced practical cooperation and coordinated investments in the two case study communities that are facing multiple social and economic challenges. There has been enthusiastic participation in the Alliance for Action approach, which seems to substantiate a generally increased level of consensus on the wisdom of collaboration for achieving added value on shared aims. This appears to be built on a now widely ingrained orthodoxy of partnership processes which has been actively promoted in advice, legislation and practice by the Scottish Government over recent decades.

Significant added value in partnership activity is achievable via the role of a generally respected ‘no axe to grind’ network like SURF which can take responsibility for supporting a coordinated and focused approach to collaborative place-based regeneration. Investors and policy-makers appear to appreciate the opportunity to engage with the reality of a local regeneration context in a ‘safe’ coordinated collaboration. Funders appear to take reassurance from the shared commitment and responsibility of other investors. Policy-makers welcome a broader understating of the local dynamics that affect the viability and interaction of their approach. Many local players are encouraged by the level and broad spectrum of interested parties engaged via the Alliance process. That breadth more accurately reflects their view of the extent and interactivity of local regeneration challenges. For most communities, it stands in favourable contrast to the conventional connections between individual funders, policy-makers, places and specific projects.

Under the shared Alliance for Action focus, there have been instances of improved investment efficiency and cooperative operating climate through the diplomatic re-engagement of some historically disconnected local projects and personalities. Similarly, there have been useful examples where debilitating misunderstandings and shortcomings around effective representation and accountability have been addressed.

SURF’s experience is that advantages for all parties of a diplomatic and catalytic role (such as that of SURF’s in the Alliance for Action) raises the question of how such a function might be replicated to achieve greater levels of constructive collaboration and mutually beneficial investments in other areas. Dunoon has several factors which suggest that an Alliance for Action could work.

From the Communities perspective, within Dunoon there is a high level of consensus on the issues facing the town and, from those consulted an agreement that there could be much to be gained from approaching the issues on the basis an Alliance for Action or something analogous to that.

The community planning partnership has identified the major issues and has set targets for their resolution through the single outcome agreement.

In addition to the significant capital resources allocated in the recent past, Argyll and Bute Council has allocated resources a Community Development worker to work on Bute and Cowal is in place with plans for an officer to focus on regeneration activity. The Council is also considering adopting a team town approach to Dunoon and has recently started working with Scottish Futures Trust and Architecture Scotland, looking at the process of rationalising its property assets in conjunction with Community Planning Partners as part of the process of service redesign. The Council acknowledge that there is a need for a holistic joined up approach and the capacity to facilitate such working.

As indicated, the Scottish Government’s Town Centre Action plan contains policy initiatives and strategies designed to encourage Town Centre Regeneration. Taken together the three pillars of support, the Community, the Community Planning Partnership and the supportive policy environment suggest that an Alliance for Action could be successfully introduced in Dunoon. If an Alliance for Action is to be developed and succeed in Dunoon it will need the support of the wider public sector and Community Planning Partnership to do so.

Notwithstanding the support from HIE for the feasibility study, the financial resources for supporting the development of an alliance for action in Dunoon should not be the responsibility of any single agency. Accordingly, delivery of the full Alliance programme needs to be achieved by support from a range of sources and will be best attained where the Community Planning Partners coordinate their activities and efforts to facilitate the development of a new approach to Dunoon as much to demonstrate what can be achieved by local coordination and small scale funding.

It is therefore strongly recommended that a priority should be the creation of a short term facilitation structure to support the development of an Alliance for Action in Dunoon as was successfully delivered in Rothesay.

To be successful, it requires the full ‘buy-in’ of all parties to the principle. In this respect Argyll and Bute Council is key player as is HIE

The SURF model which has worked successfully in Rothesay is suggested as a model for Dunoon. In this context, the funding from HIE enabled SURF to commit 50 days to enabling the establishment of an Alliance with a further 50 days committed to engaging a local facilitator to develop the Alliance to the next stage.

SURF is of the opinion that the Alliance model works best when it is independent of the statutory agencies and places the community at the heart of the process. This is one option – there will be others that the partners may wish to explore, as the Alliance develops, the 2nd phase support can be delivered in a variety of ways and there is scope for discussion around how this might be achieved.

SURF has been delighted to have been involved in Dunoon’s Feasibility and would be equally delighted to discuss how an Alliance for Action might be developed in Dunoon.