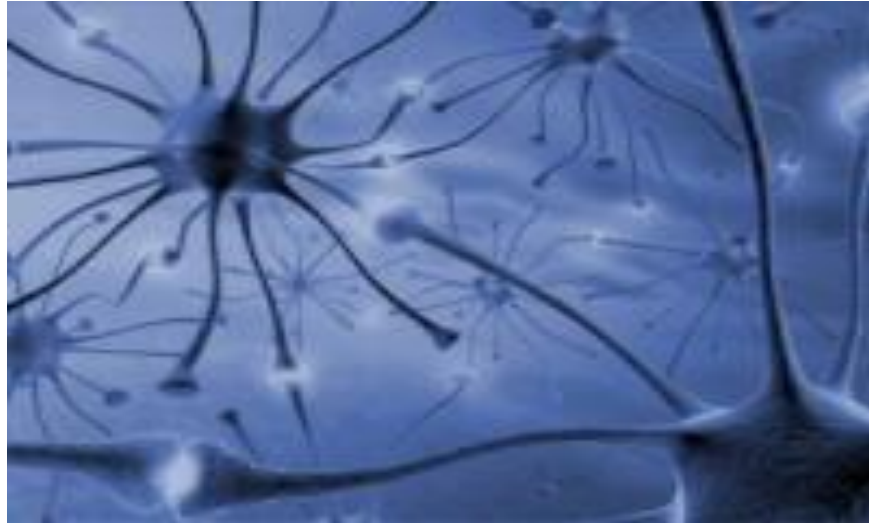




SURF
Scotland's Regeneration Forum

SURF : sharing experience : shaping practice



Alliance for Action Learning Event – Autumn 2016: Heritage

“Heritage is a powerful mirror. Those who do not see themselves reflected in it are therefore excluded” Professor Stuart Hall, Arts Council of England

In 2016, SURF’s Alliance for Action held a shared learning sessions for cross-sector partners and people living and working in the communities of Govan, Glasgow and the Gallatown, Kirkcaldy. This report explains the background, context and content of the session and records the learning and outputs achieved.

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A Mary Barbour maquette now complete in statue form

Background (Alliance for Action)

In 2011-12 SURF delivered a participative study on responses to recession-based policy decisions in two contrasting case study disadvantaged areas: Govan in Glasgow and the Gallatown in Kirkcaldy, Fife. That collaborative investigation was supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) and the Scottish Government. The research was presented as 'Reality, Resources, Resilience' - a report published by the JRF as a SURF-authored Programme Paper in January 2013.¹

The Alliance for Action was developed in response to the research findings, which had identified a need for a more coordinated approach towards connecting assets and investments from a wide range of local and national partners.

The operational *Alliance* model built on the individuals, networks and connections SURF identified and fostered in the initial study in Govan and the Gallatown. In early 2016, it expanded to include Rothesay on the Isle of Bute. A feasibility study on a further expansion to include the town of Dunoon is currently underway.

The dual purpose of SURF's Alliance for Action programme is:

- to further strengthen resilience and practical outcomes in the programme's two case study communities;
- to enhance wider policy and resource considerations for supporting community regeneration in the continuing recessionary context.

One way in which SURF pursues its aims is by facilitating and promoting opportunities for communities to learn from each other. This paper reports on SURF's Autumn 2016 Alliance shared learning session on Heritage.

Why Heritage?

The importance of heritage in supporting community development and regeneration is widely acknowledged by practitioners, academics and policymakers.

The Scottish Government has long recognised the wider benefits that can be achieved from mining the nation's heritage. To that end it invests in a variety of relevant agencies including the Coalfields Heritage Trust, Conservation Area Regeneration schemes, City Heritage Trusts.

SURF's experience is that Investment in history and heritage can produce tangible economic and environmental benefits; nurture a community's sense of identity and ownership of their environment; and promote strong social, cultural, intergenerational and educative links.

Heritage and can be used to support sustainable regeneration and community engagement in a variety of ways across a broad spectrum. This can incorporate everything from group discussions involving a few individuals to multi million pound investment in historically important sites.

¹ A final report on SURF's 'Reality, Resources, Resilience: Regeneration in a Recession' programme is available on the JRF website: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/reality-resources-resilience>

The variety of ways in which heritage can be used to drive regeneration is usefully demonstrated by the Alliance case study areas in Govan, Glasgow, East Kirkcaldy, Fife, and Rothesay on Bute, each of which is using different aspects of unique historical assets to support and engage their communities.

Purpose

The shared sessions are a key part of the Alliance commitment to capture, record and present learning both within the communities themselves and across the broad network of SURF partners and supporters. The heritage event set out to:

- showcase different approaches and experiences in the use of heritage as a way of supporting greater community participation in the regeneration of the different Alliance for Action contexts of Govan, the Gallatown and Rothesay on Bute;
- highlight the different ways heritage is used to successfully build capacity and fully engage with the community ;
- create a constructive context for shared learning and cooperation across:
 - People and organisations from Alliance for Action areas involved in supporting or participating in heritage initiatives
 - Representatives of relevant local and national support bodies (including Lottery funders, Creative Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, Resilient Scotland, Oxfam, Museum and galleries, Scotland)
 - Relevant policy influencers and funders
- explore collaboration among these initiatives in practical regeneration efforts;
- facilitate shared learning and enhance cross sector understanding and support for the role of heritage in local and national regeneration policy and practice.

Process

The event was held in Govan in the restored boardroom of the Fairfield Offices Heritage Centre – an exemplar of successful heritage based regeneration in practice – and a midway accessible point between Rothesay and the Gallatown.

SURF colleagues provided introductions, general background and broad context. Five speakers presented their experiences of working and participating in contrasting heritage initiatives in the Alliance communities and then led discussions based on a reciprocal sharing of experience and learning.

The topics covered included a campaign to commemorate a political activist; an artist's promotion of community engagement through creative use of heritage; the empowering impact of a community history group; the promotion of intergenerational and inclusive activities through heritage education; and, the impact on people and community of investment in structure and townscape.

Learning:

Despite the differences in place and scale of the activities under discussion, participants reported similar and related experiences, perceptions and challenges in their use of heritage initiatives to build community capacity and engagement.

The event showed that even those heritage initiatives which are initially narrowly focused and small scale can be the catalyst for producing a broad – and sometimes unanticipated - range of community benefits. While heritage-history projects may begin with a particular set of aspirations, the eventual outcomes are often more widespread than anticipated and producing a variety of different positive impacts upon the community.

Promoting engagement

It is recognized that story telling is central to human existence.² Heritage focused regeneration may be particularly good at community engagement because at its most basic level it is about uncovering and sharing stories from the past.

Each of the projects discussed at the shared learning session demonstrated the power of history and heritage to attract, engage and sustain participation.

Many of the participants had similarly experienced the way in which small, informal, guided reminiscence groups had developed into more elaborate and widely engaging activities.

Govan's Mary Barbour initiative began with a reminiscence group – half a dozen people telling their stories and their families' stories of days gone by. Within a few years the stories of Mary Barbour's life and achievements³ had engaged an audience which extended from Govan across the city of Glasgow and to the wider world – and resulted in the commissioning of an impressive memorial statue which will eventually stand in Govan's town centre.

During a three month tour of several Glasgow venues the five shortlisted maquettes were viewed by thousands of visitors who were invited to participate in the final selection process by leaving their 'vote' and comments on the competing sculptures. Further evidence of wide spread engagement in the venture can be seen in the way funding for the winning commission was raised by public donation, after the project had been turned down in their bid for a Creative Scotland grant.

The rediscovery and promotion of this particular Govan heroine has also helped to generate further new projects in the area with the promotion of well attended activities celebrating other strong local characters and commemorating historical events.

² Heider, F & Simmel, M; An Experimental Study of Apparent Behavior, *The American Journal of Psychology*, Vol 57, 1944, 243-259.

³ Mary Barbour was a political activist in Govan, leading rent strikes and social housing campaigns and serving Govan as a councillor with the then Glasgow Corporation from 1920 until 1931.

<https://remembermarybarbour.wordpress.com/about-mary-barbour/>

Encouraging collaboration and partnership working

Successful heritage regeneration encourages collaboration because it so often requires a combination of strong local knowledge, participation and determination and the input of expertise and resources from outside the community.

In addition to more obvious heritage-orientated organisations such as local museums, the Heritage Lottery fund or Historic Environment Scotland, projects discussed at the shared learning event had also attracted the interest and engagement of military veterans, housing associations, trade unions, schools, children's charities, artists, sportsmen and creative organisations.

Heritage walks and other activities organized around an event or place of historical interest can be seen to attract popular support and become an attractive proposition for investees. Business can invest in events which will raise their public profile, promote their work and associate them with activities with a high 'feel good' factor. Public sector and third sector funders recognize the value of projects which are often able to create both an immediate 'return' in the form of an organized activity – and longer term benefits to do with education, community cohesion and coalescing community identity.

Linking and bridge building

As well as making connections between the past and present, heritage exploration can develop other links within a community – encouraging positive communication between different generations, ethnicities and excluded demographic groups.

There was good evidence that different groups were being brought together through heritage projects.

- Reminiscence groups were forging links with school children by visiting schools and sharing memories of their participation in events which were viewed as history by the young people.
- Traditional dialect, songs and games were being passed onto new generations
- Re-enactments of historical events were bringing recent and long-standing residents of communities together to enjoy and understand the community's past and create relationships in the present.
- Heritage work which engaged children in interpreting historic narratives or learning projects found that young people involvement led to support and interest from families and the wider community.
- Focusing on a particular strand of history – such as the role of women or the impact of the movement of migrants and travellers - encouraged greater understanding and tolerance of issues in contemporary society.

Stimulating the economy

In addition to providing physical resources for community use, refurbished and renovated buildings and sites attract investment by producing contemporary work places and creative space. The promotion of heritage trails and historic buildings additionally attract visitors, attracting investment and generating direct and indirect income.

The lived experience of participants in the shared learning event reflected the findings of national research and foundations of Scottish Government policy⁴ that heritage-based regeneration impacts positively on local economies.⁵ Participants also spoke about the way in which heritage-based regeneration could specifically create jobs around the tourism and heritage 'industry' – including the need for training and upgrading skills connected with the traditional construction sector; those needed for visitor interaction and those employed to promote and maintain sites and buildings.

Ownership/self-value/pride

Divided and disenfranchised communities can be encouraged towards greater cohesion by discovering a shared history of place and a shared identity and pride in the present.

The lived experience of participants again reinforced the findings of national research⁶ that demonstrates a link between an understanding of, and pride in place and a sense of ownership of, and engagement within a community. Investment in heritage can make people happier about where they live by enhancing their sense of identity.

The heritage projects highlighted had attracted diverse participants from across the community. Participants had learned about the history of the place in which they had all made their homes and united towards a common goal of creating a shared future.

Encouraging creativity and learning

Regeneration activities use history and heritage to fire imaginations in the present.

The projects discussed at the learning session had used a wide range of inspired activities and events to explore and understand the past. Heritage based regeneration was demonstrated to be a powerful catalyst for creative and cultural activities. There were obvious parallels between the archeological work in Rothesay and the Hidden Histories projects in Govan in the ways in which communities had enthusiastically become involved in using music, drama, art and music to explore and enjoy their common histories.

Those were lively illustrations of heritage based events and activities in the form of photographs showing participants engaged in colorful historical re-enactments.

Starting local

A key theme of the successful activities and projects discussed was that they originated from within the communities.

⁴ Reeve, A and R. Shipley, *Heritage –based regeneration in an age of austerity: Lessons from the Townscape Heritage Initiative*, [Journal of Urban Regeneration & Renewal](https://www.hlf.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/hlf-puts-heritage-heart-regeneration-scotland-%C2%A37m-investment), Volume 7 / Number 2 / Winter, 2013-14, pp. 122-135(14). See also: <https://www.hlf.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/hlf-puts-heritage-heart-regeneration-scotland-%C2%A37m-investment> and *Our Place In Time*, The Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland (2016) <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0044/00445046.pdf>

⁵ <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/> , <https://www.hlf.org.uk/new-ideas-need-old-buildings>

⁶ <https://www.hlf.org.uk/about-us/research-evaluation/20-years-heritage>

Bottom up initiatives secured more inclusive community engagement. Even those which had been originally developed by external agencies were shaped by those who participated. Those projects not seeded from directly within the community tended to adapt and reflect the needs and capabilities of their immediate environment. Consultations were genuinely participatory with the ideas and support of those living and working in the area inspiring the eventual form taken by the projects.

In Conclusion....

SURF's role through its Alliance for Action approach has been to facilitate learning sessions in a way which creates an atmosphere of sufficient trust for participants to engage in lively and informed debate. Feedback from these events has been entirely positive.

Participants from the communities report feeling confident that their views have value and are heard by those who have some influence over decisions taken about their communities. Useful and mutually supportive relationships have been established between people facing similar challenges in diverse communities in different geographical locations.

Similarly, and importantly, funders and policy makers are given the opportunity to meet and connect and learn from those whose lives are impacted upon by their decisions.

This report focused on the learning from the most recent shared learning session (Autumn, 2016).

Relevant themes are selected on the basis of community feedback. Reports on other sessions focusing on the roles of food and creativity in regeneration can be accessed through SURF's website. (*Details below*).

The next learning session - on the role of health and wellbeing in regeneration - will be held in the Spring of 2017.

For more on SURF and its work, please visit the SURF website: www.surf.scot

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