



THE SURF AWARDS: LEARNING FROM SUCCESS

An outcomes report from a series of SURF workshops in 2021

SURF and the Scottish Government deliver the annual SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration to identify and share examples of high impact in addressing social and economic problems in Scottish places.

In July of 2021, SURF arranged a series of online shared learning workshop events with representatives of the [five category winning and shortlisted SURF Award initiatives](#) from the 2020 process. The goal of these events was to explore, in some depth, what transferable lessons these projects can offer to regeneration practitioners working in other sectors and geographies.

This report presents a summary of the main outcomes from the four online SURF Awards workshop events, and their respective themes:

- Successful methods of supporting young people to overcome barriers to employment;
- Achieving wider community regeneration outcomes through housing led approaches;
- Transferable lessons for place-based regeneration; and
- How can embedding artistic approaches enable communities to become agents for change?

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Introduction

The annual SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration process is widely recognised as being the most prestigious awards in the broad regeneration scene in Scotland.

The purpose of the SURF Awards process is:

- To recognise and reward best practice;
- To promote and disseminate best practice across Scotland as means of sharing knowledge and experience and enhancing policy and practice;
- To highlight the role that regeneration projects and initiatives have in improving the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

2020 was the 22nd year of the SURF Awards, and the 17th that it has been delivered in partnership with the Scottish Government.

Nominations to the 2020 SURF Awards were assessed by an independent panel of 20 expert judges drawn from national regeneration related organisations and community groups in Scotland. Working in teams, the judging panel members agreed category shortlists, made virtual site visits to these shortlisted projects, and collaboratively selected winning projects.

The five category winning projects for the 2020 SURF Awards were:

- **Creative Regeneration:** [The Glasgow Barons](#)
- **Supporting Youth Employability:** [Street League: Head, Body, Future](#)
- **Community Led Regeneration:** [The Tannahill Centre](#)
- **Scotland's Most Improved Place:** [Campbeltown](#)
- **Housing and Regeneration:** [Nith Valley Leaf Trust Community-Owned Passivhaus Project](#)

These winning projects were announced at a SURF Awards Presentation Dinner event, which was held online in February 2021, having been postponed from December 2020. SURF invited colleagues in all six winning projects to participate in a series of SURF Awards online shared learning workshop events with regeneration practitioners from the SURF network.

The events were designed to explore and highlight the main factors that led to the success of the 2020 SURF Award winning initiatives that could potentially help initiatives in other contexts and places.

The following sections of this report highlight the main areas of discussion and outcomes from the following three themed events in the series:

- **Successful methods of supporting young people to overcome barriers to employment** with Street League: Head, Body, Future, Move On: Employability Fund, Community Renewal Trust's Youth Employability Team (pre-recorded) and Skills Development Scotland. Held on 8 July 2021.
- **Achieving wider community regeneration outcomes through housing led approaches** with Nith Valley Leaf Trust Community-Owned Passivhaus Project, Dunarn Street, Newtyle, Gairloch and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations. Held on 15 July 2021.
- **Transferable lessons for place-based regeneration** with Campbeltown, The Tannahill Centre, Larkhall Community Network, Scottish Government, Scotland's Towns Partnership and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Held on 22 July 2021.
- **How can embedding artistic approaches enable communities to become agents for change?** with The Glasgow Barons, Toonspeak Young People's Theatre, Creative Steps to Positive Mental Health and Creative Scotland. Held on 29 July 2021.

SURF is grateful to the Scottish Government for supporting the SURF Awards process, including these workshop events. The 2020 SURF Awards process also benefited from the support of the following additional partners in the delivery of thematic categories: [Architecture & Design Scotland](#), [Creative Scotland](#), [Highlands & Islands Enterprise](#), [Scotland's Towns Partnership](#), [Scottish Federation of Housing Associations](#), and [Skills Development Scotland](#).

Transferable Lessons

1) Successful methods of supporting young people to overcome barriers to employment

With introductory presentations from SURF Award winning projects:

Street League: Head, Body, Future, Move On: Employability Fund and Community Renewal Trust's Youth Employability Team (pre-recorded).

Additional presentation was provided by SURF Award partner Skills Development Scotland.

About the event

The first workshop in the series highlighted the 2020 SURF Award winning projects in the 'Supporting Youth Employability' category.

The projects featured are all using techniques to support dis-engaged young people into employment, training and further education.

The morning workshop took place online on the 8th July 2021 and featured presentations from project managers and an input from SURF Awards partner Skills Development Scotland. The workshop was attended by 30 participants.

First Presentation Summary: Street League: Head, Body, Future

Street League are an employability charity that use sport, particularly football, as a tool to engage with young people. With lockdown restrictions changing the way in which they would be able to deliver programmes of work, many would ask how they managed to achieve results during lockdown. They had to adapt, and quickly. Their new operating format was very different to their usual way of working.

Between 2020-2021 they engaged and worked with 1151 young people, with 640 achieving a qualification and 837 moving on to a positive destination.

When lockdown became a reality their first thought was to managing their live caseload of young people already engaged with programmes of work. Quickly adapting to an online world they rolled out the Head, Body, Future programme, covering the three main areas that were most relevant to participants and the issues they were facing during lockdown.



The main priorities were:

1. Ensuring that there were no barriers to engagement for the young people.
2. Safeguarding and wellbeing. Which was much harder to monitor via zoom, so needed additional resource and some creative thinking.

Constant problem solving was challenging but also stimulating for staff, encouraging new thinking. The lack of technology was a clear barrier to participation for many of the young people. Street League were able to respond with the provision of tablets and data bolt-ons. As there were no travel costs being incurred they were able to re-invest that money in technology and equipment.

Not seeing each other face to face meant there was a need for increased monitoring and check-ins with participants and staff. There was an allocation of additional support, particularly for supporting mental health related impacts.

All of the normal sport sessions were pushed to an online format. Course leaders designed workouts using readily available household items, which meant a lack of weights or equipment did not create an additional barrier to participation.

Technology was not just a barrier for participants but also for the staff team. There was a shortage of suitable IT equipment for staff to begin with but the organisation stepped up support considerably, which has been vital to allowing staff to work effectively, and continue much needed support to young people.

Digital fatigue became a big issue as time went on, and lockdown periods were extended. Senior members of the team started setting young people and staff challenges via Strava and the Nike Fit app. Staff were rotated to ensure enough time was given to recuperate and that they could meet

their own needs as well as help young people. Burnout amongst the staff team would result in negative outcomes for the people they support.

475 young people received training places this year, which is an increase on the usual numbers, as other opportunities, such as education and jobs, became less available. Trying to make sure that young people were still moving forward and had a purpose was the main motivator for the team to get up in the morning and keep going.

136 young people gained a place at college and 212 moved into employment.

Staff resilience was essential to this success, it was imperative for their own performance and ability to provide support to the young people.

Street League are now bringing forward a new system of online qualification delivery called Proof Positive. The pandemic accelerated a shift to digital communications and delivery and it has proved to be really successful, and made day to day operations much easier.

The move towards a blended digital and physical approach to work means that the organisation is ready for whatever comes in the future.

Presenter:

- *Kirsty Steven, Head of Operations (Scotland), Street League*

Second Presentation Summary: [Move On: Employability Fund](#)

Move On was primarily set up to work with people in the care sector and those facing homelessness, although they have delivered employability outcomes since inception.

Set up in 2015, supported by the Skills Development Scotland Employability Fund, they began as a small operation and have gradually expanded in size and delivery over recent years. The employability programme is a small part of their overall work but very much an important element of their operation. Over that time, they have supported 200 young people into positive destinations.



The Move On Employability Fund focusses on Stages 2 and 3 of the employability pipeline. Stage 2 concentrates on overcoming personal and structural barriers to work, whilst Stage 3 is more focussed on work experience in the Move On Fareshare Glasgow Warehouse. Stage 2 focuses on training, as staff work with young people on personal development, building their skills before moving them on to Stage 3 where participants are handed over to Fareshare to gain

experience in a work environment. This allows participants more freedom and encourages them to use their own initiative. At this stage Move On are looking for them to demonstrate acquired skills and show themselves to be work ready.

The opportunity to participate in direct work experience at Fareshare is really important to the young people, and key to the success of the programme as a whole.

The programme has seen a 90% success rate for qualifications at stages 2 and 3, this includes mandatory and needs assessed training provided to participants. Participants at stage 2 can be referred to a mentoring programme for additional support, if required, and at Stage 3 there is scope for participants to take the lead and engage in peer mentoring.

Additional support is available to all participants, should they require it. This includes, a dedicated literacy and numeracy team who provide each participant with an individual learning plan; money/debt advice services, which can be an issue for a lot of participants as sometimes getting a wage can create further problems and present a challenge to a young person sustaining employment; work coaches provide dedicated support to each young person for as long as they are engaged in the programme and external coaches can be brought in to cover a range of topics and workshops, such as interview skills with employers. Trauma informed training and mental health check-ins have been particularly important and helpful in the past year.

Transition from stage 2 to 3 is largely based on interest in warehouse work or training with Fareshare. For those with other interests there are other opportunities for training and further education.

Move On have recently taken on more staff at Fareshare, which has been supported by the government Kickstart Fund. 7 out of 12 positions have been filled by the employability programme participants.

Fareshare Glasgow and the West has provided 6 million meals over the course of the pandemic which has been a great motivator for the young people, knowing that they are helping their community. Attendance is well above 90% because of this factor. Staff in the Warehouse are often ex-development workers and know how to speak to young people, and how to provide the right support to keep them motivated.

For them it is not all about getting people into jobs but sometimes about going backwards to go forwards. The work done at Stage 2 is key to building confidence, allowing young people the opportunity to speak to older people and make friends and connections. A lot of work is focussed on developing social skills rather than more complicated job specific training.

Move On did not close during COVID as Fareshare was considered to be an essential service. But they did have to delay some of the programme work as they adapted to a blended approach. The young people, however, were very keen to get back onsite. Like Street League, access to technology was a big issue for participants so Move On had to buy lot of laptops and data packages to overcome barriers to participation.

Mental health has been a big issue historically and was particularly exasperated over lockdown. The team introduced wellbeing groups and workshops for staff and participants. It wasn't easy to deliver but it was really needed.

A key challenge for Move On is around stigma and breaking down stereotypes about warehouse work. 7 of the 18 participants are girls, and are the hardest workers.

Presenter:

- *John Connell, Volunteering Manager, Move On*

Third Presentation Summary: [Community Renewal Trust's Youth Employability Team](#)

Community Renewal's presentation was provided as pre-recorded input.

Community Renewal Trust's employability programme is based on the idea of an employment safety net.

They are a charity who deliver a variety of support programmes in Govanhill in Glasgow and Muirhouse, Bingham and Magdalene in Edinburgh. The key focus is on community development,

with the aim of a whole neighbourhood being lifted out of poverty through community led cooperation and collaboration. Youth work is a key part of this holistic approach.

Community Renewal Trust (CRT) gave the successful example of a young person called Kevin who was disenchanted with school. A CLD ethos led to direct engagement with Kevin and his group of friends. General talk about aspirations turned into funding for days out. Kevin mentioned an interest in gardening which CRT turned into work experience, helping local elderly residents with their



gardens. Further work experience opportunities led to more focussed employability training.

Traditional engagement methods don't work with the most dis-engaged young people. CRT work to catch those that are missed by the traditional employability pipeline. Using an organic community development approach which snowballs as trust is gained.

CRT have helped 100 young people to reach a positive destination. Although, this is not the be all and end all and positive impact can be seen in reduced offending, building confidence and gaining skills.

People ask for help with employability as they gain confidence in themselves. CRT are then able to signpost and help find work experience or permanent work opportunities. Building personal resilience for the longer term.

Presenter:

- *John Halliday, Executive Director, Community Renewal Trust*

Fourth Presentation Summary: Skills Development Scotland

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) are responsible for a wide range of work, which includes a focus on training and careers support and work with employers on skills development.

In terms of employability programmes, SDS deliver the Employability Fund which focusses on Stages 2 – 4 of the employability pipeline. They are also now moving towards the No One Left Behind agenda and the various programmes that are covered by that strategy.

The presentation focussed on SDS's wider work, focussed on careers and equality and diversity and inclusion. They have now developed an evidence based Equalities Strategy, with fair work as an essential element. Lived experience of poverty and disadvantage are now central to their approach to guidance, apprenticeships etc.

The Employability Fund transition is now well under way. Part of the replacement will be the National Transition Training Fund for 25+, with green jobs covering a wide range of sectors, including STEM and agriculture.

There is a different role for careers guidance to play at various stages of school progression. At P7/S1 level early involvement allows for a longer engagement period to build relationships and support young people, shaping thinking about possible futures. By S2/3 advisors should be encouraging the young person to think more constructively. It is now less about individual subject choices and more about longer term career pathways. Work in Grove Academy in Dundee is an example of best practice in this area. As the young person enters S3/Senior school more intensive support is required, particularly for those with protected characteristics.

SDS does not own school system data and have no access to data if someone drops out, unless it is given to them by the school, so it is not a case of SDS giving up on the young person. There are barriers to their ability to support effectively once they have left the school system.

Data allows SDS to support for a longer period and then hand over to training providers or further education.

SDS are working to help young people think about what they would like to do at an early stage. At a local level careers teams engage with education, the Third Sector and employers to provide support, but they don't have the capacity for intensive engagement like the Award nominees provide. They can, however, provide drop-in support to Third Sector employability support providers. This is not a chargeable service and is open to everyone.

Data is very important to achieving successful outcomes and the Third Sector can contribute to this as well. Central data sharing allows structures to work around people, but sharing must be safe and appropriate.

Funds are available to help young people access further training and education. Collaboration is imperative to success, as SDS doesn't have access to data and young people otherwise.

Presenter:

- *Elaine Walls, Senior Partnership Manager, Skills Development Scotland*

Open Discussion

Some of the main comments and areas of debate are listed below. These varied views and opinions do not necessarily represent the views of SURF or all of the people and organisations present at the workshop.

- *One delegate asked Move On why they had decided to become trauma informed and was there any difference in response from young people and staff?*

John noted that they adopted the approach a year and a half ago. Conversations amongst senior management had led to the employment of a dedicated trauma informed worker who looked across policies and work to see how it could be incorporated. This resulted in a big change in the way project representatives talk to people. This was particularly felt by staff who are experiencing a different way of thinking, sometimes for first time, and looking at what has happened to people in the past when considering their present situation. A lot of the volunteers have really bought into it, and it has helped Move On to communicate more effectively and support people to open up. It has had a massive impact.

Street League are not explicitly trauma informed. However, introducing wellbeing logs has flagged a lot of issues that the team hadn't seen before. Staff are now having training on how to deal with suicide and mental health more generally, and they have expanded their Safeguarding Team. They have incorporated points in all of their documents and materials highlighting these issues. Making sure they can signpost to appropriate support is important, as whilst they have training, they are not a mental health organisation. Wellbeing logs stay open until onward referrals are complete, issues are not dropped until they have been resolved, or further support sought. They have provided access to SQA Wellbeing Awards and NSPCE online safety training for staff.

Elaine Walls contributed that careers advice and guidance sections of SDS and Schools do a lot of thinking about this. A lot of re-consideration is going on at the moment about how to

bring the voice of the individual into SDS. It is a big job to turn such a large organisation around and bring informed and personalised practice to the fore.

- *A delegate raised a question about how the projects have gone about sourcing placements over the past year?*

Kirsty noted the difficulties created by increased COVID safety issues. Relationships with employers became even more important to ensure that they knew what young people were being exposed to. Safeguarding policies and staff support was essential here. Increased risk assessments were carried out in each case.

Move On confirmed that most of their placements take place in-house, in the warehouse. There is a greater level of procedure to source external placements. They have had to reduce the number of volunteers working in the warehouses to ensure safety, and formed workplace bubbles. Despite the additional measures they were still had to shut down twice, with bubbles off as precautionary measure despite no detected transmission in the workplace

- *A question was asked about the importance/difficulty of measuring softer indicators of success/failure?*

Move On use the Vector Scale method to measure outcomes over a wide range of indicators, and they do it as often as possible to get a comprehensive representative view.

Street League held an open forum with participants prior to COVID, which was a bit of a whitewash. They created an open Google doc which could be filled in anonymously. This has provided a method for deeper and more honest engagement. They are now using a framework called Skills Builder which is focussed on eight core skills across various outcomes.

2) Achieving wider community regeneration outcomes through housing led approaches

With introductory presentations from all three SURF Award projects shortlisted in the Housing and Regeneration category:

Nith Valley Leaf Trust Community-Owned Passivhaus, Dunarn St, Newtyle and Gairloch

About the event

The second workshop in the series highlighted the 2020 SURF Award Winner and Highly Commended projects in the 'Housing and Regeneration' category.

The projects featured are all using housing-led regeneration approaches to improve the communities in which they work.

The morning workshop took place online on the 15th July 2021 and featured presentations from project managers and an input from SURF Awards partner the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA). The workshop was attended by 48 participants.

First Presentation Summary: Nith Valley Leaf Trust Community-Owned Passivhaus

Nith Valley Leaf Trust (NVLТ) are a small charitable trust covering the parish of Closeburn in Dumfries and Galloway. The Trust hadn't previously engaged in large projects, so a housing scheme was a really big project.

The core objectives of the Trust are:

- To identify the needs and requirements for a sustainable community.
- To manage community land and assets for the benefit of the community.
- To advance community development including urban and rural regeneration.
- To assist in providing recreational activities and facilities.
- To improve living and environmental conditions for a healthier lifestyle.
- To increase awareness to the local community about the environment, culture, heritage and history.
- To advance environmental protection and preservation of the natural environment.

The Trust cover quite a large area, despite the village of Closeburn being relatively small. This presents challenges for engagement.

South of Scotland Community Housing (SoSCH) are a charity established in 2006 to address a shortfall in rural housing supply in the region.

They act as an enabler and are orientated towards meeting local need and the wider aims of community ownership, such as; land reform, local leading and repopulation. Working to facilitate community-led housing in areas facing regeneration challenges and underdevelopment.



NVLТ and SoSCH worked together on their first project in 2016, with NVLT taking on the management of the Rural Housing Burden acquisition. It was at this point they established the Trust as a community landlord.

A Community Action Plan for the Closeburn area identified key issues that needed to be addressed within the community.

These included:

- Sustaining local services, particularly the primary school.
- Maintaining the population and reversing decline.
- Addressing wider issues, such as climate change.
- Tackling the local issue of fuel poverty.

SoSCH supported the Trust to identify a potential site and to carry out a local housing need and demand survey to identify the types of property required.

The project had various sources of funding at the early stage. These included a Scottish Land Fund Stage 1 application, which supported initial project development, and a feasibility award from the Rural Housing Fund.

The project funding received from the Scottish Land Fund allowed for the purchase of the site and a full grant award from the Rural Housing Fund was used for development. The capital costs were further supplemented by money from a local wind farm and a loan from a building society. As part of the funding agreement the Scottish Land Fund also appointed an experienced Project Officer to support the project.

One of the main questions asked is 'what is Passivhaus?' In answer, they are really energy efficient homes which make use of passively generated heat in the home, doing this through very high levels of insulation and mechanical temperature regulation.

Each of the three homes in the development were named after local rivers, Scaur Campie and Nith. On completion the three homes were allocated based on a localised allocation policy. Monitoring of the homes and their energy performance is ongoing. They received Passivhaus certification on the 21st of February 2020.

NVLT are continuing to work in partnership with SoSCH and are planning further projects.

The key learning outcomes from the project are:

- Rural regeneration and making the community more resilient.
- Increased population, which in turn is supporting the local school and services.
- It has generated a sustainable source of revenue to be put towards other community projects.
- Provided affordable rental housing in the area for the longer term.
- Increased drive and motivation for further projects, focussed on local needs and sustainability. The community now understands the need for housing and role of the Trust.
- Better response to surveys as evidence of increased engagement.
- Created attractive buildings on a once derelict site.
- Maintained family support networks in the village through the use of a community minded allocations policy.
- Generated a community response to climate change.

In terms of tenant experience and positive impact, the project has provided long-term homes for families that have previously experienced housing insecurity. The homes are provided at an affordable rent and with low running costs. The very low energy costs come in at around £300 per year. The style of the housing doesn't impact on comfort, and the homes produce comfortable temperature levels all year round. It has also allowed residents to stay in the local area, close to family.

The wider impacts created by Passivhaus design include:

- Addressing climate emergency challenges.
- Strengthening relationships with a wide range of partners and funders.
- Allowing NVLT to develop relationship with SoSCH for future projects.
- Given SoSCH a replicable model for community led passive housing.
- Generated revenue for the Trust, putting it in a stronger financial position to access more funding for future projects.
- Increased community engagement has led to a heightened level of trust when taking on large projects. They are currently looking at taking a playing field into community ownership.
- The SURF Award helped to attract publicity around the benefits of Passivhaus design and raised community confidence.

Presenters:

- *Jakob Kaye, Community Housing Officer, Nith Valley Leaf Trust*
- *Mike Staples, Chief Executive, South of Scotland Community Housing*

Second Presentation Summary: Dunarn St, Newtyle

Newtyle is a small rural village, 800 people, within the commuter belt 11 miles north of Dundee. The area is made up of primarily owner occupiers, although there is some social housing stock. The development plan for Dunarn Street focussed on utilising brownfield land, in part to preserve the character of the village.

The old school site was originally intended to be for eight properties with a small parcel of land left for the community to use as they saw fit. However, there was an unexpected lack of interest from the community to make use of the land so it was allocated to housing, allowing for twelve units to be built.

Rural housing is an area that Angus Council is looking to expand on. Angus is a region focussed on its seven main towns. The council are keen to develop rural projects outside of the pre-existing areas of high demand, and have been providing support to help rural communities access the Rural Housing Fund.



The Dunarn Street site sat next to an area of ex-council housing stock, which was right next to the new primary school. This was seen as an obvious opportunity to connect with the community, particularly the school. A prominent site on one of the main roads into the village, so it was frustrating for the community to see it lie unused. The Council owned the land so there was already an existing understanding of its condition. Children from the local school set the tone for communication with elected members and helped build support.

25% of the new housing was to be allocated for people with additional needs. The properties were designed in preparation for transition to higher standards of energy efficiency, Passivhaus level. Some tenants have been a bit worried about this prospect and what it will mean for them. Fibre broadband was installed in all properties as standard. Biodiversity was a key consideration for the council. This included swift boxes, soft borders and landscaping. The council parks department were involved in the planning of the site and planting.

The council wrote to all tenants in advance of this presentation to get feedback. There was a limited response but it was very positive.

A value for money exercise was carried out a year after move in, with feedback generated on a wide range of indicators, which were benchmarked against other developments and councils.

Providing affordable family housing is a significant factor, taking into account the needs of the local community. And this has helped to sustain the local school. It should be noted though that Angus as a whole has higher demand for one bedroom properties.

The community were concerned about site access, preserving trees and car parking during development. The council changed the point of site access in response to concerns.

There was a good level of interaction with the neighbouring school. The children were involved in planting and biodiversity work. Re-drawing the boundary meant that the council could hand over a section of the planted area to the school to plant themselves. Real life learning is a good experience for children.

Bancon were the lead contractor and Community Benefit Clauses were included as part of the procurement contract. They provided a range of materials for the school and acted as a good working agent between the team on site and the school.

Although there was no apparent interest in the proposed community space, the council had a Community Development Officer on standby to work with them if interest changed.

The main challenges faced by the project included:

- The impacts of COVID led to big delays and limited levels of interaction with the school and the wider community. There was less chance for site walkthroughs etc. There was also limited interaction between council departments, who are used to working in the same building. This led to some issues and teething problems as home working set up.
- Rising costs resulted in the project being over budget by 9%.
- Proximity to the school meant for certain requirements, such as fencing requiring adjustment.
- Car parking during the development period proved to be challenging as there is limited space in the village. Contractors had dedicated space but often had to park elsewhere. This created issues with existing local residents.

The main lessons learned by Angus Council when delivering this project were:

- Community engagement is key. It shouldn't be assumed that the community want to take on land for community use, they are more concerned with land being brought into productive use and with the provision of longer term affordable housing.
- Use the Community Development Team to engage more widely with people that don't engage with the Community Council.
- There are benefits to linking with the local school as a means of educating, and they would like to use this approach more widely in future developments.
- Sprinklers caused issues for tenants and the council are now moving towards a misting system.
- Design vs community interests. The council wanted to use porous borders as part of the biodiversity strategy but nearby residents were against this and in retrospect a fence is now being put up after the development was handed over.
- Hire a good contractor as they are essential to the success of a project.

Presenter:

- *Jamie Ross, Housing Policy Officer, Angus Council*

Third Presentation Summary: [Gairloch](#)

The housing project shortlisted for the Award was the new build housing at Achtercairn in Gairloch.

Communities Housing Trust have been in operation for 20 years, previously known as The Highland Small Communities Housing Trust, but now deliver throughout Scotland. They work across a range of tenures and models of development, providing homes for diversity of residents and locations. They have 15 employees covering all aspects of housing, from procurement and development to allocations and management. They administer funding on behalf of the Scottish Government and

manage housing obtained through rural burden. CHT currently owns and manages 57 homes across Scotland.

The development in Achtercairn consists of 25 affordable homes, which have been delivered in an area lacking affordable housing. The community is also impacted by the level of second home ownership, and with the diminishing residential population having a knock on effect on school enrolment and other local services.

Out with the housing, the site also includes a multi-use community building, a farm shop, an air corps training facility and an award winning museum. The housing is mixed tenure with 19 for social rent and 6 for low cost home ownership, and is covered by three housing providers offering five varied tenures.



The holistic offer has been key to the success of the development. The repurposing of a brownfield site, vacant after a hotel fire, has brought life to an area once seen as a long-term eye sore by the local community.

In terms of shared learning from the project, the main challenges were:

- Planning – Initially planned to put the homes towards the front of the site and retail to the rear. This had to be changed due to community feedback. The team wanted to give the community a boost, and allow them to feel heard, and attract more passing trade. The council were receptive to this which was very helpful.
- Volunteer Capacity – The development was a long drawn out process which stretched capabilities of volunteer groups and led to fatigue. CHT's role here was key as they could support local groups and maintain confidence.
- Funding – Always challenging, in this case there were a lot of different funders to report to and application processes to work through. The diversity of the site allowed CHT to access a wide range of funding sources.

In terms of successes, CHT would note that the Gale Centre has attracted 40,000 visitors to the tourist information hub, shop and café. It has created 20 year round jobs, which has had a huge impact for the local community. It was also Scotland's first public building to be awarded Passivhaus certification. It has space for community growing and a classroom for the University of Highlands and Islands, allowing them to offer courses to local people.

The Gairloch Farm Shop has a symbiotic relationship with the Gale Centre, selling local produce, supporting local supply chains and enhancing the local economy. It is a geographic centre for the local farming community and it provides an onsite vet. The community previously had to travel a good distance for animal care.

Community engagement and partnership working have boosted confidence and encouraged further community activity. The methods used provide a replicable model, tackling a range of needs through a collaborative community led approach. They have now opened up land nearby for community development or use.

Presenter:

- *John Forbes, Community Led Housing Coordinator, Communities Housing Trust*

Fourth Presentation Summary: Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA)

Stacey Dingwall of SFHA gave an overview of their activity during the past year.

Their four main priority areas are:

- Housing to 2040
- COVID Management and Recovery
- Net Zero
- New Supply

SFHA led on the Social Housing Resilience Group which has proved to be a key resource for their members, helping them work within restrictions as they evolve.

Housing to 2040, as laid out in a Scottish Government paper, is the result of a long process, further delayed by the pandemic. It provides a route map and vision for an overall housing system in Scotland. SFHA welcomes the ambition and priorities but need further detail on funding mechanisms and local delivery. A key ask from SFHA is for the housing programme to be funded over a period longer than one parliament, so recent commitment to a ten year grant programme is a big win.

Other key elements include:

- Becoming Net–Zero by 2026
- Development of a new housing quality standard
- A rented sector strategy and housing bill
- A review of housing for various needs
- Ending homelessness ambition and action plan
- Rural and Island development
- Right to an adequate home legislation
- Digital connectivity
- Integration of housing with health and social care
- Taxation, ownership and self-build

Work is already underway to laying groundwork for commitments and ambitions set out in Housing 2040.

SFHA is also involved in a Subsidy Review Working Group, which asks what grant level is needed to deliver homes and make a new programme work. This is challenging as new houses will need to be different from those built in the past, with a higher level of investment in energy efficiency. Also, challenges exist around supply of labour and materials, so higher costs and levels of investment will be required. A report on findings from this group will be published.

The ZEST Taskforce, co-chaired with COSLA, are working with architects and other practitioners who have practical knowledge of how to get to zero emissions from housing. The taskforce is also looking at how to maximise wider benefits of green investment. They are not just focussed on costs but also on tenant engagement and how this shift will work for them. Again, a report will be provided in due course.

Rents and affordability are a key consideration going forward, based on findings from previous working groups. Social landlords are feeling a tension between the need to keep rents affordable, whilst also spending on new stock and investment in existing stock. An SFHA briefing paper on this was published recently.

The Social Housing Resilience Group have a focus on the impacts of COVID. They had previously been meeting daily but have now moved to a monthly format as they think about longer term recovery. Data returned through the Scottish Housing Regulator has provided valuable information on how the sector has been coping, and allowed SFHA and the housing regulator to adapt how best to support the sector.

SFHA have published two papers on Housing 2040, focussed on community and places, and climate change. They are also contributing to SURF's 20 Minute Neighbourhood Practice Network, providing a housing perspective. SURF have recently started producing regeneration policy updates for SFHA members, as part of an ongoing partnership.

Presenter:

- *Stacey Dingwall, Policy Manager, SFHA*

Open Discussion

Some of the main comments and topics of debate raised are listed below. These varied views and opinions do not necessarily represent the views of SURF or all of the people and organisations present at the workshop.

- *One delegate asked Angus Council if they had engaged with a local disability access panel?*

Jamie responded that the council has their own process, involving various departments. They meet collectively and identify applicants with additional needs at an early stage and work out an appropriate process. They try to take a proactive approach and prioritise those tenants.

Euan noted that there had been a similar process for the previous Angus Council SURF Award winning Chapelpark project.

- *Jamie then asked NVLT and SoSCH about the tenant response to the Passivhaus technology?*

Mike noted that the architect has been doing monitoring this but has yet to share results.

Jakob said that it had been harder to monitor these factors due to COVID, but they made use of video conferences to work through any issues, and had got there eventually.

- *A further question on technology asked if the system was straight forward to use and could tenant training be done via video tutorials? Or just manufacturer's instructions?*

Jakob said this was not really an option. When tenants applied to NVLT they did quite a bit of consultation and explanation. A lot of people had done some research in advance of moving in and asked a lot of questions. Most are getting used to it though. As everything is electronic, being generally tech savvy can be a helpful advantage. One family in the development is more up on tech and has been providing support to neighbours. Generally, tenants have been sharing advice and experience with each other, regarding floor coverings and furnishings etc.

Mike added that the education programme was considered to be a really important part of the project from the outset but this has been restricted by lockdown.

They had planned an Open House event for the village to show what a Passivhaus is in practice but this had to be cancelled. The SURF Awards was a nice excuse to get inside the properties.

- *A question was raised regarding NVLT's allocation policy for housing, and was there an online guide?*

A guide is not yet available online, but this has been a common question. It is difficult to have one overarching policy as every community is different, and has its own needs. NVLT's criteria wouldn't meet the needs of perhaps other communities. Passivhaus imposes specific conditions, as all rooms need to be used. Jakob noted that they had 11 applications in total for the three houses.

- *Jamie was asked about the decision to switch from sprinklers to a misting system in Newtyle?*

This was due to an issue with flow rate, which meant they were faced with a choice of putting in tanks or switching to a new system. The in-house architect was in touch with building control who confirmed the alternative system would be acceptable.

- *John was asked about the situation with the land in Gairloch?*

There were multiple owners and residual contamination issues from the hotel site. A range of partners were brought together to purchase the site. Complications meant that it was a drawn out process. They learned that partnership working is central to getting things done.

- *A participant asked about tenement maintenance and balancing the needs of existing stock with new build?*

Stacey responded to this question, noting tension with SFHA members and government. Some members are saying that they are having to stop investment in new stock to concentrate on investment in existing stock. This has been hard to justify to tenants. The average cost of development has risen by £20,000 in recent years. SFHA are trying to make this clear to the Scottish Government to ensure grant levels reflect this rise in cost. Conversations are ongoing and they are hopeful that government are beginning to see this.

- A final point was raised in the chat function highlighting that the projects were only discussing new build and that there is a need to make more of work done with existing buildings and the historic environment.
- Euan responded by raising that the projects had been selected by the SURF Award Judges. SURF are very aware of this issue more widely, and that projects such as Chapelpark had been selected in previous years. Noting that there are a lot of commonalities between SFHA priorities and the work highlighted by the projects.

3) Transferable lessons for place-based regeneration

With introductory presentations from SURF Award winning and highly commended projects:

Campbeltown, The Tannahill Centre and Larkhall Community Network

About the event

The third workshop in the series highlighted the 2020 SURF Award Winning in the 'Scotland's Most Improved Place' and 'Community Led Regeneration' categories, alongside the 'Special Recognition Award' Winner.

The projects featured at the workshop varied in location, from Campbeltown in Argyll and Bute to more urban locations in Paisley and Larkhall, but are all using place-based approaches to regenerate their communities.

The morning workshop took place online on the 22nd July 2021 and featured presentations from project managers and an input from SURF Awards partners the Scottish Government, Scotland's Towns Partnership and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The workshop was attended by 56 participants.

First Presentation Summary: [Campbeltown](#)

James Lafferty has been involved through work in Campbeltown for 15 years, and also as a local it has been really enjoyable to see the changes take place. To him it was not just work. There were a lot of different people involved in the project.

Campbeltown has faced many challenges in recent times. The impact felt by the loss of traditional industries and large employers had left a mark, with rising unemployment and levels of deprivation. Its remote location had led to no inward investment, low property values, and with no opportunity a reducing population. Lack of repair or maintenance to local assets meant that the community was blighted with deteriorating buildings. All of this together resulted in a low sense of pride of place within the community. This isn't unique to Campbeltown, and can be common to many small towns on the West Coast. This could be summarised by 60 years of underdevelopment.

Argyll and Bute Council and partners got together, working with a consultancy to publish an action plan. Involvement of local Third Sector and business partners was key. There was also a large scale consultation with the community, taking a real 'bottom up approach' to regeneration.

The local leisure centre was the first building to be completed, which gave the partners and community confidence that things could happen. There have been a number of big infrastructure investments, including in green energy and aquaculture. The Roads Depot was moved to a new site on the edge of the town, which allowed for new affordable housing to be built on the site. New berthing facilities generated an increase in the number of sailors visiting the town and length of their stay.



The council rolled three 5/6 year projects into one long-term programme of investment. This included funding from:

- CARS Round 1 2007–15
- THI 2009–15
- CARS Round 6 2015 21

The creation of a Town Centre Hub was really important as it provides a base situated within the town. This open door approach led to engagement with a wide range of stakeholders.

There was funding available for small grant works, however, there was originally no demand and they couldn't give the money away. They started to make small-scale investments, in things such as windows, to build relationships and trust with businesses and the community. Shopfront improvements and community projects also helped to build relationships.

The first large project was the old school building, now Campbeltown Backpackers Hostel. This was a 6-year project, with the council providing intensive support to the Kintyre Amenity Trust, helping them to secure £500,000 of funding. Revenue from the hostel now supports the community group, helping them run a local heritage centre.

The Town Hall project was the first large scale asset transfer that the council had ever undertaken. This was another 6-year project, this time working with South Kintyre Development Trust. They accessed money from a range of funders, which led to the creation of a community run facility and saved the building from dereliction.

Argyll and Bute Council have invested in promoting maintenance and factoring. There had been no factoring for over 20 years and no companies were willing to take buildings on. The council began with free gutter cleaning and created a tenement guide. They encouraged the creation of owners' associations, leading to the development of 30 within the town. A&B Council made access to funding conditional on the creation of an association. This was initially small-scale funding then moved on to a number of larger projects getting THI money, along with funding from private housing and owners contributions.

50 – 52 Main Street/2 Cross Street were deemed dangerous buildings and were facing demolition. These were acquired from the owner through compulsory purchase and then sold to new owner straight away. This development went on to win the 2016/17 Empty Homes Award.

They developed a partnership approach to working on problem buildings with multiple sections of the council working together really successful. This approach has now been developed across Argyll and Bute.

One of the main learning points was that you need to be successful with funding. This can have a domino effect with improvement in one building leading to improvements in adjacent properties. Dangerous Building notices were used to secure repairs, which in turn saved adjacent properties from damage. All of this played a part in creating new jobs and attracting new businesses.

The Shopfront Improvement Scheme provided an opportunity for a training programme for the entire community. 50 events or training courses were delivered with both council and private sector tradesmen attending

Other successes have included, the creation of a Heritage Trail which has been funded by Sustrans. Three new distilleries are set to open in Campbeltown, increasing employment opportunities in the area.

Lots of volunteers are still working on new and existing projects and new staff have been created for maintenance and upkeep of buildings and investments.

The key lessons to take forward from the project are:

- Have patience – It is a long drawn out process to pull different elements together and to get funding.
- Team working – Effective collaboration is really important, especially with a wide range of people involved.
- No problems – There are only solutions.
- Deliverability – Quick wins are vital to build confidence and secure more funding.
- Role of the council – There are unsung heroes throughout the organisation, legal etc.

Presenter:

- *James Lafferty, Project Officer, Argyll and Bute Council*

Second Presentation Summary: [Larkhall Community Network](#)

Larkhall Community Network was a group set up to support the local community throughout the COVID lockdown period. Originally titled the Larkhall COVID Rainbows, the group decided that after

the initial 6-month delivery period that they should continue to operate longer term under a new name.

The group worked in partnership with all departments of South Lanarkshire Council, the NHS (primarily NHS Health Improvement) and the Third Sector, with private businesses also heavily involved.

The partnership was built on relationships formed during the development of the Larkhall Community Plan in 2019. A large scale community survey was carried out with 34,708 interactions in town with a population of 18,000.

People involved in the COVID response already knew and trusted each other because of this connection. Overnight 50 volunteers appeared, delivering 100 meals a day from local business Heart of Africa, delivering them using community transport minibuses. They delivered support packs, provided a service for prescription pick up and drop off using local taxi drivers and gave out Christmas meals, packs and presents.



The group made calls to people identified as vulnerable or alone. To date 20,000 calls have been made. They started an 'Adopt a Neighbour' scheme to ensure regular check-ins and a level of human contact. Included in every pack was a card offering support and saying that everyone was a valued part of community, it was not about poverty or stigma.

£100,000 was received from various funds and managed by the Larkhall Community Network and Larkhall Community Growers. In-kind funding was also received through private donations. The group benefitted from streamlined funding processes. Inclusion of the Private Sector allowed for a new kind of support. Businesses had wanted to help in the past but were not sure how to contribute. This has shaped new ways of working for the Third Sector.

The group faced a number of challenges, including:

- Governance – All of the partners had their own policies. It was challenging to square these in an emergency situation, with no written constitution or procedures for new volunteers, and working via ZOOM complicated things further. The group just met these issues head on.
- GDPR – Statutory providers such as schools and the NHS couldn't share information with them, so they had to trust them. Share materials with them to hand out to those in need and hope it got done. Some people definitely missed out because they didn't know they were there.
- Trust – A lot of people coming together, some who they didn't know previously, which inevitably led to some issues.
- Utilities support – Didn't really want to hand over cash so had to be creative with this.
- Encouragement throughout changes to restrictions – Changing rules and levels of infection were challenging. It was hard to mediate so many different personal responses.

The actions of the group have led to a number of unintended consequences:

- A stronger community support structure is now in place.

- The strength of the Third Sector response has been surprising to some. The ability to attract funding etc. Does the name 'Third' still fit? More on par with other sectors and organisations now.
- Connections made – Ordinary people doing extraordinary things. This has resulted in increased interest in future action and meetings.
- More volunteers coming on board for the longer term.
- Community efforts have been more widely recognised, and celebrated.
- Positive reputational benefit for Larkhall.

What really made the project work were the existing relationships that were already in place, both locally and with funders. This helped people to respond quickly. There was a sense of shared purpose which helped to mobilise a lot of resources from different sources, such as using church buildings and accessing community transport. Showing leadership and having key people to communicate a shared vision effectively is key.

In looking to the future, the group is progressing with a Memorandum of Understanding and establishing good governance processes. They are open to working with new partners and anyone who is interested in the wellbeing of people living in Larkhall.

They are continuing to work on joint projects, putting in action elements of the community plan and supporting the regeneration of the town centre. They continue to share knowledge and information about what's happening locally, acting as an advocate for Larkhall and its people.

Presenter:

- *Nancy Barr, Chair, Larkhall Community Network*

Third Presentation Summary: The Tannahill Centre

The Tannahill Centre is based in Ferguslie Park in Paisley. It is a large community facility which was built 26 years ago, celebrating its 25th anniversary in lockdown.

In 2006, the facility was transferred to the community as a subsidiary of the local housing association. The centre began to experience gradual decline, missing out on funding and not responding to the needs of the community.

The housing association and other partners, including the Scottish Government, got together to discuss what should be done. A survey was carried out, which found:

- The centre was unresponsive to the community and the services it did deliver were of poor quality.
- Relationships with stakeholders were strained and the centre had dis-engaged from partnership working and wider networks.
- The centre had a bad reputation, which was obscuring some of its better aspects. It was considered to be too expensive to hire, when in fact it was actually one of the cheaper community venues in the area.

A new executive team was brought in and a 3-year business plan agreed. They knew that some quick wins were needed to regain trust. In the short-term responding to people's needs was key. They focussed on children and young people, became involved in the wider Paisley 2021 City of Culture bid, and began to offer more services. They also set up new partnerships, and made visible changes and improvements to the centre.



Medium-term goals included raising awareness, attracting new funders and deepening the impact of the centre's work more broadly. In the long-term they set out to establish social enterprise activity, sustain funding and redevelop and repurpose the centre, which would require larger scale physical investment.

Partnership working began to work well and physical changes occurred, but the community were not accessing new services. At this point they made the decision to go back to the community and find out what was happening. This quote from a local activist sums it up, "seemingly never ending regeneration being done to Ferguslie Park – when does it end?"

After reflecting on the community observations there was a shift in emphasis. The team started to engage with people more informally, it became more about working alongside people and groups than delivering services for them.

New activities started to take shape. These included matching artists to 12 community groups to collaborate on a community arts festival, forming self-reliant groups and developing a Participatory Budgeting programme, with local people deciding how grant funding should be allocated. They identified a need for a community anchor organisation that could support and nurture community activity.

This asset-based approach to community development is nothing new. It was about making the most of what Ferguslie Park had in terms of strong community spirit and a strong desire to be self-reliant. The centre wanted to talk about this and make it clear to the local community that the centre wasn't there to tell people what to do.

Medium-term outcomes achieved include:

- Successfully attracting funding, but not focussed on the centre. Spreading money throughout the community, sharing resources and building skills. A lot of community groups have been set up off the back of money allocated through Participatory Budgeting processes.
- More people volunteering, there are now over 60 volunteers.
- Recognition and wider awareness of the work has led to opportunities that they wouldn't have otherwise had.

In supporting the COVID response effort, there was greater capacity available in the community due to the work of the centre over the past few years, a lot of the groups coming to fore during the pandemic had been set up through PB processes etc. Smaller groups trusted the centre to provide the right support and strong relationships allowed the centre to act as hub and linking body between different groups.

In the longer term there is a plan to redesign and redevelop the centre. The team aim to encourage and nurture further social enterprise activity within the community, and hope to secure long-term funding from a diverse range of funders.

The key reflections from the project are:

- Don't just listen – LISTEN. It took time to sit down with people, converse and find out what they actually wanted.
- Be comfortable with giving up control. You often aren't able to say exactly what will happen but remain focussed on outcomes, this requires flexibility.

Presenter:

- *Jamie Mallan, Business Transformation Manager, The Tannahill Centre*

Fourth Presentation Summary: Scottish Government

The Team Leader for Regeneration Strategy gave a brief overview of government policies relating to community regeneration.

The presentations from the groups bring to life the work the government are involved in and trying to support. The team are looking forward to getting back out and actually seeing projects.

Shared learning is really important, as it provides feedback and evidence that helps to develop and shape policy.

Government policy on place-based and community led regeneration is centred around the Place Principle and building on local knowledge, skills and resources. This has been developed and delivered slightly differently over the past year due to COVID. Ultimately the work is about outcomes and all government policies are directed towards an end goal of creating an inclusive Net-Zero economy.

The key areas of delivery for the Scottish Government Regeneration Team include pulling together what already exists into a new £325 million Place-Based Investment Programme. This will be connected to other programmes and have a 5-year funding span which will respond to identified need for long-term funding. This will be focussed on place, community regeneration and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods, linking and aligning place-based funding streams.

A Town Centre Action Plan Review will provide a vision for towns, people, planet and the economy. The next step is to turn this into deliverable action points. The Review Group will feed into the work being done on 20 Minute Neighbourhoods.

The Scotland Loves Local campaign has been provided with a £10 million commitment to support town centres and the local economy. This will roll out in partnership with local authorities with announcements due on what is happening next.

BIDS are an important model of local collaboration. There is a move towards Community Improvement Districts, building on the existing BID model. £4 million of funding has been allocated for both.

Continued funding streams and areas of activity include:

- COVID related funds.
- The Empowering Communities Programme and Investing in Communities Programme.
- A dedicated 'Our Place' website which will bring a lot of this work together, including best practice from the SURF Awards and a 'How to Guide' on where to start with place-based regeneration.

Presenter:

- *Joanne Boyle, Team Leader for Regeneration Strategy, Scottish Government*

Fifth Presentation Summary: [Scotland's Towns Partnership](#)

There is a growing recognition of the importance of place and how it connects to everything. The Scottish Government commitment to place is innovative on a global level. If you're not prepared to fix where you live, then don't expect someone else to come along and do it

Partnership and collaboration is key for successful place-based regeneration, with a need for strong local leadership.

STP exists to support this work. They have a diverse membership who are trying to connect the threads to nurture localised solutions.

There is a range of funding available from the Scottish Government for towns. It has been a major step forward to bring together the £325 million Place-Based Investment Fund, and the additional £40 million granted to local authorities for towns.

Improvement Districts provide hyper local knowledge which has been really important during COVID, in identifying a need for support and trying to bring the community alongside business and local government. It can be a useful model for bringing in different sources of funding and skills. Moving on from the original BID model, there are now a range of different types of Improvement District, including digital, tourism and food. The model is flexible to local circumstances.

The Town Centre Review sought a wide level of engagement, identifying issues and opportunities for the future, and feeding into the forthcoming Town Centre Action Plan.

Scotland Loves Local offers great potential for Town Centres, especially in the post-COVID recovery phase. It allows money to stay in the local economy. It is all about post-COVID living and commitment to place.

The STP website provides access to a suite of free resources, including the Place Standard Tool, Town Centre Toolkit and a wide-range of place resources. It is an encyclopaedia of knowledge. STP host workshops and manage funds, helping you to make connections that can provide support.

Presenter:

- *Phil Prentice, Chief Officer, Scotland's Towns Partnership*

Sixth Presentation Summary: [Highlands and Islands Enterprise \(HIE\)](#)

HIE are particularly passionate about community led regeneration. They were set up in 1965 and community development was embedded from the start.

They tend to take a more holistic approach, focussed on inclusion across HIE. They have a current push towards Net-Zero and growing the economy across different sectors, including the space sector and wave energy, working with communities and private entities.

HIE's vision is for the Highlands and Islands region to be as prosperous and inclusive as it can be, and to build strong and productive businesses, enable strong capable communities, and to create conditions for growth and green recovery. Communities are central to these ambitions.

HIE worked in Campbeltown to support the Royal Hotel secure inward investment, in turn strengthening the local economy. The also supported the Picturehouse was a funding package.

The key areas of focus for the Strengthening Communities and Place team are

- Resilience and Capacity
- Community Assets

- Net-Zero and Green Recovery

HIE have a role to enable communities to contribute to social and economic wellbeing and the growth of the region.

They have delivered a wide range of activity to support communities and businesses throughout the pandemic.

The GoPlaces Newsletter provides information that is of value to people trying to develop their communities.

HIE has a passion for community led regeneration. Previous winner, the Ochiltree Community Hub in East Ayrshire exemplified this work, drawing from the bottom up, and The Tannahill Centre has showed that it is a long road. Community led is part of HIE's DNA and a prosperous future relies on more of these fantastic projects.

The key thing that these projects show is the hard work that goes into engaging with people and communities, and enabling work in response to this.

Presenter:

- *Margaret McSparran, Head of Social Enterprise Development / Regional Resilience Manager, Highlands and Islands Enterprise*

Open Discussion

Some of the main comments and topics of debate raised are listed below. These varied views and opinions do not necessarily represent the views of SURF or all of the people and organisations present at the workshop.

- *One delegate asked all three projects what the biggest barrier to success had been?*

James responded saying that it had been people and personalities.

Nancy noted that the organisation wasn't seen as having credibility. People have had to sit up and take notice. Public sector attitudes are starting to change and they now want to engage.

Jamie agreed with both, saying that personalities and other agencies can be a challenge. The refreshing thing about COVID was that differences were put aside as they were all working towards a common goal.

- *The projects were asked about key learning for keeping collaboration productive and positive?*

Jamie said relevant partnerships are key, where all partners want to be actively involved. Some partnerships have a natural end point.

Nancy referred to the completed survey just prior to COVID. What is contained in this will guide the group going forward. All partners in the network have different areas of expertise and this gives strength and depth. Particularly Private Sector partners who are really keen to become more involved.

James noted that the current phase of council led regeneration has now ended but other groups are taking this work forward.

- Euan noted that Audit Scotland are looking for good case studies to show the impact of the pandemic on ways of working. Nancy and Jamie have highlighted public bodies giving up

control and taking risks. Can this be maintained post-pandemic with more general devolution of public spending?

- It is great to see long-term investment in place-based regeneration. Campbeltown is a 15-year project. Referencing the quote in The Tannahill Centre presentation asking 'when does this regeneration end' also illustrative of this point.
- 20 Minute Neighbourhoods are encouraging. Bit of a buzzword but something that is tangible to people. If it is included in NPF4 then that's a ten-year commitment.
- *The Larkhall Community Network was asked how they engaged during the pandemic?*

The group were supposed to launch the original survey 28th of March. They received 1812 individual responses, with 600 people consenting to future contact. The network is involved in four local social media groups which helps to get information out. They are very conscious that they might be missing people that weren't on the internet. They spoke to people when out and about, although this was harder during lockdown obviously. Organisations involved in the network cover a wide range of people so they could get information out through them. Word of mouth is still important in a town of that size. People out volunteering would pass information on. They often had people from outside the town contacting and asking to get in touch with relatives etc.

- The importance of existing groups making connections was highlighted.
- *The Scottish Government were asked when the Our Place website is going online?*

Don't know, get told and it changes. Will update Phil and Euan when they know for sure.

- *Find it much easier to get continuity in community action plans etc. in rural areas compared to in urban areas. Presentations highlight that continuity is key, it is about having the same people involved for a long time. Regeneration is like a garden. In Craigmillar regeneration has been happening for 20 years but organisations come and go. Thoughts on how these situations can be dealt with?*

Phil agreed to a certain extent. City centre property tends to be transient but certainly urban neighbourhoods that are more settled, like Shawlands and Kelvinside, BIDs are working well. Longevity requires support and resources injected at the right time. COVID is changing patterns of living and working, people are now more rooted in local. The longer term shift towards Net-Zero is compounding this. Areas of longer term concern are Edinburgh and Glasgow city centres. Glasgow is the least densely populated city centre in its class. No one is there to pick up the baton and the old model is failing.

Margaret said that it is still a challenge to maintain continuity in rural areas, particularly in terms of skills and vision on boards of community organisations. Campbeltown benefited from a shared vision and continuity of support from the public sector to nurture relationships.

Jamie highlighted the need to keep checking in with the community and the vision. This is an issue regardless of density.

- It is about making sure people have the resources and support so they don't burn out.
- *The speakers were asked what is most important for funders to support following COVID?*

Margaret highlighted that funding needs to be focussed on where recovery activity is taking place, and that this activity is linked to inclusion and Net-Zero. Immediate and longer term priorities are covered.

Jamie said there is a level of expectation from the community now that we will continue at same level, but this is very resource intensive. Would ask that trust and responsiveness continue with post-COVID funding.

- The National Lottery Heritage Fund said they are continuing to make capital investments but also investing in community activity and engagement as well. Working out how they do this over the next few years. More important now is HOW they invest, as well as what they invest in.
- *A question was raised on the right balance between local government and community leadership?*

James answered that Campbeltown benefitted from three concurrent 5-year investment schemes with a CARs Officer staying on throughout. It is tricky to balance and one size doesn't fit all. Depends on circumstances and is difficult with council budgets to say that one officer will stay in one town for the long-term.

- Power balance between different elements a key issue of SURF's work in Dunoon. The importance of subsidiarity, having people embedded in the community and feeling the impact of the work they are doing. James exemplifies this.

4) How can embedding artistic approaches enable communities to become agents for change?

With introductory presentations from SURF Award winning projects:

The Glasgow Barons, Toonspeak Young People's Theatre and Plantation Production's Creative Steps to Positive Mental Health.

Additional presentation was provided by SURF Award partner Creative Scotland.

About the event

The final workshop in the series highlighted the 2020 SURF Award winning projects in the 'Creative Regeneration' category.

The projects featured are all using creativity and artistic approaches to engage with and support members of their local community.

The morning workshop took place online on the 29th July 2021 and featured presentations from project managers and an input from SURF Award partner Creative Scotland. The workshop was attended by 64 participants.

First Presentation Summary: The Glasgow Barons

After months of house arrest, The Glasgow Barons presentation wanted to focus on the idea of the 'prison breaks of mind' that we now need to stage.

There is a wall of silence around narcotic use, which has exploded in Govan during the pandemic resulting in negative social and health impacts. The Barons held weekly Zoom rap sessions titled 'Recovery Rap' with Steg G and Sunny Govan Radio. This gave a space for participants to express themselves and build confidence, sharing stories during isolation.

Talking about mental health and complex issues, in the context of a deteriorating mental health crisis due to the pandemic, was a big focus of the online sessions. Supported by David Tyma, a well-known local busker, the project produced and filmed a video for his song 'Call Out the Dead'. The lyrics focus on his own personal tragedy and things that are often swept under the carpet. The resulting video has had thousands of hits and comments on YouTube.



To help combat social isolation, the project got involved in giving out free tablets and data bundles to participants. Internet poverty is still a big barrier to participation due to cost and skills. Thinking about how best to optimise the programme to be delivered both on and offline.

There is a need to break the silence around poverty and climate change. We need to talk to adults as well as children. Paul raised the example of the differing higher cost of meat free sausages in comparison to meat sausages. It appears that you need to be affluent to have a carbon footprint. The project is planning activities around COP26 to highlight this point. They are working on releasing a rap album called '4 Seasons in One Day' by SCARs, which will cover topics such as poverty, climate change and toxic masculinity.

One of the key barriers the project faces is class and the perception of classical musical. All of their concerts are an affordable £3 or £1 concession, and are held in accessible venues in the community that people can walk or get a taxi too. All of the musicians are paid Musicians Union rates. Air in Between is a fusion of rap and classical music.

Another barrier the project perceives as a challenge is religion. They are currently doing work with Adonai Bible Church, which is largely made up of the local African community. They are working with the Church Praise Band. The players getting real benefit from the tuition and the church is benefitting from having a better band.

Racism is a further societal issue faced by the project. The Musicians in Exile project is an orchestra made up of asylum seeking refugees. It aims to break down misconceptions and gives something back to community that has hosted them. They recently were commissioned to provide a piece for the Refugee Festival Scotland.

The Barons staged a socially distanced performance in the MacLeod Hall, in the Pearce Institute, last year, reviving the buildings original purpose as a music venue and breathing life into a community space.

Their overall approach is to break down barriers and bring folk together. The pandemic sharpened the difficulties they were dealing with.

Presenter:

- *Paul MacAlinden, Artistic Director, The Glasgow Barons*

Second Presentation Summary: Toonspeak Young People's Theatre

The presentation from Toonspeak focussed on the work that they have been doing over the past year, which has been a diversion from their normal activity.

Toonspeak is youth-led arts organisation based in Glasgow. Pre-COVID they were working in three areas in the city within the bottom 6% of SMID. Working with young people facing complex intersecting disadvantage. Bringing participants to their venues from across the city. Their work was physically based in community spaces and theatres, which helped to bring in revenue. The young people joined on a referral basis or by word of mouth, and the sessions were provided free of charge with transport and meals included.



Their standard programme focuses on three key elements; Inspire, Transform, Progress; and takes young people through a staged approach, building confidence and skills to support progression into paid work experience and creative careers.

COVID kicked in on the 17th March, busy and vibrant projects were underway but they had to shut everything down. The team initially thought it would all blow over by summer and were working on a summer programme, at this point they weren't considering a 'new normal'.

Fear became a big issue amongst the team. Fear for what would happen to the vulnerable young people they worked with. What would happen to their funding? Who are they if they are not physically working with young people? Staying in contact with participants was going to be a challenge. What will happen to the freelance workforce? The team didn't want to be furloughed.

They had to make a plan in response to each point. They decided that they would:

- Become an anchor organisation to receive funding and deliver a response programme.
- Communicate with funders to let them know what they were doing. Support and flexibility came from this.
- Stick to their mission, as that hadn't changed. They just needed to do it differently.
- Provide regular check-in calls to check on participant welfare.
- Develop a Response Programme that would offer employment to artists.

Their Response Programme featured a number of elements. One of those was Creative Calm, which responded to anxieties created by COVID and lockdown. Check-ins progressed to 1:1 and group creativity sessions delivered via Zoom. The sessions were delivered by qualified Arts Therapists who have expertise in adverse childhood experiences and trauma. They found young people were becoming more isolated due to the pandemic. There was a poor initial uptake, it took time to build trust with participants and deliver therapeutic work digitally. They ended up often working with families more than individuals.

Projects by Post saw the group delivering a structured craft and creative programme to participants in Barmulloch, consisting of good quality arts materials. They were really reliant on partners on the ground in Barmulloch working hard to make up and deliver packs physically. There were a lot of Amazon orders with arts materials to open and sort. The programme just grew and grew, initially planned for 300 packs over 6 weeks, but ended up delivering 1,728 packs and 10 weeks of activities. This was funded by the Supporting Communities Fund.

Access to Digital Creativity was the third element of the Response Programme. Their experience with this programme resonates with what Paul was saying regarding barriers to digital connection. They employed a dedicated Digital Coordinator to help people use the technology they were giving out, including data, tablets and computers. They initially targeted this at 14-17 year olds but found that the range of young people involved expanded naturally, with family members often in the background of Zoom calls wanting to be included. In response, they started doing 'family bundles' of data and tablets. The flexibility of their funding allowed them to do this and respond based on community need. They were also handling a far higher number of referrals than they had done previously.

They had originally conceived that the Response Programme would be standalone, a programme which would only exist in the time of the pandemic, something that they would naturally move away from as they entered into a recovery phase. However, the learning has been huge, in responding in the way they did they have become more responsive to the core needs of participants, through Zoom the team have been invited into their homes and their lives.

They had originally intended to move through a three staged approach:

- Response
- Recovery
- Renewed

One of the things that changed in the organisation's planned approach was the continuation of Creative Calm beyond the funded period. They have only recently wound down this programme as the need for it has changed as restrictions have lifted

Toonspeak have continued with the Digital Creativity programme supporting children and young people to connect and create. They continue to distribute equipment and data and provide support to help people to use the equipment.

They are continuing to progress young people through digital 1:1 interventions, and have begun to physically meet them through their progression associate.

The team continue to re-think how to better evidence their work, challenging their past mode of evaluation which concentrated on monitoring. Pre-Covid they relied on a smaller number of community artists to deliver weekly classes. They are now employing an increased number of specialist artists, who were not normally available to them. This has greatly enhanced their ability to progress young people. This includes working with international artists.

As a team they have learned to be more mindful of each other and to be actively caring and active in supporting their own wellbeing.

They are not going to pretend that they know what's going to happen next. For Toonspeak, what they had perhaps thought of as a linear journey from Response, Recovery and Renewal is a deeper journey which may see some departure from the standard programme, but is stronger than ever before in delivering on their mission and upholding their values, and this is really key. They are more

youth-led than ever before, young people are able to choose their individual path. The missing 'R' in each stage that they are now building into their planning is 'Reflection'.

As they come out of lockdown they have a couple of projects planned. Protest Lab is a summer film programme which is performance led and focussed on climate change. This is their first film as the performance would normally be in a theatre but they have adapted to the current conditions, and are excited to see what the young people produce.

Toonspeak have also received funding as part of the Creative Scotland Culture Collective programme. Their successful delivery during COVID encouraged them to apply for their biggest project to date, covering the whole of Ward 17 in Glasgow, which includes Springburn and Robroyston. They would never have gone for it if it wasn't for the experience they gained throughout the pandemic.

They have a new term starting in the autumn. They now know they can pivot and change if required. They are aiming for more physical work but it is about finding the right blend.

Presenter:

- *Hazel Wotherspoon, Chief Executive, Toonspeak Young People's Theatre*

Third Presentation Summary: Creative Steps to Positive Mental Health

Like other projects Creative Steps had to change during COVID. They have done very well at adapting, despite the constraints. They are now starting to move back to a more normal delivery approach.

How can embedding artistic approaches enable communities to become agents for change? By using an individual and peer support based model. Looking at how skills developed through crafts can support people, and become transferable to other areas of their lives.



“The positive psychology that results from being creative, has a powerful impact in making us aware of our capabilities. Interventions that help us to see the positive around us helps people look at life with optimism. When that is combined with building supportive friendships, we see significant changes.”

All of the interventions Plantation Productions use are very low key. They start with Step 1, going into health centres and working with people within the community, then gradually move to working in their Art Gallery at 996 with mixed groups and finally peer support.

They work to help people create structure in their days and weeks, and the work is delivered and guided by people with lived experience.

Step 2 of the programme is designed to help participants make new friendships and connections, using very low key crafts which they can take home and show to others. This helps to build confidence and appreciation of themselves and their abilities. NHS Mental Health Services see clear mental and physical health benefits from taking part in such activities, and there is concrete evidence of the value it creates for the wider community.

The programme isn't six weeks or six months; people can progress in their own time. Once they are more confident in themselves and feel ready to progress, they can move towards Step 3.

Step 3 moves work out into the wider community. It offers participants the opportunity to get involved in other activities, such as photography, the Govan Allsorts Community Choir or the sewing group. At this point participants can also begin volunteering.

Social impact assessments and monitoring with participants has shown:

- 90% reported an improvement in supportive friendships
- 88% reported an improved sense of purpose
- 88% reported improved confidence
- 85% reported an increased ability to learn new skills
- 83% reported increased self-esteem
- 83% agreed that doing something creative helps to distract them from negative things
- 66.7% state they feel better able to concentrate

The NHS have stated that the programme is very valuable, as it is rare that they get to make the link with community resources. They found that local doctors had not had a lot of experience with outside resources prior to engaging with Creative Steps.

The main elements of the Creative Steps strategy and theory of change are:

- Social prescribing
- Feeling engaged
- Feeling of achievement
- Confidence building

As a result of engagement with the programme, people experiencing a mental health condition are better able to manage their own condition, are reconnecting with society, contributing to the community and living a more fulfilling life. Thus participants have improved mental health and wellbeing and have increased their capacity to live with the flexibility and resilience to deal with life's challenges. This creates a ripple effect with people feeling inspired, and inspiring others within their network to engage in the arts.

Presenter:

- *Vanessa van Scherpenseel, Lead Artist, Plantation Productions*

Fourth Presentation Summary: Creative Scotland

Karen Dick's team within Creative Scotland covers place-based work, town centres, regeneration, community consultation, the Culture Collective programme and Place Partnerships.

Creative Scotland's new annual plan has changed how they define their work. This has largely been in response to the present crisis. COVID has forced them to adapt and change over the past 18 months, and it will change how they work and engage in the future. They have become more explicitly cogent on climate change and inequalities, and are reframing offers with greater flexibility in how they can support individuals and communities

Their main priorities are:

- Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion
- Sustainable Development
- Fair Work
- International

Funding people to work where they live as an artist remains as a challenge. Creative Scotland gets the majority of its budget from the National Lottery and the Scottish Government. This funds a vast range of activity, programmes and engagement. Karen noted that she was not going to talk about the closure of the fund for individuals at present, as it will be reopened as a fully digital application. At present they are revising funding for groups to reassess and bring in learning from COVID.

Culture Collective is a COVID-19 relief fund delivered in partnership with the Scottish Government. 26 individual organisations have been funded, with the aim of creating a network of cultural organisations and communities. In turn creating an agenda for cultural activity in their place.

The programme will provide employment opportunities for creative practitioners and actively engage people in shaping the future of the cultural life of their community. Working collectively to create a positive difference locally and nationally, in response to COVID-19. It will provide opportunities for testing new models, learning, sharing and adapting.

They are looking at how this can make a real difference in communities and people's lives, in terms of climate change and COVID recovery.

Presenter:

- *Karen Dick, Head of Place, Partnerships and Communities, Creative Scotland*

Open Discussion

Some of the main comments and areas of debate are listed below. These varied views and opinions do not necessarily represent the views of SURF or all of the people and organisations present at the workshop.

- *One delegate asked Toonspeak about the involvement of Arts Therapists. What were the barriers to the Creative Calm programme which led to the shift to working with families rather than individuals?*

Hazel responded saying that originally they thought it would be about anxiety, so would spend some time working with a therapist and then move on to the wider creative activity. But two main points that arose were the time it took to build up trust to get participants to open up and the conditions young people were living in, often tiny flats. This pushed them to bring in wider family fairly quickly.

Although they were at peace with the art therapy not doing deep therapeutic work, they are keeping the focus on the art. They had one specialist who was an expert in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE). Where this was identified they took it out of the main programme and did it separately, as they could not refer on. Art organisations are well placed to do this sort of work because they care and have already made a connection.

Paul added that it has become obvious in the past year that people are being missed, as projects can't reach them. Art has a therapeutic role but they aren't therapists. They need to work in partnership with health services etc.

It was noted that Street League said similar during the youth employability workshop. They were finding similar issues but staying in lane and matching participants to the right services.

- *Another question to Toonspeak asked if you can self-refer to projects? As there was an interest to get some people involved.*

Yes, self-referral is possible. They have certain systems and partnerships in place but accept self-referral. On the last question, it is very difficult on Zoom to keep the line clear between art and family/mental health issues. There is a need to try and create the right space regardless of background noise and upset. It is difficult but they try.

- *A question for all of the groups involved in working with people who are trained in ACE, addictions etc. Do you write these into applications for funding/job descriptions? How do you know what you're going to find prior to beginning a project?*

Hazel stated that yes they do and that every job description is carefully worked out. This is a bit different from how they did it in the past. They designed a training programme on digital safeguarding for all staff, which has been very useful. Don't think people realised how long they'd be working online. Also, they try to contextualise their work when interviewing people. Asking about challenging situations and understanding of modern poverty. They provide support for people without knowledge or experience, as it can be really challenging mentally for workers. Experienced workers mentor new starts, providing a level of peer support. It is more difficult at the moment as there is less opportunity to come together and reflect.

- *They were asked to clarify if this was explicit in funding applications?*

Hazel replied that yes it is very explicit. A lot of the funds that came out during COVID asked for a level of detail that forced them to think through these issues.

Paul added that because his project is largely music led, rather than music therapy, they look for lived experience, which comes through in the work. The Facilitator for Musicians in Exile was previously a member of the group and a refugee themselves. The work brings insight into traumas facing members. As music is a specialised field they don't cover ACE yet but will build in as necessary.

Vanessa noted that because they work with the NHS, specific mental health work is done through CPNs and other referrals. Group work, with up to 20 people in each, is not really suitable for more therapeutic work. Vanessa has an art therapy background and has tried to introduce it, with limited success. Something to maybe try with small groups in the future.

- The need to adapt and funding flexibility was noted by all projects.
- *A participant noted that the impact of COVID on organisations has been reported, and that sometimes we are not good at looking at the stress individuals working for institutions face. In terms of delivering funding etc. Karen was asked how it had been for Creative Scotland?*

There is a far bigger volume of work being done from home, and new systems added online for Culture Collective applications. It is really not straightforward. They were communicating with people already funded to let them know they could still use it. Working out how they could get stuff done in a new context. Personally, she was thankful that she had something to focus on, as Creative Scotland had to be there to support people. This provided motivation. She reflected that she would normally spend a lot of time out and about, so this has been really strange. Place-based activity doesn't replicate itself online, and you can't reach people who would never think of talking to Creative Scotland in the same way. It has enabled Creative Scotland in other ways. They have wanted to do something like Culture Collective for a really long time, and this has provided an opportunity. Looking forward to getting out and seeing all of the activity now that things are opening up.

- *People were glad for the flexibility and openness around funding that COVID brought, how can this be maintained while also ensuring accountability?*

Creative Scotland have delayed the second part of their review process to examine this. The new individual funding structure has been informed by the pandemic. They have always been flexible but it is about people being confident enough to speak to them. They will be trying to build flexibility more explicitly into new funding structures, although they can't promise it will be the same.

- One delegate noted that it is ultimately about relationships and communication. They were personally delighted to hear climate change discussed at the individual and community level.
- Paul stated that it is important to challenge false narratives. There is an idea that climate change doesn't matter. We know that the poorest will be the worst affected. It is about finding a narrative that people can relate to and managing false information. Scottish hip-hop already has a strong voice on this subject.
- Hazel said she had no idea what the film the young people are working on will look like. It is the first time she has not been there to oversee things. She is intrigued as she has been asked to source strange props. Paul is right, it is about an authentic message, might not be about climate change explicitly but is about things that are related to what people already care about.

End of paper

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October 2021

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Supported by: Creative Scotland, Glasgow City Council, Historic Environment Scotland, Museums Galleries Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, the Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland and Wheatley Group.