SURF 2021 MANIFESTO PROCESS: THE CLIMATE CRISIS

ABOUT THIS PAPER

SURF is **consulting** with its **members** and **wider contacts** to prepare a **2021 Manifesto for Community Regeneration**. The 2021 Manifesto will set out what SURF's network thinks the **Scottish Government** should be **doing differently** to better support the regeneration of socially and economically challenged places over the next term of the Scottish Parliament.

SURF's consultation process is structured on **13 key themes**. This briefing paper concerns one of these themes: **the climate crisis**. This broad topic encompasses the anticipated implications of **climate change**, and related **preventative, mitigative and adaptive actions**, on Scottish places and society.

Briefing papers are circulated to SURF consultees with relevant knowledge and experience with a view to sharing **helpful background information** on the process and theme in advance of consultations. Please click the following links to **learn more** about: What is SURF? How will the 2021 Manifesto be developed?

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

During the coronavirus crisis, **SURF policy and research staff** will be consulting via telephone calls, video interviews, and by requesting email submissions. **SURF is grateful to all participants for their time.**

The **following questions** will be used to structure interviews and submissions. They are **optional** and participants may answer as many or as few as they wish. **General comments and views** relevant to the theme are also very welcome.

1. Do you think the climate emergency is a helpful concept in terms of encouraging governments and other stakeholders to take stronger, quicker action to alleviate the impacts of climate change?
2. In your view, has the Scottish Government prioritised climate change adequately in line with its declaration of a climate emergency in 2019?
3. Do you have any views on the selection of 2045 as the target date for achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland?
4. In the context of Scottish Government statements, commitments and policies on the climate crisis to date, do you feel these are likely to have the desired impact in ultimately stopping Scotland from contributing to climate change?
5. Which area of public investment do you think can contribute most immediately and effectively to climate resilience and social justice aims?
6. Do you think existing measures and commitments will successfully protect the poorest people and places in Scotland from the anticipated impacts of climate change?
7. Some in the SURF network have argued that climate change is a middle class conversation in Scotland, with poorer people and places not being fully engaged in the debate and response. Do you think this is a fair concern, and if so how do you think it could be addressed?
8. Of your knowledge of governmental actions to support an economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, do you think these are supporting the climate emergency policy agenda?

9. Do you think the COVID-19 crisis will have any long term implications on climate change action plans, whether good or bad?
10. Do you have any other views or comments on challenges and opportunities associated with the climate crisis?

MANIFESTO FOCUS

Some **general information** for participants:

- SURF intends to **record interviews**, for internal use only in supporting the taking of summary notes. Permission to record will be requested at the start of each interview and recording will only take place where active consent is given.
- All individual responses will be **anonymised** in the Manifesto. With permission, SURF intends to publish a list of consultees in the final presentation, noting that inclusion of an individual or organisation does not necessarily imply their agreement with the presented policy recommendations.
- SURF's 2021 Manifesto is **targeted at the Scottish Government** that will be formed after the 2021 Scottish elections. Policy recommendations must be **practical** for the Scottish Government to progress or deliver within its powers and resources over the 2021-2026 Parliamentary term;
- SURF's overall objective is to **improve the lives and opportunities of people living in Scotland's socially and economically challenged places**.
- The consultation process will run while the **COVID-19 pandemic** is unfolding. The long-term implications for Scotland's economy and society are likely to be significant. SURF would like to learn more about views on these implications and several questions are specific to COVID-19.

POLICY CONTEXT

The Climate Emergency

The Scottish Government declared a Climate Emergency on the 28th of April 2019. Over half of Scotland's Local Authorities have passed resolutions declaring a Climate Emergency.[i] The immediate impacts of the climate emergency are becoming increasingly apparent in Scotland, with rising seasonal temperatures, sea levels and annual rainfall, and more frequent extreme weather events.[ii]

The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 set targets to reduced Scotland's emissions of greenhouse gases to net-zero by 2045. A number of political parties and campaigning groups have advocated for a quicker reduction and transition to a zero carbon economy.[iii] The UK Committee on Climate Change has argued that, at present, faster reduction is not credible – with current policy insufficient to meet even older, less ambitious targets.[iv] While net-zero by 2045 is generally seen as an achievable target, some analysts have argued that it will require the mobilisation of policy and resources on an almost unprecedented level.[iv]

The Scottish Government's most recent Climate Change Plan sets out greenhouse gas reduction targets for the period 2018-32[v], while the Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Program 2019-24 is the second statutory five year programme for adapting to climate change[vi].

Climate Change and Inequalities

The climate crisis is an issue of social justice. Climate change acts as a 'threat multiplier', most strongly affecting those already disadvantaged the most, who are also those least likely to have contributed to carbon emissions.[vii] Climate risk is stratified unequally across society. Income is a major determinant of resilience, and therefore ability to cope with the multi-level impacts of climate change.

Concurrently, extreme weather is expected worsen existing inequalities in population health, with impacts felt most by those already vulnerable. At a community level, deprived areas are likely to have less green space and be at higher risk to pluvial flooding.[viii] Residents of poorer places tend to live in lower quality accommodation and are least able to adapt their homes to deal with extreme weather, while rural and island communities are more vulnerable to becoming cut off and isolated.[ix]

Climate Change and Regeneration

Adapting to climate change is closely linked to wider community regeneration; both policy agendas call for enhanced community capacity and resilience, and the delivery of positive social justice outcomes from mitigation activity. The Scottish Government's adaptation program has a number of outcomes specifically focused on community resilience and inequalities. Sub outcome 2.1 of the 2019-24 adaptation programme states:

> *"The most vulnerable to climate change in Scotland are engaged, empowered and able to adapt to climate change"* [v]

Actions on community engagement emphasise raising awareness, particularly among the most vulnerable, of the likely impacts of climate change, including highlighting areas at risk of flooding and improving early warning systems. The programme also highlights the Place Principle and the Place Standard Tool. [v x xi]

Community Resilience & Adaptation

Community resilience describes the strength to cope with the immediate effects of climate change like extreme weather events, and also in the handling of the longer term economic and social impacts of climate change. Resilience is closely linked to community capacity, in terms of local organisations, networks and individual skills.[xii] This has been demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, where existing community organisations have reacted strongly and played a critical role in providing front line support in disadvantaged places across Scotland.[xiii]

Glasgow Centre for Population Health's 2018 study *Weathering Change*, which explored climate resilience in three communities in North Glasgow, offers a useful insight into the links between resilience, community regeneration and climate change. While it found that local people were aware of climate change, it was perceived as a relatively abstract concern compared to the more immediate concerns of poverty and the desire for social and physical regeneration. There was, however, a clear practical overlap between climate adaptation and other community regeneration priorities, such as; active travel, vacant & derelict land, community growing projects, and community led place-making.[xiv]

Increased capacity within the community, in terms of both organisations and individuals, has been identified as essential to climate resilience. While public policy is in place to support the activity of community organisations in this regard, it has been argued that there is a lack of clarity around practical implementation. This a common concern in communities across the country and a central topic of interest for SURF's place-based initiative, the *Alliance for Action*.[xiv xv]

Just Transition

The International Labour Organisation describes a Just Transition as the shift to a well-managed and environmentally stable economy, which contributes to social inclusion, poverty eradication and decent work.[xvi] A Just Transition Commission was set up by the Scottish Government in 2019 and is due to report in 2021. Its aim is to provide recommendations which:

- maximise the economic and social opportunities that the move to a net-zero economy by 2045 offers;
- build on Scotland's existing strengths and assets;
- understands and mitigates the risks that could arise in relation to regional cohesion, equalities, poverty (including fuel poverty), and a sustainable and inclusive labour market.

The Commission published an interim report in 2020, which highlighted a number of key areas of concern.[xvii] These included an implementation of Fair Work principles across sectors supported by the Climate Change Plan, the expansion and development of existing energy efficiency schemes, and the expansion and preservation of rural bus routes. These projects alone will require significant investment. One possible source is the Scottish National Investment Bank; the 2019-20 Scottish Programme for government stated that the Investment Bank's principle mission will be to support the transition to net-zero.[xviii]

Communities themselves have been recognised as having a clear role to play in facilitating a Just Transition. A good example of this can be seen in the significant number of community energy projects across Scotland, focused on renewable power generation and energy efficiency.[xix] Dedicated funding for community action around climate change has been delivered through the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund, which supports projects that contribute to carbon reduction. Funded projects have helped communities reduce their reliance on car travel, cut waste, grow local food and lower energy use in homes and community buildings.[xx]

The Climate Challenge Fund is currently under review. Suggested programme amendments include enhanced encouragement of partnership working to link community climate organisations with other local and regional partners, in support of more sustainable outcomes.[xxi] The Scottish Government is also in the process of setting up a series of regional Community Climate Action Hubs, to act as interfaces for community action on climate change, supporting groups to access funding and to link with local authorities and other partners.[xxii]

End of briefing paper (SURF contact details and references follow)

SURF CONTACT

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Interviews will be carried out by Christopher and by SURF Policy & Participation Manager, Derek Rankine.

For further information on SURF, please visit: www.surf.scot

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