SURF
Scotland's Regeneration Forum

SURF : sharing experience : shaping practice

SURF 2021 MANIFESTO PROCESS:
COMMUNITY LED REGENERATION

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: **Community Led Regeneration.**

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 **entirely 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. What are your general views on the current status of policy and practice around community led regeneration in Scotland?
2. Do you think community led regeneration activity is adequately supporting wider policy aspirations for economically challenged places, such as tackling poverty, supporting economic development, responding to the climate emergency, and reducing social isolation?
3. Do you think recent policies and commitments such as the Place Principle have had an impact in increasing collaborations between community led regeneration players and other regeneration agencies, to support better local outcomes?
4. In very general terms, poorer places tend to have lower levels of volunteering than affluent places, and their community groups often have fewer skills and less confidence in sourcing funding and managing local regeneration activities. How do you think policy-makers could respond to this?
5. In places you are familiar with, do you think community groups that are engaged in local regeneration activity are generally representative of local people and their views?
6. Do you have any views on the current relationship between local governments and community anchor organisations, and how this could be improved? These could be general views, or comments on specific communities or local authority regions that you are familiar with.

7. Some policy developments are encouraging more community groups to consider taking on ownership of land and buildings. Are you in favour of these developments?
8. It is not uncommon for two or more community groups to be in conflict with each other in some places, to the detriment of local regeneration plans and activities. Do you think policy-makers could take measures to recognise and manage these tensions?
9. Do you have any views on the Scottish Government's additional support for community led regeneration activity throughout the COVID-19 pandemic?
10. What special measures, if any, do you think the Scottish Government should be putting in place to ease the longer-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic for community led activity and deprived places?
11. Do you have any other views on suggestions on what the Scottish Government could be doing differently in the future to better support community led regeneration in Scotland?

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

Overview: Community Led Regeneration

The Scottish Government's current regeneration strategy, *Achieving a Sustainable Future*, defines community led regeneration as:

> *"…local people identifying for themselves the issues and opportunities in their areas, deciding what to do about them, and being responsible for delivering the economic, social and environmental action that will make a difference".* [i]

This covers a wide range of activity at different scales, from informal volunteer-run community activity to established community anchor organisations such as housing associations, development trusts and other types of charities and social enterprises that employ staff, manage assets and provide local services.

Encouraging more of this community-led activity has been continually and prominently highlighted as a central aim of Scottish Government regeneration policy since the 2011 publication of *Achieving a Sustainable Future*. This has been backed up in a range of legislation and strategy, including the

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016, the Fairer Scotland Action Plan of 2016, and the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.

The Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities announced a commitment to the Place Principle in 2019.[ii] The Principle, developed with input from SURF and other place-based regeneration partners, encourages all spheres of local and national government to put place at the heart of decision-making, advocating enhanced levels of collaboration across sectors based on shared aims and resources. Importantly, it also requests that partners work collaboratively with communities to identify and act on local priorities.

In Practice

Community led regeneration can act as a corrective to much-criticised 'top-down' approaches to regeneration, by commencing development from the 'bottom up', with communities defining and working towards their own goals and ambitions, as opposed to those set by distant or external bodies. The SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration has highlighted a diverse range of highly successful community led regeneration projects.

Recent winners of a dedicated category of SURF's annual awards process, which is delivered in partnership with the Scottish Government, have included the Ochiltree Community Hub, which preserved and expanded a vital community space in a former mining village in East Ayrshire, and the Tomintoul & Glenlivet Regeneration Project, where local community members worked together on package of activities that helped attract visitors and secure the economic future of a geographically isolated village in the Cairngorms.[iii] [iv]

Other groups such as Community Land Scotland, Development Trusts Association Scotland, and the Scottish Community Development Centre, have also produced a wealth of case studies on community led regeneration in action, while local authorities and other regeneration agencies in the SURF network regularly highlight successful examples from their regions.

Challenges and Barriers

Increasing community involvement and empowerment in regeneration policy is a founding principle of SURF, which was formed in 1992. It is widely perceived as a valuable goal that can improve social and economic outcomes for disadvantaged and excluded groups.[v]

There is, however, scepticism about the extent to which practice is consistent with policy aspirations. For example, some formal community engagement processes, particularly those linked to large-scale regeneration initiatives, can be seen as tokenistic and undermined by fundamental imbalances in power between decision-makers and intended beneficiaries, and by conflicts of interest.[vi]

The Scottish Government has acknowledged that the emphasis on community-led regeneration over the past decade in part stems from the post-austerity financial context, which has seen local government budgets and community development support functions severely diminished. Furthermore, research has shown that more affluent communities are more adapt at sourcing resources for community led activity.[vii]

In this context, the emphasis on communities to take the lead on identifying and working on regeneration priorities has been seen by some in the SURF network as worsening inequalities, as already deprived communities can find it more difficult to address fundamentally structural issues of economic and social decline. One of the key learning outcomes from SURF's *Alliance for Action* place-based regeneration programme has been the need for dedicated funding and support to

increase capacity within deprived communities, to enable them to engage and lead on regeneration projects.[viii]

Significant funding for community led regeneration in recent years has been delivered through mechanisms such as the Scottish Government's Empowering Communities Programme, which includes the Investing in Communities Fund (ICF), which amalgamated a number of smaller annual funds into a single, streamlined programme of funding in 2019, and the Aspiring Communities Fund (ACF).[ix]

The ICF is open to a wide range of community led activity that takes a holistic approach to tackling poverty, inequality and rural disadvantage. Significantly, the fund offers flexibility with regard to multi-year funding, offering more support and stability for established community groups. The £25m ACF, operating over 2018-20, is targeted at community groups and third-sector organisations in Scotland's most fragile and deprived communities.

Third sector funders, such as the National Lottery Community Fund, and local authorities also run community led support programmes that community groups can apply to. Funders and policy-makers regularly acknowledge a tension between the resourcing of new projects, and the on-going support for existing organisations and initiatives within limited funding programmes, which are often heavily oversubscribed.[x] In 2020, various funders provided dedicated COVID-19 oriented funding packages to support local community led response activity such as food bank expansion and medicine delivery, and to sustain community anchor bodies affected financially by the pandemic.

Community Empowerment and Land Ownership

Community led regeneration is part of a wider community empowerment policy agenda. One particularly notable contemporary development is the passing of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act in 2015. This legislation gives communities the right to make 'participation requests' to local authorities, requires community involvement in public services that are seen as underperforming, and provides new powers for community groups to register an interest in buying, leasing or managing public land and buildings, initiating an 'asset transfer' process where a benefit to the community is demonstrated. Additionally, the Act provides statuary reinforcement to the Community Planning process, requiring the production of a Local Outcome Improvement Plan for each Community Planning Partnership, along with geographically targeted 'locality plans'.[xi]

Community led regeneration is also closely linked to land reform. The first Land Reform (Scotland) Act was passed in 2003, giving rural and island communities the right to register interest in and purchase land. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act explicitly expanded this to urban communities. The second Land Reform (Scotland) Act, passed in 2016, led to the creation of the Scottish Land Commission, and made it easier for communities to progress aspirations for local land and buildings.[xii]

The ambition to transfer a greater share of Scotland's land into community ownership has been a significant driver of community led regeneration activity, particularly in rural and island communities where historic patterns of concentrated land ownership have acted as a barrier to community development and regeneration.[xiii] There has been a general shift away from policy-makers viewing land ownership and use as a private concern, and it is increasingly seen as a vital and finite public resource. There are also particular efforts underway to engage communities in the productive reuse of vacant and derelict land, which are more prevalent in deprived areas. One current initiative is the the Scottish Land Commission and Scottish Environmental Protection Agency's Vacant and Derelict

Land Task Force, which SURF is a member of. The Task Force produced a range of policy recommendations to the Scottish Government in Autumn 2020.[xiv]

SURF CONTACT

SURF Research & Administrative Assistant, Christopher Murray, is coordinating the consultation responses.

Participants can contact Christopher on:

- Email: christopher@surf.scot
- Tel: 07392 112 831

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

REFERENCES

[i] The Scottish Government, *Achieving a Sustainable Future: Regeneration Strategy*, 2011. The Scottish Government/APS Group: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/364595/0123891.pdf

[ii] The Scottish Government, *Place Principle: Introduction*, 2019. The Scottish Government: https://www.gov.scot/publications/place-principle-introduction/

[iii] SURF, *2019 SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration Winners Announced*, 2019. SURF: https://www.surf.scot/2019-surf-awards-for-best-practice-in-community-regeneration-winners-announced/

[iv] SURF, *2016 SURF Awards: Winning Projects Revealed*, 2016. SURF: https://www.surf.scot/2016-surf-awards-winners/

[v] GoWell, *Briefing Paper 13: Community Empowerment in Transformational Regeneration and Local Housing Management in Glasgow: Meaning, Relevance, Challenges and Policy Recommendations*, 2011. GoWell: https://www.gowellonline.com/assets/0000/0555/Briefing_Paper_13.pdf

[vi] Lawson, L., & Kearns, A., *Community Engagement in Regeneration: Are We Getting the Point?*, 2010. Journal of Housing and the Built Environment: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10901-009-9168-7

[vii] Hastings, A., *et al*, *The Cost of the Cuts: The Impact on Local Government and Poorer Communities*, 2015. Joseph Rowntree Foundation: https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/cost-cuts-impact-local-government-and-poorer-communities

[viii] SURF, *SURF Alliance for Action Review: Rothesay/Bute*, 2020. SURF: https://www.surf.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Final-Rothesay-review-April.pdf

[ix] The Scottish Government, *Community Empowerment: Empowering Communities Programme*, 2019. The Scottish Government: https://www.gov.scot/policies/community-empowerment/empowering-communities-fund/#previous

[x] The Scottish Government, *News: Investing in Communities*, 2019. The Scottish Government: https://www.gov.scot/news/investing-in-communities/

[xi] The Scottish Parliament, Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, 2015. The National Archive: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/18/contents/enacted

[xii] The Scottish Parliament, Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016, 2016. The National Archive: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/18/contents/enacted

[xiii] Glenn, S., *et al*, *Investigation into the Issues Associated with Large Scale and Concentrated Landownership in Scotland*, 2019. Scottish Land Commission: https://landcommission.gov.scot/downloads/5dd7d6fd9128e_Investigation-Issues-Large-Scale-and-Concentrated-Landownership-20190320.pdf

[xiv] The Scottish Land Commission, Transforming Vacant and Derelict Land, 2020. The Scottish Land Commission: https://landcommission.gov.scot/our-work/housing-development/vacant-and-derelict-land