

Notes from the Regeneration Workshop of the CDAS 'What Vision for Scotland?' Conference on 25.06.14

1 Why is strengthening communities important?

It is the route to recognising, understanding and building on the knowledge, perspectives and skills that only the communities themselves hold. Accessing and engaging those otherwise untapped additional resources of information and active cooperation will be vital for informing and supporting better and more effective public services under rising demands and constrained resources.

Inequalities within and between communities are important in deciding on focus and priorities in terms of activity and investments. The greatest priority should be on those with the greatest challenges in terms of deprivation and disadvantage. While there are obvious examples of thematic communities that need support and most people understand communities best in terms of place and that is the best setting for focusing on the interaction of different challenges and responses.

2 What do we need to do to support communities to be able to take part effectively?

A mix of:

- **Legislation** - Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill, Human Rights, Land Reform *etc.*
- **Adequate resources** - the present community development/resourcing situation is not realistic in terms of ensuring effective community participation – and, in any case, the suggestion of potential equal community status in Community Planning Partnerships and similar is not truly achievable.
- **Local authorities and other statutory agencies 'stepping back'** in terms of controlling bureaucracy to create the space for community action and growth.
- **Political leadership** at both national and local level (and within communities) in promoting the community role, providing resources and driving change in internal bureaucracy and attitudes of boards, officials and elected representatives.
- **Better training and support for elected Councillors** especially in the extent and limits of their appropriate formal roles.
- **Imagination, confidence and innovation** *e.g.* in more ambitious Participatory Budgeting processes.

Overall, the aim should be for **default subsidiarity** adequately supported in terms of resources, access and coordination with 'higher' levels of decision making and investment.

3 What is the vision for community development in Scotland in bringing strands of policy and practice together?

More intelligent consideration of appropriate levels of action and responsibility. No one seriously thinks communities should be directly involved at all levels of decision making in all contexts and in all sectors.

Better linking of public investment strategies and policies – *e.g.* linking community development with public service procurement budget processes; linking community planning with physical planning (as proposed in National Planning Framework 3); and setting all of the above more realistically in the pressing reality of rising poverty and inequality instead of apparently assuming more community participation could be a sufficient solution in itself.

Making the **creation of greater health and wellbeing** in communities both the aim and the driver of change.

End of note

Andy Milne, SURF Chief Executive, 04.07.14