RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM



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Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Individual

Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

SURF – Scotland's Regeneration Forum

Phone number

Address

0141 440 0122

Orkney Street Enterprise Centre, 18-20 Orkney Street, Glasgow

Postcode

Email

G51 2BX

jacqueline@surf.scot

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We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

~ 1	

No

Yes



SURF : sharing experience : shaping practice

SURF'S RESPONSE TO THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT'S 2017 CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF THE SCOTTISH PLANNING SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

In its role as Scotland's Regeneration Forum, SURF regularly seeks the views of its 250+ cross-sector member organisations on regeneration policy issues. SURF member comments and perspectives provide a basis for responding formally to relevant policy consultations.

This paper presents SURF's response to a national consultation concerning some major changes proposed for the Scottish planning system, as set out in the <u>'People, Places and</u> <u>Planning' consultation report</u> published in January 2017.

'People, Places and Planning' addresses key planning matters including development planning and management, community involvement, the delivery of housing and infrastructure, and the resourcing of the planning system. The consultation outcomes will inform a new Planning Bill, which the Scottish Government plans to introduce later in 2017 as per its <u>2016-17 Programme for Government</u>.

This consultation follows a comprehensive independent review of the existing spatial planning system, which published <u>48 wide-ranging recommendations in May 2016</u>. SURF's response to a selected number of the consultation's set questions follow. A copy of this response, and other SURF consultation responses, are <u>available on the SURF website</u>.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

MAKING PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

1. Do you agree that local development plans should be required to take account of community planning?

SURF recognises the potential of Community Planning to act as a strategic framework for effective collaboration, coordination and prioritisation between public services. Following an 18-month consultation exercise with our cross-sector membership, linking Community Planning (CP) and spatial planning was highlighted as one of nine policy recommendations in our 2016 Manifesto for Community Regenerationⁱ. We believe aligning CP with spatial planning would offer wide ranging opportunities and benefits due to their common concern for improving places for people and communities, as alluded to by RTPI Scotland 2015ⁱⁱ and CoSLA researchⁱⁱⁱ.

To attain these opportunities and benefits, however, this proposal must be **clearer** and **bolder** with the intention of moving towards the integration of CP and spatial planning in practice. For the proposal to be **clearer**, there should be an explicit overarching purpose for aligning the two systems.

Alignment could bring together the key outcomes of CP and spatial planning. Drawing on outcomes defined by the Scottish Government^{iv} and the Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services^v, there would be added scope to significantly improve the places and lives of individuals and communities, by taking preventative action through enhancements in the joint delivery of services and the future development of places.

With reference to the East Ayrshire case study profiled in the consultation paper, SURF supports the aligning of CP Outcomes with Local Development Plan visions and objectives. For the proposal to be **bolder**, SURF's position is that further steps could be taken to facilitate more coordinated delivery, as set out in RTPI Scotland 2015ⁱⁱ research on linking CP and spatial planning.

For example, we support the idea of CP and spatial planning representatives jointly identifying issues, priorities and outcomes for their Local Authority area. Spatial proposals could be developed similarly under a system in which Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) and Planning Authorities could combine their specialist knowledge, spatial data and different perspectives to identify effective solutions.

The benefits of this coordinated approach are cited in RTPI 2016 research^{vi}, specifically through use in place-based approaches to poverty and inequality reduction. By examining several UK case studies, this research highlighted successful projects where public services recognised key spatial factors which affect poverty including access to jobs, affordable housing and crime rates. Through improved recognition of local conditions and assets, far more effective solutions were delivered, alleviating employment deprivation and other key poverty indicators.

To facilitate this collaborative approach, SURF believes that joint CP and spatial planning public consultation events should become common practice. As demonstrated through the Wick and Thurso Charrette, this approach allows greater collaboration and positive working between partners to agree outcomes and projects to be delivered^{vii}. It also offers a potential solution to the growing issue of 'consultation fatigue' for community groups and residents.

SURF is, nevertheless, keen for a fair balance to be struck between high-quality community engagement and consultation timescales, so that development proposals do not become stalled. In addition, we feel that wider performance issues for CPPs around partnership-working, leadership and achievement of outcomes, as highlighted by an Audit Scotland study^{viii}, should be addressed as part of this proposal of alignment with spatial planning.

SURF acknowledges that each of these propositions would require consideration for aligning Council structures and plan preparation periods as well as administrative boundaries, which vary between planning and public services. Additionally, there would be some added value for professionals to exchange knowledge on their roles and responsibilities as spatial and community planners.

PEOPLE MAKE THE SYSTEM WORK

9. Should communities be given an opportunity to prepare their own local place plans?

Yes. Our reasoning for this is detailed in 9(a) and 9(b) below.

9(a) Should these plans inform, or be informed by, the development requirements specified in the statutory development plan?

As in paragraph 2.9 of the consultation paper, Local Place Plans (LPPs) present, for SURF, an excellent opportunity to initiate dialogue on development requirements so that the LDP produced by the Planning Authority, and the LPP produced by the community, meaningfully inform one another. This would require both plans to align their preparation periods over the 10 year LDP cycle put forward in Proposal 4.

To achieve this balance effectively, we believe that the **purpose** of these LPPs should be to define:

- 1) The long-term development aspirations and priorities for development proposals of a community;
- 2) How the wider community needs identified by Planning Authorities (e.g. housing, infrastructure, other services) will be addressed through spatial proposals.

In addition, the LPP should function as an inspirational document that is widely supported by the community. This approach was adopted in the preparation of the Central Govan Action Plan (CGAP)^{ix} – "a community-led, investment and development framework guiding the physical regeneration of Central Govan" in Glasgow^x. Here, both the community and key public agencies identified priorities for change, including increasing quality housing stock and promoting the preservation of Govan's heritage. Since 2006, significant investment has delivered notable physical improvements to Govan while also raising the quality of life and sense of community.

We have provided further details to suggest how LPPs could be prepared under Question 9(b).

9(b) Does Figure 1 cover all of the relevant considerations?

Who should be involved in creating Local Place Plans?

SURF has some concern regarding the suggestion in Figure 1 for Local Authorities to endorse a single community body from a particular locality to prepare the LPP in all circumstances. In order that a range of interests are represented, it may be appropriate in some localities to instead engage a consortium of representatives from various community bodies with one lead organisation, which may operate more effectively. This could present an opportunity to reduce conflict and

competitiveness between organisations and work towards consensus. In short, one community consortium rather than one community body per locality would be a more appropriate suggestion.

Boundaries of Local Place Plans

By allowing community bodies to select the boundary of their LPP, there is the risk that the coverage of LPPs could become patchy and difficult to tie into existing spatial plans. One solution might be that the community body chooses to cover one or more localities, perhaps with the same spatial boundaries as the most up-to-date version of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

Further considerations for pre-plan preparation

SURF welcomes the recognition that the production of LPPs by communities will require "time and investment of resources" – in other words, the need to build the capacity of individuals and organisations to produce these plans. Through our Alliance for Action programme, SURF has found that strong leadership is vital to the success of community driven initiatives.

In addition to this, we would suggest that training requirements and volunteer or staff roles to produce these plans must be defined from the outset, so that communities can plan and accumulate sufficient time and resources to meet these commitments. Particularly amongst our third sector members, SURF is keenly aware of the stark difficulties in covering core staff costs at present. SURF's Alliance for Action programme outcomes have also provided a heightened awareness of nationally respected and capable community organisations struggling, "to secure sufficient resources to survive, let along thrive and replicate"^{xi}.

SURF also welcomes the recognition that, "action needs to be prioritised in and around communities where change is needed most" (para 2.12). As an organisation, our overall objective is to address poverty in Scotland's most disadvantaged communities. It is therefore important to determine how 'need' is defined.

Finally, SURF member experience across the regeneration sector indicates a reality in which the communities where change is needed most are among those who are the most disengaged in terms of contributing their views to the public sector. Several successful innovative engagement initiatives, which have been implemented by Alliance for Action partners and SURF Award winners, are included in our response for Question 11.

Plan preparation

To evidence our response on LPPs, we have examined the structure of existing Community Led Plans from around Scotland, including:

- The Balloch and Haldane Community Action Plan (2008)^{xii};
- The Isle of Rum Community Land Use Plan (2015)^{xiii};
- The Neilston Town Charter (2009)^{xiv};
- Central Govan Action Plan (2012)^x.

Although different in focus, each of these plans have a strong, inspirational vision and aims for future of the community. They also identify the needs and concerns of their community, gathered via the views and perceptions of the residents through a Design Charrettes or similar.

To take this proposal forward, SURF believes that LPPs should be prepared in a similar way. The LPPs should also help to identify sites to address wider community needs identified by Planning Authorities, based on data analysis in areas such as housing, infrastructure and other services. This

level of transparency could further improve trust and understanding between Planning Authorities and community groups.

At this preparation stage, it is important for communities to consider how their priority proposals could be delivered, whether through their own rights, as established in Community Empowerment, Land Reform and other legislation, or through the work of the Planning Authority. Accessible, non-technical guidance should be provided for this, to help communities identify appropriate delivery methods for specific proposals. As raised in our 2016 Manifesto for Community Regenerationⁱ, complex and jargon-based language can create confusion and reduce the scope for cooperative working between different sectors.

If relevant, the LPP could also include design principles to inform upcoming development. For example, for each housing site identified in the Isle of Rum Community Land Use Plan, an assessment is provided on significant natural and historical landscape features, which any future development should seek to complement.

Alignment with other plans

For SURF, the LPP preparation period should be aligned with that of the Local Development Plan (LDP) so that it can be assessed at the development plan gatecheck, as put forward in Proposal 4. As well as alignment with the LDP, Local Place Plans should consider alignment with CP, including Locality Plans (if implemented in that community) and the Single Outcome Agreements. This especially relevant in light of the proposal to align CP and spatial planning. SURF acknowledges that aligning each of these plans may be onerous to Planning Authorities, but we feel that it is worthwhile, given the clear benefits of coordinated working.

'Signing off' plans

SURF agrees with the idea to hold a community referendum on the LPP and its submission as part of the draft LDP, as set out in Figure 1. To ensure a consensus is reached through such a referendum, we feel that high standards of community engagement must be implemented in order for adequate community buy-in to be achieved. In addition, it would be essential for the referendum to take place in line with the consultation process for the Local Development Plan.

Defining a community and community body

Among SURF's wide cross-sector membership, there is no consensus on what constitutes a community body. For example, there is often conflict over whether communities should be defined by geography or by interest group. However, in the case of LPPs, we feel that it would be advisable for the applicant community organisation to define their community by geography. This could operate in a similar way to a Community Right to Buy application, where a constituted community body must describe the area to which it relates.

In terms of defining a community body, we would suggest that a particularly broad definition is used, so as not to include certain types of organisations. As an example, SURF generally supports the use of the following Big Lottery Fund in Scotland 2013 description of a community group:

"A community group may be a small and informal neighbourhood forum, such as a community council, a Friends of The Local Park group, or a tenants' and residents' association. A community group may also manage major capital assets such as housing stock, harbours, and wind farms. Community groups can employ staff, be run by volunteers alone, operate to business models, generate income from a range of sources, and deliver local services"^{xv}

10. Should local authorities be given a new duty to consult community councils on preparing the statutory development plan?

SURF supports this proposal to some extent. As we promote inclusive approaches to development and regeneration, we have some reservations with focusing any enhanced community involvement on community councils, unless appropriate action is taken to ensure that all community councils better reflect the diversity of their communities. This could mean involving community members of different ages and backgrounds, as well as engaging representatives from other community bodies such as Development Trusts and Tenants and Residents Associations. We appreciate that this is the general sentiment of 'Proposal 7: Getting more people involved in planning', but more action specifically with regard to community councils would be welcome.

In addition, we would like to see some clarity on the suggestion to involve "communities at key stages of decision making" (paragraph 2.15), particularly on whether community councils would be given parity to key agencies in the early stages of Development Plan consultation to identify issues and options.

10(a) Should local authorities be given a new duty to consult communities in the preparation of the Development Plan scheme?

SURF asserts that it would more appropriate to carry out a Scotland-wide consultation on Development Plan schemes, so that there is an agreed national standard on how local communities are involved in developing proposals for change. We do not feel that there is value in revisiting the Development Plan scheme for every iteration of each Local Development Plan, particularly as this may lead to consultation fatigue within the community.

11. How can we ensure more people are involved?

SURF is strongly supportive of full and meaningful participation in planning consultations. By way of example, many SURF Award for Best Practice in Community Regeneration winners demonstrate the innovation and ingenuity that is often required to engage a diverse section of society in planning matters. These exemplars could be promoted further as positive case studies.

A wide range of community members can be engaged through providing a diverse range of arts events and projects. The Stove Network in Dumfries (SURF Award Winner 2016 for Creative Regeneration^{xvi}) uses a variety of creative projects to gather the views of a wide range of community members, on matters from flooding issues to high street regeneration. To draw in different groups of community members, initiatives include sailing events, those which explore Dumfries' heritage and identity, and a social enterprise café which hosts live gigs and training opportunities.

In the evolving community in the Laurieston area of Glasgow, arts organisation WAVEparticle (SURF Award Winner 2015 for Creative Regeneration^{xvii}) successfully engaged with existing and incoming residents as part of an extensive large-scale physical regeneration strategy. Vacant sites were temporarily made available for creative use by artists and local community groups, such as for outdoor art exhibitions and social gatherings. Through this process, there has been a lasting legacy of strong partnerships formed and evidence of improved community cohesion, vibrancy and pride of place".

Fuller community engagement can also be achieved where local people decide project priorities. For example, a small affordable housing scheme in Helmsdale (SURF Award Winner 2015 for Community Led Regeneration^{xvii}) was initiated after being identified as a prime priority in a major community

consultation. The project was driven by Helmsdale and District Development Trust, run by volunteers from the area, and the membership for which is represented almost a quarter of the local adult population. Moreover, the Trust, the local community and key partner agencies collaborated to deliver the project. This small housing project also succeeded in retaining and attracting young families as well as stimulating further residential development.

Success in engaging the community can also be achieved for essential infrastructure upgrades, led by a key agency. For example, the modernisation of Ullapool Harbour, SURF Award Winner 2015 for Large Scale Infrastructure^{xvii}, was strongly shaped by the needs of the local community. Consequently, the newly upgraded waiting room incorporates space for music and arts exhibitions outwith ferry service times. This space is now widely used and clearly valued by community groups, arts organisations and schools. It is also a key venue for local events and festivals.

11(a) Should planning authorities be required to use methods to support children and young people in planning?

SURF supports this proposal to some extent. We are strongly supportive of making a concerted effort to engage and support children and young people in planning. However, we also recognise the importance of connecting with other 'hard to reach' groups, as part of our ambitions towards wider and more inclusive community engagement approaches.

Therefore, we feel that it would be better to require Planning Authorities to use methods that are likely to involve groups with protected characteristics, as defined in the National Standards for Community Engagement^{xviii}, including age (and therefore young people). Furthermore, we would suggest that Planning Authorities should use specific techniques to engage with those in poverty, since public bodies will be required to reduce socio-economic inequalities as part of the SURF manifesto recommendation and Scottish Government Fairer Scotland Action Plan commitment to introduce a socio-economic duty on public bodies^{xix}. We hope that current research on barriers to engagement in planning will aid more effective processes for broader engagement.

We agree with the proposal to carry out an early examination gatecheck, although we believe it would also be necessary to include additional groups in this process. We would also like to see clarity on the robustness of the standards used to complete this gatecheck, and we feel that there would need to be clear consequences set out if Planning Authorities fail to engage certain groups effectively. Similar methods to encourage greater inclusivity for planning consultations could also be used to attract a more diverse membership onto Community Councils.

Since there is currently, "little evidence of engagement with young people" (paragraph 2.22), among planning authorities, we believe greater consideration is required on effective methods to promote best practice examples since there is already some promotion of these examples. From SURF's perspective, it would be advisable to create 'off-the shelf' templates for resource-stretched Planning Authorities to use to engage with young people and other groups.

In addition, we are aware of some excellent examples of projects where a Planning Authority has partnered with a local or national organisation which specialises in youth engagement. For instance, SURF is supportive of PAS' involvement in Charrette events across Scotland, which have comprised deliberative school sessions to educate children and take on their views regarding local planning matters. In turn, the outputs from these sessions have shaped subsequent wider community workshops and the final outcomes of the Charrette.

12. Should requirements for pre-application consultation with communities be enhanced?

Yes. SURF welcomes the recognition of the inadequacy of current statutory requirements on consultation and the benefits of fuller consultation for all parties involved. This is reflected in SURF's two founding principles, which underpin all of our work. These are:

- Successful and sustainable regeneration is only achievable when all aspects of physical, social, economic and cultural regeneration are addressed in a holistic approach.
- The people who are the intended beneficiaries of any regeneration effort must be meaningfully involved in the process if it is to be successful in planning, implementation and maintenance.

12(a) What would be the most effective means of improving this part of the process?

To enhance Pre-Application Consultation for communities, we agree that it would be useful, "to encourage everyone to get involved at the earliest stage possible" (paragraph 2.31). We also feel that there should be greater emphasis on improving the, "quality of the conversations" (paragraph 2.31), between communities, developers and planners. To enhance the quality of these conversations, we feel it is essential that Planning Authorities provide information to communities by marketing it in attractive and accessible ways in locations frequented by a variety of groups, both within the locality and online.

For SURF, standard practice should reflect highly effective engagement techniques such as those used by the LIVE Park campaign, the 2015 consultation initiative for the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs LDP. This campaign was, "interactive and engaging, using digital media to reach a broader audience, particularly young and working age people"^{xx}.

It is equally important that communities are made aware from the outset the extent to which their comments can influence a development to set standards for expectations. Public information should be provided on how developers and Planning Authorities respond to community inputs.

SURF agrees with the idea for, "fuller and more meaningful engagement [for] development sites which have not been allocated in the development plan" (paragraph 2.31). Instead, however, of the approach being agreed between the Local Authority and relevant community council as suggested (paragraph 2.31), SURF would prefer a robust and reliable process guided by national standards, best practice examples and templates.

As an advocate for high-quality community engagement, SURF strongly supports the idea for effective and innovative training of the development sector in community engagement. In line with the sentiment of Proposal 16, we would promote a shared services approach where specialist organisations collaborate with Planning Authorities and developers so that this can be implemented relatively quickly.

16. What changes to the planning system are required to reflect the particular challenges and opportunities of island communities?

Our annual SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration often receives applications from a geographically diverse range of communities. SURF therefore holds a strong awareness of the particular challenges and opportunities of island communities as exhibited by winning and nominated projects on Orkney, Shetland, the Inner and Outer Hebrides, and beyond. Drawing from

this learning, we present the recurring common challenges and possible opportunities for the planning system from varied community-led projects from different islands.

Primarily, the sustainability of island communities is often dependent on access to essential services. For example, the Jura Development Trust (SURF Award Shortlisted Project for Community Led Regeneration 2014^{xxi}) undertook a complex process to purchase, refurbish and extend the village shop and post office. This has proven highly successful as a lifeline for residents, particularly for those elderly or immobile, and as a place to socialise.

Similarly, the Isle of Luing Community Trust (SURF Awards Shortlisted Project 2015 for Community Led Regeneration^{xvii}) attracted £1.25 million to deliver a multi-purpose community hub which offers space for businesses, cultural events and social care. The community also worked innovatively to widely market the facilities, bringing new visitors and revenue to the island. As well as boosting the local economy, this income has enabled the provision of much-needed social support.

Both the Jura and Luing projects demonstrate the opportunities arising from the strong determination of island communities to solve their local issues through innovation. Furthermore, these initiatives show the potential benefits of upgrading local services, to enhance economic prospects and the quality-of-life within island communities, and address long-term decline.

Similarly, infrastructure projects can be key to securing the viability of services on islands. By delivering new housing, the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust (SURF Award Winner 2012 for Infrastructure and Regeneration^{xxii}) managed to secure the sustainability of the ferry connection, primary school and NHS amenities. This clearly improved the quality of life for residents and has also attracted newcomers to the island.

Investing in existing buildings and heritage of island settlements can give rise to a variety of cultural, commercial, educational and recreational opportunities. This was achieved in Stromness in Orkney (SURF Award Winner 2013 for Town Centre Regeneration^{xxiii}) where more than £6m of public and private investment was drawn in for the renewal of town centre buildings and spaces. As well as increasing economic prospects for businesses and tourism, there was a much improved feeling of pride of place reported by local residents.

SURF is aware that fuel poverty is also a central issue for many island communities. To address this matter, a number of communities have adopted an enterprising approach by establishing income generating energy schemes. For example, Community Energy Orkney (SURF Award Winner 2011 for Partnership^{xxiv}) established six turbines to provide long-term income for nine island communities. The success of this project was underpinned by strong partnership working between islands, which allowed knowledge exchange, the creation of ambitious community development plans and innovative approaches for delivery.

For the planning system to reflect the **common challenges** for island communities, SURF feels that the following should be among the priorities:

- depopulation;
- access to essential services;
- economic opportunities;
- housing; and
- fuel poverty.

With these in mind, it would be essential to consider robust spatial strategies to support the current and future sustainability of island communities with social and economic challenges.

For the planning system to reflect the **opportunities** of island communities, from the examples above, it is clear that there is often potential for strong partnerships to be formed within and between communities and external organisations.

Moreover, the local communities featured above have proven to be resourceful and innovative, adapting to local physical and human resources available. This could provide further impetus for closer collaborative working between Planning Authorities and communities to create spatial plans and deliver projects 'on the ground', as island communities are likely to have a keen sense of key priorities and viable potential projects.

End of SURF's response Jacqueline Stables, Research and Administrative Assistant 3 April 2017

References follow on pp12-13

 SURF
 Scotland's Regeneration Forum. Orkney Street Enterprise Centre, 18-20 Orkney Street, Glasgow G51 2BX

 Tel: 0141 440 0122 / Email: info@surf.scot / Website: www.surf.scot

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