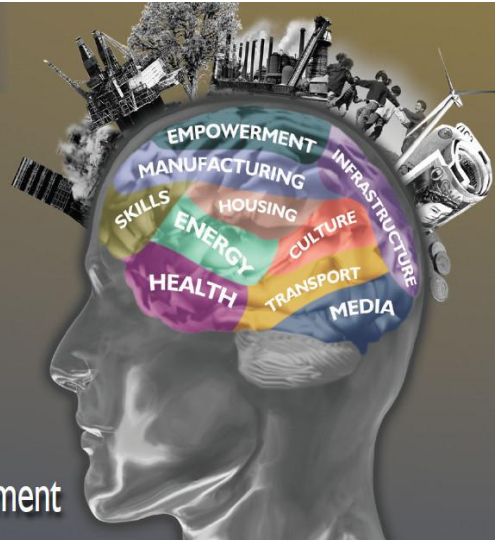




**SURF**  
Scotland's Independent Regeneration Network

# Planning Ahead For Regeneration

towards a manifesto for a new Scottish Government



## Scottish Regeneration Question Time 2016

Full transcript of a SURF debate with political party representatives in the lead up to the 2016 Scottish Parliament Elections

### Background

In its role as Scotland's regeneration network, SURF produced a **Manifesto for Regeneration** and promoted it to the main political parties in advance of the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections.

Our 2016 manifesto is based on two interlinked priorities, **addressing poverty** and **supporting place-based regeneration**. It was developed through a comprehensive 18 month consultation process, including at SURF's [2015 Annual Conference](#) where participants were given the opportunity to debate, prioritise and electronic vote on 18 draft policy proposals.

The final manifesto presented **nine 'bold and practical' policy recommendations** for the 2016-21 Scottish Government. It is available for download [from the SURF website](#).

SURF debated the manifesto with representatives of **Scotland's main political parties** in a **hustings-style event** on the afternoon of Thursday 7 April in the CoSLA Centre, Edinburgh.

More than 50 SURF network colleagues took part in a **lively and engaging open discussion** with topics including housing supply, regional regeneration support mechanisms, the planning system, local government powers and citizens' income. This report features a **full and unabridged transcript** of our Scottish Regeneration Question Time debate.

## Participants

The party representatives were (A-Z by party):

- **Willie Black**, RISE: Scotland's Left Alliance, Spokesperson for Regeneration;
- **Iain McGill**, Scottish Conservatives, Scottish Policy Board Member and 2016 candidate for the Lothian region and the Edinburgh Northern and Leith constituency;
- **Andy Wightman**, Scottish Greens, Party Spokesperson for Communities, Local Government & Land Reform and 2016 candidate for Lothian region;
- **Cllr Johanna Boyd**, Scottish Labour, Leader of Stirling Council and 2016 candidate for the Mid Scotland and Fife region;
- **Martin Veart**, Scottish Liberal Democrats, 2016 candidate for Edinburgh Northern & Leith and Lothian region;
- **Marco Biagi MSP**, Scottish National Party, Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment.

The UK Independence Party was also invited to participate, but did not respond to our invitation.

The debate was chaired by **Andy Milne**, Chief Executive of SURF.

The debate was introduced by **Robert McDowall**, a long-standing SURF Board Member, independent research professional, and former Head of DTZ's Property Regeneration Team in Scotland.



*Party Panel: (l-r) Iain McGill (Con); Andy Wightman (Green); Cllr Johanna Boyd (Lab); Martin Veart (Lib Dem); Willie Black (RISE); Marco Biagi MSP (SNP)*

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A **video of the debate** is available on [SURF's YouTube channel](#).

# The Transcript

## Introduction

### **Robert McDowall** *SURF Board Member*

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. It's my pleasure to welcome you to this particular venue and this particular event. The SURF Board has been working behind the scenes at this manifesto, really significantly, through 2015, and as you can see from the documents in your pack, there's been comprehensive consultation on physical matter about regeneration across Scotland. Some of the research we've looked at has gone further on that. So it's been drawn together with a bit of blood, sweat and tears. But that's no bad thing, especially as you move into the critical phase of the elections.

As far as the SURF network is concerned – perhaps some of you don't actually understand the background to it – this slide shows you the 12 partners that we have and we are always indebted to them for their support, which has been ongoing now for a number of years.

Without them, events like this might not be able to happen, and support to broadly 250 members who we engage with might be a bit more fragmented than it actually is.

Robert McDowall, SURF Board Member

**"INFLUENCING REGENERATION POLICY HAS BECOME ONE OF OUR KEY THEMES... THE SURF MANIFESTO SETS OUT WHAT WE THINK ARE THE IMPORTANT POLICY ISSUES ABOUT SUPPORTING PLACES AND TACKLING POVERTY"**

In the SURF Board, having being refreshed significantly in 2015, we've now got more resources at Board level, but also more resources at staff level, to help make sure that the agenda that we're setting in this particular context for the political parties is put across in an appropriate manner, given the importance of regeneration as we see it in Scotland. So the output that SURF provides to the wider network involves conferences, involves seminars, involves disseminating best practice and also, a number of you may have been present at SURF Awards during the course of the past few years which, from our perspective in SURF, we've kind of raised the bar with regards to the quality and number of applications for the various categories associated with the SURF Awards and some new partners are here represented today. We see that continuing simply because the work that's being done out there by various communities across Scotland needs to be flagshipged, needs to be put into a public context and therefore the Awards actually help to do that.

So influencing regeneration policy has become one of our key themes at Board and Staff level during the course of the past year and therefore the manifesto that's before you sets out what SURF sees as the background, the agenda and we've listed within there what we think are the important policy issues about supporting places and tackling poverty.

There are nine there and we could have made it 16, we could have made it three, but executive decisions are made and we decided nine was the most appropriate number, in the hope that the audience who reads this and hears all of it can actually understand what we think are the key themes, the key priorities. And it's these matters that we expect to see the politicians grappling with, including in manifestos, and then when the new government is formed later on this year, we actually would like to see things being put into practice from that particular point of view.

So there was a strong response from when the manifesto was launched in January, and this debate has always been sort of creeping up on us. We wished it could have happened six weeks ago, but this is the appropriate time to have this particular debate and therefore, thank you for joining us in this debate. There's the usual sort of social media things which you can contribute to - certainly that was a feature at the SURF Awards at the end of last year and went down very well.

But we hope that questions will come from the floor in response to what also we hope will be the various political parties responding to these nine points there. So we welcome our political colleagues from the various parties – I don't need to list them – and we invite them to put their particular positions forward and we hope for a lively debate. Thank you very much.

**Andy Milne** *SURF Chief Executive*

Thank you very much Robert... my job today is to be as civil as I can but also potentially a bit rude occasionally. I hope that won't be necessary, but the reason I say that is we have an audience here today based out of the SURF membership which contains very many experienced people with lots of knowledge and expertise in their own field.

So we want to be able to draw on that but we also want to be able to hear from the politicians on their positions and their responses.

I'm just asking you, civilly at this point, when we do get round to the point of exchanging information here, that we keep it as brief and clear as possible. Perhaps you can be briefer and more clear than I'm doing at the moment! [laughter] Being succinct is good.

So with that in mind, as Robert has referred to our format for the day, is to start with five minute presentations. My colleague Jacqueline at the back of the room, in true normal football fashion, will raise a yellow card when there's about 30 seconds, to go and then a red card when you really have to stop, and that's the point at which I get stropky.

So, we'll start then, and again, thank you to all the candidates and the parties for responding to our request to come and make a response to the SURF manifesto and our shared concerns across the membership.

I'd like to start by introducing Iain McGill, from the Conservative Party to make the first five minute introduction. Over to you, Iain.



*SURF's Robert McDowall (above) introduced the event; it was chaired by Chief Executive Andy Milne (below)*



## Opening Statements

### Iain McGill *Scottish Conservatives*

Thank you very much for hosting the event, thanks for putting the manifesto together. I'm on the policy board of the Scottish party I represent. So I've been involved in our manifesto process. We release ours on Wednesday and I'm under strict instructions not to leak too much, Ruth wants to take all the fun there! I know the work that goes into producing manifestos there and I'm particularly interested in to see how you do up the back – I'm a referee and I want to see just how you do, I will give you some pointers maybe after depending on how you do there. So it's nice to feel at home amongst referees.

Some of the things that I hope will come out the discussion today include, we've got good stuff that will be in the manifesto: the planning system reform, we think it's overdue and we've got some good stuff about making that quicker and easier. Community empowerment, some of the stuff that

particularly excites me, we want to introduce a new community right to bid which would give community and voluntary bodies the right to express interest in taking over a particular service. Local Authorities are required to respond to this particular challenge and, unless there's reasonable grounds for refusal, the Council would draw up a

Iain McGill, Scottish Conservatives

**"WE'D STILL LIKE TO SEE ANOTHER RUN OF THE TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION FUND, WE THINK THAT WAS A GOOD SUCCESS AND SOMETHING DELIVERED BY THE TORIES RIGHT HERE IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT"**

procurement exercise for the services, would be opened up to bids. We recognise some Councils do already consider alternative models but a right to bid would open the doors to a much greater degree of participation. For example, it would allow community groups to take over the maintenance of a local park that's been neglected by the Council, but there are many, many other ways, around this room that you may well be excited about.

Before the Tories worked with Labour and the Lib Dems in Better Together, we worked with the SNP minority Government to make sure the country was run. And one of the things we were excited about, one of the prizes paid for our partnership with the SNP, was a [Town Centre Regeneration Fund](#). We're still committed to that and we'd still like to see another run of the Town Centre Regeneration Fund. We think that was a good success and something delivered by Tories right here in the Scottish Parliament.

Rural Scotland: we've got good proposals for rural Scotland, including getting broadband and more transport links, extending bus pass schemes beyond commercial operators to include community transport as well. And something I'm particularly interested in is to look at best practice around, well you guys have been around the country, some like what Highlands and Islands Enterprise have been doing and how they're getting greater success.

Other ones: something that excites me is taking place down south, in the NHS down south. So in Scotland, we've got big proposals since SNP came into power. New-builds have dropped since SNP came into power, we want to get that, we've got a proposal: a thousand extra houses over the next five years, get the housebuilding well back up to pre-recession levels. It's interesting to see just how we're doing that - down south, the NHS recently announced 10 healthy new towns in England. I think you could... it's a much-needed push to kick-start affordable housing across England, it creates



a golden opportunity for the NHS to promote health and keep people independent. So new neighbourhoods and towns are built... we'll be kicking ourselves in ten years, thinking back and having missed the opportunity to design out the obesogenic environment, design in health and wellbeing.

Some of the things taking place... the new towns that are being built in [Whitehill & Bordon](#), 3000 new homes in a former army barracks; it's a new care campus to co-locate care-ready homes specially designed to be adaptable for the needs of people with long term conditions, with a nurse led treatment centre, pharmacy and an integrated care hub. In Cranbrook in Devon, it's 8000 residential units... it will look at how prevention and healthy lifestyles can be taught in schools from a young age.

Some of the principles behind these new-builds that we're doing, options to be tested at sites include fast-food free zones near schools, designing safe and appealing green spaces, building dementia-friendly streets, ensuring people can access GP services and digital technologies. Technologies reflect the need of the local populations.



*Scottish Conservatives candidate and keen football referee Iain McGill kicked off the debate*

We're working up our plans. Design questions being asked include, why are children happy to walk around all day in a theme park but often get bored in everyday journeys? Could adventure areas be designed into streets to help them play? There's good stuff going on there and that's the sort of thing we'd like to see in our new house building that we're getting on with here in Scotland. Thanks.

**Andy Milne:** Thank you Iain. Almost dead on time- very impressive. I'm not going to attempt to summarise the inputs, I'm sure you've all made your notes there. There was a lot of interesting material in there, responses later on. Obesogenic is certainly one word I'll be writing down and using in future! It's the first time I've heard it - sounded good to me. Moving on swiftly, for the Green Party in Scotland, Andy Wightman. Andy, over to you.

### **Andy Wightman** *Scottish Greens*

Thanks very much, Andy, and thanks for the invitation. I've just been in bed for 14 hours, so I'm still just slowly recovering, so treat me gently. Scottish Green Party is based on four key principles - the whole global green movement is based on principles of equality, peace, environmental sustainability and radical democracy.

We very much welcome your manifesto – a lot of the ideas in there are ideas which resonate with our politics. I want to raise four broad areas which I think Scotland needs to make progress on. First is the whole question of local democracy. I think over the last century, the last fifty years, the last twenty years, we have seen a massive diminution in local democracy, particularly since the Scottish Parliament came along. And one of our big priorities in the next Parliament, not just the next Parliament but over the next ten years, in fact, is to build cross-party alliances and strengthen local democracy.

Because I think a lot of the good work you're doing, your members are doing, in communities across the country deserve to be given greater recognition and you deserve to be given far greater power and accountability over what you're doing. And too often we defer that to very centralised authorities of the 32 Local Authorities or indeed, the Scottish Government and we need to reverse that whole process so rather than town centre regeneration programmes, you know, we would like to see town councils back, for example.

Secondly, on inequality, we've made inequality a central theme of our tax plans with a key analysis that shows that the tax plans we've put forward last week can reduce inequality. We believe it's very, very important to use all the powers that come up, that the Scottish Parliament has, and that are coming to the Scottish Parliament to do precisely that. We've taken our lead there from reports



*The Scottish Greens' Andy Wightman highlighted commitments around local democracy, inequality, housing and planning*

like the [Scottish Government's Poverty and Inequality adviser, Naomi Eisenstadt](#), and the [Mirrlees Review](#) etc.

And one particular policy that we've had, ever since we were a political party in 1999, is a citizens' income, which I notice is one of your asks, which is difficult to do in Scotland but not impossible. There's work going on to show how that could actually be begun, at least.

Third, the whole area of land, housing and planning - we'll have some exciting ideas in our manifesto which launches on Tuesday. So next week is manifesto week. I did a piece in the Evening News the other day in

kind of my favourite site in Edinburgh which is down in the waterfront. It is owned in the British Virgin Islands, derelict and abandoned, untaxed, unaccountable. There are lots of issues around that, the fact that our planning system, which we believe needs reviewed, but I don't think in the direction the Tories want to go, we don't believe in greater centralisation and speed, we actually want much, much more community involvement and master-planning and actually deciding how communities will look – and take developers and powerful business interests out of the planning system because they drive it too much.

So, for example, down in the waterfront, where there should be a lot of houses, a lot of community facilities etc. That land has fallen out the five-year land supply because the first criteria in determining your five year land supply is ownership. We don't even know who these people are and they're not interested in developing it, and that's putting pressure on the greenbelt out in Midlothian and places like that. So we need a wholesale review of how we do planning and regeneration. We are taking a lot of lessons from Germany, on that, we can talk about some of the detail on that.

Andy Wightman, Scottish Greens

**"WE NEED A WHOLESALEREVIEW  
OF HOW WE DO PLANNING AND  
REGENERATION – WE ARE TAKING A  
LOT OF LESSONS FROM GERMANY"**

Fourth, we believe in an economy which is much more driven by mutuals, cooperatives and social enterprises, and again we'll be talking about that. We've been arguing for that in the energy sphere for a long time. And fundamentally, Scottish Greens believe in structural reforms, radical reforms, reforms that, for example, avoid the need to pay people a winter fuel payments because everybody should be able to live in a house that doesn't require any extra money to heat.

Again, in Germany, the houses they're building now are not only affordable for everybody, the tenants are earning money from those houses because the income they receive from renewable energy, from solar panels, is greater than the rent they pay. So we believe in structural reforms to tackle inequality, poverty and disadvantage. And we also believe in powerful place-based approaches to regeneration. I think it is a bit of thinking that has emerged out of your work over the last five years which I think is vital. Thank you very much.

**Andy Milne:** Thank you, Andy. And I know you haven't been well so thank you very much for doing that. So, Scottish Labour Party, over to you Johanna.

**Cllr Johanna Boyd** *Scottish Labour*

Thank you very much Andy, and thank you for the invitation. When I was thinking about putting together our case, the presentation of the Labour Party case on regeneration in this allotted five minutes, and I too will be very mindful of the colours going up from the back, two things became very clear to me.

First of all, regeneration of our most-in-need communities, socially, physically and economically, was really the reason why I joined the Labour Party and left a career at The Bar, and came, put myself forward for elected office. And the second point that became clear to me was that in setting regeneration as a key political priority, one that's part of a larger strategic vision, both in a national and at a local level, is absolutely critical if we want to drive real change, tackle poverty, tackle inequality, and ensure equal opportunity for all.

And I don't just say that from a theoretical or an academic standpoint; I've seen that in my time as a locally elected member and as the leader of a Council. I represent an area in Stirling that suffers from the most severe of deprivation. I agree with much of that which is set out in the SURF manifesto and one point that really struck me in it was around, about leadership. I think it is absolutely critical that we have leadership on the issue of regeneration, not just political leadership, but leadership from businesses, from our universities and places of higher education, our third sector and crucially, I think Andy touched upon this, from our communities. We must see regeneration led from our communities. I was thinking about the points set out in the manifesto about strategies at a national level but equally, ownership at and prioritisation of regeneration at a local level.



*Stirling Council leader Cllr Johanna Boyd highlighted the Labour Party's commitment to an Anti-Poverty Bill*

I wanted to talk just briefly about, something, an initiative that we're driving in Stirling. We've set up a city commission and it is part of a wider regeneration strategy. On that city commission, which I chair, we have national agencies, we have key local businesses, the University, the College and our Heritage and Cultural bodies. And our single goal is to set a clear, long term vision for our city and for



our rural areas which are critical in the Stirling Local Authority area. We want to see Stirling positioned as a cultural and economic powerhouse, as I'm sure all cities and their surrounding economic regions do across the whole of Scotland. We're pushing, as many places are, in relation to a [UK City Deal](#) and also, with the Scottish Government, in relation to a [growth accelerator model](#).

But that Commission is part of an overarching strategy and another element to that is community led pilot projects. And what we're doing through those projects is seeing communities identify their own priorities. The next step in that journey is a Council restructure so we're not just talking about local communities identifying their priorities and leaving it at that. We're actually going to restructure the Council so that those priorities and localities are embedded within that Council structure itself. And I hope we have an opportunity to talk more about that. So that really is about not only Council but, and hopefully, I foresee, in time, Community Planning Partners coming together to really deliver the services that those local communities want to see delivered.

Cllr Johanna Boyd, Scottish Labour

At a national level, the Scottish Labour Party today announced that we will implement all 15 of Naomi Eisenstadt's recommendations. We'll do that through an Anti-Poverty Bill that'll be included in the first Labour

Government, programme for Government. I think it is very telling that we've heard nothing from the current SNP Government in spite of the commission of this innovative piece of work. I think it's disappointing and I hope that it'll be rectified soon.

"I AGREE WITH MUCH OF THAT WHICH IS SET OUT IN THE SURF MANIFESTO, ONE POINT THAT REALLY STRUCK ME IN IT WAS AROUND LEADERSHIP"

I set out at the beginning the reasons why I joined that Labour Party. I believe that we have driven the most innovative, the most bold, the most transformative agendas for change, based on our core values; our core values of social justice, inequality and fairness. And I hope with your support as we move forward - we can and we will drive those agendas once again together. Thank you.

**Andy Milne:** Thank you and thank you all once again for being so concise and within time. Moving on, Martin Veart from Liberal Democrats. Martin.

**Martin Veart** *Scottish Liberal Democrats*

Good afternoon everybody. Thank you for inviting me. And SURF should be commended on the thoroughness of their manifesto. It's a very detailed document. We share many of the aims of SURF, if not the actual sum of the means; I'm sure we can work together on many of the aims there.

Our key policy for tackling social inequality is a raise of one pence in the income tax in order to fund education. Over the past eight years or so, education has been slashed across the board and we want to introduce, north of the border, [the pupil premium](#), which will allow people children from disadvantaged backgrounds, extra funding going directly to their school. And if that funding, if the pupil moves school, the funding follows them, it doesn't stay in the location. And that would mean an additional £1400 for each primary school pupil and £900 for secondary school pupils.

In addition to this, we are looking at the planning; we would like to introduce, to be easier for local communities to Compulsory Purchase the abandoned brownfield sites and derelict sites in their

communities and help regeneration through that way. We would like to see a Scottish Land and Property overview body put in place to monitor land management, usage and also who owns what. And also limits, upper limits on individuals or legal entities owning individual amounts of property here in Scotland. And also, we would favour the rights for tenants to buy out their holdings as well. Of course, all this needs to be within a structure where the housing is affordable and available.

On the wider issues of housing- here in Edinburgh, for example, it's well recognised that there's simply not enough. Across the country, Liberal Democrats are committed to building 40,000 new social houses every year. This is additional to encouraging affordable houses and rent-to-buy schemes across the country. We wish people to have good jobs available at the end of this, who does not, but they have to be able to afford to live in the areas where those jobs exist.



*Liberal Democrat Martin Veart focused on education, land, housing and tax*

Another thing is – on the housing – is that not only is there not enough of it, but what we have at the moment is often too poorly insulated. We would like to see a national scheme, in cooperation with other parties, set up to get our houses properly fuel efficient. Over 40% of people in Scotland at this moment live in fuel poverty. And in rural areas, it can be 60%. That is obviously far too high and that is also key in some of the initiatives we'd like to do with this communal and social housing such as heating renewables. At this moment, Scotland is only on 3% of heating renewables – the target for 2020 is 11% and is going to be 40% for 2030. So if we're going to do this, if we're going to meet those targets, it's vital that we get a move on right now.

In terms of taxation for individuals, the SNP would argue that they don't want to spread austerity to the lowest paid people in jobs. We would counter this by saying that the lower level of taxation is being raised, is currently £10,600 - that level is going up. People who are earning less than £19,000 will not see any extra effect of that penny on the income tax.

Martin Veart, Scottish Liberal Democrats

**"SURF SHOULD BE COMMENDED ON THE THOROUGHNESS OF THEIR MANIFESTO – IT'S A VERY DETAILED DOCUMENT"**

To summarise, we are well aware of Scottish problems. We want to see an equalisation of both opportunity and a narrowing of living standards between rich and poor across the nation. Thank you.

**Andy Milne:** Thank you, Martin. And moving on. Willie Black from RISE.

**Willie Black** *RISE: Scotland's Left Alliance*

Hi, how're you doing? RISE stands for Respect, Independence, Socialism – something other people didn't apparently come into politics for, but they're in the Labour Party, which is a bit weird – and Environment. For us, we need to get angry. We need a solution [like Iceland](#) where people have the power to remove prime ministers and maybe that's why we should be using that red card. If it's big enough and we can point it down to 10 Downing Street, maybe that's what we require.

Because big questions need big answers. The idea of tinkering while the redistribution of wealth isn't being tackled. While we didn't tackle the big ideas that we've all lived for over the last 30, 40 years

where the wealth has come from us to them. We need a reversal of that and therefore, when it comes down to just, the practical policies, RISE will actually involve itself in that. I happen to be an anti-poverty campaigner in North Edinburgh. I'm involved, I came into the tent, it's a bit uncomfortable but nevertheless, I'm near the flap but nevertheless, I want to challenge the prevailing things that have been happening in my community.



*Anti-poverty campaigner Willie Black criticised the lack of "real power" in existing community empowerment approaches*

So I'm the chair of the Community Council. I'm actually involved in the creation of conferences, where local people can come together to create their own ideas. There was one only a few weeks ago which I was involved in, in Craigroyston School, which we're trying to spend the next six months coming up with a plan of our area which actually challenges and starts to question the way that we're controlled from the top down.

We have a poverty industry in many of our areas and cities. People, one of the people in my, our area calls it the 'sticky jumper' – you get a job from outside the area and you bring your pal and you stick them right onto your jumper. Right? The local people didn't seem to be able to get involved in that and that's why we understand that regeneration policies and programmes go

to the wealthiest areas, to the developers. They scoop up any money that comes to central Government and take it into their coffers. And we're left high and dry.

What we're talking about is, an example – you said it, Andy – about the waterfront. The only job we ever got from the waterfront was one guy with an Alsatian to protect the empty land. There used to be a sign, just under the red bridge, if anyone wants to come down to North Edinburgh, we'll take your money, spend it in the shops and it'll help to regenerate something. But actually, there used to be an employment office. There never was an employment office and it took them 10 years to remove that sign. So what we're talking about is getting angry about the things that affect the people that I represent or hopefully, am going to represent when I'm elected as an MSP, in the future. We're the new kids on the block – I mean you look at me and you would question that! [laughter] Nevertheless, and I'm sure that somebody's somewhere sitting in a RISE cupboard trying to work out a concrete policy.

But actually, I think that what we're really talking about is mobilisation and since we want to challenge from the bottom up, RISE

members will be involved in many of the communities that SURF and others will connect with. I know that Andy talked about the Awards and I happen to be at the Awards down in North Edinburgh, we have a community garden. So I understand and have been to the conferences and involving and bringing people at the bottom. The best

Willie Black, RISE

**"REGENERATION POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES GO TO THE WEALTHIEST AREAS, TO THE DEVELOPERS – [THE COMMUNITY] IS LEFT HIGH AND DRY"**

thing you do with the conferences is talk to the other people that come from areas, like you, to invite them into your area to share ideas so that we can begin to have a voice, the have nots to have a voice, inside a community, so that we can challenge.

I mean Iain talks about taking over the park - you know what taking over the park is. It's picking up the dog poo. We're not wanting a policy that gives us a park with dog poo. We want the park. We want to be able to control the billion pounds that's in the city coffers. That's real power; that's real money; that's real challenge. But I tell you what empowerment is – if you give people the empowerment to run, to look after a rundown building or a community centre that's on it's bum, right, that's not empowerment. We're talking about wealth distribution, back to the people who create it.

**Andy Milne:** Thank you. Well done Willie, using every single second available. [Willie: I don't usually sit down to a red flag!] Good stuff, okay. Last but not least, Marco Biagi on behalf of SNP.

**Marco Biagi MSP** *Scottish National Party*

Thank you and I think there's actually quite a lot of agreement here. This isn't going to be one of those, I hope, hustings where everybody ends up calling each other names. We all have a view on regeneration that, in order to make economic growth actually reach every corner of Scotland and every community, that there needs to be active steps by Government, there needs to be deliberate attempts to ensure that the tide lifts all boats and the money trickles down. That doesn't happen without Government doing a bit itself.

I am in politics for many reasons. I believe fundamentally, as a nationalist, that there should be more powers over economic policy, welfare policy and all of those levers here in Scotland, but I believe as well that that is because, when people have more power over their lives, when they are more able to be involved in decision-making, that they make better decisions. And that applies at community level for regeneration and, indeed, for any other decisions taken in local areas. I looked through the four principles in the Manifesto and I see four principles that I agree with very fundamentally: that regeneration must be community led.

Marco Biagi MSP, Scottish National Party

**"I ALWAYS DECRY THE WELL-INTENTIONED MEN WITH CLIPBOARDS WHO COME TO COMMUNITIES AND LOOK OVER THE BOARD AND TELL THE COMMUNITY WHAT THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO WANT"**

Wherever I go, wherever I speak – I have spoken as a Minister – I always decry the well-intentioned men with clipboards who come to communities and look over the board and tell the community what they are supposed to want. The people who live the challenges everyday are those who are best placed to find and to argue for the solutions. We've had a real debate in this country about inequalities of income and wealth going back decades but there are also inequalities of power and influence.

And boy, do those propagate the others. It's also important to be collaborative, rather than adversarial, to recognise then if you do have, and as well to ensure that communities stay in the driving seat. If you have a right to challenge that opens up procurement over a decision that you disagree with and suddenly Serco comes in and they're running your community centre, I don't think that's quite what was in mind. And that we have to build on strengths, respect stories, and work with the heritage that people have. Because so much of this, so much of this, is just community confidence from decades of being disempowered and having to be able to overcome that.

I look at the key recommendations and I see things that are echoed in the work we have done through the [Community Empowerment Act](#), to ensure that each of the 32 CPPs have locality plans targeted at the areas of significant economic disadvantage and the work that we have done, in the Community Empowerment Act, to ensure that socio-economic inequalities are something that Ministers have to consider for the National Outcomes for the entire country.

And on the other points, well, it [SURF's manifesto] suggests that we should rebrand Community Planning Partnerships. I'll tell you this, if it wasn't for the fact that it was in primary legislation, I would have done that already because they do not, do not, describe what those organisations do. And I'd be very interested to debate all the other points on there as the event goes on.



*Marco Biagi MSP defended the SNP Government's record on community empowerment and town centre regeneration*

But I come here as a Minister, as a spokesperson for a Party that has a record in Government of putting communities first. [Participatory budgeting](#), which is opening up those spending decisions that's been championed myself in the last eighteen months, by others beforehand. We have the Community Empowerment Act which is giving communities real teeth to take over that land that is neglected, abandoned, detrimental even if the owner, wherever they might be, doesn't want to sell it.

We have the [Regeneration Capital Grant](#) which is co-managed with Local Authorities. The [Town Centre First Principle](#), the [Strengthening Communities Fund](#) so that when those community groups do take over the community centre, they've got money there to help them turn it into a sustainable enterprise. We have [Charrettes](#), we have moves on unoccupied properties and taxation and our proposal for charges on vacant and derelict land which has come out of the Local Tax Commission's examination of all of the questions of local tax reform.

It is a record that has been based on work with community groups, both local and national. It's one that we want to take forward because it's not good enough to say to local decision makers, to all the public bodies that report to the Scottish Government that you have to involve people - you have to have people in there at the start and not do it ourselves.

So, just as an example of that commitment to that approach, I would highlight all of those consultations that SURF have put on the website about community planning coming from the Community Empowerment Act. We drew those up in partnership with the community. That is how we take things forward. That is how we achieve real regeneration. That's how we achieve re-empowerment, and that's what we'll continue to do if the SNP is re-elected to Government.



## Questions and Open Debate

**Andy Milne:** Okay, thank you. Well, we got through that very efficiently so we've now got a full hour to make the best possible use of. And just to, just to note a point of clarity here, in terms of party representation, we did invite UKIP to participate in this process as well, but we didn't get a response there. I think they're doing something else today, I don't really know what that is but anyway, they're not here. So, in terms of the audience, I think as I've said to all of the candidates before, we've got a very wide range of expertise, experience, disciplines and perspectives here.

I will say again that I would like, if you're here from an organisation, then it would be helpful if you could just indicate that that's the case, which organisation that is. I don't think we really want to do one question, and then every single member of the panel has to respond. So if your question is for a particular panel member, it would be really helpful if you indicate that. If you don't indicate that, I'll leave it open for other candidates to come in if they wish to. But the whole idea is to move through this and make the best use of all the resources we've got in the room. So, I will take questions first and I think Colin, you had your hand up there. Just as brief and clear as you can.

**Colin Deans:** Colin Deans from Glasgow, an ex-councillor, still involved in [Transformational Regeneration Areas](#) in Glasgow. I think, unless the opinion polls and my good friend John Curtice are completely wrong, the SNP is going to be in power for the foreseeable future, which means that you five, no disrespect, resemble, you know, resemble Bill & Ben fighting over a coal. And, at the end of the day, the SNP need to be reminded by us all and, I think Willie will agree with me on this one, that with great power comes great responsibility. When Alex Salmond took a return to regeneration, when Alex Salmond [**Andy Milne:** as brief as you can please Colin] – I'll be quick – was discussing regeneration of some sand dunes in Aberdeenshire with Donald Trump, some of us advised taking a long spoon. What does the SNP Government think, in terms of regeneration, is the China national railway engineering [investment] going to do for Scotland?

**Andy Milne:** Okay, at the end of that, a topical question for you, Marco.

**Marco Biagi MSP:** Well, I would just say that, I am part of the Government that officially [defrocked Donald Trump of his GlobalScot status](#). Wherever you have big development decisions, there will be a balance between economic benefit and environmental concerns, poverty dimensions and all of that. We can all endlessly debate every decision 'til the end of time. If Donald Trump phoned me, I think I would just reject it because I don't take nuisance calls. But when it comes to, when it comes to this and we have a memorandum of understanding at an early stage – we are looking for financial support, we look for alternative funding mechanisms, we look for... money where we can take it.

We have, for example, a pension fund investment in Falkirk which is unlocking affordable housing. That's been years in gestation but it's a creative way of finding more money to deliver the things we need here. Now, we're always going to have international trade, we're always going to have international business and bringing money to Scotland isn't something that I'm going to apologise for. I think, especially given the constraints that there are over borrowing in the Scottish Parliament, the inability to follow a, using the jargon, a Keynesian-led economic stimulus approach, then we have to look for creative sources and that's just one of many.

**Andy Milne:** Okay, thank you. So the first question...reaching from China to the American Presidential Election. That's, that's SURF for you! Okay, so we'll bring, Andy, you wanted to come in there, please do.

**Andy Wightman:** Not on the substance of your question, but to remind people that we're not electing a Government on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May. We're electing a Parliament.

**Andy Milne:** And just say more [on that] Andy.

**Andy Wightman:** Well, the idea the five of us here are sitting arguing over a... what? Something to do with a coal [laughter]. The make-up of the Scottish Parliament is critical. You're electing a Parliament, you're electing your domestic legislature, out of which will emerge a Government, the colour of which we don't know, the colour of which is probably going to be a strong shade of yellow, but by no means pure yellow.

**Andy Milne:** A point well made, particularly given the way in which the Parliament was set up with the express intention that it should indeed be one of representative consensus. Okay, we're going to move on. Next question please. Phil.

**Phil Prentice:** Phil Prentice from Scotland's Towns Partnership. I want to try and put a wee bit more of a utopian slant on it and cast everybody's minds back to 2014. During the course of 2014, Scotland as a nation set itself up in terms of a world context by working collaboratively by celebrating the best of what we are as a nation, working together, and I think that's something that we need to remind ourselves of. But in my role, I'm trying to transform the towns across Scotland, I think Scotland is defined, or a lot of its character is defined, by its towns and it's how we take the towns movement forward that will determine a big part of our, our social and economic destiny.

The context that with, for the first time in mankind's history, the generation that's going to come next are going to be worse off than the generation now. And also the fact that 1% of the world owns more than 50% of the world's wealth. And I know that's a lot to do with externalities, but getting to the question: I think that, in terms of STP's position here, Scotland's Towns, we very much support the work of SURF and we agree with their main point within the SURF Manifesto, is localities, when they are being a part to drive forward activity and improvement on the ground, that has to be supported strongly by national policy. So the quick question then is, you guys in power, if you could make one significant change to existing economic and social policy, what would it be?



*Scotland's Town Partnership's Phil Prentice*

**Andy Milne:** Okay, thank you. So two good questions at the start- need them to be brief, yeah? Okay. And brief answers too please, if you can. So the question is: if you had one choice to make in terms of national policy, to support local regeneration, what would that change be? I'm going to start with you, Iain.

**Iain McGill:** I am going, I'm taking that as I, as a personal question so what would I as an individual do, I'll give you a quick answer. Seeing as we've touched on American politics already, my favourite president ever in the States was Andrew Jackson because the one thing he did, he was the only president who ever paid off the national debt. Personally, I would love, I would love to be the guy who paid off the national debt and then, you know, just seeing us running the economy with the money we're raising and spending that and not saying, not loading future generations with debt. And your question, you touched on future generations not being as wealthy as we are, some of that is because we're loading them with debt so we can have a nice, comfy life now.

**Andy Milne:** Okay, clearing off the national debt. Andy.

**Andy Wightman:** Well, probably one policy we're going to be announcing, I mean you mentioned inter-generational inequality and I think I remember Tony Blair set up the Cabinet, the Number 10 Policy Unit, and one of the first reports they commissioned was intergenerational inequality and the results that came out were stark, they quickly buried the report because it was quite embarrassing. And there are two reasons, well there are many reasons, but one of the reasons is due to the growing wealth inequality that's happening and so, we tackle that with our local tax proposals.

But we're also doing one important thing on housing because you're seeing a generation of under-40-somethings who are not only being flat-lining in wages, but they're also facing great difficulties in securing affordable housing. So we want to see affordable housing for all, we want to take the word 'affordable' out the ghetto of mid-market rents etc. We want even rich people to be able to have more affordable housing because they, they spend far too much money on housing. So we would repeal Section 1 of the [Town & Country Planning Act 1959](#) which stopped a very good post-war development which was to give public sector led development the right to acquire land existing use value. That's what they still do in Germany, they still do that in Germany. And that's the reason the German houses, in real terms, haven't increased in price since the early '70s; that's why German houses are bigger, cost next to nothing to heat, and last twice as long. Ours is because of a failed volume housebuilder model. So that's what we'd do.

**Andy Milne:** Just repeat that one bit: you'd repeal what?

**Andy Wightman:** Section 1 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1959, which would return us to the 1947 situation whereby public authorities acquired land at existing use value. Now there's this big uplift value... we'd save about a billion pounds in public expenditure in Scotland.

**Andy Milne:** Okay, thank you Andy. These are complex matters. Let's keep it as brief as we can. Johanna.

**Cllr Johanna Boyd:** My aspiration would be that we are a [Living Wage](#) nation. So it would be to see everyone paid a decent wage; something that you've seen Local Authorities lead on at a local level but I think it needs to go much broader than that. I know there are challenges- we need to take business people with us but I think there are, there are businesses I've heard from directly myself that they actually want to be in a position to pay a living wage. So it would be a move towards that, to be a Living Wage nation.

**Andy Milne:** The imposition of a Living Wage nation. Thank you. Martin?

**Martin Veart:** Right, I'll make a personal observation and then a policy observation. My personal observation, having lived in Norway for three years, is that I think that in order to reach a lot of the aspirations that has been expressed in this room, we need to change our mind-set in this country and become more inclusive, more Scandinavian, reduce, willingly reduce, the levels between those who are highest paid and those on the lowest pay. We need to narrow that gap and willingly do so. At the moment, there's still that divide between too much of our communities.

On the policy front, is that we are local, we like to see decisions made at most local line possible and that means getting the budgets down there, taking away the logjam which is currently occurring at Holyrood where the Council taxes are frozen, for example, and that any extra spending has to come from the centre. And in order to do that, we want to set up regional developments to make sure that

the money gets down to as local areas as possible, be that stakeholders, local Community Councils, whatever the body. So that would be the area to break that logjam of funding and local democracy.

**Andy Milne:** Shifting resources to local level through, presumably some kind of structural shift in the existing Local Authority. Willie.

**Willie Black:** Yeah, I'm interested in how Iain's going to pay off the national debt. The problem is, it'll be us that will be paying off the national debt and that's what they're attempting to do while they're shipping their money elsewhere. [Andy Milne: And to Phil's question?] Well I would, I would scrap Trident.

**Andy Milne:** Scrap Trident. Great, good concise answer there. Okay, Marco.

**Marco Biagi MSP:** I think I've heard at least, at least four things I agree from there but I'll just, I'll probably echo Andy the most that I would....we need to build more houses. Right, we really need to build more houses in this country. And I'm not going to go for that necessarily specific mechanism, although it's one which is interesting. We have a shortage of housing. We have people in insecure housing as a result of that shortage of housing and economic wealth going into - [Andy Milne: What change would you make to achieve that then, Marco...in national policy?]

If we were in an ideal world, if we were in an ideal world and weren't constrained by Treasury rules, EU borrowing, I would repeat the, the house-building programmes of the '50s and '60s, state-led in a large way, funded by public sector borrowing. We can't do that within the macro-economic constraints we're in, but in an ideal world, which I think was the question, that's what I would do.

**Andy Milne:** That was indeed the question, so thanks for that. Good. Okay, moving on then. Who else have we got? Gentleman here- sorry, I don't know your name.

**David Stevenson:** David Stevenson, Edinburgh University, speaking as an individual. Very approximately, Scotland has 32 Local Authorities; Norway has about the same population, has between 400 and 500. Should we be moving in a Norwegian direction – and if so, how? One particular point there is that the tradition there is that the Local Authorities raise most of the tax money and give some to the central Government, where we have it the other way round. Can we move in that direction?

**Andy Milne:** Very clear, thank you. Who would like to take that up first? Anyone? Martin, then Andy.

**Martin Veart:** Having experience of been living in Norway, as I said, you're quite right and this is what I meant by the changes of the mindset. Really, communes, for instance, one, two, I know well, are Stavanger and Sola.

Stavanger has introduced a levy on cars, on tollbooths, and Sola has not, for example. These are the kinds of local decisions that have to be made and it does mean freeing up a lot of the centralised decision making policies... allowing towns to take their own, their own decisions on that.

How that's achieved...I'm not so sure [Andy Milne: Tremendously difficult, I think]. Absolutely. But it is kind of that mindset that we do need more of. And also, local accountability as far as Police

Dr David Stevenson, University of Edinburgh

“SCOTLAND HAS 32 LOCAL AUTHORITIES;  
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Scotland, for example, that was made on the Norwegian model, but they, SNP, forgot about local accountability practice. That's why you can have a single police force in Norway, but each commune has a councillor on the local police board.

**Andy Milne:** Thank you. Andy, you want to come in?

**Andy Wightman:** Yeah, well just very much in agreement, and I said it there, I said it in my opening remarks, we do need to have a debate over the next five or ten years about how to entrench a much stronger, much more diverse, much more autonomous system of local government in Scotland. We've not really had that debate at all, we've had bits of it over the last 16 years but we've not really had it at all. And I think in, in bits, in big bits I think of most of the political parties in Holyrood, there is actually quite a lot of sympathy with that.

It is, as Andy says, just a difficult thing to do. But it's not impossible. I mean we're a small country, five million, we should be able to do an awful lot of this innovative stuff and I think we do need to turn a corner now for a number of reasons. One, we're seeing Local Government now at its most fiscally un-autonomous, the least control. We're just turning a corner, all the parties are producing local tax proposals, most of which give a little bit of fiscal autonomy back, but we need to embed that within a fiscal framework, like they do between Holyrood and London.

And I think, critically in this, I'll finish on this point, is the question of democratic engagement. Turnout at the last local Government elections was 39%, and barely anyone shrugged their shoulders. In Iceland, four years ago, turn out for their 72 municipalities, and the country's only got a population of 300,000, that's the size of Dundee, they've got seventy-two municipalities, turnout fell below 80% for the first time in Icelandic history, and there was a national outcry. That's how seriously they take local decision-making.

**Andy Milne:** Okay, I think this, this, it's a very, very good point I think that's being made here because it goes right to the heart of local decision-making control, control of resources, resource application, which is really, ultimately what regeneration is all about. It's not one that we put in our Manifesto because our Manifesto is meant to be bold and practical. Although it seems to be right, it doesn't seem to me to practical at the moment, purely on the basis that we have not had the leadership in recent decades which has talked up the importance of local democracy which creates the kind of public climate in which that might be possible. I think SURF was to advocate more Local Authorities, then I think the press reaction etc. is likely to be very negative. Iain, briefly please.



*The panel responded to a question on local government structure*

**Iain McGill:** Again a, a personal view, because I'm a Conservative, we're allowed our personal views, we're not the SNP! [laughter, murmurs] There's, when it comes to local accountability, local democracy... you know, we've just heard a Government Minister feel trapped by EU regulation and he'd like to build more housing but EU regulation gets him, gets in the way... **Andy Wightman:** He said Treasury rules, not EU rules]. Did you mention the EU, Marco?



**Marco Biagi MSP:** I think you can run a bigger deficit under those circumstances.

**Andy Milne:** So Iain?

**Iain McGill:** So yes, [EU Referendum](#) is coming up, I am actively going to be campaigning, voting to leave. I think that we in Scotland could be spending money better ourselves. We send £50 million a day over from the UK, we get about half of that back, we're told how to spend it, we know our Local Authorities are... could do with extra cash to spend. There's practical things we can do where, to empower our Ministers at Holyrood, get extra funding there for our Councils and our key services there. So there are, so there are practical things that we can do in a much shorter time. Different views are available in the Conservative party, as I said. But I'll differ, we're allowed our own views there.

**Andy Milne:** Okay, good. Unless anybody's dying to come in? Right you are Johanna.

**Cllr Johanna Boyd:** Yeah just very, very briefly on this question about centralisation. I think it really does begin to go right to the heart of the question of community empowerment because, whilst I agree that much of what Marco said about empowering our communities, I think there is a very important question about what is it that you want different tiers of Government to be responsible for and to deliver. So at the moment, we've got the formation of, for example, [health and social care integration](#) going on. Now that represents 25% of a Local Government budget, which is effectively being taken away and being put into what I would describe as a super-quango.

You've then got education, which represents 50% of a Local Authority budget, which is being more and more centrally controlled. So I think this begins to raise, whilst we hear rhetoric around about community empowerment, there really is a serious question which builds upon some of Andy's points about what is it that you want Local Councils to do. And then I think, once you unpick that, you then get to the question of and how are we going to finance it. And there is absolutely no doubt in my mind there needs to be, in order to get the community empowerment and a sense of true local democracy, citizens being engaged, wanting to come out and vote Local Government elections, they have to have more control over how money is spent in their local communities. And that will not happen with 80% of Local Authorities being paid from the centre.

**Andy Milne:** I am going to – if you tell us very briefly, Marco

**Marco Biagi MSP:** The research that was done for the [Commission on Local Tax Reform](#) found only Austria, Switzerland, Sweden and Iceland, from memory, had more than 50% of revenue local based on the work that was done there. The localities model that Stirling's taking forward is a very innovative way of getting decisions out of people because I think when we talk about the balance of powers between central and local, we should be careful we don't just think about putting powers into city and town halls where they can be hoarded as well and they can get out into localities and communities too.

**Andy Milne:** Okay, thank you. Another question then.

**Graeme Hill:** Hi, I'm Graeme Hill from Arcadis and Architecture + Design Scotland. Marco and Andy – thank you very much for mentioning housing. Obviously a big, big issue for Scotland, and one that looks to be getting worse, rather than better. I'd be interested to know what the panel's views are on how we can provide more accessible housing for, for our people.

**Andy Milne:** Thank you, okay. Brian, we'll just take yours as well at the same time, if you don't mind.

**Brian MacDonald** [former SURF Chair]: Not at all, Andy. In the introductory remarks, a fair bit was made of the need to have an equalisation of opportunity and reaching every corner and that kind of thing. But if you look at the map of Scotland, there is, as the manifesto says, the Highlands and Islands approach that the way in which they've funded and developed stuff in local, in rural communities.

If you look at the City Deal approach, there's virtually a whole sort of city deal expanded right up the east coast. There are very few areas in Scotland left off the City Deal and the Highlands and Islands alternative funding. It's essentially Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway. Now if we're serious about equality of resources in Scotland, how do the panel propose that areas that are left off the City Deal and the HIE map actually get properly funded for regeneration purposes?

**Andy Milne:** Okay so two things: First of all, practically delivering on the broadly shared view of housing as a crucial element in successful regeneration. And secondly, ensuring cohesive connectedness around opportunity and resources across the whole country. First, Willie.

**Willie Black:** Yeah, I mean RISE's policy is actually to create 100,000 houses. But the problem is that when you find that the limitations of say a Council who wants to build, has to build then certain things. So for instance, on Phase 2 of North Edinburgh, what's happening is there's going to be 177 houses. But the problem is 100 are going to be for sale, 77 left and 35 for social housing. On a 25,000 people on the waiting list in Edinburgh for affordable housing. There used to be 3800 people lived in Muirhouse and Pennywell. There is going to be, at the end of it, something like 800 houses. The problem is that that this idea that what we have to do is make it happen but we're not really challenging social housing because what we're actually doing is taking what used to be social housing.

It was described to me the other day there that I used to live, 'oh I live in a ghetto'. Well I'll take a ghetto to a Baberton suburb where people look after each other and they know their neighbours and they're not looking after themselves. That's may be doing a disservice to anyone who comes from Baberton, that might be a generalisation, so it is in politics. **[Andy**

**Milne:** Might have lost a couple of votes there!] But I do think that, that what you have to do is, you have to challenge that, you have to shift the thing. I mean... I'll just finish on this. What was once said, it's not the slicing the cake, it's who's hand's on the knife. And unfortunately, the last 20, 30 years, working class people in Britain and Scotland have lost their hand on that knife through weakening trade unions etc. And we need to get that back before we'll find a long-term solution.

Graeme Hill, Arcadis Design

**"HOUSING IS OBVIOUSLY A BIG, BIG ISSUE FOR SCOTLAND, AND ONE THAT LOOKS TO BE GETTING WORSE, RATHER THAN BETTER. WHAT ARE THE PANEL'S VIEWS ON HOW WE CAN PROVIDE MORE ACCESSIBLE HOUSING FOR OUR PEOPLE?"**

**Andy Milne:** Power imbalance. So back to the question about ways of delivering on the broadly shared aspiration of more housing and the accessibility of resources and support across the whole of the country. Anybody else want to come in? Iain?

**Iain McGill:** I risk repeating a lot of what I said in my opening statement. **[Andy Milne:** Oh don't do that!] So, we are doing exciting stuff, RISE and ourselves share a policy, it's pretty new but yeah on the big ticket thing, 100,000 houses over the new Parliament, we're looking at all types of housing,

so it's all type of housing. To get there, we need to look at how the grants are allocated, we need to fix the planning system, we need to lower the regulatory burden, it's some of the... **[Andy Milne: Can you just say something of what you would do with the planning system, Iain?]**

Yeah, so planning statistics for Scotland's 34 Planning Authorities, see I can do a – Scotland's 34 Planning Authorities show the average decision time for major planning applications was 36.6 weeks in 2014/15 which is two weeks slower than 13/14 - significantly higher than the 16 week determination target laid down in the statutory... **[Andy Milne: So it's about the time it takes to go through planning is a key issue in housing supply you think?]** It's part of it, like it, do you know, like I said, there's a lot of different things there that we're doing.

There's other stuff arguing that if a major development application decision is taken in line with the Strategic and Local Development Plan, the appeal should be decided in a full Council meeting, rather than, rather than up the way. Better consultation progress and a more localised planning fee system where Councils are setting their own planning fees potentially, with a centrally set capping linked to performance – more details on the agenda for planning will be available on Wednesday.

**Andy Milne:** Okay, thank you, thank you. Might ask Craig [McLaren] to come in a wee bit on that front from RTP1. Does anyone in the panel want to have a go at this issue about some areas of the country don't seem to be able to connect into the streams of resource that are supplied generally for city areas, and perhaps even the Highlands and Islands. Martin?

**Martin Veart:** I did mention the regional overview authority which the Liberal Democrats would want to set up in this and its purpose would be to provide a framework to get the organisations talking to each other, that are, that are involved here. We all agree, I think everybody on the panel agrees, that we need more housing. But along with that, we need to have the medical services to provide for the populations that are going to be increasing in those areas.

And at the moment, there isn't really an effective mechanism for health authorities and for, and for Council to talk with each other on a regional level. So, we would want to get that squared away and also, commercial stakeholders as well, is all – even in North Edinburgh for example – there's areas there where shopping facilities aren't, you know, people have got to travel a few miles in order to get to their local or large national retail supermarket.

**Andy Milne:** So I think SURF would certainly share the view that what we don't want to go back to is just building loads and loads of houses without consideration of community and transport connections and facilities etc. Joanna.

**Cllr Johanna Boyd:** Just to take Brian's point about the City Deals and some of the financial models that are coming forward from collaboration with the Scottish Government. I think at the moment, this really is the, the show that's in town. I'm sure in five, ten years' time, there may be something else we're talking about, but certainly, when you look at the proportion of Scotland that's potentially going to be covered by either a City Deal or some sort of deal that the Scottish Government, then, I think you said Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway are the only areas not being covered. I mean, I know from my own experience, Stirling covers an area that's the size of Luxembourg, so our city is a small city but we have a huge rural area. And it's very critical to us that the rural businesses that we have profit from any deal we may secure with either the UK or the Scottish Government.

During those discussions that are ongoing, I've been approached, for example, by Clackmannanshire – the smallest Local Authority area – wanting to talk about ways in which they might get involved. So I would imagine that for those areas that are seeing this action going on around about them, really

it's incumbent upon their leaders to say, "well how can we get involved? How can we benefit from this?" If that's not possible, then I think it is incumbent upon a national Government to step in and think about ways in which everyone can benefit. And of course, there will be infrastructure. Take an obvious example of transport whereby there's, there's an obvious place for a national picture to be looked at.

We're building up our business cases at the moment for specific infrastructure projects that we see as critical for that step change in my area. But housing will be just, to bring in housing, that will be a critical element. And I'm not sure that housing has played the key, the key element that it could in, within those City Deals. I, our staff are working on that as we speak but I certainly want to see how housing is going to be dealt with, not just in the city centre, but also across the whole of the rural area in terms of securing my area's future. I think that's something that should be happening across the whole country.

**Andy Milne:** Okay, certainly there's an interesting piece of work done some time ago, Scottish Rural Universities Institute did a piece of work looking at [vulnerable towns](#) and out of that, I think, came the identification, Brian, of Ayrshire towns, and down to Dumfries & Galloway where people would expect to see more from the Highlands and Islands in there. And in our manifesto, we're saying that Highlands and Islands Enterprise, for their benefits and their flaws, have somehow managed to make a better connection between economics, place, history, culture and communities.

One of our main concerns in SURF, I mean, Phil from the Scotland's Towns Partnership is away now, is that connection between the large central investment which is where, I think our colleague over here referred to resources tending to go to where the market's hottest, tending to be drawn in there. What is it politicians can actively do to produce a counter flow to that, to ensure there's better support for the local level? Brian, do you want to, could you just come back in on the point that you're making there if you feel that you've had some response here or if the point's been missed?

**Brian MacDonald:** Yeah, I mean I think one of the interesting things is, there is this chunk of Scotland which is left off. And we're waiting five or ten years, well that's happened before and nothing's changed so we'll wait another five or ten years. But the truth of the matter is that here's these structural things set up that actually favour some areas. Now it seems that it favours successful areas because the last City Deal was Inverness, where they were lauding the fact they were going to get more money to help their tourism.



*Regeneration expert Brian MacDonald raised concerns about 'left behind' regions*

Well, great, but there are places like Kilmarnock or Ayr or other places you can choose who actually need a bit more sort of attention paid to their structural issues and they're not going to be tackled by thinking, "just hang on because if things get really good in Glasgow, you're not part of Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Deal area, but if things get better in Glasgow, it'll be okay." That's not good enough. And I think the political parties who are looking for election this year should be saying a bit more about equity and a fairer Scotland, meaning a fairer Scotland, not just fairer bits of Scotland.

**Andy Milne:** It does, it does still look across the piece that there's still a kind of hanging on and I think we said this in our press release to the [SURF] manifesto, a kind of hanging on to a trickle-down theory. Imagining if we get it right in the big places where things are already working and going, then somehow the benefits will then spread out from there. And that does seem to be a thing – you're not agreeing Marco?

**Marco Biagi MSP:** I disagree. The fund that you pointed to was, one that was [SPRUCE](#). It was co-investment so it needs to be in any areas where there was a degree of commercial interest. When you look at the, the broader scope of the policy, where Strengthening Communities money goes, where JESSICA, where all the Regeneration Capital Grant, in particular, goes, it is an attempt to try and spread out that spatial element. Ayrshire is left off the current City Deals map, but the three Ayrshire Councils have been trying to create a [regional partnership](#) to basically undertake the same sort of exercise.

We do have, we do have... well, as a Minister, I'm well aware of the effect on this, on HIE, because

Marco Biagi MSP, Scottish National Party

“SHOULD SCOTTISH ENTERPRISE HAVE MORE OF A SOCIAL DIMENSION? THAT'S SOMETHING I'M GOING TO HAVE TO STAY CAGEY ON.”

when we last announced Strengthened Communities money, I noticed the list of successful projects, half of them were in Highlands and Islands, because HIE had offered match funding and as a result, had been able to snaffle up a lot of the money. Great, because it was going to good places, but it did, for me, ask the question of: should Scottish Enterprise have more of a social dimension to its function there?

And that's something I'm going to have to stay cagey on. But it's certainly a, something...

**Andy Milne:** Why are you going to stay cagey on it?

**Marco Biagi MSP:** Because...we keep these things under review.

**Andy Milne:** What does that mean?

**Marco Biagi MSP:** It means I wouldn't rule it out but I'm not going to commit to doing it.

**Andy Milne:** Okay, I think it's an important point. You know, I think you're right. Highlands and Islands Enterprise have been in our [SURF] Awards annually – we see a disproportionate number of Awards coming forward from entries and indeed, successes actually, coming forward from the HIE area. We know that's because they take a proactive role in promoting those projects, but also in generating and supporting those projects in the first place. And there is a question about why that isn't happening across the rest of Scotland, if we are really interested in the spread of community empowerment and ownership across the whole of Scotland. Johanna?

**Cllr Johanna Boyd:** Just a very short point and it's sort of, it's related to the City Deal but it's also related to bidding into some of these funds. It puts an incredible strain on, I'm speaking personally from a smaller Local Authority or a smaller town or city, to actually garner together these applications. I think it is something that really needs to be borne in mind. I had similar representations made to me by staff about the Regeneration Capital Fund, for example. The amount of work that's needed to go into these things, in order to be successful, the process, it can be incredibly resource intensive.



**Andy Milne:** We pick up a lot, at the very local level, with individual community projects, the amount of times you'll have heard this many times, the amount of time and energy they have to spend going through that process. So there's something a bit out of kilter there, perhaps, and maybe it's about where the resources are allocated in the first place, rather than, as our colleague here made the point, about the resource allocation being back to front. Robert, do you want to come in?

**Robert McDowall:** Yeah, I was just going to come back to this HIE/SE situation. Of course, Andy's just referred to it in the latter couple of minutes that he's had. It's just perhaps important to point out that SURF at Board level has had a number of discussions around the relationship it has with HIE and how that works so well in partnership. We've also had discussions previously about the relative success of Land Reform legislation, Community Empowerment to replace that, and how that particular piece of legislation, if you look at the geographic map, then land reform has been particularly well utilised in remote rural islands areas.

So whilst I can accept Marco perhaps being a bit cagey on the situation, from our perspective, something needs to happen if we're going to have the same level of enjoyment that is currently the case, from our perspective, in remote rural island areas, across the rest of Scotland, and then that would embrace the particular areas that Brian has referred to. There is an opportunity for best practice within HIE for, it's pluses and minuses over the years. There's an opportunity for best practice and strengths of relationship relative to its geographic area and local communities. But somehow the rest of Scotland, we need to find these key ingredients, as well as the monies. But it's the key ingredients in terms of relationship that's fundamentally important.

**Andy Milne:** Okay, so that's good, but we also know HIE now have the responsibility for delivering the Community Land Fund in urban areas. I've had meetings with colleagues from HIE about how that will be different, how that will be a different experience from the successes, some successes, some less successful, that they've had in the HIE area. This goes back to a point which has been raised by Andy and by Willie and by other members of the panel about this question of ownership of land as the fundamental bedrock of regeneration and resources. Anybody want to pick up on how that, how that might work more successfully in an urban context than it has done until now. Andy first and then maybe Willie?

**Andy Wightman:** Well it's interesting in the [Land Reform Review Group](#), they looked at urban issues quite a bit, and the Scottish Government didn't take forward any of them in the Bill, but has been taking forward a bit of work called Housing & Land Reform or something, and a series of workshops, and I'm sure some of you've been involved in that here. And I think that the [First] Minister committed herself to being in the SNP manifesto to introduce Compulsory Sale Orders, for example, that's something we'd be interested in as well. What came out of it was things like a new law around multiple land assembly, majority land assembly so ending a ransom strip model – again, I think there would be quite a bit of enthusiasm for that.

And as I said in my remarks in response to a previous question, and it would address the housing question as well, we believe the need to go back to 1947 model: a public sector led development, like they do in Germany, where the private sector housing building industry is one that builds quality houses and doesn't speculate in land development. I was in a lobbying meeting at Parliament the other day with a prominent volume housebuilder. I asked them two thirds of the way through: "if I wanted you to build me a house, could you do it?" And he said, no, because I'm not in the housebuilding industry – they're actually the land speculation industry. Make all their land – money from land development.

So this is not going to be in the Green Party manifesto but we basically want to eliminate the volume housebuilding industry, as an industry, as it exists just now, within 10 to 15 years. Because we think it's utterly failed to give us the quality places, the quality homes, that we need. It's a completely failed – no-one else in Europe uses it. And I think that turning to the post-war model where public sector moved in, master-planned and then engaged a range of actors for the private, public,

Andy Wightman, Scottish Greens

**"THIS IS NOT GOING TO BE IN THE GREEN PARTY MANIFESTO BUT WE BASICALLY WANT TO ELIMINATE THE VOLUME HOUSEBUILDING INDUSTRY... YOU COULD DO IT TOMORROW"**

nowadays it would include the social cooperative sector, is the way forward. It'll give us better places.

**Andy Milne:** Just making the transition from volume housebuilding and the model that you're advocating and still achieving the housing outcomes that we all agree- how's that going to be done Andy?

**Andy Wightman:** You could do it tomorrow, I mean there's elements of the volume housebuilding industry who are very, very good, and it's not for me to name individual companies. But there is one company whose land bank goes back to 1920s, 1930s, and it's written off in its books and it is notably building much, much better quality homes than any of the other companies. So, I mean, the point is these people can build homes, right, if we give –

**Andy Milne:** But at the moment, they're making more money out of just speculating on land.

**Andy Wightman:** But they're leading the development process: by pushing forward the developments, by hiring expensive consultants. And the Tories want it just to go through faster, the SNP are calling in everything over a hundred to get these targets. It's a nightmare. We can do things differently.

**Andy Milne:** Okay, anybody else on this point. Willie? And then we're moving on.

**Willie Black:** I think, I think I agree with Andy, in fact, you know. We would line up with Andy and the Greens and whatever in demanding to try and achieve that. Maybe we're looking for one nation Toryism, if Iain rejects that. But they actually built more houses than most... I'm not advocating that by the way. Don't write it down or minute it! [laughter] But the hole is getting filled in. What I'm really talking about is this whole question of land banking. We need to break that, we need to make a definite decision: buy it and use it or lose it. And that would be an easy Bill to write up, wouldn't it? I would have to come out the cupboard for that.

**Robert McDowall:** Andy, could I maybe encourage Craig McLaren to just have a few words and a bit of some time on the planning side

**Andy Milne:** Craig, we need to hear from you on planning.

**Craig McLaren:** I was going to ask a couple of questions, I was going to give a couple of figures. I'm Craig McLaren from the Royal Town Planning Institute, the professional body for town planners. Four figures first. Some research we did, which showed that the last five years, we've seen a 20% loss of planning staff in Local Authorities. That's taken £40m out of the Planning Authority budget.

The average amount of money you get from a planning application only covers 63% of processing that application. And the final one is, which astounded even me, was that the amount of money

which Local Authorities gives to the Planning Department, on average is 0.63%. So I'd just like to put that into the mix to show the difficult circumstances Planning Authorities are in.

For me, the big question has been sort of talked around a wee bit. However, is the planning, do people think the system, should the system should be geared towards trying to make sure we speed up planning applications, get delivered quickly? Or is it about trying to deliver quality on the ground?

**Andy Milne:** How do we match speed and quality then? Anybody got any thoughts on change to the present system to achieve that? Iain.

**Iain McGill:** Some of what I've said, some of what, I'm not going to repeat some of what we've said there, but we think we can, we think we can speed it up, and have the decisions being taken by full Councils rather than going up. So we think we can speed it up and have decisions taken locally and we think that will see better results.

**Andy Wightman:** Absolutely agree with Craig. We've sat in your [Patrick Geddes lecture](#) this year with the former Chief Planner from Freiburg. And they deliver results. And they deliver results because they don't rely on developers and land owners making, initiating the process of development. And public servants and highly trained professionals like your members, being a people, in effect, are not actually master-planning their communities, but are responding to often very, very poor development brought forward by the private sector. We should turn that on its head. And we can turn it on its head because your members, in other countries in Europe, don't do that.



*Craig McLaren of RTPI Scotland (centre) asked whether the panel would prioritise speed or quality in the planning process*

**Andy Milne:** Okay, thank you. Martin, and then we'll move on after this on the planning point.

**Martin Veart:** I believe that the Liberal Democrats look more towards the quality than the volume. This is why we want houses to have, we want to have a decent national minimum standard, but if the local Councils, stakeholders want to improve upon that, we are very happy with that. And also, with the communal point, getting the heating and renewables in there as well and getting proper levels of insulation.

**Andy Milne:** Okay, thank you Martin. Johanna, very brief if you will, and then we can move onto Peter from the Poverty Alliance.

**Cllr Johanna Boyd:** I think, Craig, the thing that struck me in the, in the points that you made, Craig, were the amount of budget cut from Planning Departments. Of course, that is part of a much broader, severe, more severe challenge that Local Government faces at the moment; the disproportionate cuts that we are having to moot out. But the point I wanted to raise was, what we're talking about here is individual planning applications, but also ongoing, and again the pressure that's put on a Planning Department is within the LDP process.

So I think that in part answers Andy's point that there is a process that goes on which is about planning and planners having, identifying appropriate sites. Having that vision for what they see as being the appropriate places for building etc. I think where communities become completely disengaged is when it's incredibly complex, first of all, for individuals to understand if they have no grasp of the planning system. They go through an LDP process and understand, "right that's a green field, it's not being touched"- for then a developer to come in and speculate on that site. So then they have to defend that again and I'm speaking from direct recent experience. Then thinking, "oh right, the Council's rejected that, that's the end of the matter."

It's now going to go in direct to a Minister and potentially be overturned. So the whole, I'm not going to sit here and say that I have a global answer to all of those things but it, it really does raise the question of just how clunky and inefficient it actually is. And ultimately, I think that what it's doing is that it's disenfranchising even more, and really not inclining people to become involved in the democratic process because they see it as ultimately futile.

**Andy Milne:** Okay so I'll be interested to seeing some of the manifestos coming out, if there are any particular differences on the important issue of the planning system. Peter.

**Peter Kelly** [Director of The Poverty Alliance]: Thanks, Andy. The SURF manifesto very clearly locates tackling regeneration, degeneration as part of tackling inequality. And I think all of you, maybe not you Iain, sorry, but, all of you in your opening statements talked about the importance of tackling inequality. [IFS](#) suggests that we're going to see a rise in inequality over the next five years or so. We're also going to get new powers to the Scottish Parliament, over the next couple of years. Could you say specifically how you would use those new powers, new social security powers, new taxation powers, to address poverty and inequality? Because we know that one of the things that will help regenerate communities is to put more money into more people's pockets. How would you use those powers?

**Andy Milne:** Thank you very much, Peter. Okay, so while the panel's just thinking about a specific move that they would make, under the new powers, to help address poverty and inequality, Peter and I exchanged a [Martin Wolf article in the Financial Times](#) recently based on a piece of research I think also from the Institute of Fiscal Studies which showed that the social security system, the variations in payments from the social security system alter more over an individual's life than they do between social groups which I thought was really interesting.

So there are people, I remember getting told off recently for calling it welfare and being told again to call it social security, it actually does, even colleagues from right wing thinking positions accept social security system is that; it's an insurance system for us as individuals rather than the transfer of money from one section of society to another. I thought: interesting point.

So, specific moves on tackling poverty and inequality based on enhanced powers within the Scottish Parliament. Anybody want to go for that? Martin again, okay. Why not? Indeed.

**Martin Veart:** It's, as I said in the opening statement, is that we do want to use the tax system. Now Willie would probably say it was tinkering but we want to have that penny in the pound and dedicate that for education. And make sure that education spending is restored to the levels it was prior to the 2008. That is our flagship policy on that.

Peter Kelly, The Poverty Alliance

**Andy Milne:** So that's an interesting, very specific one then, Martin. Is there a contradiction though between the, I think hypothecation is the word there, of that one penny to education? A contradiction in that, and local control and local decision-making for various circumstances in different places?

“COULD YOU SAY SPECIFICALLY HOW YOU WOULD USE NEW SOCIAL SECURITY POWERS, NEW TAXATION POWERS, TO TACKLE POVERTY AND INEQUALITY?”

**Martin Veart:** Well because the spending is targeted to disadvantaged areas, that, especially with the pupil premium, that is the, that's the issue we want to address. For instance, there was an [Al Jazeera article recently concerning Glasgow](#) and under the Freedom of Information, they assessed that some areas of Glasgow are more likely for a young person to end up in the local detention centre than in the local university. And that is fundamentally down to educational levels. Now, the article was in March – I'll find a link for you.

**Andy Milne:** Okay, thank you. So somebody else, Willie?

**Willie Black:** Yeah, I mean the difficulty is when we had the trickle down, when the Good Samaritan in stature talked about the Good Samaritan, now in the Virgin Islands, we gave them wealth and they didn't trickle down to us. You not remember the days when we thought we'd just open the window and the giants would all be shouting it's coming down the road, you look. It never happened in the good times and the idea that somehow if we just put money into education that that will in itself challenge the question of poverty and whatever. I think we've got to be much bolder.

The problem is that the SNP is in danger from the independence movement from losing any kind of radicalism. And so it manages the economy, so it needs to be more radical. We would be trying to hold of that phrase, the SNP, it might be a small fire that we've got, but we'd certainly try and get the feet closest. [**Andy Milne:** What would we be asking them to do specifically?] I think as far as the service tax situations in towns, we would certainly be asking them not, you know, to replace the Council tax with a service tax based on income, not based on property, but based on income, in that sense.

**Andy Milne:** Anybody else on this point? Andy? And then...

**Andy Wightman:** Yeah, I mean we've published our tax proposals, which I'd encourage you to read. We want to see a tax shift over the next ten years from incomes to wealth. Wealth inequality is sitting at 0.6 – that's the [Gini Coefficient](#). Wealth inequality income is sitting at 0.3. And that's what's happened over the last 20 years. Wealth inequality has been exacerbated at twice the rate of income inequality. So we would scrap the Council tax. We would follow Naomi Eisenstadt's recommendations to introduce a bold, progressive local tax system and change the situation for those who are in Band A properties, paying 1.42% tax rate, and those in the very top, paying 0.29.



It's the most regressive tax in the UK and it's fundamentally the reason, critical reason why, if you look at the overall tax burden in Britain, the bottom 10% decile pay 45% tax rate overall. VAT, fuel duties, income taxes, property taxes etc. And the top 10% pay 35%. And the critical reason for that 45% is the regressive Council tax. And just finally, our income tax proposals are going to make half of the population better off under the median wage by reducing the bottom rate to 18% and increasing the top rate to 60%. And those are measures that are specifically designed to tackle inequality, not necessarily to generate revenue at the top but to stop rent seeking and to curb excess wage demands. And we've actually calculated the Gini Coefficient reduction at 0.4%.

**Andy Milne:** Okay. And specific figures there, and the Gini Coefficient. Marco.

**Marco Biagi:** Yeah, I go back to the comments you said about people in and out of welfare over their lives. I claimed Jobs Seekers Allowance myself at one point and I'm sitting here as a Government Minister. I don't see this as 'them and us'. I see this as something we can all end up having to use. To be clear though, only about 11% of the spending on social security is coming to the Scottish Parliament. So let's, let's be realistic about this. That said, respect is at the heart of it and that is the, that had been one of the problems with how it had been considered, how people that need social security are viewed.

And we want to potentially start with a blank slate with our own agency and put respect at the heart of what we do. On the tax side, the top four Council tax bands will be asked to pay more. I have a front page of the Daily Mail talking about the SNP's middle class tax rate, which is currently up on my wall, I'm very proud of it. And we're not passing on Osborne's tax cut for the top 10% above, that are in the 40% threshold. And in terms of Council tax reduction, something was recommended by Naomi Eisenstadt as well, for those people at the bottom who are paying Council tax bills but have, are working families with children, where the system at the moment isn't generous enough. And probably in time we will have to go even further than that.

**Andy Milne:** Okay, thank you. I'm just going to hold it there then and we're going to move it on. In the last ten minutes now. Judy, do you want to come in?

**Judy Wilkinson:** Yes, in the [SURF] Manifesto, it says that they want the involvement of people who have direct experience of poverty in design and development. Now the only one I've heard talking so far about the citizens' income, which was again number seven in your proposals, the secondary proposals from the Manifesto, was the, was from Andy. And he mentioned the citizens' income. What are the feelings of the others about the benefits of this? And why isn't it being discussed at a much –

**Andy Milne:** So this is the benefits of the citizens' income proposals. And you're from the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society, yes?

**Judy:** Yes. But I've seen, if we could get the citizens' income, then I think that the way that people in poverty are completely stressed. They cannot, they do not have the time, they do not have the energy to do anything else but try. And very often, I mean some do, but most of them don't have the time and the energy to tackle anything else than just dealing with their situation.



*Judy Wilkinson of the Scottish Allotments & Gardens Society queried party positions on citizens' income*

**Andy Milne:** I think that's an excellent point, that. It's really interesting how we expect poor people to take on responsibility to deliver their own services, that the rest of us expect our Councillors and our officials to deliver that for us, it's an interesting concept. So you would say that, in the Allotments and Gardens Society, less people participating because they're busy feeding their kids and looking after them and so on.

**Judy Wilkinson:** And then all the problems about not feeding them well. You know, so if you get the stories about: "yep, okay, I can just manage, I'm not going to think about feeding my kids, I don't want to think about growing my vegetables because I just have to survive."

**Andy Milne:** Just getting by. Okay, we'll account for that. Bringing us back to that specific point in the SURF manifesto on citizens' income. Views on that. Iain?

**Iain McGill:** I could give you the quick answer which is we are not going to be proposing a citizens' income on Wednesday in our manifesto. But I could expand that a little bit and say some of the things that, some of the things I'm pleased about. So the new Living Wage pay rise for, pay rise for everyone – up to £7.20 an hour. The tax allowance up to £11,000 there, a big rise, a big rise in pensions there.

**Andy Milne:** But Living Wage is £8, what? Is it £8.20? [**Andy Wightman:** £8.25] £8.25, yeah.

**Iain McGill:** There's Living Wages and the Living Wages and that's fine.

**Andy Milne:** Right, right so that's a different Living Wage –

**Iain McGill:** Well no, I saw in the – I'm sure we've all seen in the bus stops and buses and TV, the [UK] Government's giving the nation a pay rise. It's a well-deserved pay rise – it leads onto, leads onto one of my frustrations in my day to day, my day to day life. There's cross party consensus in Holyrood. I think the best bill Holyrood ever passed is the Self-Directed Support Bill. So folks with, folks with additional support needs could be taking control of the, control and support of services they needed. And what we've seen over the past few years is Councils using that as a means to –

**Andy Milne:** I'll have to move on, because we're really, we are running out of time. So Judy made a specific point. Comments on the citizen's income, whether you're for it or against it and why. Andy.

**Andy Wightman:** Well we're for it.

**Andy Milne:** You're for it and moving on.

**Andy Wightman:** I'll just make one point on that. It's that, I think it is really important in the next Parliament – there's been too many parties who've said, "well this isn't a devolved issue, there's nothing we can do about it." Actually, we need to work, not only do parties to work better together in Parliament, but also we need to work better with Westminster, regardless of what political parties in Scotland feel about the political complexion of Westminster. So for example, I... [**Andy Milne:** Short example, Andy, please] Okay, on this, we could table, we could work up what was required to implement a citizens' income, both in terms of what it would mean for the devolved settlement, the fiscal framework and the law.

And we could present it to Parliament in Westminster. We can actually initiate change that is actually reserved, that we want to happen here. And today, what we've seen today is devolution has happened first in the [Calman Commission](#) with only, you know, four of the five Scottish political

parties there as a kind of response to try and fend off the independence. And then [the Smith Commission](#) which was a kind of an afterthought to sort of compensate for, or whatever. And these have been very reactive processes.

**Andy Milne:** Quicker, Johanna, please.

**Cllr Johanna Boyd:** I, speaking myself personally, I would, I would like to see what's being put forward in the [SURF] manifesto come forward in our manifesto in terms of exploring that potential and what it might mean. The other point you raised Judy was a really, really important one, and that was about engagement and who we engage with. And how do we engage with those who are the least inclined to engage with us.

I think for too long our first port of call has perhaps been a Community Council. I know from my own experience, some function very, very well, and are broadly representative and others are very much what you might term gatekeepers, so they comment on specific issues and they want to see a resolution of their specific issue. They may not be thinking in a wider sense as to how they're representing their communities. So I think we, really, collectively, not just from a Council point of view, who may have traditionally gone out and engaged in that way of, you know, a national Government's point of view. We need to think much more creatively about how we engage with those people who are the hardest –

**Andy Milne:** Okay. You're all going to have one minute at the end of this to say things that you haven't managed to say yet. So just save other remarks for that. Just, on the citizens' income please – Martin.

**Martin Veart:** Citizens' income, that's no Liberal policy. We used to support it. We don't. [**Andy Milne:** Used to?] Used to, but not anymore. We would like to see welfare being raised, for instance, for carers, for example, coming up with same for Job Seekers. If I go off-piste a little bit, I'm currently claiming Job Seekers Allowance. I'm unemployed. So one thing that I would personally like to see at this moment is the courses that are funded by the Scottish Government, and from Westminster, is that if you have a course you would like to do, you have to have a guaranteed employment outcome at the end of it. There is no way that I can get onto a course and so then look for a job. I know what I would like to do but I need to have an employer on the back of that. So, that's actually getting back to the lifelong education side; helping people become employable again.

**Andy Milne:** Thank you. Willie?

**Willie Black:** Yeah, I mean our policy's for ten pound an hour. Actually, at a time, where we got that, we got that from the Tories – the official Government figures, that that's what you need. So even when they discovered what we need, they didn't give us what we need. So the problem is also in the [SURF] manifesto, there's another thing that says it, and this is the worrying factor, is that you can have a minimum wage and you can have Living Wage and you can have citizens, income levels. But if that becomes the maximum, what we need to strengthen is organisation that fight for a better... what is it... slice of the bakery or the knife or whatever analogy I used before. [**Andy Milne:** Slice of the pie] You know, if it was an idea about half an hour ago, I'm forgetting it, because that's all dead.

**Andy Milne:** Interesting point that is made in our manifesto about the way in which the low level wage – Peter, you've done lots of work on this in the Poverty Alliance – has spread out to encompass very large sections of society now. Marco.

**Marco Biagi MSP:** Citizens' income is interesting - it's been modelled by the [Expert Working Group on Welfare](#). The numbers are very hard to overcome – if you're going to give 4 million adults an equivalent of a full time living wage, it would cost as much as all public spending by all three levels of Government that currently takes place in Scotland per year. That said, its objectives, universality and genuine social security, are things we need to see the system evolving to provide, get that respect and remove those great societal ills that Beveridge pointed out all those years ago. Rather than, frankly as is currently happening in welfare right now, using things like hunger as a weapon of policy.

**Andy Milne:** So we put in the manifesto that we should look at a pilot of how this works because there are challenges and complexities in this. But I think, as you're alluding to there, Marco, the status quo is not sustainable.

## Closing Statements

**Andy Milne:** Okay, thank you very much for all your patience there. We're going to finish now and I'm going to radically alter the ending arrangements. I know, I think we said two and a half minutes [for closing statements]. You can have one minute each, right? Where's our referee gone? So at 15 seconds, your yellow card goes up, okay, that is after 45, I mean, sorry Jacqueline. It's all getting terribly complicated! [laughter] Okay, take it in reverse order this time, Marco for your last minute, on anything you want to say on that you haven't had the chance to raise.

**Marco Biagi MSP:** Both votes SNP. I'll be that brief. I think we've got a record that you can see puts our heart in the right place and attempts to deliver things based on those principles within the constraints that we have had. I would not have chosen the last two terms to be the first terms in Government after all the decades that we had, given the financial pressures, but wherever we have been working, whatever we've been doing, we've been doing in collaboration with people and communities. I think we have done the best with the cards we've had, so in the years to come, if we have a re-elected majority, I think we'll be able to do some really quite amazing things about it, but other than that, you're going to have to wait and see what the manifesto has to offer.

**Andy Milne:** Thank you Marco. There you are, I thought you were going to do three seconds at the start, you ended up doing 45. Willie.

**Willie Black:** Yeah, whoever you're going to vote for first has nothing to do with us. We're looking for your second vote. And that's the beauty, the benefit of the system. You can actually try and get some kind of alternative inside, some radical people that will actually push a radical agenda. In Lothians, for instance, 17,000 votes would actually get an MSP. If you vote SNP second, basically they have to get over 200,000 to get one more SNP MSP or, after that it becomes silly. So therefore, if you want and if you're supportive of independence and a second referendum, then vote RISE, vote second, and we would make a difference, I believe that, essential. But also, if we didn't get elected then it's one foot in the Parliament and a thousand on the streets. So we, we want to move and build a social movement and that means, we're not looking for your vote just entirely, we're looking for your involvement, your campaigning. And we'll join in unity in that.

**Andy Milne:** Thank you. Martin.

**Martin Veart:** Really enjoyed today's debate and listening to, and – not the yellow card yet! [laughter] And listening to a lot of the points is that we need in Scotland, an accountable Government, we need a transparent Government, and I don't think we're getting this with the SNP at the moment. The Liberal Democrats are about devolution, of bringing powers and the finances

back to the local level, as close to the communities as it possibly can. And we have got a proven track record holding the SNP Government to account with very few MSPs. So I'd ask you to vote Liberal Democrat to increase that vigil on what's probably going to be an SNP Government, but it needs to be far more critical opposition, and that's what we will provide. Plus cooperation, working with other parties for our aims.

**Andy Milne:** Well done. Okay. Johanna?

**Cllr Johanna Boyd:** Well I think you've heard a lot of consensus today about just how good this manifesto from SURF is and I'm very grateful for it. Marco says; "judge us on our record". Well I, for my part, don't think that we've seen a bold vision for Scotland. We haven't seen great social reform. What we've seen is an incredibly centralising Government. We've seen Police Scotland, health and social care integration, Local Government having a disproportionate amount of cuts to bear. We see problems with our health service and I think we can do so much better than we have been doing for the last ten years. Unemployment's higher, college places have been cut. So I would ask you to consider using both your votes for Labour, for a progressive bold vision. We'll use these powers that will come to this Parliament so that we don't see the continued difficulties that we see in the way that we're going forward at present.

**Andy Milne:** Thank you, Johanna. Andy?



*The party representatives were invited to give closing statements of no more than one minute each*

**Andy Wightman:** Well I'd just like to remind you again, we are electing a Parliament, Parliament for five years. Unprecedented length. We've never elected a Parliament for five years before. Scottish Greens have achieved a lot in the last Parliament, with just two MSPs, so we're seeking to build on that, get a few more in. To build a Parliament that can work together, that can help a minority Government of any colour, because there's a lot of consensus across the Parliament on a number of important things.

But critically we can be bolder and can be much, much more radical and can use the powers that we've had since 1999, many of which we haven't even begun to use, and the powers which are coming in 2017 on things like housing, on things like inequality. There is a graph from Bell in Stirling showing the gains of Scottish taxpayers since devolution – the top 1% have made a 2% increase in their share of income, at the expense of absolutely everybody else. We can ban fracking, we can



have genuine local democracy and we can start that important jobs transition to fossil fuel free economy. We want to be part of it, I'm standing number two in the Lothians. Vote Green.

**Andy Milne:** Crammed a lot in there, Andy. Is that right about five years? I thought it was four years – it was five years last time.

**Andy Wightman:** It was extended in the middle of it because of the new permanent UK Government four-year thing. This is the first year it'll be, it's already been determined it'll be five.

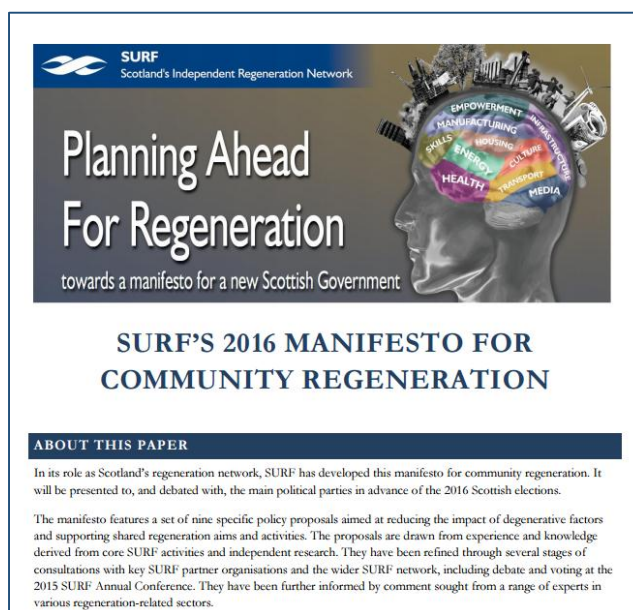
CLlr Johanna Boyd, Scottish Labour Party

“WELL I THINK YOU’VE HEARD A LOT OF CONSENSUS TODAY ABOUT JUST HOW GOOD THIS MANIFESTO FROM SURF IS, AND I’M VERY GRATEFUL FOR IT”

**Andy Milne:** Thank you. Iain?

**Iain McGill:** Perfect, guys. Thank you for a break from the usual debate we get on the doors, which is absolutely all about those two parties on the end there, on the independence references and constitutional wrangling. That should have been put in the box in 2014, because this is where the healthy debate is, this is where Scotland should be, this is the things Parliament should be discussing, should be finding the consensus and going forward. So the Conservatives very much have a pitch, we don't want that constitutional wrangling, we don't want that second referendum. It's done, it's dusted and we want to be... the fight is, John Curtice, has it, a map of yellow. The fight is there for the second place: Ruth Davidson to be the official opposition. Labour with six leaders in eight years haven't landed a glove on the SNP. And that's an SNP Government with housebuilding down 40%, 150,000 college places gone. Their record's terrible, we want to take the fight to them. So thanks, vote Conservative, especially your second. Thank you.

**End of transcript** – SURF's Andy Milne and Derek Rankine provided some closing remarks and thanked the party representatives and guests for their time and contributions.



Further information on this event and SURF's 2016 Manifesto is available at:  
[www.scotregen.co.uk/projects/2016-manifesto/](http://www.scotregen.co.uk/projects/2016-manifesto/)



**SURF**  
Scotland's Regeneration Network

## About SURF

SURF is Scotland's regeneration network. Its overall objective is to address poverty and inequality in Scotland's disadvantaged communities.

The SURF network is the primary arena for independent debate on community regeneration in Scotland. Through its close links to national and local government, SURF acts as a constructive channel for information, consultation and policy proposals, based on the knowledge and experience of its extensive membership and its wider connections.

SURF's output includes research, seminars, conferences, international policy exchanges, study visits, open forums, the annual [SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration](#) and the distribution of information and comment in a variety of formats.

SURF was established in 1992 as a not-for-profit social enterprise company. It is directed by a board of voluntary directors drawn from across its wide cross-sector membership of over 250 organisations.

SURF members range from small community groups to some of Scotland's largest private companies, and include local authorities, housing associations, health boards, academic institutions, professional bodies, voluntary organisations and charities.

By exchanging knowledge, experience and ideas across this diverse network, SURF supports the work of its members and assists the development of more successful and sustainable community regeneration policy and practice.

Further information on SURF and its work is available on our website:

[www.scotregen.co.uk](http://www.scotregen.co.uk)

Find SURF on Twitter [@Scotregen](https://twitter.com/Scotregen)

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