



Building Community Wealth in Scotland

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- Individual
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

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

- Yes
 No

Questionnaire

Question 1a

We are proposing a duty to advance Community Wealth Building, which form do you think this duty should take:

Option A

The SURF network is enthusiastic about the prospects for Community Wealth Building to address poverty, strengthen local economies, enhance health and wellbeing, and ultimately improve the quality of life for residents of deprived Scottish communities. SURF members generally agree that further action is required to advance the concept in practice, and placing a formal duty on a wide range of local and national government agencies, and other stakeholders, to that end will be a useful part of that process.

Option C is, on balance, more desirable in expanding the duty as far as reasonably possible, from the formal plans and strategies of Scottish Ministers and national bodies, to practical regional action plans that cover local authorities, regional partnerships and the actions of charities, businesses, community groups and other players.

SURF would like to draw attention to three associated challenges that may prevent a new duty from making a significant impact. One is the example of the socio-economic duty on public bodies, which has led to additional reporting obligations but a lack of responsive action. Forcing a body to produce a report can often result in summaries of existing activity, and explanations for a lack of progress, but do not guarantee the development of positive change in the real world. Explanations range from an absence of new resources to implement change, insufficient capacity and a stretching of strategic priorities in a busy and overlapping policy climate. How is a new duty on Community Wealth Building to avoid the same fate?

A second challenge is a lack of awareness-raising and sustained focus. As is often the case around place-based regeneration, new policy measures are the focus of short-term attention, and the policy agenda often moves to another item before deep understanding and meaningful responsive action takes root. To best ensure the involvement of all sectors, an awareness-raising campaign that highlights the concept, associated duties and case studies of impact, accompanied by robust guidance, is required. Community Wealth Building could, for example, feature more prominently in the Programme for Government and the public statements and commitments of the First Minister and Scottish Cabinet, and associated senior figures in local government, enterprise agencies and the business, voluntary and community sectors, all of whom stand to benefit from successful implementation.

A third challenge is Community Wealth Building requires a culture change around local partnership working. In general, what is termed partnership working is often led by a single agency, with tokenistic involvement from other sectors and partners. SURF, the Scottish Government and CoSLA are supportive of the Place Principle concept, as referenced in the consultation paper, which requires a step-change in place-focused collaboration. We view the Place Principle and Community Wealth Building as intertwined concepts that must be implemented together, backed by serious commitments and resources, to produce progress on the ground.

- Option B
- Option C
- Other
- No Duty

Please provide a reason for your answer. In your answer please include views on:

- which bodies should be covered by the proposals
- how to best ensure accountability for implementation to the Scottish Parliament
- how to best ensure the involvement of local communities, business and the third sector in the implementation of the duty

Question 1b

One way Scottish Government could support the implementation of the proposed Community Wealth Building duty is to provide statutory or non-statutory guidance. Would this be helpful to partners in meeting the proposed duty?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

Please provide a reason for your answer. In your answer please include views on:

- areas in which it would be helpful for this guidance to focus on, e.g. areas to consider when implementing the five pillars, links to further support materials

The five pillars are widely admired as a different approach towards supporting local communities and economies, but as general statements on overarching principles, they do not in themselves provide tangible steps towards implementation.

Local authorities and other players require a great deal of additional support towards delivery in practice, and strong and clear guidance would comprise part of that package of support. While some principles may be clearly understood, such as fair work, community owned assets and socially progressive procurement practices, examples of how public bodies should implement new measures, would improve prospects for change in Scottish communities in the current context.

The SURF network has reported that some principles, such as plural ownership of the economy and making financial work for local places, are more woolly and harder for many bodies to engage with. For those pillars, guidance is not only helpful, but necessary if any action is to be delivered.

Guidance should focus not on the contents of reports and strategic plans, but on practical action points that can Community Wealth Building from rhetoric into reality. Statutory guidance comes with more weight than non-statutory, but a sole focus on the former may disengage non-governmental agencies, and may lead to a top-down, public sector ownership of the context. Therefore, guidance should also be targeted at the myriad of stakeholders, from small businesses and social enterprises to academic institutions and grassroots community groups, as part of a wider approach to encourage all players to engage with a bold new approach to our local economies.

- whether the guidance should be statutory or non-statutory

Question 2a

Are there other non-legislative measures that you believe are required to accelerate the implementation of the Community Wealth Building approach in Scotland?

- Yes
 No
 Don't Know

Please provide a reason for your answer.

There is a general sense in the SURF network that Community Wealth Building is not yet well-understood as an agreed, settled concept. Much of the effort towards building support, understanding and practical change lies outwith the legislative agenda. Activities such as awareness-raising public events, media items on pilot approaches, study visits, accessible reports by non-public bodies, Ministerial visits and speeches, will all help in making the concept more accessible to all relevant actors. This requires planning and resources beyond the formation of new legislation.

Question 2b

Are there specific actions required to advance delivery of the items contained within the Shared Policy Programme outlined on page 11 of the consultation paper?

- 'working within and developing procurement practices to support local economies, including Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) and micro-businesses, and improved access to training and labour markets for disadvantaged communities and individuals.
- encouraging public kitchens, including school canteens, to source more food produced by local businesses and organic producers.
- where possible, to base public sector capital and revenue funding decisions on targeted social, economic and environmental outcomes'

- Yes
 No
 Don't Know

Please provide a reason for your answer.

The general aspirations set out in the Shared Policy Programme require specific measures to support change at the desired level. While SURF is aware some of the support and encouragement is being provided, those in the SURF network active in certain sectors report a lack of dedicated actions and/or coordination.

Question 3

Are there ways in which the law could be changed to advance the spending pillar of Community Wealth Building?

- Yes
 No

Don't Know

Please provide a reason for your answer. In your response you may wish to consider the stakeholder suggestions outlined in the consultation paper which have arisen from early engagement.

Without further legislative actions, the SURF network is concerned that only modest changes are being realised in efforts to transform the operations of public procurement, local supply chains and related areas for the benefits of our local communities.

SURF events and publications have promoted patchy examples of impact and success, including Community Wealth Building pilots in Ayrshire, which have resulted in small businesses, community groups and social enterprises working with local authorities to enter the public procurement system for the first time. These examples have demonstrated the possibilities for positive progress and the net benefits for all stakeholder organisations, in addition to local people and places.

As the consultation document notes, access to public contracts is limited for many players in many parts of the country, and further actions are required to reduce barriers and engage effectively with those historically and currently disconnected. SURF appreciates the wider challenges in doing so, with restricted public sector finances causing particular pressures in particular.

There is a further problem in the tendency for short-term funding and oversubscribed grant processes for community and voluntary bodies, which are a key part of Community Wealth Building agenda, but which are often struggling for survival in the current context.

Question 4

Employment law is reserved to the UK Parliament. Are there other devolved areas where the law could be changed to advance the workforce pillar of Community Wealth Building?

Yes

No

Don't Know

Please provide a reason for your answer. In your response you may wish to consider the stakeholder suggestions outlined in the consultation paper which have arisen from early engagement. You may also wish to consider areas that the Scottish Government could work with the UK Government on if you have proposals regarding changes to the law which remain reserved to the UK Parliament. We will cross-reference to responses received as part of the Fair Work Nation consultation which was held in 2021.

SURF is a vocal Member of the Scottish Living Wage Campaign and keenly supportive of the wider Fair Work policy agenda. SURF is not, however, sufficiently engaged with employment law to recommend specific legal steps to support further action in this area.

Question 5

Are there ways in which the law could be changed which are not already covered in the proposals for the Land Reform Bill to advance the land and property pillar of Community Wealth Building?

- Yes
 No
 Don't Know

Please provide a reason for your answer. In your response you may wish to consider the stakeholder suggestions outlined in the consultation paper which have arisen from early engagement.

SURF wishes to amplify the arguments of Community Land Scotland and other players in favour of a formal review of the Community Right to Buy legislation, which some SURF members that own, or aspire to own, land and buildings on behalf of a community, have highlighted challenges with. These challenges are reported to include excessive bureaucratic burdens, unreasonable delays, and a lack of responsive action in the event of non-compliance from other parties.

SURF is also aware that many local authorities report insufficient capacity to deal with Community Asset Transfer Requests in a timely and effective manner. Given the central importance of community ownership to Community Wealth Building, exploring and addressing challenges and perspectives from community and local government perspectives, and amending legal processes accordingly, will be vital to supporting policy implementation.

Question 6

Are there ways in which the law could be changed to advance the inclusive ownership pillar of Community Wealth Building?

- Yes
 No

SURF is interested in the appetite to create more locally owned businesses, including cooperatives, in Scottish communities. We engage closely with Social Enterprise Scotland, CEiS, Firstport and other players who wish to expand the social enterprise model in Scottish communities. We are supportive of Social Enterprise Scotland calls to create a new Commission to advise the Scottish Government on how more locally owned businesses can be created in the current policy and resources climate.

SURF is particularly keen to see targeting of creation of such entities in communities with 'most deprived' status in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. Such communities stand to benefit most from the creation of locally rooted, locally owned businesses, given their economic fragility and particular need for sustainable economic development that generates, and retains, new revenue streams.

- Don't Know

Please provide a reason for your answer. In your response you may wish to consider the stakeholder suggestions outlined in the consultation paper which have arisen from early engagement. You may also wish to consider areas that the Scottish Government could work with the UK Government on if you have proposals regarding changes to the law which remain reserved to the UK Parliament.

Question 7

Are there ways in which the law could be changed to advance the finance pillar of Community Wealth Building?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

Please provide a reason for your answer. In your response you may wish to consider the stakeholder suggestions outlined in the consultation paper which have arisen from early engagement. You may also wish to consider areas that the Scottish Government could work with the UK Government on if you have proposals regarding changes to the law which remain reserved to the UK Parliament.

The SURF network has reported a particularly poor understanding of how this pillar can be translated from a concept into practice in specific Scottish places. In addition to legislative support, clear guidance and case study examples are required to demonstrate what actions public bodies and other stakeholder can take to help local businesses, community bodies and other players to access appropriate finance and develop sustainable business models.

Banks and financial institutions must also be encouraged to engage closely with Community Wealth Building across Scotland, during a prolonged period in which local branches are being closed and local connections severed. SURF members in the community and charity sectors report basic challenges in dealing with banks, including to open accounts, maintain mandates and replicate the services available to them in branches online. The combined effect is to discourage, rather than encourage, progress in the finance pillar.