

LEARNING OUTCOMES: SURF'S 23/24 ALLIANCE FOR ACTION PROGRAMME

ABOUT THIS PAPER

Since 2013, SURF has been managing a place-based regeneration initiative called the *Alliance for Action*.

The *Alliance for Action* has a dual purpose:

- to support the delivery of practical regeneration outcomes in a set of diverse communities that have pressing social and economic challenges;
- to learn more about 'what works' in community regeneration in a challenging context, with a view to enhancing wider policy and resource considerations.

In the current 2022-25 delivery period, the *Alliance for Action* operates in four places (pictured):



- Dunoon, Argyll and Bute
- Girvan, South Ayrshire
- Govan, Glasgow
- Peterhead, Aberdeenshire

This report summarises key learning outcomes from programme delivery in the year to 30 March 2024.

We hope it is of interest to SURF members, *Alliance for Action* programme partners, and all who are interested in place-based regeneration in Scotland. For more information on SURF's *Alliance for Action*, please visit our website: <https://surf.scot/programme/alliance-for-action/>

KEY TAKEAWAY

The Alliance for Action demonstrates the value of providing an intermediary practitioner or connector to work with communities in places with social and economic challenges, and help those communities to address challenges and capitalise on opportunities.

In the current context, place-based regeneration efforts are hindered by multiple barriers. These include: restricted funding availability from the public and voluntary sector; limited project development knowledge and experience in community groups; and increased capacity pressures on local authorities, many of which struggle to maintain the effective delivery of statutory services.

This is compounded by a heightened fragility at community level, where many formal organisations are economically precarious, struggling to support staff and volunteers, and to maintain project, service delivery and/or buildings in a difficult resource and operating context. Services which arose during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, which were intended to have a short life-span, have continued to be needed in the cost-of-living crisis, putting additional strain on all providers.

This environment makes it more difficult for local authorities, community groups and other stakeholders to work together on shared interests for making much-needed improvements in multiply deprived places. An intermediary, such as part-time SURF *Alliance for Action* Facilitators based in towns and neighbourhoods with strong regeneration demands, can help overcome these barriers by:

- Providing practical support for project development, drawing upon project management expertise and utilising national networks for guidance and advice from peer projects and specialist agencies.
- Identifying resources for new regeneration activity, through extensive knowledge of policy developments, fundraising approaches, funding programmes, and decision-making processes.
- Making connections between local community groups, public sector partners, charitable trusts, local businesses and others, to support wider place-based collaborations.
- Building capacity for the longer term at the community level, supporting local players to develop the skills, knowledge and sustainable capacity to maintain projects, work confidently in partnership structures, and progress long-term plans.
- Mediating between local community anchors and partner bodies, in situations where historical grievances, differing views and priorities, and personality clashes can prevent meaningful collaboration.

The *Alliance for Action* shows the potential for place-based approaches that build capacity, and which support action and collaboration across multiple community anchors, public sector and businesses in a single place. SURF's approach aligns strongly with the Scottish Government's Place Principle in bringing relevant assets, resources and players together as part of a more joined-up approach to improve the lives of local residents.

SURF and the Corra Foundation convene a national group of 12 bodies that incorporate place-based approaches into their work. The Place-based Programme Exchange Group, which also features the Scottish Community Development Centre, Coalfields Regeneration Trust and Inspiring Scotland, strongly agree that the use of intermediary connectors can help to improve communities in the current policy and practice context.

SURF and Place Group members further agree that regeneration support is not a short-term task; it is medium and long-term in nature, typically requiring ten years or more of consultation, development and delivery of multiple aligned projects, rather than the 1-3 years typical of funding awards for regeneration interventions. The long-term value that can be added through intermediary regeneration support agents such as *Alliance for Action* Facilitators, is considerable.

The key takeaway from the *Alliance for Action* programme is, further dedicated investment in empowering and enhancing community led regeneration activity, supported by targeted support for places with deprivation and low community capacity, can deliver significant and sustainable regeneration outcomes from modest investments.

The remainder of this paper illustrates just some of the regeneration project activity that SURF is supporting in each *Alliance for Action* site.

CASE STUDIES BY SITE

DUNOON

Dunoon Community Development Trust: SURF is working closely with Dunoon Community Development Trust to progress Alliance for Action project delivery in the Argyll town of Dunoon.

The Development Trust was established by SURF in response to local demand to create an appropriate and sustainable community led delivery vehicle to drive forward the longer term regeneration of Dunoon.

From 2017-2023, SURF employed a part-time Dunoon *Alliance for Action* Facilitator, Ann Campbell, to deliver key community demands articulated in [2017 Community Charrette consultations](#). These include improving town centre attractiveness, promoting heritage and tourism, enhancing community and voluntary activity, connecting the waterfront and town centre, and supporting business development.

SURF successfully applied for charitable status and funding for the new Development Trust, and contributed to a Spring 2023 open recruitment process for three Development Trust positions: a full-time Partnership and Development Manager; a part-time Information & Engagement Coordinator; and a part-time Wellbeing Volunteering Programme Coordinator. These three-year posts were appointed in July 2023, and are funded by the Scottish Government's Investing in Communities Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund.

Additional activities delivered by in 2023/24 include:

- **Grow Food, Grow Dunoon** – establishing shared growing spaces within Kirn Primary School, and in Struan Lodge Residential Care and Day Care Centre, providing healthy food, social, volunteering and educational opportunities, community open days, learning workshops, and more.
- **Dunoon Bothy Project** – an initiative with Cycling UK to support development and the promotion of active travel activities. Led by a part-time Bothy Co-ordinator, outputs include e-bike provision and supporting trained volunteers to provide regular led cycles and health walks for individuals and groups, active travel workshops, and a 'silent disco' resource for community groups.
- **Communications & Community Connections** – Development and delivery of an effective communication strategy for the town, including 600+ local contacts for a weekly Mailchimp newsletter, a What's On Dunoon website, social media posts and and regular requests from groups and organisations to share information.
- **Castle Gate Lodge** – providing Argyll & Bute Council with a business case to attract external funding and complete restoration of a key waterfront building's restoration. The Lodge, in Castle Gardens, provides a prominent and accessible Active Travel Hub for the Bothy Project. It was refurbished in partnership with Dunoon Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme.
- **Dunoon and Cowal Coworks** – an initiative set up to support freelancers and home-based workers and enterprising people based in Dunoon and Cowal. Activities include facilitating monthly meet-ups,



What's on
DUNOON

encouraging social media sharing, delivering learning events and online co-working, providing a strong peer-to-peer support network to support diverse people living and working remotely.

- **The American Years Revisited** – a multi-faceted initiative recording and celebrating the heritage of the 31-year US Naval base presence on the Holy Loch adjacent to Dunoon. Recent developments include a website and podcast series, a successful £10k National Lottery Heritage Fund grant to support social history research, and a pop-up exhibition used to tour community venues and share and gather interesting stories.
- **West Bay Regeneration** - A project that engages local people in considering the potential for the regeneration of Dunoon's West Bay, using a prototype beach hut design, a series of short films, a temporary exhibition, and traditional skills workshops to spark conversations around heritage, planning regulations, building requirements, traditional skills, water quality, shingle beach environments, flora, fauna and climate change.
- **Community Conversations: Soup-er Sundays** - A series of events in Dunoon Burgh Hall Trust that bring Trust members and other community members together to talk about Dunoon, while providing some practical support with food and warmth. Support organisations regularly attend and join the conversations.



Clockwise from top left – sharing stories at an American Years pop-up exhibition; active travel promotion via the Dunoon Bothy Project; intergenerational connections at Grow Food, Grow Dunoon.

- **Charitable Governance** – Implementing appropriate governance policies and operating processes for the new Development Trust.

GIRVAN

The Bandstand Project – SURF's *Alliance for Action* Facilitator in the town of Girvan, South Ayrshire, is Zanne Domoney-Lyttle. Zanne actively supports a variety of local organisations to work towards and realise community ambitions.

A key initiative is supporting Adventure Centre for Education in their bid to buy the historic Girvan Bandstand from South Ayrshire Council. This has involved meeting regularly with Council officers, developing a funding strategy for the phased refurbishment of the building, submitting funding applications for the development phase to get quantity survey and costings reports, condition surveys, conservation reports and design plans, and creating a communications strategy for Adventure Centre for Education to keep the community well informed.

A successful Architectural Heritage Fund grant application has led to planning for renovation, and a building purchase from the Council is close to finalisation. The project will continue to be a central priority for SURF as it has enormous potential to transform the area physically and socially. It aligns strongly with community demands to improve tourism, the town centre economy, and connectivity between the town and its waterfront.

Additional activities delivered by SURF's *Girvan Alliance for Action* Facilitator in 2023/24 include:

- **Girvan Academy Auditorium Project** – This project involved working with South Ayrshire Council, Girvan Academy Parents-Teacher Council, local elected members, and community groups to help raise funds towards refurbishing the auditorium in the school. The plan is to open the space as a community theatre outwith school hours to provide a space for performance in Girvan. SURF is sourcing funding towards specific elements of the proposed refurbishment, collecting evidence of need and community support, and exploring a schedule of events over the next 12-18 months which could make use of the newly refurbished auditorium.
- **Biosphere Bikes** – SURF sourced funding through the Smarter Choices Smarter Places fund to employ a project officer for 12 months to support the continued development and progress of Biosphere Bikes as they seek to expand. The local social enterprise is scaling up, promoting active travel and outdoor tourism, and purchasing a vacant building to create a skills training workshop.
- **AYE Girvan** – Accessibility Yields Empowerment (AYE) Girvan is an ambitious new charity which seeks to provide several family-oriented services to the community of Girvan, including a Hygiene Bank and Food Provision, wraparound childcare, children's rights workshops, a charity/thrift shop, and community workshop space. SURF has been providing advice and guidance on governance models, funding strategies and other areas as required.
- **William Grant Foundation** – managing and distributing £7.5k of community grants provided by the Foundation to SURF's *Alliance for Action* programme to seed fund emerging community led activity, particularly those which provide new social and economic opportunities for young people, which is a strong and recurring theme in community consultations in Girvan.
- **Community Rail Partnership** – SURF has attended workshops and meetings with the Community Rail Partnership and is supporting Girvan Youth Trust, who have expressed an interest in taking over the old tea/coffee kiosk in the train station and running it as a social enterprise.
- **Boost/Girvan Town Team** – SURF has facilitated a partnership between Girvan Town Team and Boost. Boost are a collective of individuals who come together to enjoy walks, exercise, cooking classes and more. They are not constituted. By aligning them with Girvan Town Team, they now have access



to funding and help to fulfil one of the community's main priorities around improving health & wellbeing.

- **Community Growing Project** – SURF has met with representatives from the land and asset team in the NHS to discuss the future of the derelict and overgrown site of the old doctor's surgery on Henrietta St. SURF submitted a proposal to the NHS team that the land be returned to the community and turned into a community growing space.
- **Supporting Girvan's Story** – this ongoing project led by South Ayrshire Council is supported by SURF in several ways, including connecting the project leader to various community groups and stakeholders to support the project, supporting the project board and meeting with the project leader on a regular basis to assist with practical developments and help write funding applications for training opportunities.
- **Tourist Information Point and an Ailsa Craig Centre** – Supporting development plans in collaboration with community led tourism body Go Girvan;
- **Business Association** – creating an Association in partnership with Girvan Town Team, to bring together community groups and small businesses in an informal forum;
- **Glendoune Community Association** – SURF is assisting with funding applications and development of projects with advice and practical tips on development and delivery.
- **Town House Arts Centre** – SURF is working with local individuals to commission a feasibility study on the potential use of the Town House as a community arts venue.



Clockwise from top left – the derelict and historically significant Bandstand is being converted into a community owned café, events and tourism hub; SURF has supported Biosphere Bikes to scale up its activities, now including skills training and active travel projects; Zanne and Derek from SURF in a meeting with Glendoune Community Association, which serves the town's most deprived area.

GOVAN

In Govan, SURF's Emma Scott sits on the Steering Group of Central Govan Action Plan, a community led partnership that manages local regeneration activity and works closely with Glasgow City Council.

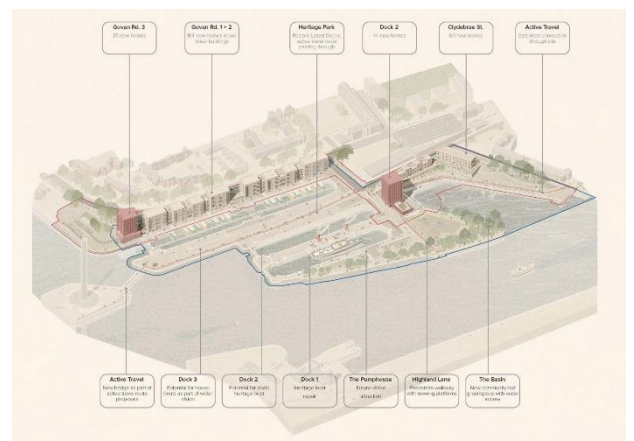
Emma contributes to Central Govan Action Plan's activity programme, and responds to requests for advice and support from local community group players.

In 2023/24, Central Govan Action Plan's regeneration programme features three major projects:

Govan-Partick Bridge – Construction work of the bridge and linked residential developments form the basis of a multi-faceted long-term regeneration strategy to improve the local Govan economy, the physical appearance of the town centre, and access links for local people and visitors.

The bridge is set for completion in mid-2024. Central Govan Action Plan are utilising the 110-metre pedestrian and cycle bridge development to build on wide-ranging regeneration activity, plans and aspirations, which include increased provision of housing and business space, productive reuse of vacant and derelict land and expanded heritage attractions.

Lyceum Working Group - This Group is led by Central Govan Action Plan, under the Govan Heritage banner, with support from Glasgow City Council. It is comprised of representatives from local organisations, community representatives and local authority officials. It aims to look at a community asset transfer of the notable Lyceum cinema building, currently in private ownership, and in a very dilapidated state.



Clockwise from top left – the main section of the Govan-Partick bridge awaiting installation; plans for the former Graving Docks feature positive community, heritage, industry and housing outcomes; the derelict Lyceum Theatre is also the focus of regeneration activity attention on the back of community enthusiasm for reuse.



Following previous failed attempts, by Govan Housing Association to purchase the building, this Working Group was established to support a bid for Community Right to Buy, as the building is seen as a key regeneration priority by the community. The Group are currently in the process of going through the requirements to register for Community Right to Buy Part 2, whilst also looking at other options should they

require them in the future, including Part 5. The community representatives on the group received support to establish a new registered charity – which will be the end recipients should ownership become a reality – plus additional expertise around building preservation and development for future use.

Graving Docks Working Group – This Group is led by Glasgow City Council, with support from Central Govan Action Plan, also under the Govan Heritage banner, who have a particular interest in the historic Pump House. The Group also features representatives from local organisations, community representatives and local authority officials. In contrast to the Lyceum, this site has a cooperative private owner, a developer that is willing to hand over 80% of the site to an established community body who can make the site economically sustainable.



Funding has already been generated from the Vacant and Derelict Land Fund and Sustrans for initial works. There are aspirations to use two of the dry docks to generate income, including the re-establishment of one as a working dock. A design team from Glasgow City Council, are consulting with the community on wider plans for the site. The community representatives are also looking to establish a Development Trust to manage the site in future, and to explore the potential for water sports to be a key feature on the site. The developer's housing development is currently going through the planning process.

PETERHEAD

SeaFest – One of the local regeneration initiatives our Peterhead *Alliance for Action* Facilitator helps to manage is Seafest Peterhead.

This is a major North East Seafood Festival, most recently held in Peterhead Harbour on Saturday 9 September 2023. The event could not have happened at significant scale without SURF's support, as our local *Alliance for Action* Facilitator Linda Hendry convened the SeaFest Peterhead steering group, featuring representatives from the community, businesses, stakeholders and public partners, and dealt with funders, suppliers and contracts.

The free-to-attend event, promoted to tourists and families, celebrates Peterhead's port industries and fishing heritage. The 2023 iteration included a busy seafood market, live and interactive cooking demonstrations, local celebrity appearances, live music, children's activities, educational exhibits, product showcases, seafood tastings and beverage sample stalls by local and regional food and drink producers, and information and engagement stalls from community and voluntary groups.

The event, pictured overleaf, was a big success, attracting hundreds of visitors and generating positive outcomes for industry, tourism, community engagement and heritage. It was highlighted in local and national media.

The steering group remains in place and plans are underway to repeat the event biennially.





Clockwise from top left – Seafest Peterhead featured exhibitors, a food market and live demonstrations and more; it attracted hundreds of visitors to Peterhead Harbour and waterfront; SURF managed multiple 'Peterhead 2040' consultation events for community and voluntary sector leaders in the town and wider region.

Additional activities delivered by our Peterhead Facilitator in 2023/24 include:

- **Town Board** – Supporting the creation of a Town Board with Aberdeenshire Council, which will oversee a planned £20m UK Government regeneration investment in Peterhead over the next ten years;
- **Peterhead Together for Good** – Helping an emerging group to establish itself as an umbrella body for community led activity in the town centre;

- **Peterhead Area Community Trust** – Capacity building and project support for the community group, which manages a park and green space in the town centre, and have wider plans. With SURF’s support, the Trust secured funding for a Pump Track construction, and applied for separate funding to create a Multi Use Games Area in the town centre;
- **Peterhead Development Partnership** – Contributing to the work programme and project planning of an Aberdeenshire Council led forum, which is managing a number of initiatives aimed at bringing vacant buildings back into use. The Partnership is undertaking a major “Peterhead 2040” strategic plan, which SURF is managing consultation elements of, including and public events;
- **Men’s United** – Business plan and premise development support for the social regeneration charity, which is creating a free gym for service users;
- **Peterhead Sailing Club** – Supporting a Coastal Communities Fund feasibility study and project plan to maximise the potential for the club to expand their current offering for community and event activity;
- **Poverty Hub** – Working with Aberdeen Foyer and other players to create a service hub, with priority plans to raise awareness of food banks, healthy eating workshops and growing spaces;
- **Social Enterprise Development** – Engaging with social enterprise support agency CEIS, who have offered pro bono assistance to several local enterprises and initiatives;
- **SSE Thermal Communities Fund** – Engaging with local groups to promote consultation and emerging funding opportunities as part of a new programme provided by the energy company for community benefits.

Further information on SURF’s Alliance for Action programme is available on our website:

<https://surf.scot/programme/alliance-for-action/>

End of report

Derek Rankine, SURF Policy Manager, May 2024

SURF – Scotland’s Regeneration Forum

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