



SURF ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

**This report summarises SURF's
activities and operations over the
financial year ending 31 March 2024**

For the general interest of SURF members and other stakeholders

1 Activity, Outputs and Outcomes

A brief summary of the main activities over 2023/24 follows:

2023 SURF Awards: The 25th anniversary SURF Awards process launched for applications on 8 June 2022, via a celebratory launch event in Glasgow featuring previous winners and long-standing partners.

The timescale followed the standard process, with a June opening of the applications window, an early September closing date, assessments, shortlisting and site visits in September and October, and a Presentation Dinner in early December.



Creative Scotland's Karen Dick speaking at the SURF Awards launch event

The 2023 SURF Awards attracted 96 applications across the five categories. This is significantly above the target of 50 applications – a result of extensive cross-sector and cross-platform promotional activity by Emma Scott.

A panel of 15 judges then shortlisted three applications in each of the five categories, making site visits to 14 (plus one virtual visit necessitated by bad weather in Aberdeen), before agreeing on category winners. The SURF Awards process concluded with a successful Presentation Dinner on 7 December 2023.

The projects listed below were announced as winners by (then) Scottish Government Minister Joe Fitzpatrick.

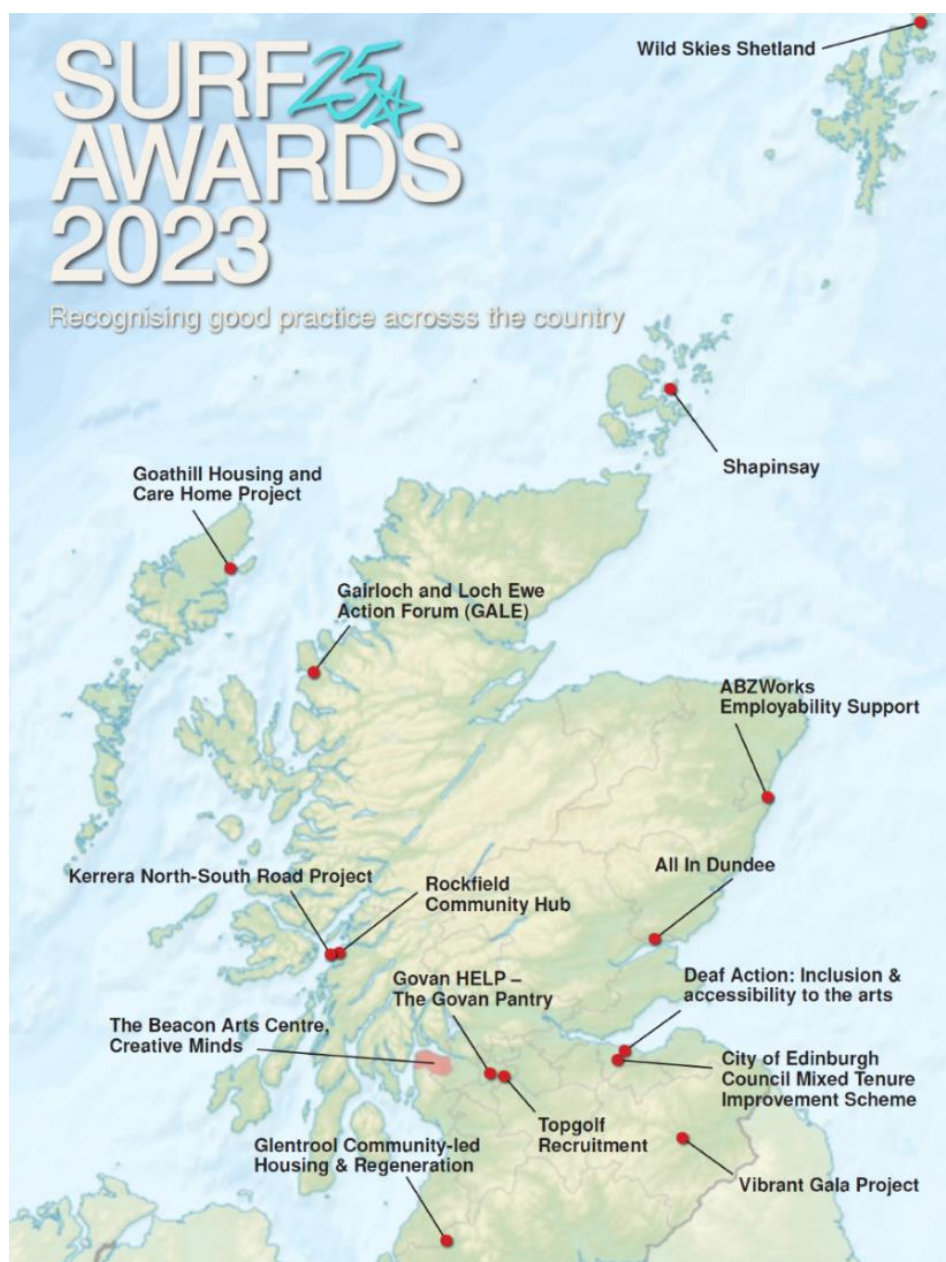
Community Led Regeneration: Govan HELP: The Govan Pantry – supporting people experiencing food poverty in Govan, Glasgow, while providing training, volunteering and employability opportunities.

Creative Regeneration: Wild Skies Shetland – encouraging Unst locals and visitors to appreciate beautiful and dramatic skies while helping to improve the economic outlook for one of Shetland's poorer island communities.

Housing and Regeneration: Goathill Housing and Care Home Project – an ambitious Isle of Lewis initiative to meet the varied needs of the local population, featuring a 52 bed residential care home, 50 housing units with extra care provision, 58 homes for social rent, and 16 homes for sale through a shared equity scheme.

Improving Scotland's Places: Vibrant Gala Project – recognising the impactful work of Energise Galashiels Trust, a community led organisation that was established to arrest town centre decline in Galashiels and create a more vibrant and welcoming community.

Removing Barriers to Employability: ABZWorks Employability Support – working across Aberdeen, ABZWorks provides a comprehensive and highly effective employability service for care experienced young people.



Judges visited shortlisted projects from Galloway & the Borders to Lewis & Shetland

A capacity 280 bookings (a previous 300-capacity event proved too cramped) were received for the successful Presentation Dinner event in Glasgow's Grand Central Hotel.

A [SURF Awards 2023 publication](#), profiling all 15 shortlisted initiatives in addition to updates from last year's five winners and full context on the process, was produced in print and electronic format. This was accompanied by healthy coverage of the outcomes in the sector, and on social media, local/regional media, and in Parliamentary Motions by constituency MSPs.

For more on the 2023 SURF Awards process, please visit:
<https://surf.scot/surf-awards/surf-awards-2023/>



The 2023 SURF Award outcomes were revealed at a packed Presentation Dinner in Glasgow

Alliance for Action: SURF renewed its *Alliance for Action* initiative, following a 2022/23 exit strategy in Langholm, and an evaluation survey that demonstrated that the programme met its local objective of strengthening local regeneration activity and outcomes. In 2023/24, two new places were introduced to the programme – Girvan and Peterhead – and we continued to support two long-standing programme places – Dunoon and Govan.

We produced a **research report** on [learning outcomes from the Alliance for Action programme](#) in 2023/24, highlighting the much-needed value of resourcing skilled local intermediaries to help deliver sustainable community regeneration approaches in places with social and economic challenges, and featuring case studies of key local projects supported through the programme.

In Peterhead, SURF's part-time Local Facilitator, Linda Hendry, delivers project support functions in collaboration with local community groups, charities, public agencies and businesses including the community led regeneration vehicles Peterhead Area Community Trust and Peterhead Together for Good, and Peterhead Development Partnership, an Aberdeenshire Council led forum, which is managing a number of initiatives aimed at bringing vacant buildings back into use.

SURF accepted a partnership delivery role in “Peterhead 2040”, a wide-ranging strategic plan being developed collaboratively by Aberdeenshire Council on four themes including town centre regeneration and enhanced connection to the hinterland. SURF delivered two consultation events in Peterhead in January 2024 to learn more what leading community and voluntary sector figures wish to see prioritised in the new plan, and provided a formal report to the Council.

Notably, Linda coordinated Seafest Peterhead, a major North East Seafood Festival held in Peterhead Harbour on Saturday 9 September 2023.

Linda’s other engagements and activities include: working with Aberdeen Foyer and other players to create a Poverty Hub, with priority plans to raise awareness of food banks, healthy eating workshops and growing spaces; a “Parking Buddies” project to respond to community demands for improved road safety around schools and nurseries; project support for community led park and green space in the town centre, and a prospective community asset transfer for an historic town centre church; and a plan to rehabilitate the Lido in Peterhead for community and event activity.



SURF managed a set of Peterhead 2040 consultation events in the football stadium

In Girvan, SURF’s part-time Local Facilitator, Zanne Domoney-Lyttle, progressed from community consultation and networking into practical project support delivery for a wide range of community led projects and South Ayrshire Council partnership activity.



Zanne (left) & Derek with Glendoune Community Association

Two projects are receiving particularly high levels of attention and support from Zanne and have developed significant momentum. They are:

Bandstand Project – Zanne facilitates steering group meetings for a community led project to restore derelict Girvan Bandstand into a community café and

events hub with facilities for outdoor and sea activities. Zanne has liaised with prospective designers and with the South Ayrshire Council Community Wealth Building Team on the production of initial concept designs, currently under consideration by the steering group. Zanne has also produced an Architectural Heritage Fund application and a communications plan, liaised

with legal representatives of the Council with regards to purchase of building, and started a pre-planning application.

AYE Hub (Accessibility Yields Empowerment) – a new community led project to take over old library premises on a long-term lease and create a family hub with playcare facilities, pre- and after-school clubs, workshops on children’s rights, a food pantry, and other services. Among other support activities, Zanne has met with Council officers and elected members on potential leasing arrangements, helped the community members involved to make a charitable application, and met with the project manager regularly to help develop project workstreams, and requests for funding and partnership support.

In addition, and among others, Zanne is assisting with a new Community Growing Project, a community theatre initiative in Girvan Academy, a Community Rail Partnership to run a social enterprise coffee kiosk in the train station, an Affordable Accommodation initiative targeted at empty buildings, support for the development of Glendoune Community Association, which serves the town’s most deprived neighbourhood, and to re-establish Stumpy Jail as a heritage attraction.

SURF continues to support **Dunoon** Community Development Trust to progress Alliance for Action project delivery support functions. Ann Campbell, previously SURF’s Alliance for Action Facilitator, is the Trust’s full-time Partnership and Development Manager. Ann is supported by two part-time staff, and recent attention has been given to establishing appropriate governance policies and working practices for the new entity.

Ongoing project support in Dunoon includes: expansion of the Dunoon Bothy and Cycling Project and the Grow Food, Grow Dunoon community growing space; maintenance and development of the ‘What’s On Dunoon’ events hub and ‘Dunoon Forward’ app; business support activity including Dunoon and Cowal Co-works (support and monthly meetups for people working from home) and assistance for new-start businesses and social enterprises; and the physical regeneration of West Bay, informed a Local Place Planning process.

In **Govan**, we continue to track local regeneration activity progress in liaison with Central Govan Action Plan. SURF’s Emma Scott sits on and attends Steering Group Meetings, and coordinates response to requests for advice and support from various stakeholders.

Local regeneration focus presently centres on construction of a new Govan-Partick bridge, which is on course to open in summer 2024, a linked mixed use development, and development and heritage plans for two long-vacant sites: the Graving Docks site and Lyceum Theatre.

Learning outcomes from all Alliance for Action activity are promoted via various channels and stakeholder communications.

Concurrent to local progress and development, we also continued to support the **SURF’s Heritage and Creativity Alliance** (SH&CA) initiative. SH&CA formally engages 10 national heritage and arts agencies who are keen to explore the potential benefits of improved collaborative working in the context of *Alliance for Action* learning outcomes.

More at: www.surf.scot/alliance-for-action/

People in Place Practice Network: SURF's Practice Network is open to practitioners with an interest in the delivery of place-based regeneration in areas with deprivation challenges, including the concepts of the place principle, community wealth building and 20 minute neighbourhoods/living well locally.

The network size is currently 433, with a combined 456 attending six network meetings in 2023/24.

Five meetings were held online, and one was delivered in Edinburgh in partnership with Public Health Scotland. This gathering drew out Practice Network views on the Place Standard Tool in order to inform and influence the 2024-28 Place Standard Delivery Plan.

The event format included World café discussions facilitated by SURF and Public Health Scotland staff, background and updates from the Public Health Scotland Delivery team, and presentations on training and collaboration opportunities.

We held a further five network meetings online, featuring guest experts from national and local government, academia, charities and community groups, with average attendances exceeding 50. Topics covered in the online meetings were green infrastructure masterplanning, living well locally case studies, 20 minute neighbourhood research, guidance and assessment tools, local place plans, and the practical application of community wealth building principles.

The Scottish Government funds the Practice Network, which developed in 2023/24 from a previous iteration focused only on the 20 minute neighbourhood concept. Along with the SURF Awards and Alliance for Action, it continues to receive Scottish Government support in 2024/25.

More information, including digital event recordings and presentation slides, are available at: <https://surf.scot/programme/people-in-place/>

2023 SURF Annual Conference: Our Annual Conference took place on Thursday 31 August in Kilmarnock's CentreStage, with a capacity of 128 guests in attendance.

Entitled, 'Community Growing – entering un-chart-ed territory', the Annual Conference explored ambitions for community food growing to contribute to national improvements in health, wealth and the environment, including through the 2022 Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act.

A waiting list was in operation for the popular event. Key contributors included then Scottish Government Minister Joe Fitzpatrick MSP, academic expert Mary Brennan, Karen Davidson and Lou Evans from Get Growing Scotland, Jill Muirie of Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Greig Robertson from Edible Estates, and storyteller Daniel Serridge.



120 guests attended SURF's 2023 Annual Conference in Kilmarnock



Following the event, the SURF Chief Executive [published a summary](#) that elaborated on SURF's interest in the topic, while the Policy Manager [contributed a blog piece](#) identifying policy outcomes from the Annual Conference:

In addition, a selection of speakers and guests are sharing blogs on their own perspectives in the SURF website's ["News and Views" section](#).

Presentation slides and programme details are available on the website:

<https://surf.scot/event/2023-surf-annual-conference-community-growing-entering-un-chard-ed-territory/>

Place-based Programme Exchange Group: In partnership with the Corra Foundation, we co-convened four quarterly meetings of the Place-based Programme Exchange Group, now comprising 12 member bodies.

These sessions are helpful in sharing developments and learning outcomes on various national place-based programmes, including the Alliance for Action, and wider policy and practice developments.

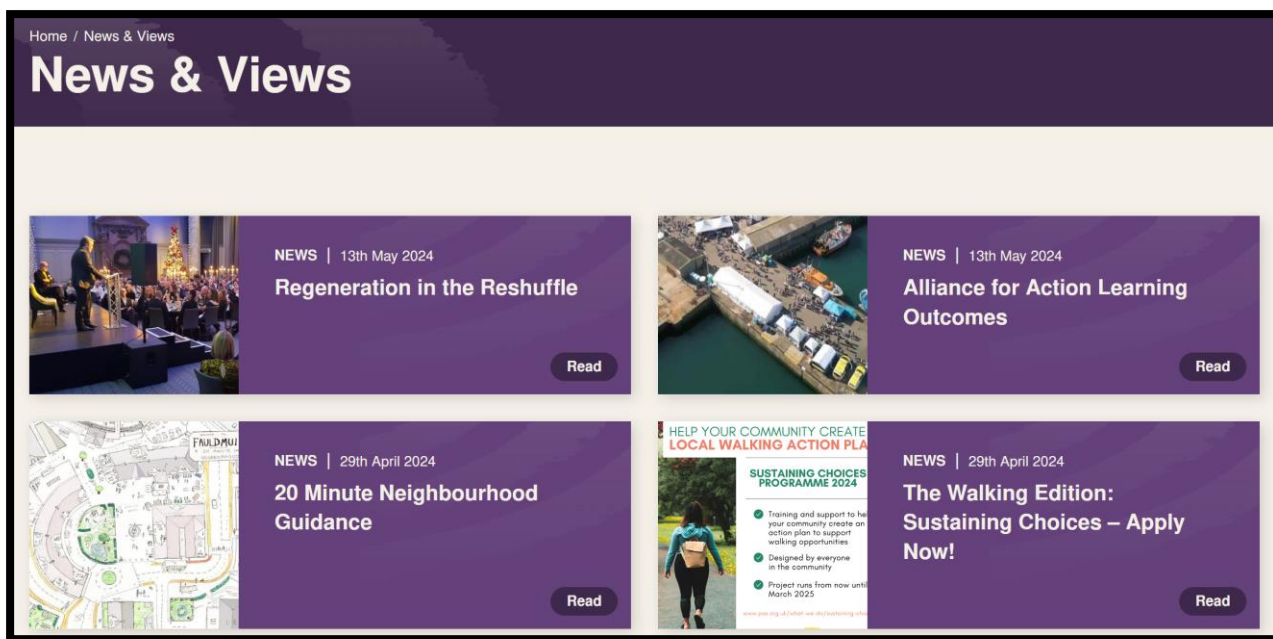
For more, visit: www.surf.scot/working-better-together-in-place/

Presentations and Profile: SURF's role and reputation has been further enhanced by the delivery of keynote presentations and networking at regeneration-related conferences and gatherings throughout 2023/24. A list of engagements is provided to Trustees in each quarterly staff team report.

Study Visits: SURF hosted several study visits in Govan, introducing partners, funders and researchers to a live case study of extensive physical, social and economic regeneration plans

being implemented in a multiply deprived place. The biggest study visit was hosting 25 students from various Colleges & Universities Minnesota and Wisconsin in December 2023, who were in Scotland as part of a three-month study programme funded by a bursary managed by the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Website – Design company Infinite Eye were commissioned following a tendering process to develop a new SURF website and delivery of associated branding and communications services. Working closely with Euan and Emma, and with some feedback sought from Trustees, several design iterations were produced prior to launch of the new website, and rebranding of all SURF communications, in May 2023.



SURF's new website features regular news items and guest blogs

Participation:

Event attendances across 2023/24 are as follows:

- People in Practice Network Meetings (six events) – 456
- 2022 SURF Awards Workshop Series (four events) – 262
- 2023 Annual Conference – 128
- 2023 SURF Awards Launch Event - 43
- 2023 SURF Awards Presentation Dinner – 280
- Democracy Matters & Just Transition Policy Consultations (three events) – 55
- Peterhead 2040 Consultations (two events) – 30

This comprises a total of 1254 event participants in 2023/24, counting physical and digital event attendees. This is a rise of 12% compared with 1123 participants in 2022/23.

2 INFLUENCING POLICY

One of SURF's functions is utilising the knowledge, experience and views of its members to inform positive developments in regeneration policy. Selected policy influencing activities in 2023/24 are:

20 Minute Neighbourhoods / Living Well Locally: SURF responded to a consultation on draft planning guidance to support aspirations for local living and the creation of more 20 minute neighbourhoods across Scotland.

Community Wealth Building: SURF responded to a Scottish Government consultation on Community Wealth Building. SURF provided feedback on legislative options for implementing the new approach to establishing more sustainable local economies, and drew attention to wider barriers around implementation, based on the outcomes of several SURF events.

Covid-19 Inquiry: The key outcomes of SURF's 'Lessons from the Frontline' research report was shared with the Inquiry team in an evidence session. SURF's research is based on more than 150 reports of SURF member organisation experiences in supporting communities during 2020/21 lockdown period.

Cross Party Groups: SURF is a member of three Cross Party Groups: Architecture & Built Environment, Poverty, and Towns & Town Centres. SURF contributed to meetings of all three during sessions in 2023/24, drawing attention to relevant SURF policy positions.

Culture: SURF responded to the Scottish Government's Culture Strategy Consultation. SURF's response included a comment on the Scottish Government's vision and highlighted the value of further promotion of more mutually beneficial links between the culture, heritage and place-based regeneration policy agendas. It also argued for more effort in improving the capacity of socially and economically challenged places to engage meaningfully with cultural assets and opportunities. These themes were also explored at a number of SURF events focused on culture and regeneration.

Food Policy: SURF participated in the Scottish Government's consultation on the first proposed iteration of a National Good Food Nation Plan. Drawing on policy outcomes from our 2023 Annual Conference, we argued the Plan should adopt a commitment to significantly increase the number of community growing spaces across Scotland.

Investment Panels: SURF representatives (the Chief Executive and two Trustees) sit on three national funding panels, and participate in decision-making investments around place-based regeneration. These are the Investing in Communities Fund, the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund, and the Vacant and Derelict Land Fund.

Just Transition: SURF participated in an early Scottish Government engagement process to inform new planning and strategy towards a Just Transition in Climate Change. The relevant Directorate contacted SURF to learn more from our network, and those of other selected national bodies, about how climate change, poverty and inequality can be addressed simultaneously through actions in the spheres of the built environment, transport and land use.

We held a dedicated consultation event for our members in July, with 24 attendees, and fed the outcomes into a report and an evidence session.

Local Democracy: SURF organised two consultation events – one for SURF members, attracting 25 participants, and a second for groups in the Place-based Programme Exchange Group – on the second phase of the Scottish Government’s consultation on local governance. We provided a formal submission covering themes around community empowerment and place-based regeneration, including community powers, representation and accountability, setting boundaries, and resources & relationships. The Scottish Government team collecting responses, shared that SURF’s was one of the most in-depth received.

Ministerial Engagements: The SURF Chief Executive hosted quarterly video meetings with the two Ministers that held key regeneration responsibilities in their portfolios in 2023/24: two with Tom Arthur, and two with Joe Fitzpatrick. These meetings, also attended by senior civil servants, were used to discuss emerging policy developments, and share reports and learning outcomes from SURF activities. They were registered in the Scottish Lobbying Register. Joe Fitzpatrick spoke at the SURF Annual Conference and SURF Awards Dinner.

Scottish Parliament Participation and Communities Team, and Scottish Government Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee: SURF contributed to the work programmes of both the Team and Committee by providing advice on community outreach events, suggesting areas of inquiry, attending and contributing to events, and sharing opportunities for members to get involved with specific activities.

Planning: SURF responded to a Scottish Government consultation on the quality of draft guidance for planning authorities and community groups. The purpose of the guidance is to improve community engagement in the production of local development plans, which cover local authority regions and national parks. In addition, we took part in a Scottish Government review of permitted development rights, and shared a targeted request concerning low-income households in world heritage sites

Policy Committees: SURF attended regular meetings of the SCVO Policy Network, Prosper (formerly SCDI) Policy Committee and the Poverty Alliance Policy Forum, utilising opportunities to further engage with policy-makers and to promote SURF network views in their policy influencing activities.

Profile: We commissioned Ipsos Mori, to undertake a fieldwork survey of current MSPs, following up on a baseline study in 2021/22. The purpose is to learn more about their awareness of SURF and knowledge of its activities. The results were similar to 2021, with a 5% rise in MSPs who have heard of SURF, but a 5% fall in those who held a favourable view of SURF work (see snippet below).

<p>1. Familiarity</p> <p>Most (80%) MSPs had heard of SURF – Scotland’s Regeneration Forum (compared with 75% in 2021*) and 15% said they knew at least a fair amount (22% in 2021).</p> <p>Awareness was higher among Government members – 20% knew at least a fair amount, compared with 8% of Opposition members.</p>	<p>2. Favourability</p> <p>A third (34%) held a favourable view of SURF (compared with 39% in 2021). More than half (63%) had a neutral view and no MSPs viewed the organisation unfavourably.</p>	<p>3. Advocacy</p> <p>A quarter of MSPs said they would speak highly of SURF (25%, similar to 23% in 2021), 72% said they would be neutral, and none critical.</p>
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In addition to MSP engagement activities described elsewhere, SURF involves MSPs in the SURF Awards, by inviting Constituency MSPs to raise Motions in Parliament when a local project is shortlisted for a SURF Award, with a very high acceptance rate.

Wellbeing and Sustainable Development: SURF submitted evidence to inform the development of this new Scottish Government Bill, which is intended to ensure that decision-making processes in the public sector do more to increase the wellbeing of Scotland’s current population and future generations.

SURF consultation response papers are available online at: www.surf.scot/consultations

3 Website, E-bulletin and Social Media Development

SURF E-bulletin

Each month, SURF distributes an e-bulletin featuring information on upcoming SURF events, SURF Awards and Alliance for Action developments, new website content and publications, opportunities to get involved in SURF network consultations, and general regeneration policy and practice news including dedicated sections on funding, external events, consultations training and vacancies.

SURF's April e-bulletin: All the latest news

Hello Derek. Welcome to the April e-bulletin. We hope you will: attend the **SURF Award Shared Learning Workshops**; read **SURF's response to the Good Food Nation consultation**; have a look at **SURF's views on new 20 Minute Neighbourhood guidance**; find out more about **the 2024 SURF Awards process at the Launch Event**; consider **joining SURF as a member in 2024**; and keep up-to-date with the **latest news & events** in Scottish community regeneration.

Shared Learning



The **SURF Award Shared Learning Workshops** are now open for bookings.

These will be in-person events held throughout May in Glasgow City Centre, Edinburgh and Kinning Park.

There are 4 workshops covering the themes of:

- [Employability](#) (2nd May)
- [Housing and Regeneration](#) (9th May)

SURF's busy monthly ebulletin has a circulation exceeding 2200

E-bulletins are circulated to more than 2,200 SURF contacts, and are also available to view via SURF's social media channels and website.

Busy monthly e-bulletins were distributed over the quarter and were complemented by one-off bulletins promoting the SURF Awards application window, opening of registrations for key events, and member invitations to our consultation events.

See our Mailchimp e-bulletin archive at the following link: <https://us10.campaign-archive.com/home/?u=e89ac2b1e78d983ceb2a92ad8&id=5926fd9106>

SURF Website

One year on from its 2023 redevelopment, SURF's new website is regularly updated with news items, guest blogs, SURF reports and information on forthcoming events.

In 2023/24, statistical reports show consistency in attracting around 2000 unique visitors per month, spiking when SURF's e-bulletin distribution encourages click-throughs to news and events items, journal features, and publication downloads.

Social Media

SURF is active in several social media channels including X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, Facebook, and YouTube. We have 4112 followers on X – a growth of 180 since March 2023 – and encourage 'live tweeting' from our events via dedicated hashtags.

We sent at least 50 tweets a month in 2023/24, promoting information on SURF activities and Scottish regeneration-related news, events and policy developments.

4 SURF Membership

As of 15 May 2024, SURF has 316 members:

- Sponsors – 5
- General Members – 101 – *of which:*
 - *Public Sector – 21*
 - *Private Sector – 18*
 - *Third Sector – 62*
- Community Groups - 66
- Housing Associations – 86
- Individuals – 43
- Students – 4
- Mutual Members – 11

While there has been a fall of 21 members, or 6%, since the previous year (then total:337), SURF has retained healthy organisational numbers across sectors despite budgetary pressures on all types of organisation.

As of 15 May 2024, the five sponsors are:

- Creative Scotland
- Historic Environment Scotland
- Museums Galleries Scotland
- Scottish Government
- Wheatley Group

The 2024 membership list is available on our website at: www.surf.scot/our-members/

5 Board and Staff Team

Board of Directors

As of 31 March 2024, the SURF Board comprised 11 individuals:

- **Jamie Baker**
- Laura Black
- **Maggie Broadley**
- Hazel Cross
- Diane Gray (Vice Chair)
- **Francesca Lynch**
- Brian MacDonald (Chair)
- **Eugene Mullan**
- Andrew Ormston
- Iain Wardrop
- Kate Wimpres

Those **highlighted in green** were recruited during an Autumn 2023 recruitment process, and selected from 12 strong applicants.

There were two resignations in 2023/24: Mariarose Ngosi and Ian Wall

Staff Team

SURF's directly employed staff team over 2023/24 was as follows:

- Chief Executive – Euan Leitch (full time)
- Policy Manager – Derek Rankine (full time)
- Information, Communications and Events Manager – Emma Scott (full time)
- Financial Administrator – Alison Boyd (1 day/week)
- Peterhead Facilitator – Linda Hendry (2 days/week)
- Girvan Facilitator – Zanne Domoney-Lyttle (2.5 days/week)

6 Looking Forward

A strategic planning session of the SURF Board of Trustees in mid-2024 will inform the development of a new Business Plan, and SURF's activities and operations beyond the end of March 2026.

SURF will continue to incrementally improve the quality of its services and outputs over 2024-2026, working to an operating plan and budget centred on membership services, an Annual Conference, policy influencing and three key projects: the Alliance for Action, SURF Awards and People in Place Practice Network.

A forthcoming Expert Advisory Group will complement existing support from the Board of Trustees for the staff team and the delivery of SURF services in 2024/25.

[END OF ANNUAL REPORT]

Euan Leitch & Derek Rankine, 20 May 2023

SURF – Scotland's Regeneration Forum

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