



# THE SURF AWARDS: LEARNING FROM SUCCESS

*An outcomes report from a series of SURF workshops in 2024*

SURF and the Scottish Government deliver the annual SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration to identify and share examples of high impact in addressing social and economic problems in Scottish places.

In May of 2024, SURF arranged a series of in-person shared learning workshop events with representatives of the from the [2023 process](#). The goal of these events was to explore, in some depth, what transferable lessons these projects can offer to regeneration practitioners working in other sectors and geographies.

This report presents a summary of the main outcomes from the four online SURF Awards workshop events, and their respective themes:

- Removing Barriers to Employability;
- Effective approaches to housing led regeneration;
- Delivering place-based regeneration initiatives; and
- Using creativity in regeneration.

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## Introduction

The annual SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration process is widely recognised as being the most prestigious awards in the broad regeneration scene in Scotland.

The purpose of the SURF Awards process is:

- To recognise and reward best practice;
- To promote and disseminate best practice across Scotland as means of sharing knowledge and experience and enhancing policy and practice;
- To highlight the role that regeneration projects and initiatives have in improving the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

2023 was the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the SURF Awards, and the 20<sup>th</sup> year that it has been delivered in partnership with the Scottish Government. Nominations to the 2023 SURF Awards were assessed by an independent panel of 15 expert judges drawn from national regeneration related organisations and community groups in Scotland. Working in teams, the judging panel members agreed category shortlists, made site visits to these shortlisted projects, and collaboratively selected winning projects.

The five category winning projects for the 2023 SURF Awards were:

- **Creative Regeneration:** [Wild Skies Shetland](#)
- **Removing Barriers to Employability:** [ABZWorks Employability Support](#)
- **Community Led Regeneration:** [Govan HELP – The Govan Pantry](#)
- **Improving Scotland’s Places:** [Vibrant Gala Project](#)
- **Housing and Regeneration:** [Goathill Housing and Care Home Project](#)

These winning projects were announced at a SURF Awards Presentation Dinner event in the Voco Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow on the 7<sup>th</sup> December. SURF invited colleagues in all five winning projects to participate in a series of SURF Awards shared learning workshop events with regeneration practitioners from the SURF network.

The events were designed to explore and highlight the main factors that led to the success of the 2023 SURF Award winning initiatives that could potentially help initiatives in other contexts and places.

The following sections of this report highlight the main areas of discussion and outcomes from the following three themed events in the series:

- **Removing barriers to employability** with ABZWorks Employability Support, All In Dundee, Topgolf Recruitment, Institute of Employability Professionals, and Scottish Government. Held on 2 May 2024 in the Glasgow Women’s Library.
- **Effective approaches to housing led regeneration** with Goathill Housing and Care Home Project, City of Edinburgh Council Mixed Tenure Improvement Scheme, Glentroot Community-Led Housing & Regeneration, Scottish Procurement Alliance, and Scottish Federation of Housing Associations. Held on 9 May 2024 in the Grassmarket Community Project, Edinburgh.
- **Delivering place-based regeneration initiatives** with Vibrant Gala Project, Govan HELP – The Govan Pantry, Scottish Government, Scotland’s Towns Partnership, and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Held on 16 May 2024 in the Kinning Park Complex, Glasgow.
- **Using creativity in regeneration** with Wild Skies Shetland, Deaf Action: Inclusion & Accessibility to the Arts, Beacon Arts Centre Creative Minds, Creative Scotland, and Creative Lives. Held on 23 May 2024 in Civic House, Glasgow.

SURF is grateful to the Scottish Government for supporting the SURF Awards process, including these workshop events. The 2023 SURF Awards process also benefited from the support of the following additional partners in the delivery of thematic categories: [Architecture & Design Scotland](#), [Creative Scotland](#), [Highlands & Islands Enterprise](#), [Institute of Employability Professionals](#), [Scotland’s Towns Partnership](#) and [Scottish Procurement Alliance](#).

# Transferable Lessons

## 1) Removing barriers to employability

With introductory presentations from SURF Award winning and shortlisted projects:

ABZWorks Employability Support, All In Dundee, Topgolf Recruitment.

Additional presentations were provided by SURF Award partner the Institute of Employability Professionals (who joined virtually) and the Scottish Government.

### About the event

The first workshop in the series highlighted the 2023 SURF Award Winner and Highly Commended projects in the 'Removing Barriers to Employability' category.

The projects featured are all using techniques to support dis-engaged people into employment, training and further education.

### First Presentation Summary: [ABZWorks Employability Support](#)

*Presenter: Lori Leslie, Senior Project Officer, Aberdeen City Council*

ABZWorks is delivered by Aberdeen City Council. The ABZ brand covers all employability services provided by the Council but this specific programme is focussed on care experienced young people. This refers to looked after children who are those in the care of the local authority, as defined by the [Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995](#). This also includes those in:

- Residential Care
- Foster Care
- Kinship Care
- Looked After at Home
- Prospective Adopters

Being care experienced means you will have been looked after at some point in your life. Children and young people who are care experienced have the poorest outcomes of all children and young people in Scotland, statistically.

Evidence shows that care experienced young people are more at risk of experiencing homelessness, engaging in risky behaviours and offending, and are more likely to have experienced trauma and adverse childhood experiences, which can impact their development and their lifelong mental health. Care experienced young people can face a broad range of barriers and without family support and guidance, or indeed ongoing family issues, can feel overwhelming. The Council deem it to be their duty as a corporate parent to provide opportunities and moral duty.

The programme has buy-in from both the [Community Planning Partnership](#) and the [Local Employability Partnership](#). There has been a small improvement on outcome statistics but there is still a distinct gap between care experienced young people and the wider group.

Moving to adulthood care experienced young people are still more likely to experience poor outcomes due to complex issues. For example, not having ID as they don't know their family name to get a birth certificate or their birth certificate has been lost due to moving through the system.

The programme initially began with the Community Planning Partnership's [Aberdeen Local Outcome Improvement Plan](#). They supported 15 care experienced young people to progress into employment through public sector funded employability programmes by 2023.

The [Guaranteed Interview Scheme](#), set up in Aberdeen City Council, allows a person to indicate that they are care experienced and meet the minimum criteria for a role, and therefore be guaranteed an interview.

The team set about building stronger links between the teams that support care experienced young people within the Council, this included education, social work and employability. It became apparent that the social workers were acting as gatekeepers to the young people and trying to deliver everything, including employability. They had to build trust and relationships, through open conversation and information sessions, to take on some of the burden. This resulted in enhanced collaboration, trust, a shared purpose and vision, and increased opportunities for the young people. The social work team became ambassadors for ABZWorks.



The team commissioned an employability training course, delivered by third sector partner [WorkingRite](#).

This programme adopts a [No One Left Behind](#)

approach. The RiteWorks programme provides employability support to care experienced young people in Aberdeen, in partnership with ABZWorks. It adopts a relationship based approach meaning that more time is given to create and foster a relationship with each individual, which is vital to build rapport and trust.

The programme utilises bespoke delivery so that each young person is met on a 1 to 1 basis, and the project is tailored to them. The young people oversee their own journey, WorkingRite are there to support. RiteWorks has been delivered in every care home in Aberdeen, and partnerships have been built with Aberdeen City Council, Action for Children and Barnardo's. 38 care experienced young people have gone through the programme in Aberdeen in 3.5 years.

In developing future services, a pilot programme offered a session at a well-known and trusted venue to discuss what the service would look like and provide. The team then moved to an entire consultation, meaning that young people essentially designed their own programme based on their ideas, experiences and needs. Together they considered various employability activities to help them decide what they wanted to include, how many weeks the project should run for, the frequency, and how many activities should be included each week.

Over nine weeks the programme:

- Ran CV building, job searching, interviews skills, mock interviews, job application support, confidence building, and certificated Emergency First Aid training sessions.
- Arranged hotel work experience to find out about different jobs.
- Visited an NHS hub to look at career opportunities.
- Met with an SDS careers adviser who ran a session offering careers advice.
- Were visited by North East Scotland College (NESCol) to explore opportunities, courses, and support available.
- Celebrated with an afternoon of 10-pin bowling and other activities at the Codona's fun fair and arcade.

10 young people were referred to the programme and achieved the following:

- 6 young people engaged with the project, 4 never engaged
- 1 participant went into employment
- 1 participant was accepted onto a college course

- 1 participant applied to college, waiting to hear back
- 2 participants are receiving ongoing ABZWorks employability support
- 1 participant left due to life events, but continues to engage with a keyworker

All participants showed improvement and progression overall and the team received great feedback, with a theme emerging that the young people were delighted to have been involved in the co-design and to see what was agreed actually be delivered, as there is a feeling of consultation fatigue with care experienced young people. They feel that they contribute but don't actually see an end result. This process helped to build trust.

Aberdeen City Council is a large employer and a corporate parent. The team used employability funding, including [Kickstart](#) and a scheme for long-term unemployed, to create paid work experience placements within the authority in roles the young people were interested in, such as social media and communications, and identified supportive managers and buddies for them. These young people were provided with 12-week paid internships, paid at Real Living Wage rate, and on incrementally increasing hours. Support to remove financial barriers to employment were provided, this included utilising the [Aberdeen Gift Card](#).

Lori mentioned a case study of a girl who had gone through the Kickstart supported programme. At first she didn't see herself fitting into a corporate environment but the programme changed her life and perception. Another young person supported through the employability service went on to win an Intern of the Year award.

A final case study referred to a young mum who was referred with low self-esteem and childcare issues. They linked her with a role in the catering department at her son's school.

From 34 referrals, 10 young people progressed into an internship and following this:

- 3 into employment (care sector and catering)
- 3 into Modern Apprenticeships (roads and early learning & childcare)
- 1 young person progressed into college (social work)
- 2 young people continue to engage with a keyworker
- 1 young person disengaged

The progression rate is not great at around 1 in 3 progressing from referral to intern. This will be covered within the challenges.

## **Challenges**

There are challenges around engagement. This group have increased barriers against them being able to engage and also lead hectic lifestyles. Perseverance and word of mouth help to build trust. The door never closes and the young person can always come back.

Open and honest communication around appropriateness of referrals from social work is needed. Some young people are just not ready. You need to manage expectations and have realistic conversations.

Trust is so important and they have to take the time to invest in building that trust as it is core. It is about doing what you say you will, communicating and persevering.

The funding landscape is precarious with annual funding risking continuity of service. It can feel like a cliff edge.

## Successes

The main success is that young people with complex barriers are being supported into fantastic outcomes. Trust has been developed amongst the young people, who are now promoting the service via word of mouth and are becoming ambassadors.

They have developed stronger working relationships and trust between services like social work and employability partners. They hope to inspire other organisations to look at how they work.

The service has provided an opportunity for the Council to demonstrate their efforts to be a good corporate parent, and as an employer they are attracting fresh talent and perspective to the organisation.

## Policy

The service is mainly funded through No One Left Behind and embodies those principles, such as treating everyone with dignity and respect.

Care leavers also appear within the text relating to the [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#) and there is legislation around corporate parenting included within [The Promise](#).

Lori concluded with a final case study describing a young person who had written and performed a rap at a local event about his experiences. It was [filmed for YouTube](#).

[View presentation slides](#)

## Second Presentation Summary: [All in Dundee](#)

*Presenter: Gemma Falconer, Operations Manager, Enable Works*

The programme is led by Enable Works, part of the Enable parent organisation. Enable's mission is driven by a vision of an equal society where people have the right to live, work and participate as active and respected citizens in the communities of their choice, and to build inclusive communities. Their work is guided by 5 values; Equity, Ambition, Challenge, Integrity, and Impact, and their services are led by these values and delivered to contribute to the vision.

Enable Works commitment to equity, inclusion and fair work for disabled people underpins the services they design and deliver. The 'All In' model is designed with Enable's values and vision in mind, and the partnership model helps to ensure that [No One is Left Behind](#). Enable believe that every person in Scotland has the right to work in a job that is high quality and well paid.

Enable Works supports over 5500 people every year across 28 Scottish Local Authorities to learn skills for work, and more than 1000 people into work. They partner with thousands of employers to create inclusive cultures and improve the diversity of Scotland's workforce. Together they challenge perceptions of disability and unleash the potential in Scotland's future workforce.

There are an estimated 175,000 people with a learning disability in Scotland. 9% of school leavers with a learning disability go onto university in comparison to 45% of all school leavers. There is a significant employment gap with 50% of disabled people in employment in Scotland, in comparison to 82% of non-disabled people. For every £1 a disabled person makes they earn just 83p of that. This means that a disabled person works for free 62 days of the year. They work to ensure that disabled people have the same opportunities and chances as everyone else and access to the right support to do that.



The 'All In' model works across four local authority areas; Dundee, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Moray. They deliver on their mission and values through partnerships with 26 organisations across Scotland, including Enable that is 27 partners. This means 27 sets of skills and knowledge and hundreds of years of collective experience. Collaboration over competition is fundamental to the programme's success. By not using a payment by results model they were able to bring a wide range of partners together.

The model adopts a person-centred approach with integrated services, working with grassroots and national partners. They have linked in with health services, who are most likely to link with the target audience. The main aim is to de-clutter the employability landscape.

The partnership model can cover all 5 stages of the [employability pipeline](#), including in work support, and supported and specialist employment, such as sector-based academies. They provide support to parents, young people, people with disabilities, long-term health conditions, mental health conditions, convictions and offending history, substance misuse, and those who experience multiple barriers. Services are designed around the person, taking into account the barriers they could face at any time in their life, acknowledging that people and circumstances can change therefore services must be flexible and able to adapt.

Delivery methods can vary but Enable Works take a focus on community engagement to ensure that access to services is not another barrier for customers. They go to them where they are comfortable. By taking services into local areas, they can ensure that they are accessible and inclusive.

Partnerships also make complex procurement processes more accessible for the smaller organisations, who perhaps don't have the resource to complete lengthy or complex bids or tenders. One application, one service. Partnerships also deliver value for money as the lead partner takes on the management of the contract delivery for all partners, leading to less resource required from the local authority, therefore a larger impact and reach for the funding awarded versus if it were to be awarded to providers individually. It ensures joined up and cohesive delivery and promotion of service, not only simplifying the landscape but also the management processes for the funder.

### **All In Dundee**



All in Dundee provides high quality support while also delivering excellent results and lasting impact to the people they support. The programme was initially set up with 9 partner organisations in Dundee, a mix of grassroots and national organisations. One service for anyone who needs support in Dundee. The partnership adopts a no wrong door approach where they wrap services around to provide tailored support.

As of 2024, All In Dundee now consists of a consortium of 7 third sector employability providers each offering different specialisms under one service. This includes health, care experienced individuals, substance misuse and convictions, single parent families, and young people. They have funding from three places including No One Left Behind and [Parental Support](#).

The programme supports up to 1000 people per year. It is delivered through a blended model, tailored to each individual, as not one size fits all. Parents who were mentees are now mentors. They utilise a joined up working approach to hide the wiring. All organisations use the same system and paperwork to share information.



The programme is built around the principle of supported employment. Stages 1-5 of the employability pipeline with end to end support. All partners deliver every stage and customers can move across offers under a single caseworker.

Enable have their own Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Team who work with employers to provide training and support. They have been funded in Dundee by Discover Dundee to provide training to employers for free. The funding provided by the Scottish Government has acute challenges but in Dundee they are lucky to have alternative longer term funding.

They are driven by collective performance, not by targets. All In Dundee has supported 1879 people to date and achieved a positive destination rate of 57%. 42% of people have moved into employment. 76% sustained 6 months on the programme and 72% sustained 12 months

As part of the All In Dundee service they offer an [Individual Placement Support \(IPS\) service](#), which is only one of 17 recognized IPS services in Scotland and one of only a few in the UK to achieve exemplary fidelity. The IPS service delivers 52% employment outcomes and a 92% sustainment rate at 12 months. This sustainment rate is achieved by ensuring that they are not placing people into any job, but rather a career of their choosing; with ongoing support. They ensure caseworkers have space to work with people by setting no high targets.

There is a ripple affect with a positive impact on Dundee City Council targets. They have reported a 41% increase for positive destinations, and an 18% increase on sustainment at 6 months.

Funding is getting smaller but they make the best use of what they have. They provide smaller funding pots to help support the removal of barriers, such as money for work clothes, car maintenance etc. They also have a new fund available to offer financial support for qualifications to help people to become self-employed. This route can sometimes be the best fit for working around individuals own needs, such as childcare etc. This funding can help to speed up the process of attaining the qualifications.

Gemma closed by referring to some case study feedback from individuals who had taken part in the programme.

[View presentation slides](#)

### Third Presentation Summary: [Topgolf Recruitment](#)

*Presenter: Niki Spence, Head of Sustainable Communities, Clyde Gateway*

Clyde Gateway is an Urban Regeneration Company working in the East End of Glasgow and parts of South Lanarkshire. They cover two local authority areas and two health boards. The founding members were Glasgow City Council, South Lanarkshire Council, and Scottish Enterprise.

They focus on holistic regeneration with the three key areas focussed on people, place, and jobs, linking opportunity and need. They are not the sole delivery organisation for all of this and rely on partnership work.

Their projects produce capital build that provide jobs, increasing attainment and opportunities. Often people see buildings but not what is happening inside, where there are people making change. Creating jobs is the number one priority.

[Topgolf](#) is a global sports and entertainment company with multiple branches across the US and three in South East England. Clyde Gateway worked with public and private sector partners to bring

Topgolf to the area. This in turn brought 330 new, local jobs with flexible hours to support work/life balance, and no zero-hour contracts.

Large scale inward investments provide trickle-down economics. They create jobs but this is not easy and can take many years. You have got to stick at it. You can't assume that things will work just because we want them to. Clyde Gateway want to replicate the Topgolf model where they hide the wiring from the private sector.

It was important that they made sure jobs went to people living in the Clyde Gateway area. There are issues within the hospitality sector and retaining staff. Clyde Gateway managed to get Topgolf to commit to no zero hour contracts, which is something they have in all of their other sites.



Clyde Gateway worked with [PACE](#), a redundancy support service set up by the Scottish Government. Niki gave the example of the loss of the McVitie's factory having left redundancies in the Parkhead area.

They wanted as many jobs as possible to be filled by local residents but Topgolf wanted to use their US recruitment model with big flashy events in night clubs in the city centre. Instead, Clyde Gateway convinced them to run recruitment sessions 7 days a week for 4 weeks, 3 sessions per day, in Rutherglen Town Hall.

There was a key focus on unemployed residents, opportunities for school leavers and young people, and those with barriers to employment. The [Developing Young Workforce](#) (DYW) Lead was a home economics teacher in a local school.

Clyde Gateway provided local knowledge as Topgolf didn't have a Scottish context. They held partners to account through a fortnightly working group.

A wider partnership model was created with Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Routes to Work South (RtWS), South Lanarkshire Council, and Job Centre Plus.

SDS provided links to further and higher education, with four local secondary schools engaged. They also supported with links to training providers and has continued to take the group forward for ongoing recruitment, upskilling, and links to apprenticeships etc.

RtWS provided targeted recruitment for technical and hospitality posts. They helped to facilitate information sessions and [Sector Based Work Academy Programmes](#) (SWAPS).

South Lanarkshire Council increased supply chain opportunities, such as catering and grounds keeping, and enhanced supplier engagement through meet the buyer events. They provided links to local businesses.

The Job Centre engaged with jobseekers, creating a pipeline of applicants via SWAP. They are also involved in future upskilling. In the final stages of the build, 10 local people were trained and taken in through SWAPS.

On opening, 78% of people employed lived locally, which wouldn't have been the case without the support of Clyde Gateway and partners. 49 of those employed were 16 – 17 year olds. The project delivered 100% and 83% success rates on technician and hospitality.

Niki closed by reading out some feedback relating to the project.

## Open Discussion

Some of the main comments and areas of debate are listed below. These varied views and opinions do not necessarily represent the views of SURF or all of the people and organisations present at the workshop.

- *One delegate asked Niki if an employability project called Gezzabreak was still in operation.*

Niki responded that they are an element of Jobs and Business Glasgow and that there are lots of employability services available in the area.

- *A delegate noted that a proportion of time is spent on non-conventional employability, for example providing clothes etc. Is that challenging?*

Lori replied that it is about holistic support. They are part of the local authority so have other departments to provide support. You need to make sure people are getting everything they are entitled to. It depends on the person as they don't always initially tell you the barriers they are facing to begin with, so you have to work with them for much longer. They look to partners for support. This is the beauty of the [No One Left Behind](#) approach.

Gemma said that they have 50 frontline staff in Dundee, including wellbeing workers. A role within the partnership is to focus on wider support and to upskill staff. It is about having solid foundations or you are setting people up to fail. They are not experts in everything so depend on partnerships. The third sector are the heartbeat of the community. It is about ease of access.

- *The projects were asked how many staff it takes to deliver the service?*

Lori said that they have 12 key workers, one of which is for supporting Ukrainian refugees.

Gemma added that they have 52 staff in Dundee, including money advice workers and wellbeing workers. There is a wide range of skills within the team.

- *The next question focussed on the process for bringing in partner organisations? They noted that they are constantly redeveloping and becoming more holistic, adapting and upskilling staff, but participants are continually presenting with new barriers. There is a need to engage with more partners.*

Gemma answered that it depends on the local authority. You need to adapt and flex to meet customer needs but also locally. In Glasgow, Glasgow City Council were very clear on what they wanted and key sectors. In Dundee, it was looking at what the customers needed. They only work with third sector organisations but they put out an expression of interest. Meet with potential partners and see how that fits with the landscape. In Dundee, a major thing was reach and engagement. Funding is required, which is a heavy resource to complete but it can be shared through a wider partnership setup. Challenges can't be overcome by a single organisation.

## Fourth Presentation Summary: [Institute of Employability Professionals \(IEP\)](#)

*Presenter: Helen Lee, Head of IEP Learning Academy, Institute of Employability Professionals*

The IEP is the international membership organisation for employability professionals. They are the people who support others to gain work, progress in work, and retain work. Their goal is to promote

excellence in employability services worldwide and strive to achieve a vision where ‘employability professionals everywhere are the best they can be’.

Since 2011, they have established a presence across the UK and grown to operate in several countries including the Republic of Ireland, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Sweden, and Australia. They also work with partners in Canada and the Netherlands.

IEP represent over 11,000 members worldwide who are dedicated to enhancing the employability prospects of those who are most disadvantaged in society, such as those in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial struggles, homelessness, and lone parenthood. The people who are farthest from the job market.

They have a focus on empowering, sharing information, and sharing what works. They champion employability as a profession through representation of people’s social and economic contribution and achievements to policy makers and influencers.

The secure employers’ recognition that their employability objectives are best achieved through a commitment to development and through the selection and training of a highly skilled professional delivery team. They have a role to empower individuals to perform to a professional standard through gaining relevant further knowledge and understanding.

IEP provide membership support services, learning and development, research through leadership, governance and accountability, growth, and diversification. They work collaboratively to deliver what the sector needs.

### **Types of Membership**

- **Corporate Affiliate Membership** is open to anyone who works for the organisation. This membership level will grant individuals access to some of the membership benefits.

Please note this does not include access to the e-Learning programme.

- **Associate** level is open to anyone who is new to the sector. Associates enjoy full benefits of membership and the use of the AIEP post-nominals.

Associates can be upgraded to Member level after 1 years’ experience and completion of the IEP Employability Essentials eLearning Programme.

- **Member** level is available to those who have either three years’ experience within the employability sector or 1 years’ experience and completion of IEP Employability Essentials.

Members enjoy full benefits of membership and the use of the MIEP post-nominals.

Member benefits include learning, growing, and sharing best practice. This is done via e-bulletins, monthly CPD webinars, podcasts, a knowledge bank, and regional learning and networking events.

They also offer sector specific qualifications and a coaching and mentoring programme. The IEP’s coaching and mentoring programme, Members4Members, connects members with other members who would like to receive or provide mentoring/coaching on their chosen areas of expertise or want to promote professional and personal development.

Members can also take part in training courses for frontline practitioners and line managers. [Fedcap](#) in Scotland have graduates of their training programmes.

A new course has been launched covering complex needs and supporting practitioners who are working with those with the greatest barriers.

[View presentation slides](#)

## Fifth Presentation Summary: [Scottish Government](#)

*Presenters: Kathryn Simpson, Team Leader – Developing the Young Workforce and Business Management, Scottish Government and Jenny Lee, Policy Manager, System Transformation, Scottish Government*

The Scottish Government lead on [Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy](#). Established in 2014, 21 Regional Groups were created to bridge the gap between industry and education. The groups take an employer-led focus on preparing young people for the world of work.

[Developing Young Workforce](#) (DYW) School Coordinators are embedded in mainstream secondary schools across Scotland. The programme was implemented to create increased opportunities for, and participation in, work-based learning and employer engagement for pupils, particularly those in the senior phase. They strengthen collaborative working across delivery partners and de-clutter a complicated economic landscape to match labour market demand.

The 2023 policy prospectus states that by 2026 DYW will have 'Helped all school leavers, regardless of their background, to access the transition support they need to achieve their potential, and ensure every young person aged 16-24 can further their education or secure a job or training place.'

Third sector partners provide a role in linking employers with young people to transition into the world of work. They provide funding to specialist partners that support those facing additional barriers: [Enable](#); [Intercultural Youth Scotland](#); [MCR Pathways](#); [Career Ready](#); and [Founders4Schools](#). Partners provide targeted provision for young people facing additional barriers by offering work based learning, work inspiration, and mentoring, while connecting educators and young people with a network of inspirational business leaders.

### **DYW Fife - Volunteering with Fairway Fife**

The Volunteering Programme, initiated by [Fairway Fife](#), in collaboration with [DYW Fife](#), aimed to provide senior pupils from Dunfermline High School with the opportunity to mentor young people with disabilities or additional support needs through engaging in sports activities. Over a 6-week period, pupils from Dunfermline High School dedicated their time to volunteer and mentor with Fairway Fife. Central to their involvement was the opportunity to engage in football sessions alongside service users, offering support in communication and social skills development. The structured nature of the programme enabled pupils to enhance their interpersonal skills while contributing positively to the community. As the programme progressed, pupils expressed a desire to continue their involvement beyond the initial volunteering period, indicating the impactful nature of the experience on their personal growth and career pathways. Dunfermline Athletic Football Club played a pivotal role by providing facilities and opportunities for the pupils to engage in football activities with service users at Pitreavie.

### **DYW West - DXC Digital Futures Academy**

On the 29<sup>th</sup> March 2024, all of the 52 selected pupils from eight schools in the West region, two schools per local authority, attended a Digital Futures Academy event, including senior [DXC](#) personnel and the [DYW West](#) Chair Jim Hannigan. The young people were from the more deprived areas in each authority, focusing on young people that are not on a pathway to university, but are interested in tech. The pupils at the first event got tasters of what they will be doing in future sessions, including VR, autonomous cars, tech pitching to Dragons and drones.

## DYW Orkney - Planning for the Future

An event was held with S4 and S5 pupils who will be leaving school and are at risk of not achieving a positive destination. Their school leavers' programme, Planning for the Future, was developed and is delivered in partnership with [Skills Development Scotland](#) (SDS). It is aimed at pupils who will be leaving school at the end of this academic year and need support to take their next step. Two, 2-day sessions were recently held in Stromness, for pupils from Stromness Academy, and Kirkwall, for pupils from Kirkwall Grammar School. In total, 12 pupils attended the programme. The programme concluded with mock interviews.

A 3-year plan for 2024-27 sets out to build on the progress of [No One Left Behind](#) (NOLB) to date, recognising that changes in the employability delivery landscape have occurred against the backdrop of wider policy developments and a changing fiscal context.

The plan aims to provide strategic direction to partners across Scotland to deliver a system that tackles inequalities in Scotland's labour market. One that creates a responsive and aligned approach that helps people of all ages who face greatest barriers.

Transformational change is at the heart of the NOLB approach. Through it they want to reduce duplication in services, address the complexity from the perspective of service users, and create a delivery model which places design of services closer to the people who need them. However, it is clear that partnership working is a critical element of this work both at a national and local level.

### Key priorities:

5 key areas of priority, and 2 emerging areas of focus:

1. **Reducing Child Poverty** – [Bright Start Best Futures](#), employability plays a crucial role. Scottish Government recognise that more needs to be done to enhance the reach and impact of support for parents.
2. **Health & Work** – with actions particularly focussed on disability and economic inactivity.
3. **Tackling Structural Inequalities** – including long term unemployment.
4. **Increasing awareness & Uptake** – looking to create new referral pathways and deliver better outcomes for people. There have been a number of internal discussions with other policy areas to agree and set out actions on mutual aims and objectives.
5. **Emerging Priorities** – including [Net Zero and Just Transition](#). Scottish Government want to understand where their support is currently being leveraged to support entry to green jobs and what more can be done.
6. **Business & Employer Engagement** – They know that employer engagement activity currently takes place at a local level, with examples of employer forums, [Local Employability Partnership](#) (LEP) sub-groups, and constructive working between businesses and services locally. Scottish Government are keen that this local activity is supplemented by national level action moving forward to support awareness of what is on offer for employers and ensuring that design of policy and services reflects the views of businesses. In doing so, they will seek to align with pre-existing Scottish Government activity.

The Strategic Plan will aim to set out the role of employability in relation to the wider policy landscape, recognising that since this area became a priority for Scottish Government there has been a lot of change. Initial drafting is well advanced, with 6 themes that will be developed as priorities for Scottish Government funded services over the next 3 financial years.



With NOLB everyone that wants support gets support. There was a phased approach to NOLB. [Fair Start Scotland](#) has now finished for referrals, with two years of support still running. Referrals will now go through NOLB.

They wanted to hear from people in communities delivering employability support. After the consultation events they came out with further actions from the priority actions.

LEPs are working well and should be influencing what support is needed in their area. This delivery model for employability support is based on effective partnership working. It recognises that Scottish Government funding is just one contributory part of the wider employability landscape, and to deliver effectively for users, they need to ensure they are encouraging collaborative working across policy, funders, and leveraging existing activity as part of a participant's journey. It recognises that strong, effective partnership working is required and the roles each cog plays across Scottish Government policy areas, [COSLA](#), local government, and at a local level through LEPs.

They recognise that the range of linked policies also reflects a broad range of service provision locally and by increasing the decision-making power of LEPs, employability services are better placed to link with other structures locally and account for the wider picture of need and provision in their area, in a way a nationally designed service offer could not.

Local authorities act as Lead Accountable Bodies in the funding relationship, allowing local government, SDS, [DWP](#), colleges, third sector, and business representatives to work together to address local needs. Shows all partners have a part to play in ensuring a strategic approach to planning, implementation, and delivery of employment support.

It shows that they are committed to ensuring there is a mixed economy of provision in place across the country, with national and local government working together with the wider public, private and third sector organisations.

[View presentation slides](#)

## 2) Effective approaches to housing led regeneration

With introductory presentations from SURF Award winning and shortlisted:

Goathill Housing and Care Home Project, City of Edinburgh Council Mixed Tenure Improvement Scheme and Glentroll Community-led Housing & Regeneration.

Additional presentations were provided by SURF Award partner Scottish Procurement Alliance and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations.

### About the event

The second workshop in the series highlighted the 2023 SURF Awards Winner and Highly Commended projects in the 'Housing and Regeneration' category.

The projects featured all used housing-led regeneration approaches to improve the communities in which they work.

### First Presentation Summary: [Goathill Housing and Care Home Project](#)

*Presenter: Dan MacPhail, Project Manager, Investment Delivery, Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar*

The Western Isles has been viewed as the location of the 'perfect storm' in relation to resourcing the care needs for older people. The relationship between an aging population, prevalence of long-term health conditions, and the highest level of single occupancy households creates the two-fold challenge – meeting the care needs of the population with an aging and decreasing workforce. There is a low number of the population falling within the economically active age group.

In addition to this, there is the impact of a higher retirement age and the knock-on effect this will have on the ability of family carers to support their loved ones to live as independently as possible. There were two ageing residential care homes on the island. The properties were built in 60's and 70's and a solution was needed. A third problem was demand for social and affordable housing. There was more funding available for housing but that came with a pressure to spend within a deadline.

In June 2014, a review was initiated by [Comhairle nan Eilean Siar](#) (CNES) of older persons housing needs and services. A Working Group was set up across CNES services, and including [Hebridean Housing Partnership](#) (HHP). The review considered the future of the existing care homes in Stornoway, which were nearing end of life. One with 38 beds and the other 33 beds. There were also approximately 40 people on waiting lists at any time for care homes, of which 20+ were on delayed discharge.

The Council was the main vehicle to take forward the project but HHP was keen to deliver social housing in their usual way. The right people were in the room at the right time. It can be difficult to get partners together.

The Goathill site was purchased by HHP as a land bank opportunity with Scottish Government support. New Scottish Government [Resource Planning Assumptions](#) were announced in pursuit of 50,000 homes by a 2021 target. This brought a huge opportunity but also a major time challenge to complete by March 2021.

They had to identify and examine best practice models in relation to housing and residential care provision for older people and individuals with long term conditions/complex care needs. They collated and examined the local data on the current and projected demand, and undertook an

options appraisal to agree the models of care to be developed in more detail. From this they commissioned a masterplan. In developing the masterplan, they received guidance from the [University of Stirling's Dementia Care Centre](#).



The development delivered a 52 bed residential care home, 50 housing with extra care flats, 58 homes for social rent, and 16 Homes for sale through the shared equity scheme. There is something for everyone's needs included on the site.

They wanted to leave a legacy on the island regarding local supply chain and also encourage people into health and social care positions by offering training facilities etc. A call centre for monitoring alarms and

[Alzheimer Scotland](#) are also based on the site.

### Challenges

- There were challenges around agreeing a model of care. Assisted living with extra care vs residential care. They finally agreed on a model with a mix of both to suit the demographic.
- Funding is always a challenge for the Western Isles as it is expensive to build.
- Developing a procurement strategy brought challenges as employing one contractor wouldn't have left the desired legacy around the local supply chain.
- Post construction challenges.
- Transportation logistics - Ferries are always a challenge. It was easier 20 years ago just to travel to Edinburgh never mind getting materials there now.
- Weather – climate change and rainfall issues. Islands are more susceptible to inclement weather.
- Brexit, COVID, War in Ukraine - causing shortage and increased process of materials.
- Labour, material and accommodation availability.

Things have become more of an issue recently with skills shortages, access to labour, increased material costs and shortages etc. Utilities are always a challenge.

### Policy – what helped

The 50,000 homes target by 2021 helped and the Scottish Government was flexible with the homes with extra care. The drive to build homes pushed the project. They received a Scottish Government grant to undertake the Masterplan. The Outer Hebrides funding allocation for housing was £25M for 2018 – 2021.

There was additional post Covid and post contract funding available. They received a grant through the [Health and Social Care Remobilisation COVID funding](#), and also an additional subsidy from the [More Homes Division](#).

### Policy – what hindered

The housing target also hindered as everyone was driven to build so the market became saturated in the central belt, making it even harder to get workers for island projects. There was a limited appetite to work on Scottish islands, coupled with a skills shortage in the construction sector and increasing costs.

### Successes

- It was a once in a generation project and it was successfully delivered.

- They delivered high quality housing and care provision which has been life changing for many tenants, service users and those providing the service.
- Inter-agency partnership working has left an appetite for more.
- Maintaining a clear vision throughout kept the project on track.
- Strong project governance and control measures.
- They won the Clinician's Choice Award at the Building Better Healthcare Awards (UK).
- Many challenges, such as finding employees, remain but this transformational project will be vital in addressing these. It has addressed some challenges but not eradicated.

There was a clear feeling that if you can do this, you can do anything.

Dan suggested taking a [virtual tour](#) of the housing.

[View presentation slides](#)

## **Second Presentation Summary: City of Edinburgh Council Mixed Tenure Improvement Scheme**

*Presenter: Mark Connelly, Building Surveying Manager, Mixed Tenure Improvement Service, City of Edinburgh Council*

In the 1950s and 60s there was a real drive for housebuilding in Edinburgh, particularly social housing. In the 1980s the idea of increased home ownership was pushed by the UK government. There was a move towards people owning their own home. Move on a few decades further and ownership has become even more complex with a mix of ownership and types of housing.

How do you maintain blocks and make them fit for purpose when they are falling apart and you have mixed ownership? Everyone has buried their head rather than address the situation.

There has been a move towards a focus on large area based approaches. Edinburgh, like many areas, cherry picked which blocks to fix. This has been an issue across Scotland. Moving away from upgrades on an element by element basis and ensuring a whole house approach to improvements.

Investment will follow a large area based scheme approach informed by:

- Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) rankings with the Lowest 5% & 10% areas to be targeted first
- Stock condition findings, blocks most in need of investment
- Tenure mix - focusing on areas where the Council owns the majority of homes (biggest impact)

The drivers are:

- To deliver better thermal performance
- Reduce fuel poverty for our residents (tenants and owners)
- Working towards EESSH2 standards (statutory obligations)

Thermal performance is a clear challenge as something built in the 1960s is not going to be at the standard it should be in present day. In addition, there are increasing issues with fuel poverty across Scotland due to rising fuel costs. How do you balance this?

There is significant fuel poverty in Wester Hailes, the chosen pilot area for the scheme, and it falls within the most deprived 5% of the city. In terms of statistics, a 2-bedroom house price is 50% lower than the Edinburgh average and household income levels are 37% lower than the Edinburgh average.

The area contains 1400 homes, with 180 blocks built in the 60s and falling down. A dedicated team of 8 case officers was established to take the project forward, making use of the [Tenement Scotland Act](#) legislation. Initially the Scottish Government were questioning the process but two years later an MSP has nominated the project for an award.

The team worked with the community to take the project forward, providing support to owners. Owners in Wester Hailes are not rich and the average cost of the work was £27k per flat. How do you take that forward?

A buy back arrangement was put in place where the Council purchased in excess of 50 flats. A loan system was also put in place. They did ask owners for up to £5k per flat for a return of £27-£30k worth of work. There were some challenges with private landlords.



The works included new roof coverings and external wall and loft insulation. The insulation was carried out under the Tenement Scotland Act as essential repairs and maintenance. There was a real disbelief that they would do anything different. People had heard it before from the Council with no end results.

The scheme is no longer a pilot. It has been extended to other areas of the city falling within the worst 5% in terms of poverty.

[View presentation slides](#)

### **Third Presentation Summary: [Glentool Community-led Housing & Regeneration](#)**

*Presenter: Mike Staple, Chief Executive, SOSCH*

[South of Scotland Community Housing](#) (SOSCH) is a community led housing support provider and enabler. They were established in 2006 to address a shortfall in rural housing supply in South West Scotland in response to a study by Shelter and based upon a Highlands model. They currently are currently engaged with 50+ communities in Southern Scotland.

They support community organisations through the housing process, from planning through to the build. Their work is supported by the [Land Reform Agenda](#) and [Community Empowerment policy](#). They access funding through the [Rural Housing Fund](#), which is the only funding piece of the jigsaw open to community organisations. Their approach is embedded in wider community ownership of assets and land and is driven by partnership. SOSCH work with communities in the long-term.

They focus on solutions that target local needs and allocations, but also repopulation. Long-term project lifecycle support to communities and a holistic approach to community led regeneration, empowerment and placemaking.

Partnership is a crucial element of their work. They strategically engage with Scottish and local government, and a range of national agencies and organisations, including:

- **Regional** - Strategic Partnership with Councils, Housing Associations, [South of Scotland Enterprise](#) (SOSE)
- **Scotland** - engagement with [Community Land Scotland](#), [Scottish Land Commission](#), [Communities Housing Trust](#), [SURE](#), [DTAS](#)
- **European** – UK networking via [Nationwide Foundation](#), [Oak Foundation](#), [ECLTN](#)

They straddle between affordable housing and community asset transfer and focus on upscaling community led housing to address rural housing supply issues.

They are now experiencing similar issues in the South of Scotland that Dan eluded to in island communities. There has been a shift in the housing market over the last few years. Second home ownership is now becoming more prevalent in the South of Scotland, making it harder to secure housing. The [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#) helps to facilitate community asset transfer and the [Land Reform Acts 2003, 2016](#) and [2024](#) has provided support via [Community Right to Buy](#) and [the Scottish Land Fund](#). In March 2021, [Housing to 2040](#) announced an extension of the Rural Housing Fund and this platform for community led housing. There is an emerging agenda with [Community Wealth Building](#). [Scottish Government Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan](#) was launched in October 2023 setting out the status of community led housing.

SOSCH work with communities to identify hyper-local housing need and capacity to deliver solutions. Perpetuity affordable housing within a wider context of community ownership of land and assets, contributing more sustainable, resilient communities. Mixed tenure developments provide potential for affordable rent and ownership and, other partnerships

[National Planning Framework 4 \(NPF4\)](#) and [Place Plans](#) should place housing as an integral element of community resilience, regeneration and growth. Economic growth in the South of Scotland has had an impact on housing supply.

At the early stages SOSCH act as a partner liaison, carrying out community engagement exercises and localised [Housing Need and Demand Assessments](#). Making sure that there is an alignment with Local Place Plans.

During the project development phase their role is to support the project to secure project development funding, enable the procurement of a project team and to act as an enabler of key stakeholder relationships, particularly with Scottish Government, the local authority, and SOSE.

At this point project teams should also be looking at business planning, cash flow, and considering delivery routes. Project planning and process/timelines, along with building warrants would also be supported.

During the delivery phase SOSCH support with securing a capital funding package and provide any necessary continued support through delivery to completion.

Rapid growth indicated a level of interest from communities themselves to tackle housing issues. Issues that have permeated highlands and islands now being seen in the South of Scotland post Covid. There are increased pressures on “locally affordable” housing supply and significant demand.

There is an undersupply of safe, warm, low-energy, secure homes for rent/purchase. Particularly for families, young people and older residents. Looking to drive a repopulation agenda and promote opportunities to live-and-work in Southern Scotland.

Town centre decline has led to absentee ownership, permanent changes to the retail market and depopulation within towns. There are pressures on services in rural settlements and smaller towns, schools, businesses etc. Developers are being faced with spiralling development costs and supply chain issues. There are evident issues of social inequality, particularly post-pandemic, such as rural homelessness often being disguised, a low wage economy, and an ageing demographic.



## Glentrool

Glentrool is extremely remote, situated within the Galloway Forest Park. The starting point for this project was an empty building. There was no chance of saving the local school but the building was being ran by the community as a community hub, albeit in poor condition.

Three homes, previously let by the Housing Association, were going to cost too much to bring up to standard so were headed for sale on the open market. There was worry within the community about second home ownership.

SOSCH worked with the community to put together a project development package to take the properties into community ownership and carry out a deep retrofit. They carried out a series of community engagement exercises.

They received funding from the Rural Housing Fund, the [Dumfries and Galloway Community Fund](#) and the Scottish Land Fund, along with loan funding and smaller grants. They brought in retrofit expertise in the form of [John Gilbert Architects](#). They planned on doing both sides of the project, the community building and the housing, at the same time as a single entity.

There were challenges around the costs, which would be even higher now with continued rising prices of materials and labour. SOSE's involvement became critical to the project's success. There was a complex package of capital funding.



The three homes were nowhere near standard and had been empty for a period of time. They purchased the properties in 2021 and worked with a local contractor, Broatch Construction who SOSCH had used this to do two other projects in Dumfries and Galloway. They have had issues with contractors previously.

The project resulted in 3 community led family homes, promoting repopulation. The school building was transformed into the Glentrool Hive, a community hub with visitor accommodation, a café and gallery, social space, and educational space. There are specific links to the biosphere and the dark skies park. A community growing space was included to provide fresh locally grown food. The centre also acts as a local employment facility.

Given the remote location, this project promotes community led placemaking at its best. The success of the project was down to partnership work, providing capacity building within the community.

SOSCH is committed to learning and knowledge exchange. They have taken part in the European [CLT Network](#) which is a network working to mainstream community led housing in response to the affordable housing and the climate crises. The Nationwide Foundation's [Backing Community-led Housing](#) project is engaging throughout the UK on a funding programme, sharing learning with community led housing hubs in England and Wales. They have also taken part in the [Oak Foundation Housing Programme learning exchange](#).

They work closely with the Communities Housing Trust to promote and raise profile of the community led housing model across Scotland.

Mike showed a short film about the Glentrool project.

[View presentation slides](#)

## Open Discussion

Some of the main comments and areas of debate are listed below. These varied views and opinions do not necessarily represent the views of SURF or all of the people and organisations present at the workshop.

- *A delegate asked if the tenants had to move out during the retrofit process.*

Mark replied no as the work was to the fabric of the building. They did go in and look at ventilation. They are now looking at whole house retrofit and looking at decanting but where do you put people during a housing emergency? Remembers in Kirkcaldy years ago caravans being used but that wouldn't work now. Each phase took 9 months to do. Scaffolding up to down in 16-18 weeks. People were fed up but good feedback once the work was complete.

- *Another delegate asked in terms of checking how well the retrofit is working, what monitoring is in place.*

Mark said that they are not there yet. It is an area that he needs to keep pushing on. Some of the grant funding required monitoring. Monitors are in place in 10% of the properties. They monitor for temperature and humidity. Can see some form of improvement. They could have better monitors though. Pre-imposed thermal checks were carried out. These show gaps etc. in cavity wall insulation. They also tested how drafty the homes were pre and post works. There was a 40% improvement. It is about education and getting people to understand that they may still need ventilation, how to dry clothes etc. This is an area to develop further in future sites.

Dan added that education is a big part. It is about behavioural change. As they are new build houses there is a building management system.

Mike responded that there is a bit of a challenge around community led housing in general as owners are small organisations. Some partners have links to do monitoring. New occupants found properties too warm in the summer, needed education around cooling. Monitoring is more common in [Passivhaus](#).

Euan mentioned a future [SURF People in Place Network](#) event with [Collective Architecture](#) on retrofit. He added that there has discussion about retrofit being cumbersome for tenants with having to move out, and the impacts of that.

Mark added that they had agents involved as a point of contact throughout the process.

- *Mike was asked about a business plan for the Hive. How much is reliant on paid staff and how much on volunteers?*

Mike responded that there is a relationship between the housing and the Hive operation. The Hive Manager lives in one of the houses. There are a large number of volunteers, 24-25, helping with the Hive, plus two paid members of staff. Big volunteer involvement.

- *The final question asked about the sustainability of the retrofit and not having to go back and do it again. Also, comments on cross policy/funding work, barriers and collaboration.*

Mark said that they saw the condition of the buildings before they went in. If they don't maintain them, it will end up in the same condition in years to come. One of the main concerns of tenants/owners was around ongoing maintenance. They worked within the Council to make sure repairs and maintenance are done, using the [Tenement Scotland Act](#), and that yearly inspection and a gutter cleaning process are carried out. Small thing but makes a big difference. It needs the

community to engage and take it forward. Pride of place has been developed. There was no real community in Wester Hailes before. In terms of conflict, it was pretty good as they had full Council support.

Dan replied that it is quite a big challenge to look new for the next 60 years. He gave an example of schools built under an FM Contract and all still looking good but the ones that were built later not under an FM contract are looking older, as not as well maintained. Spoke about air-source heat pumps being widely used in domestic dwellings but not in public buildings. They are less reliable when you have the North Atlantic wind chill, but luckily the island has a gas connection. Wind works well but brings challenges in a planning context. Hydrogen is now coming in as the emerging technology. Local authority budgets have been cut so it is difficult to find money for maintenance. In Scotland, we are not so good at maintenance.

Mark added that it needs to be self-sustaining. The usual response is that it is the Council's job to do that but landlords have the same power to setup tenant maintenance schemes.

Mike said that they passed this to the local community. Community organisations need to be succession planning and creating a sustainable mix of individuals involved, having young people to take it on in the future. On a different area of policy and cohesion, with this project it covers a lot of policy areas but the Scottish Government would look and say 3 housing units delivered and not see the other areas. Not seeing alignment of community housing to place.

Dan concluded that by setting targets by a certain date, like climate targets, which are important but might not meet the landscape and market.

#### Fourth Presentation Summary: [Scottish Procurement Alliance \(SPA\)](#)

*Presenter: Heather O'Donnell, Technical Support Manager, Scottish Procurement Alliance*

SPA are a framework provider working solely in construction. They are a not for profit organisation, with any surplus fed back into community through rebates, Community Benefits Fund etc. Their support allows partners to save time on procurement frameworks.

They work with partners and are big on collaboration. They begin by asking what they can do to help free up their partner's time. Their procurement team can pick up some of the slack through added support.

They are now owned by [LHG Procurement](#) but started in Scotland 8 years ago. They operate slightly differently to England and Wales due to differences in procurement regulations. SPA work with the [Lintel Trust](#) who are their charity partner. The Lintel Trust work to distribute community benefits and match funding to give back to communities. They have worked with SURF for a couple of years but have sponsored the SURF Award since 2023.

SPA's mission focuses on improving lives and places through quality procurement solutions, with a vision to improve lives and places through the impact of their products and services and the social value generated through their community benefit funding and activities. They make sure that what they do provides significant and lasting impact and social value is at the maximum it can be.

England have the [Social Value Act](#) but Scotland don't have the same legislation. SPA push for social value and that partners build this in from the start through community benefits, and have accountability to make sure that it is happening. They work with public procurement, which has a traceable spend, and push for innovation and how they can support that by upskilling communities.

Working with over 125 partners throughout Scotland, they look at ways to improve collaboration amongst partners and opportunities to share learning from projects between partners. An advocate for collaboration between partners and appointed companies, not us and them.

They look at supplier development closely to get local supply chains in place and linked up. They work closely with the [Scottish Federation of Housing Associations](#). Frameworks get a lot of input from partners and suppliers and adapt to their needs. They actively promote pre-tender engagement and look to see what support they can provide to achieve best outcomes.

Better value for money can come through volume purchasing, and it can make processes simpler. SPA always look at ways to add value, whatever that might be. For example, by going to an area to provide specific training to contractors.

They recently published a [Social Value Strategy](#). Looking at how you monitor the impact of a project and what the legacy can be. Taking a circular approach through frameworks and making sure they get the maximum surplus to put back into communities.

[View presentation slides](#)

## Fifth Presentation Summary: [Scottish Federation of Housing Associations \(SFHA\)](#)

*Presenter: Annabel Pidgeon, Policy Lead, SFHA*

Due to illness this presentation was provided as annotated slides.

SFHA is the membership body for, and collective voice of, housing associations and co-operatives in Scotland. They exist to represent, support and connect their members. SFHA has 137 members across Scotland and the membership varies greatly in terms of size, geography and services delivered. Their vision is that their members are central to Scotland's social and economic recovery and renewal. It is everyone's right to live in a safe, warm and affordable home, in a thriving community. Their members are uniquely positioned as community anchors across Scotland, supporting people and their communities.

SFHA do this through 3 pillars of work, focused on issues that matter to members:

1. Delivering and managing affordable housing supply – because enough homes and the right homes in the right places are key to tackling the housing crisis in Scotland.
2. Tackling poverty and Inequality - because we all know that affordable housing keeps people out of poverty, and homes are the bedrock from which people access many other types of support (e.g., employment, health, financial).
3. Climate change emergency and the [transition to net zero carbon](#) - to put housing central in a 'just transition' and recognising both the opportunity and costs potential of net zero in the sector.

A key focus is policy that increases the provision of affordable homes. At a time when Scotland has nearly 400,000 people on a housing waitlist and 30,000 homeless people, both of which are likely under-reported indicators, increasing supply is the priority in the crisis. This need is in the context of Brexit, Covid, high-inflationary periods of an economic crisis that make costs/development more challenging. But it is also in the context of the cost-of-living crisis, where demand for social homes and poverty have spiked.

Development statistics represent numbers in the last year to end September '23 and demonstrate new supply going in the wrong direction at worrying levels. Amidst this downturn, Scottish Government has cut the [Affordable Housing Supply Programme](#) (AHSP) budget by 26% for 2024/25. £80 million of this has been replaced across two years, but this is insufficient and the policy focus remains re-instating the full AHSP budget. SFHA has worked and continues to work with partners, including [Homes for Scotland](#), [CIH Scotland](#), and the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) to advocate for a reversal of these decisions because it does not match up with the Scottish Government's agenda priority for tackling poverty in Scotland.

Another current focus is the recently published [Housing Bill](#). It is a long-awaited framework Bill which intends to increase choice, security, and strengthen tenants' rights. SFHA believes these are difficult outcomes to achieve through legislation and without the housing supply and public investment to match. SFHA agree with many of the principles in the 'Ask and Act' homelessness prevention and domestic abuse requirements of the Bill, but have concerns over the inadequacy of the resource allocated to support implementation. The Financial Memorandum identifies £8million over a 3-year period to support implementation, however these new duties are significant and broad. It is unlikely that this is therefore sufficient to achieve the transformational change required for relevant bodies to implement their new responsibilities well.

On Mid-Market Rent (MMR) SFHA is seeking exemption for MMR provided by Registered Social Landlords (RSL) and subsidiaries under the long-term rent controls introduced in this Bill. They believe MMR is a unique and specific provision that needs to be protected. It is predominantly for people who are not successful or do not have priority for social housing but who cannot afford to buy on the private market, and remains an important provision for key workers, young people, and people leaving home or education for the first time. The uncertainty created by the introduction of rent controls without detail, clarity, definition, or data in this Housing Bill is detrimental to MMR investment and the pipeline of both RSL MMR and social homes. MMR properties are already subject to rent controls as conditions of grant and connection to [Local Housing Allowance](#), [Broad Rental Market Areas](#) values and RSLs do not operate like 'typical' private landlords that the legislation is aimed at.

It is important to acknowledge the recent Government changes around net zero, with the 2030 energy targets scrapped and the Greens leaving the coalition.

These policies provide important clarity on future targets for social landlords, proposing new legislation around energy efficiency, the way buildings are heated, and phasing out direct emissions systems.

SFHA responded to both Bills after consultation with members and the key messages are:

- The [Social Housing Net Zero Standard](#) needs to be realistic and accommodate the diverse housing stock in Scotland. They have asked for the energy efficiency target to be a range and for the list of measures for proposed standards by 2028 to be extended. SFHA cautioned against the inability for properties to be re-let that do not meet the list, as they do not want stock to fail during the current housing crises and lack of supply.
- The [Heat in Building Bill](#) - SFHA supports the 2045 timeline to electric/heat networks, but warns against inadequately aligned policy while the price of electricity remains so much higher than gas for tenants.

SFHA are calling for more support and clarity so that RSLs do not have to choose between meeting energy standards or increasing rents for tenants and less development. They are also calling for a

social tariff and for a gas-equivalent tariff to incentivise the transition to electric heat, especially for rural locations.

This is a brief list of the key working groups that SFHA is involved in, indicating the overlap of Scottish Government priorities and member priorities in a number of areas. More info and further discussions are available from SFHA.

- [Tenement Maintenance](#)
- [Energy Standard Review Group](#)
- [Housing Affordability](#)
- Housing Supply
- [Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group](#)
- [The Future Role of Supported Housing](#)
- [Green Heat Taskforce](#)
- [Housing to 2040 Strategic Board and a 'deliverability' review group](#)

In March, there was the launch of a report on community investment, '[Thriving Places.](#)' It focusses on the other ways that social landlords can partner with others, such as local authorities, community groups, and other charities, to support their communities beyond housing or some of the more traditional placemaking responsibilities of RSLs. The report covers examples of employability and skill-building programmes, use of community hubs and centres, and other programmes that demonstrate the ways in which RSLs can elevate the community-based work happening in the areas they operate and respond to tenant needs. This is also an important area of focus and an area of opportunity.

[View presentation slides](#)

## Open Discussion

Some of the main comments and topics of debate raised are listed below. These varied views and opinions do not necessarily represent the views of SURF or all of the people and organisations present at the workshop.

- *A question was asked about [Community Wealth Building \(CWB\)](#) and how supply chains are changing within Scotland.*

Heather responded that there is a vast difference between different areas of Scotland, and CWB goes down to supply chains. They do things through frameworks regarding project delivery, for example asking how much of the employment will be local. This also needs to be relevant to the length of the contract. CWB is difficult to get a handle on due to procurement regulations. You need to look at it on a project to project basis. How do you do this when budgets are tighter than ever and local might cost double. In the Western Isles transport may be more expensive than materials. A holistic approach is required on a project to project basis.



### 3) Delivering place-based regeneration initiatives

With introductory presentations from SURF Award winning projects:

Vibrant Gala Project and Govan HELP – The Govan Pantry.

Additional presentations were provided by SURF Award partners the Scottish Government, Scotland's Towns Partnership and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

#### About the event

The third workshop in the series highlighted the 2023 SURF Award Winner in the 'Improving Scotland's Places' and 'Community Led Regeneration' categories.

The projects featured at the workshop varied in location, from the rural Galashiels in the Scottish Borders to the urban setting of Govan in Glasgow, but are both using place-based approaches to regenerate their communities.

#### First Presentation Summary: [Vibrant Gala Project](#)

*Presenter: Ian Dalglish, Chair, Energise Galashiels Trust*

Energise Galashiels Trust (EGT) was established in November 2014 by individuals and groups sharing a vision for a more vibrant, confident and inviting community.

Comprising of local volunteers, the group was awarded charitable status and works alongside [Scottish Borders Council](#) (SBC), [South of Scotland Enterprise](#) (SOSE) and a number of local community organisations.

Their aim is to:

- provide a focus for engaging with the community;
- to develop a vision for and deliver actions to improve Galashiels; and
- create a more vibrant, welcoming and confident community.

Placemaking is a process designed to collectively inspire communities to rethink and reinvent public spaces to enhance the public realm in their area. Whether that is buildings, open space or infrastructure, the main goal is to improve the connections between people and their places. Placemaking also contributes to capturing the social and cultural identities of a community.

Placemaking has been happening in Galashiels for years. The term "placemaking" was new to some but leading on the development and delivery of local projects has been central to EGT since its inception. Going forward EGT are now formally in the process of creating a [Place Plan](#) for Galashiels.

All aware regeneration of any kind costs money and EGT were fortunate enough, and the previous Chair was persuasive enough, to receive four years funding from SBC and SOSE based on the Vibrant Gala Project.

Energise Galashiels has focussed on four different themes:

- **All About Galashiels** - This theme is about promoting attractions, events and projects taking place in Galashiels. Galashiels is a great place to live, work and visit. EGT have created and became the guardian of the town brand – "Galashiels Heartlands of the Borders" - and use social networks, print and broadcast media to promote Galashiels in a positive light, emphasising its considerable strengths: its textiles and design heritage; its hosting of a prestigious University campus; and its position as the Rail Gateway to the Scottish Borders.

- **Looking Good** - EGT want a welcoming environment in Galashiels town centre. One area of focus has been enhancing the appearance of unoccupied premises. They aim to support the efforts of the Council and retail outlets to make the town centre attractive to businesses, visitors and residents of Galashiels. The centre of Galashiels should be a focus for community events and provide an enjoyable, varied retail experience.
- **Events** - EGT have supported groups to deliver events that enhanced community life and benefited the local economy.
- **Innovative Projects** - EGT believe Galashiels has a bright future. The aim is to develop innovative projects which contribute to creating a more vibrant, welcoming and confident community. Developing effective and productive relationships with key partners, such as [Heriot-Watt University](#), [Borders College](#), ScotBIC and SCOT, they aim to assess long-term strategic initiatives and infrastructure developments which will benefit Galashiels.

They have created a digital town brand titled 'Galashiels Heartland of the Borders'. This has been used to promote the town in a positive light, taking in the history and heritage. It has been used to enhance appearance and address shop vacancies and is linked through the town's website and social media. 125 local enterprises are now listed and the website currently attracts thousands of visitors each month.

Since 2015, EGT have supported or delivered 75 community projects or events. Some examples of the community projects include:

- Galashiels Heartlands of the Borders
- Floral Gala
- Trishaw
- Gala Remembers
- Property Transformation Grants

Floral Gala, a sub-group of volunteers under the Community Council, has had financial support from EGT to purchase equipment and planters for the town. This has helped to improve pride of place locally. EGT also purchased a trishaw from [Cycling Without Age](#), and a small group of volunteers manage trishaw rides for the local sheltered accommodation. EGT acted as a coordinator for the community groups who got involved in the Gala Remembers event in 2018.

Property Transformation Grants followed the earlier shop front improvement grants. EGT have supported the improvement of 35 town centre properties with funding of £119,000, with priority given to long-term vacant premises, large vacant units or those negatively impacting the town centre. This has encouraged new-starts and expanding businesses, creating a more attractive and vibrant town centre with new and additional retail and service offers, as well as local employment.

EGT have supported a number of community events. A few examples include:

- Monthly Heartland Market
- Community Arts Project
- Maroon'd
- Tangled Fibre Festival
- Town Awards

The monthly pop-up Heartland Market undoubtedly increases footfall in the town. Some additional benefit has come from some of the pop-up businesses opening permanent shops.

This year's Community Arts Project comprised a series of events, using various venues and public realm space around the town centre. One event, held in [MacArts](#), had over 600 people in attendance.

[Maroon'd](#) has become an annual community rugby event attracting about 4000 people, participants and spectators, to Netherdale. The inaugural [Tangled Festival](#) in 2023 was attended by about 1000 people over the 2-day event. It returns in 2024.



The Town Awards were established to recognise the contribution made by local businesses and encourage the community to nominate their favourite businesses in the town. Both the inaugural and subsequent event attracted between 6500 and 7500 votes, which isn't bad from a population of 13,000.

Another popular local attraction has been the installation of a number of murals celebrating local heritage. These include:

- Flying Scotsman
- Braw Lads
- Weave the Magic
- Sir Walter Scott
- Shepherds Tartan
- Mechanical Flow

The murals brighten up the town, with the first linked to the reopening of the railway. The Braw Lads Gateway celebrates the weaving and textiles heritage, whilst the Sir Walter Scott mural celebrates his links to the town. Mechanical Flow again celebrates the textile heritage, and the Shepherds Tartan mural showcases the tartan of Galashiels.

As a result of the work SOSE encouraged them to enter Awards. EGT won two national awards in 2023. First was the Creative Community Award from [Scotland's Town Partnership](#) at an event in Dundee on 28 November. The second was the Improving Scotland's Places Award from SURF at their award ceremony in Glasgow on 7 December. Receiving both of these awards led to a [motion in the Scottish Parliament](#) recognising the achievements and a visit from MSP Craig Hoy.

Being voted the "happiest place in Scotland" in a survey conducted by Rightmove also resulted in a trip to Galashiels by travel writer Robin McKelvie, who followed up with a really [positive article](#) about his visit to the town.

Funding is always hard to get. The SBC and SOSE funding has now ended. They are now looking at how to move forward with the Place Plan, which will look at the whole town and not just the town centre. They are also looking at starting a [Business Improvement District](#). They tried this in 2018 but it failed, they think now is the right time.

The [Great Tapestry](#) came to Galashiels which created a debate over where it would go. The outcome was a new building created in the centre of the town.

A few other examples of investment in the town include:

- Tapestry Building
- Destination playpark, Galashiels Public Park

- Borders Railway (Interchange, change in road layout)
- New Academy campus

Lots of plans done in Galashiels, these include:

- [Eildon Locality Plan 2016](#)
- [Galashiels & Tweedbank Masterplan 2018](#)
- [SBC Local Development Plan 2020](#)
- [Vibrant Galashiels Plan](#)
- [Tapestry Way Study 2022](#)

As a Trust they can't run the Place Plan, they have developed a Town Team, but are driving it forward using the [Place Standard Tool](#) (PST). They will engage consultants to take this forward. SBC are providing some money for the Place Plan with an aim to get funding for regeneration.

So far, workshops have been hosted by SBC in November 2022 and March 2023. Feedback from those who were invited to attend the first workshop resulted in 8 key areas for consideration in a draft town plan, some of which had previously been identified.

Meetings have been hosted by EGT every month since September, usually attended by 15-20 people each representing different organisations in the town. They have been using a tool called [Mentimeter](#) which is great for getting feedback. When asked to describe Gala in one word, the attendees at the first meeting were overwhelmingly positive. Town centre regeneration was a top priority identified by those present.

A public consultation was held using the PST. They were offered the alternative [Place Builder](#) tool but it is very expensive. There are issues with the PST as it doesn't do everything it should and could do, and it could be more user friendly. It is a lengthy process and time consuming. If people don't complete in full it doesn't save anything, which is a big drawback.

Prior to launching the survey, they spoke on TD1 radio about the formation of a Town Team and the reason for the survey. They made the PST available digitally and in paper copy. Following feedback at one Town Team meeting, a version in Ukrainian was also produced by SBC. The survey was promoted in Gala Life, Border Telegraph and the Southern Reporter as well as on the GHOTB social media platforms.

They also delivered sessions to Borders College and Galashiels Academy. Seven sessions were delivered at Gala Academy to all S2 pupils and the reason that they chose to work closely with young people is that they were already sensing that the town should reconsider the facilities and services available for them.

A Galashiels Town Team Facebook page was also created to share updates from the town team, and to highlight activity in the town which is making it a better place to live, work, learn and enjoy.

They had a total of 470 completed responses to the PST: 284 from the main PST, and 186 from the young person's PST. The Town Team members reviewed the PST feedback. The majority of feedback related to better street cleanliness, increased and improved street lighting, better road and path maintenance, and reusing empty and derelict buildings.

[View presentation slides](#)

## Second Presentation Summary: [Govan Help – The Govan Pantry](#)

*Presenters: Viv Sawers, Chief Officer, Govan HELP and Stephen McFadden, Operations and Development Manager, Govan HELP*

Govan HELP was established in 1996 by Hills Trust Primary School, originally named the Hills Trust Community Project. It evolved to become Govan Home and Education Link Project (Govan HELP). They have delivered a range of family support services in schools and the community for 28 years.

They aim to improve the life chances of families from the local area who are impacted by poverty and deprivation, and they provide holistic support to families to help them address complex issues that are impacting on family life.

They deliver a range of support services to meet the needs of children and families, linking with three local primary schools. Services include:

- Family Support
- Play Therapy
- Training and Volunteering
- Adult Counselling
- The Govan Pantry

The family support service helps to identify issues and create an action plan. Play therapy sessions work with children who experience complex trauma. There is more demand for this service than they imagined. Adult counselling groups for families allow a route to access other services, some general and some more specific. They offer training and volunteering opportunities, seen as an early stage employability journey. And then they have the Govan Pantry.

They had no intention of setting up a food project until the pandemic. A change in circumstances within families, a need for food, meant they had to adapt. Govan HELP linked in with [Fareshare](#) and started a foodbank by April 2020. At this time there was no other food provision projects in the area.

They started in the church hall, which was the only building they could get access to, and then eventually moved back to the [Pearce Institute](#). They had a list of families registered and were preparing food parcels for them. They had 47 families in week one but by week two they had 157 families, and demand remained consistently high. Referral criteria was simple, families had to be based in Govan and they only had to provide dietary requirements and the size of the family.

Within a month the impact was clear. The people coming weren't just their usual clients. It had grown beyond just families with children under 12. The team felt that they weren't really meeting the needs of a culturally diverse community, in terms of diet, culture etc. They looked at other models across Glasgow and Scotland, at a time where the world was shut. They also looked at international models.

They decided to join the [Scottish Pantry Network](#). This was a model where there was a small charge for people to select a number of items. This move seemed more dignified and compassionate and provided a shopping experience rather than hand out. They trialled a pop up pantry but they still had no plan to continue a food project in the long-term.

For the trial, they agreed a cost of £2.50 for up to 10 items and the community bought into this idea. The shopping experience, beyond a supermarket, provided a personal approach. At that time Fareshare had food in abundance but it is not the same now.

They trialled the pop-up for a few months and memberships grew. They realised that this was not going away so they had to adapt and accept that this would now become part of their role. They had to amend their criteria to look beyond families, as they now had a responsibility to people. How do you make this sustainable when it is not an answer to food poverty?

They got a capital grant of £50k from Glasgow City Council's Town Centre Initiatives programme and improved the aesthetic of the space. They wanted to tackle the stigma and change people's thinking. Wanted them to believe that they deserved something nice in Govan. They started to make an impact on people's mentality. The refurbishment of the pantry has had a huge impact on the community.



They aimed to create a positive environment for people in the community experiencing food poverty and wanted it to look like it would fit in on Byres Road. The key component was adopting a more dignified approach.

The project came to them at a time when the world was a scary place and people were isolated. They provided a relaxed and safe environment which has now become an essential service for the community.

They open two days per week and had over 600 members throughout the pandemic. They thought this would slow down but it is now beyond 3000 members which is more than 10% of the population of Govan. They have developed partnerships with a range of organisations locally to target the most marginalised groups in the community.

The team have a background in training and employability. The Pantry provides a Training and Volunteering programme that supports 24 volunteers each year to receive accredited training and volunteering experience, helping to build skills and confidence

Organisations are sending referrals but with no funding attached. A discussion needs to be had around this. They have invited corporates in to get a sense of what really goes on at a grassroots level within communities. It provides financial sustainability for Govan HELP and the corporates may get to enact corporate responsibility.

It terms of stats:

- 207 tonnes of food distributed since April 2020
- 493,819 equivalent meal portions
- £740,728 equivalent monetary value
- 3057 pantry members registered
- 48,376 Pantry memberships sold
- Savings to the community of approx. £967,520
- 2,515 Pay It forward memberships provided
- 9,465 partnership memberships provided
- 102 local people supported to volunteer

For every £3 membership the average value of food is £20. They offer a Pay It Forward Scheme to cover costs of those who can't pay. They use the Pantry as a tool to signpost people to other support services. They offer partnership memberships to local organisations, such as the housing



associations and [Govan Community Project](#), which means they pay for memberships for their tenants/clients.

Govan HELP went into the pandemic in a risky situation financially but this project gave them activity to continue during the pandemic. That bought them time to get money in for the wider projects. If not for the Pantry they would have closed. There was lots of funding available during the pandemic.

They now have a front face onto the community, where as previously they worked on a referral basis. They had to re-do their marketing package to incorporate the Pantry into the wider family so that they were not just known as the Govan Pantry.

They provide 70hrs of volunteering opportunity a week and they couldn't do it without them.

[View presentation slides](#)

## Open Discussion

Some of the main comments and areas of debate are listed below. These varied views and opinions do not necessarily represent the views of SURF or all of the people and organisations present at the workshop.

- *Govan HELP were asked how having food provision changed the nature of what they do – changed objectives?*

Govan HELP replied that there was a time where the Pantry was the main focus but it now runs on its own. They had to then go back to their previous focus and create a strategy. The Pantry now sits within the wider programme of support. They have grown the other teams. It took them in a different direction but at that time they were looking for something to do. It allows them access to other parts of the community, a route into other services.

- *Ian was asked about what support they have had from the Scottish Government around textiles and tapestry – compared to whisky.*

Ian replied that there was a decision to bring the Tapestry to the Borders, a decision made due to their heritage, but there has been no direct Scottish Government support for the textile industry. [Heriot-Watt University](#) have presence due to their textile course. They link to them as a way of showcasing a need to sell the textile importance better. The [Tangled Festival](#) took people by surprise as it was so popular.

- *A participant asked about the festival.*

Ian said that it is a big textiles festival. A shop has opened to sell wool and yarn etc. with networking space. This is an outcome of the festival.

- *Ian was asked about the balance between local people and drawing visitors – who is the target audience?*

Ian replied that the events are targeted at local people rather than visitors. Got to get the town right in the first place.

- *Another delegate asked Ian about their relationship with the Council.*

Ian said that [Scottish Borders Council](#) have been good at the start of the placemaking journey. A Council representative is working with them to crack the requirements for the [Place Plan](#). They have provided some funding for a consultant to make the Plan.

- *A delegate asked if they have an agreement with the Council to maintain projects – greenspaces etc.?*

Ian answered that they had developed projects to RIBA 2 and RIBA 3 stage but that there were issues with lighting. The Council need to approve but don't want the liability. If you put lighting up, you need to maintain it which is difficult when you are a Trust. The Place Plan needs to be approved by the Council, and then they will be looking at [Borderlands funding from Levelling Up](#). If they approve the Place Plan they are more obligated not to disapprove of the maintenance etc.

- *Another delegate asked both projects about working with groups and engaging with young people. Have you done that?*

Ian responded that historically there wasn't much engagement as it was difficult but for the Place Plan they have engaged with the schools. Feedback was very good and provided different perspectives.

Govan HELP added that they don't have the same youth focus but do consult with families. They received anecdotal feedback such as having more money for the gas meter. There is a specific youth project already in Govan who they link with. They tend to lead on youth engagement. Have had young people in working in the Pantry through a Youth Philanthropy Initiative.

- *Govan HELP were asked if their model had been replicated in other areas of Glasgow.*

Govan HELP replied that the model has not been replicated but there are other projects doing some similar work across Glasgow, but not set up in the same way.

- *A final question was asked to Ian about whether or not they have a Community Council and how they make sure groups are truly represented.*

Ian responded that yes they do have a Community Council and that they are part of the Town Team. They try as hard as they can to be truly representative. Town Teams are not formally constituted; groups agree to sign up.

### Third Presentation Summary: [Scottish Government](#)

*Presenter: Tricia Ma, Place-based Regeneration Strategy Team Leader, Scottish Government*

Tricia gave an overview of where they started to present day and future plans.

The [Regeneration Strategy](#) was developed in 2011. It was the real start for putting communities first and tackling fragile communities.

The [Town Centre Action Plan](#) was developed in 2014 and revised in 2022. It was a joint approach between Scottish Government and local authority leaders. It looked to put town centres first as somewhere to live and work.

Regeneration now sits with Planning and Architecture. This highlights the importance of town centres and fits with climate changes and net-zero, as out of town retail forces people to need cars.

The [Place-based Investment Programme](#) provides funding and a framework to make that happen. It consists of an aligned programme of place based investments. It builds on the impact of the [Regeneration Capital Grant Fund](#) (RCGF) and the Town Centre Action Plan to accelerate ambitions for place, town centres, regeneration and [Community Wealth Building](#). The funding goes directly to local authorities.

RCGF is part of that programme and is competitive. The partnership with local government and [COSLA](#) is really important to that. This year there was £45.8m allocated for place-based funding for capital projects, the amount has been significantly reduced due to the landscape.

The [Vacant and Derelict Land Fund](#) is directly allocated to 6 local authorities. It is used to support innovative local approaches to tackling persistent vacant and derelict land as part of a [‘just transition’ to net-zero](#).

The [Empowering Communities Programme](#) supports communities to do things. People can't always just be volunteering. This can be used to fund local plans. The programme provides resource funding, complementing their capital investment, supporting community-led regeneration, enabling communities to tackle poverty and inequality on their own terms.

The [Investing in Communities Fund](#) supports and empowers communities to identify and deliver solutions to local priorities and challenges enabling them to tackle poverty, child poverty, inequality and rural disadvantage on their own terms.

The [Place Principle](#), established in 2021, lies at the heart of everything, this includes new guidance on Local Place Plans, [20 Minute Neighbourhoods](#) etc. It is more important now than ever in the current landscape. There is a need to be more innovative and to work more collaboratively.

[National Planning Framework 4](#) (NPF4) embeds local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods into decision making, and through planning reform, [Local Place Plans](#) will capture the aspirations of communities that will be fed into a new generation of local development plans. This statutory framework in itself will help to ensure people are at the centre of decisions made about a place. However, local living is a collaborative endeavour, cutting across council departments and across sectors.

The Regeneration Unit are currently keen to learn from past investments to ensure places and groups are prepared for when the next rounds of funding come around. A vehicle for this is sharing case studies across Scotland. Tricia referenced to SURF as driving place-based regeneration forward. How do we take examples of good practice and make this common practice?

The country is currently facing challenging times. Political changes provide a good opportunity to keep the conversation going. [Tom Arthur](#) is keen to drive the agenda forward.

The [Our Place](#) website highlights best practice examples and promotes place-based working. This includes the Place-Based Framework as a how to guide.

[View presentation slides](#)

## Fourth Presentation Summary: [Scotland's Towns Partnership \(STP\)](#)

*Presenter: Mhairi Donaghy, Vice Chair/Associate Director, Scotland's Towns Partnership/ Scottish Futures Trust*

STP, launched in 2014, and speak on behalf of Scotland's towns and villages. They are a membership body with an extensive and varied membership. They are the go-to organisation for Scotland's towns and places and provide resources such as events, insight and networking. They also deliver programmes on behalf of the Scottish Government. Localism lies at the heart of everything they do.

They have 4 key objectives. Three of these will be discussed in more detail and the 4<sup>th</sup> covers all of the other things that they do, including activities, events, parliament, and press.

STP's remit is to amplify the voice of Scotland's towns and to identify the issues and the opportunities for their improvement. They have a range of tools and techniques that are freely available and can be found on their website.

They host the [Understanding Scotland's Places](#) platform which allows you to compare and contrast different types of places, and they also host the [Town Centre Toolkit](#). Mhairi added that STP's monthly 'Funding Finder email' is an excellent source of currently available grants.

STP sit on the [Cross Parliamentary Group on towns](#). Members include housing associations and local authorities. They are delivering more work on town centre living and held a roadshow on the importance of what housing brings: people, services and connectivity. They are looking for more feedback from housing associations.

The [Town Centre Action Plan](#), now on version two, is their key policy document and was jointly produced by Scottish Government and [COSLA](#). It outlines aims and aspirations for our towns, and embeds the [Town Centre First](#) approach. It also supports a low carbon future through the best use of existing buildings, walkable places and connected services.

Promoting towns through [Scotland Loves Local](#), which is being used by councils and other organisations to increase local spend. It is tailored to the local level. Over the past few years, and with great success, they have promoted towns through the national Scotland Loves Local campaign. This includes adverts, articles and local branding which helps to raise the profile of what our towns have to offer. It made a big difference over the Covid recovery period where Scottish Government provided funding for a whole range of local projects.

The [Scotland Loves Local Gift Card](#) involves distributing pre-paid cards, where the money is returned to the local authority area. The programme was born out of lockdown to help local businesses fight for survival. It encourages people to choose local. It is a critical weapon in the armory to support Covid recovery, the climate emergency and the cost of living crisis. It has grown into a significant force for good in bringing action needed to build stronger places to live, work and visit. To date £15m has been spent with local businesses and nearly 8000 places are registered for use. It is a fantastic corporate reward with local people and enterprises supporting each other.

[Improvement Districts](#), added to STP's remit in 2017, are where a collection of local organisations and businesses come together to deliver new stuff that will improve their place. It is funded and controlled at the local level by those organisations and businesses that voted to set it up. They support localism, [20 minute neighbourhoods](#) and they drive new investment into our towns and neighbourhoods.

STP lead on Improvement Districts on behalf of the Scottish Government. There has been a huge uptake in Scotland, better than the rest of the UK. There are currently 35 active and 20 in hand. STP can provide a seedcorn grant and advice and support to those thinking of establishing an Improvement District. Initially set up as Business Improvement Districts, there are now different types focussing on specific topics, such as tourism and food and drink, and more recently a Community Improvement District (CIDs). Mhairi gave the example of 2021 Highly Commended [Remaking Saracen](#) in Possilpark. CIDs take a broader approach, not just business specific but also have input from local groups and community organisations like housing associations.

Improvement Districts are helping communities to grow, playing to their strengths and allowing individuality to shine. They are driving inclusive local economic growth by providing national strategic guidance, training, practical support, and strong partnerships. Levering local investment, encouraging innovation, unlocking opportunities, and creating sustainable change.

STP sponsor the Improving Scotland's Places category. As a judge Mhairi has seen a wide range of different applications, from very small islands, to single focus projects, and those with broader approaches. It is not always the big guys that win but rather those who demonstrate clear support from the community as well as economic, social, and physical improvements. They are not looking for those that have necessarily completed the work but are on the journey.

Mhairi concluded by encouraging anywhere that has been working hard to improve their town or place to submit an application.

[View presentation slides](#)

## Fifth Presentation Summary: [Highlands and Islands Enterprise \(HIE\)](#)

*Presenter: Murray Allan, Senior Development Manager, Highlands and Islands Enterprise*

HIE are one of the three economic development agencies for Scotland. HIE and the [South of Scotland Enterprise](#) (SOSE) agency have a remit for economic development and community, which differs from [Scottish Enterprise](#). Part of that is because of the place discussion. They focus on specific places so no one is left isolated, which is important.

HIE work in a diverse region which extends from Shetland to Argyll, and from the Outer Hebrides to Moray, covering more than half of Scotland's land mass. They have teams across the region helping communities and businesses to develop and grow. They help people across those areas of Scotland to build a stronger economy and a better future. They want the Highlands and Islands to be a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable region, attracting more people to live, work, study, invest and visit.

HIE deliver activities around economic development and regeneration but are very much about place. Working together to help improve the economy. They have been doing this work for almost 60 years.

HIES's [2023-2028 strategy](#) focuses on People, Place, Planet and Prosperity but place runs throughout each of the strands.

**People** focuses on:

- Management and leadership capability in enterprises and communities
- Entrepreneurial culture and mindset
- Talent attraction and population growth
- Skills development and coordination

**Place** focuses on:

- Strategic place-based planning and development
- Business and innovation infrastructure
- Community resilience
- Community wealth building
- Improve connectivity
- Housing supply and demand
- Inward investment

**Planet** focuses on:

- Net zero evidence base

- Awareness and adoption of the transition to net zero
- Community wealth building/benefit from net zero
- Renewable energy development
- Hydrogen
- Sustainable transport and transport decarbonisation
- Resilience and adaptation

**Prosperity** focuses on:

- Sector development
- Innovation capability and capacity
- Advanced manufacturing and technology/digital adoption
- Social innovation
- Entrepreneurship
- Trade, inward and external investment
- Transition to net zero
- Supply chain development
- Networks, collaborations and clusters

They provide support to build successful, productive and resilient businesses; to enable strong, capable and resourceful communities; and to create the conditions for growth and a green recovery. HIE work with all of the actors and provide direct support to businesses. Within communities they work to ensure entities are strong, and work to help with project development. They have a similar approach to supporting social enterprise.

HIE provide advice, support and funding to support social start-up and recovery in the following areas:

- Governance
- Leadership
- Specialist advice
- Innovation
- Community Assets
- [Scottish Land Fund](#)
- Use of Gaelic
- Culture and Heritage
- Woodland Crofts
- [Community Wealth Building](#)
- [Net-Zero](#)
- [Fair Work](#)
- Decarbonisation plans
- Green jobs potential
- Local food production
- Shared ownership models with wind farms
- Opportunities to adopt low carbon land uses
- [RIPEET](#)
- Benefits from heat resources

On the ground they support sector development activity by creating an environment for new industries to flourish, such as offshore energy and spaceports.



A place-based approach lies at the heart of what they do, with a strong link between economic and community development. They have a long history of adopting a place-based approach, with public sector, communities, businesses and the education sector. Combining their knowledge, resources, skills, and assets to make a difference.

Community led regeneration is fundamental to HIE. Community Wealth Building is a key element of what they do now, supporting inclusive growth and equality, and aiming to retain wealth within a place. It might be different terminology but they have been doing it for years through being smarter at what they do around procurement, employment and skills etc.

HIE empower communities to be active participants. Their approach includes community resilience and capacity, enabling research, access to investment, leadership, innovation, volunteer development, and impact measurement to help communities tell their story. The HIE region boasts the highest levels of community asset ownership. 99% of community owned land and 59% of community owned assets. 1 in 3 people volunteer.

HIE supports by providing advice and assistance, financial support, peer-peer learning, and access to resources. Find out more about how HIE [work with communities](#) and [see HIE's business and community case studies](#).

[View presentation slides](#)

## Open Discussion

Some of the main comments and topics of debate raised are listed below. These varied views and opinions do not necessarily represent the views of SURF or all of the people and organisations present at the workshop.

- *One delegate asked about attracting investment and how that applies to private investment.*

Murray said that HIE work with a lot of organisations and funding bodies but that they also try to attract as much private investment as possible into the region through key partners. Whether it is making attractive areas for businesses to come, such as the Freeport. There are now advances in sectors such as space and renewable energy. Be as active as they can be.

Tricia replied that in terms of current focus, the [National Town Centres Forum](#) meet bi-annually. It contains representatives from across the sector, including private. There is a current discussion on town centre living and bringing in private investment.

Mhairi added that the aim of the forum is looking at how we can do better at creating better places. One roadshow workshop was on how so we attract private investment into town centre living but also how you get the best value out of that. It is about enabling private sector investment through drivers of change.

Euan mentioned the housing crisis in the news as part of wider regeneration issues. Where are the private investors to do that? More housing vs less Scottish Government red tape. Nothing can be done by Scottish Government to address scale.

- *The second question stated that there is a lot of investment for projects but not the planning process. How much consideration is being given to this in light of budget cuts?*

Tricia said that it comes down to capital vs revenue. Can't sustain capital without revenue. They are currently reviewing funding models and have heard the messages coming from communities. For their future funding model, they are looking at programmes they have delivered and what impact has that made. Looking at how can you shift to better support communities.

## 4) Using creativity in regeneration

With introductory presentations from SURF Award winning projects:

Wild Skies Shetland, Deaf Action: Inclusion & Accessibility to the Arts and Beacon Arts Centre, Creative Minds.

Additional presentations were provided by SURF Award partner Creative Scotland and Creative Lives.

### About the event

The final workshop in the series highlighted the 2023 SURF Award winning and highly commended projects in the 'Creative Regeneration' category.

The projects featured are all using creativity and artistic approaches to engage with and support members of their local community.

### First Presentation Summary: [Wild Skies Shetland](#)

*Presenter: Jane Macaulay, Secretary, Wild Skies Shetland*

It's easy to use the word 'remote' and many places in the Highlands and Islands are certainly remote. To get to Unst it is either a 12 hour ferry journey from Aberdeen or 14 hours if you go via Orkney. It is also possible to visit Wild Skies flying in from any of the mainland Scotland airports, then 2.5 hours and two ferry crossings to Unst. It is the most northerly island in Shetland and is known as 'Unst the island above all others.'

As a lot of areas in the Highlands and Islands are remote it has an impact on the economy. Young people leave for university or work and don't come back. The group decided that they needed to do something to help improve the economy. Any small thing that has a benefit on the economy is worth doing, even creating one job.

In the 90's the airport closed, which had primarily been used for the rigs. It had employed 32 people. Then in 2006 the RAF left after having been there for more than 60 years. The island lost 340 personnel which had a huge impact. In terms of population, this resulted in a loss of a third of the population and half of the school roll.

The Wild Skies project was set up in 2018 and was inspired by a sky project in Reykjavik, Iceland. The aim was to showcase Shetland's ever-changing skies. They set up as a registered charity to access funding and used the funding for a feasibility study. They are a constituted body with 7 volunteer trustees, 5 of them live on Unst. This means they meet the [Scottish Land Fund](#) requirements, should they decide to go down the path of community land buy outs.

The original plan centred on a Northern Lights Visitor's Centre. They quickly realised that costs would be too high and would come with expensive overheads. They abandoned the idea of a visitor's centre, which turned out to be the best thing. They re-thought their priorities following the feasibility study.

They hosted a series of small events, including bringing in a planetarium, providing solar eclipse packs, creating bottle rockets, and delivering a theatre performance celebrating 50 years since the first moon landing. The events garnered a lot of attention. Living remotely the economy benefits from every boost it can get, increasing visitor numbers and getting them to stay longer would be a big bonus.

Fun and finances are their aims. To have fun and to provide enjoyable activities at the same time as adding to the local economy.

### **The Sky Trail**

Although the SURF judges were interested in a number of the creative activities they offer, it was the Sky Trail that they concentrated on during the visit. It was a long, slow process getting the Sky Trail to where it is today, with much of the work being done during the Covid restrictions.



There are 13 sites scattered around the island, each in a stunning location. Each site has a different sky related theme, such as the northern lights, storms, meteors, and the effect of the moon on the tides. The website has an interactive map and it is possible to click on each of the sites to read about it and hear the audio, including local fiddle music, Shetland dialect sayings about the weather, or the Music and Dance club playing a St Bernard's waltz. The Sky Trail pulls people in and makes them stay for longer, this is where the regeneration theme creeps in. The website also allows you to visit the Sky Trail from the comfort of your own home.

The colour palettes of all the panels are the same and so each site is linked by its appearance and style, rather than by its geographical location. Each site has a panel with Shetland dialect included first. There are also QR codes on all the panels.

Unst has a rich Viking heritage, with both a Viking long house and Viking long ship situated on the island. In fact, there are 60 Viking sites on the island. The Viking long ship has a QR code to take you to an animated film which helps to explain how Vikings saw the sky. They are heavily indebted to the consultants for developing the brand and technology.

There is also a musical bench playing harp music specially written by a local professional harpist and inspired by the Northern Lights.

They are extremely lucky in the wealth of creative people living on Unst. It is a small population, around 650, and they generally know everyone. That way they 'use' each other in the nicest possible way and weave the skills together to create something very special.

Wild Skies was born in a creative place. It has grown and been nurtured by the creative community. The Trustees claim very little of the success for themselves as it has been an organic growth, with unexpected twists and turns, but always using the sky as the guide and inspiration.

### **Successes**

- Trustees
- No building
- Trails
- Excellent consultants
- One off quirky events
- Strong local roots
- Can-do attitudes
- Relationships with e.g. [Highlands and Islands Enterprise](#) and [Visit Scotland](#)
- USP

All 7 Trustees were handpicked, and each with their own important skill set. They have a wide range of skills, such as a meteorite hunter, science communicator, two physics teachers (one in Lerwick and one on Unst), and one is also a knitting teacher who knitted the planet Mercury for the project.

No building means no overheads, maintenance costs, land issues etc.

Both the Planetary Trail, which is a walk through the solar system, and the Sky Trail have proved very successful. They are outside, can be self-guided and are unusual. The Planetary Trail is smaller than the Sky Trail but it allows you to walk from the sun to Pluto faster than the speed of light, and then have a picnic with puffins on Pluto. It was designed by people living on Unst and contains creative elements such as collage, glassmaking, and knitting.

Wild Skies unusual approach to things has made a difference to how they are perceived, and the enjoyment they can offer. For example, they can show a film in a Viking longhouse, without electricity.

They had excellent consultants right from the start. Both SKS and CMC have gone above and beyond in terms of their input and their genuine interest. They knew they wanted something gentle and folksy and the consultants came up with designs.

The joy of a subject like the sky is that it can encompass art, science, theatre, photography, legend, and music. All art forms with a huge helping of science. They have run a number of one-off quirky events, including sky viewing events, made solar eclipse packs and appeared on national TV, invited a planetarium to Unst, had one-man theatre, and made a film.

They have strong local roots which is probably one of the most important areas. Wild Skies has had huge local support right from the start. Letters of support from the school, local organisations and community groups helped enormously. This is also coupled with can-do-attitudes. This is very definitely from the Trustees, but it is also a broad seam running through the community.

Relationships have also been at the heart of all their successes. Wild Skies has very good relationships with Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Visit Scotland, [Promote Shetland](#), the [National Trust for Scotland](#), and local funders etc. Visit Scotland and Promote Shetland sent influencers to the island. There is nowhere to eat on Unst but Trustees provide hospitality, it is just how it works.

And finally, they have a unique selling point as they are the most northerly point of the British Isles, which can be viewed as fun and quirky. Their differences have made a difference.

## Challenges

- Land ownership
- Planning permission
- Funding
- Volunteer time
- Waiting for others to
- do things
- Weather

Land ownership was always going to be an issue. Land is part of the identity of the people living on Unst. They had to tread very carefully, and be extremely diplomatic. It is often a very slow process but it paid off.

Planning permission is a very long, slow, expensive business. They paid £900 to put up 3 signs.

Funding is, of course, always an issue. They have been lucky and the Trustees' skill sets have paid dividends. They are now setting up to be self-sustaining and are hoping to offer exclusive guided tours to small groups of visitors in 2025 to help generate income.

Volunteer time is unsustainable in the long term as both the Chair and Jane work, in addition to providing 10-15 hours per week volunteering. They are applying to Highlands and Islands Enterprise and other funders to have a Project Development Officer work with them for a 2-3 year period. It is early days and they do not know if they will get the funding.

Waiting for others to do things can prolong processes. Waiting for the Sky Trail hardware to be made and sent, and then for it to be installed locally took a long time. Getting their heads around planning requirements, and for them to respond took time. The National Trust for Scotland move at their own pace. But they were patient.

The weather is always an issue as they have extremes of weather which hold things up, or cancel things completely. For example, a Sky viewing event on a cloudy night is almost impossible.

### **Policy**

Wild Skies has had a lot of help and funding support in terms of capital funding with money for things like the Sky Trail panels and furniture and for organisational support and activities. For example, a local aquaculture company sponsored the launch of the Sky Trail, and Northlink ferries has sponsored visitor travel. VisitScotland and Promote Shetland sent the influences and paid them for guided tours.

Wild Skies has been supported recently by [Business Gateway](#) as they try to find the best route for sustainability both in funding terms and in development terms.

Rural need doesn't always tick the funding boxes. Wild Skies does not fit the urban poverty and deprivation criteria, where much funding is focussed. Deprivation in Shetland is often measured by access, to the hospital for example. They are 2 hours from the hospital, with 2 ferry crossings. However, their shopping bills are considerably higher than mainland Shetland and, of course, mainland Scotland. There are many families struggling with the cost of living but with the way the criteria are worded, Wild Skies is excluded from the start. This reduces options.

Travel costs, both within and in and out of Shetland, are also huge so travel for many families is out of the question. It is very expensive to live on Unst. Wild Skies aims to provide local, free activities as often as is possible.

[View presentation slides](#)

## **Second Presentation Summary: [Deaf Action: Inclusion & Accessibility to the Arts](#)**

*Presenter: Philip Gerrard, CEO, Deaf Action*

Deaf Action was set up in 1835 to provide a range of services to the deaf community throughout Scotland. They were the first deaf organisation.

Deaf Action has a vision that by 2027 Edinburgh will have a festival season that gives the best of both worlds; festivals accessible to the deaf community and a week of deaf culturally specific events. Integration alongside cultural celebration, giving the deaf community the opportunity to sample and enjoy the festival season in its entirety.

Philip asked how many people had been to the Edinburgh Festival, either the Fringe, Book, International etc. A mass number of events are included and the Fringe has existed for around 77 years but he noticed that there was not much deaf participation included.

Deaf people want to be involved in performance, whether on stage, backstage or watching. They had the idea to do something about that. Wanted to add another festival into the mix as part of the wider festival family, not isolated and stand alone. Where everyone can fit in.

### **Edinburgh Deaf Festival (EDF) vision for 2025-27**

Social and strategic aims:

- Striving for quality of access to information, advice & services.
- Improve social inclusion, supporting people to become active citizens.
- Celebrate deaf culture, language & heritage, offering nurturing community spaces.
- Realise the unique deaf cultural value of Albany Street.
- Grow interpreting service.
- Expand deaf awareness training.
- Increase efforts to celebrate Deaf Culture in Scotland.

They want there be a to be a renowned “signing quarter” of Edinburgh in the vicinity of Deaf Action, where local hospitality venues will have had deaf awareness and basic BSL training so are able to make deaf customers feel comfortable. Deaf people may not be familiar with going to theatre or shows due to access, they want to bridge the gap but also between non-deaf people accessing the deaf world.

Deaf Action’s social and strategic aims include:

- **Quality of access to information, advice & services:** Deaf Action is a venue, but also a ‘hub’ for deaf people to visit. They can get information about events happening at the EDF and other festivals in Edinburgh, book interpreters, network, socialise, etc.
- **Improve social inclusion:** They will work with lots of other organisations to support and promote accessible events like BSL tours. Organisations include the [National Gallery](#), [National Museum of Scotland](#), [Botanic Garden](#), [Book Festival](#), and the [Edinburgh International Festival](#).
- They are currently in the process of making the **BSL Signing Quarter** a reality. Starting with some coffee shops local to their venue.

The Fringe programme is so long and for a deaf person they need to work out what is visual, has interpreters, BSL etc. It can be very overwhelming. They wanted to create a hub, like a train station information board, that has easy access to information in one place. They want to celebrate deaf culture and heritage. Welcome people into their world.

They also want to make sure a lot more interpreters are available and registered and safe to practice. Deaf people need to be included and have opportunities to develop. Unst has challenges getting people to them due to distance but deaf people have remote barriers too.

Another aim is celebrating deaf culture, language & heritage, offering nurturing community spaces. They want to bring the arts to deaf audiences, giving deaf people access to festivals in a way that they haven’t had before.



## How?

They want to flip the status quo. Rather than deaf people going to hearing-led shows they will welcome hearing audiences to experience and learn about deaf culture and deaf performance.



Deaf people have a right to access the arts and they want to go to events. Deaf artists have as much to offer as hearing people. By including deaf people, you are opening yourself up to a new culture, new experiences.

The first EDF started 2 years ago. August 2024 will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> Festival. It is still new and developing. At first they were worried people wouldn't show up but they were overwhelmed. You have to bring deaf people in and promote opportunities. If what you are offering is not familiar to that world you need to bring them in. For

example, the Book Festival had an event running at the same time and had 80 attendees. They opened the door to collaboration with Deaf Action. They had never before seen so many deaf people or had that level of demand.

The EDF wants to give new performers a platform to springboard their career. There is a 50/50 split on deaf and hearing people in the audience. Philip gave the example of a stand-up comedian and BSL user who is now touring with John Bishop. He also noted Rose's appearance on Strictly and the impact that it had. Deaf people have the skills; they just need the opportunity.

### 2023 Festival stats:

- 10 day celebrating deaf culture, language, and heritage
- Welcomed almost 2,000 people through our doors
- 70+ events including comedy, theatre, debates, film, tours & workshops
- 15 interpreters & captioners
- 90+ interpreted & captioned shows
- 27 volunteers supporting staff

### Challenges

Funding is always a challenge for festivals. Interpreters aren't enough, they want deaf artists and their stories. There also might not be many funding opportunities for deaf artists, and if there are they are often written in English, which isn't accessible. Lots of panels who make funding decisions are all hearing with no deaf representation. They often don't fully understand the application or interpreter/translation might not fit with what was signed. Hearing applicants are then chosen over deaf ones.

Lots of opportunities in the arts focus on hearing performers, whether they realise it or not. There are many barriers for deaf people, including access to information such as: no interpreters or BSL translations available, directors/producers not being able to sign to communicate, alone in a hearing work environment, or unable to network with people at events.

There are barriers for deaf people to access courses and therefore lack the knowledge to train as production team members. For 2024, Deaf Action are offering a work placement to a deaf lighting technician/operator at the EDF festival to nurture deaf talent.

Performance interpreting can be daunting and challenging. How do you know if interpretations are good or not, or they are not maintaining the level of the show? They need to be trained to the

highest level. Different challenges for interpreter's doing performance, it is not same as a medical setting etc. Deaf Action are growing their in-house interpreting team and encouraging them to explore different areas of interpreting. At last year's festival two of the new graduates interpreted an Abba Drag night and it was fantastic.

Philip concluded by showing a film.

[View presentation slides](#)

### Third Presentation Summary: [Beacon Arts Centre, Creative Minds](#)

*Presenter: Karen Townsend, Co-Director, Beacon Arts Centre*

They have just completed the second Creative Minds festival due to community request. It now looks to be a permanent part of the programme.

Inverclyde is located in West Central Scotland on the coast and is one of the country's most attractive places to live and work. The area offers spectacular scenery, sporting and leisure opportunities, a vibrant housing market, and well developed transport links. Main towns of Greenock, Port Glasgow, and Gourock sit on the Firth of Clyde. Coastal settlements Inverkip and Wemyss Bay sit to the south west, and picturesque villages Kilmacolm and Quarriers Village are located further inland. All add to the area's social, economic, and physical diversity.

A strong sense of community identity exists, particularly within local neighbourhoods. Citizens are proud of their area and history, steeped in centuries of maritime and industrial endeavour. Inverclyde was second only to a place in England for its number of witch trials.

Inverclyde is subject to an ageing population and de-population, driven by a lack of employment opportunities and markers of multiple deprivation. Greenock and Port Glasgow experience some of the worst income inequality in Scotland. The Beacon is located in Scotland's most deprived area as identified by the 2020 [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#). After World War II, shipbuilding moved to other centres, leaving only one on the Clyde. In the 1950s, IBM brought 5,500 jobs and occupied a site a mile long, but all buildings had been demolished and jobs moved by 2020. In 2023, the Amazon distribution centre closed with the loss of 300 jobs. In February 2024, BT announced the closure of the EE Call Centre with the loss of 450 jobs, and consultation began on the closure of the main police station.

Inverclyde's challenges create a unique set of circumstances and makes the Beacon's role in delivering arts activity and improving quality of life crucial. Involvement in the arts remains high. Over one third of the 37,406 Inverclyde households have visited the Beacon, cementing the organisation as a pillar of its arts scene.

The Beacon's mission is to make the arts accessible to all. Driving this mission is their firm belief that the performing arts improve quality of life, thereby playing a vital role in society. Engaging in the performing arts is an emotional and social experience that opens up new possibilities. Participation at any level has been shown to improve physical and mental health which contributes to the wellbeing of the local community.

#### **History**

1946 the Greenock Arts Guild was established on the premises of a disused public swimming pool by the citizens of Inverclyde as a memorial for the 271 people killed during the Greenock Blitz and others from the region who had lost their lives as a result of World War II. Its purpose was to promote local participation in arts activities.

1949 the Arts Guild Theatre opened, with two meeting rooms and a 100-seat theatre.

1955 the Main Auditorium was completed and opened, its raked seating formed from the slope of the old swimming pool.

1956 the Greenock Players became the first amateur dramatic society broadcast live on television from the Arts Guild Theatre. The theatre hosts amateur and professional companies throughout the next five decades.

2006 funding was awarded for the theatre refurbishment; the project changed into the relocation and building of a new purpose-built multi-purpose theatre and arts space.

2012 the Arts Guild Theatre hosted its final performance and in 2013 the Beacon Arts Centre opened.

2022 the Beacon begins co-productions and in-house pantomime and in 2023 the Beacon Arts Centre celebrated its 10th anniversary.

The pandemic enabled the Beacon's community engagement work to really accelerate. Recovery funding for the arts was centred around the community. This enabled the Beacon Arts Centre to work with an awful lot of community groups, and when they were putting the bid together for the second round of [Culture Collective funding](#) they started to think about all of these organisations that they work with and all of the different media that they work in, and how they could bring that all together to celebrate it. This is how the Creative Minds Festival was born.

A lot of the community groups that they work with think that they are not creative, which is ridiculous. The team wanted them to be able to work on whatever they wanted to work on, and for them to feel reassured that there was no pressure at all. This was a great way of getting those groups on board that were a bit more reticent. For this reason, the process and the lead up to the festival itself was equally, if not just as, important as the festival.

The way that the Creative Minds Festival worked was that different community groups were invited to work in partnership with artists to then present something at the festival, and the artists were very carefully selected to complement the ideas that community groups had for the creative projects that they wanted to do. This was their opportunity to express themselves creatively, and the Beacon were there to facilitate that happening.



Some groups knew exactly what they want to do straight away, and some didn't have a clue. They had lots of cups of tea and lots of conversation. Within the process things did change and evolve and people thought of different things that they wanted to do and they just adapted and went with that.

A lot of those people hadn't really engaged in a creative process like that before. This is a very deprived area of Scotland with all of the barriers that come with that, and people often think the arts is not for them. The team did whatever was needed to be done to make that process easier for people, welcoming them and having conversations and listening as well. They brought the groups into the building multiple times, and took them backstage.

They showed them the spaces that they would be in, they met the tech guys. It is quite exciting getting behind the scenes, but actually they were showing them that they are part of this building too.

The team had open and honest conversations with them about risk assessments and about security. The kind of things that might have been an elephant in the room. Everybody felt safe in the space because they had things in place to make them safe.

Since the completion of the festival they have had a lot of reports from people saying that they feel welcomed into the building and it was somewhere that they haven't really gone into before. They are seeing the place in a different light now.

On the days of the Creative Minds Festival all of the groups came together and could witness each other's work. It was a real celebration of creativity. The day was well attended and not just by the people who were associated with the groups but by the public as well. Even when there wasn't an actual event taking place there was lots of time for people to just go and look at things and engage that way too. So many different groups were there who would never normally have crossed paths. Everything came together brilliantly and what a beautiful thing it was to see how proud people were of their work.

At the Beacon they don't want to just come in, do a project, tick some boxes and disappear. They want to build trusted relationships with local groups and people and individuals. There is not one single group that were involved in the Creative Minds that doesn't want to do more. These are creative people and now they have this completely different relationship with the arts. They all want to keep working with the Beacon and they are the ones coming with the ideas now. They recognise that the team can help them to amplify what they want to talk about. They are trying to do their own things now, and they are wanting to do something much more long term.

Since the Creative Minds Festival, the people of Inverclyde are seeing the Beacon as a resource. This festival has demystified the building and helped to bridge that gap making people realise it's actually their space to come into. For the Beacon to be part of the regeneration of Inverclyde as a wonderful creative place to live is an amazing thing. The team just want to keep building on that momentum.

## Open Discussion

Some of the main comments and areas of debate are listed below. These varied views and opinions do not necessarily represent the views of SURF or all of the people and organisations present at the workshop.

- *The first delegate said that coming from a local authority all 3 presentations have been inspiring and asked how they manage, monitor and demonstrate value.*

Jane answered that it was actually very difficult at the beginning of the Planetary Trail. They have a visitor's book but not everyone signs it. The Sky Trail is very new. They made a presentation to the travel trade regarding exclusive tours, they are able to monitor those numbers. The trails are open to everyone and you don't need guide, so it is difficult to monitor numbers. They will need to do it for funding.

Phillip said that collaboration is so important. For the festival in August they are in discussion with partners to see if their systems can be adjusted to include whether or not people are deaf.

Euan mentioned knowing the benefits of being involved in arts and creativity but ongoing need for data.

- *A delegate said that the EDF being part of the wider International Festival is fantastic for influence but Philip was asked if there were other places they looked to for best practice?*

Phillip said that Scotland as a whole has so much history. The first deaf school was in Edinburgh. There is a Deaf Festival in France but it is not integrated, and that there is also an isolated Deaf Film Festival in Wolverhampton. This was the first of its kind and had people from other countries seeing this. Integration can happen and Scotland is leading the way.

- *Philip was asked if interpreters for theatre actually perform and if there is a way of casting interpreters.*

Phillip replied that you need to build on experience. There is no specific qualification. There can be a mix of results. You need to get it right. [Summer Hall](#) has a budget for interpreters and they normally book a single interpreter to cover 6 shows. This time they approached Deaf Action as experts to find the correct fit. It might be that interpreters are not needed, for example if there is a racial dynamic. You need to do it properly or not at all.

## Fourth Presentation Summary: [Creative Scotland](#)

*Presenter: Karen Dick, Head of Place, Partnerships and Communities, Creative Scotland*

Creative Scotland, inclusive of [Screen Scotland](#), are the national body that supports arts, screen and creative industries. They are a non-departmental government body funded by Scottish Government and the [National Lottery Community Fund](#). They manage relationships with local authorities, [ALEOs](#) and Trusts. They are a Non-Departmental Public Body of the Scottish Government, and their remit is set out in Part 4 of the [Public Services Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#), which describes six general functions of Creative Scotland, including: Identifying, supporting and developing quality and excellence in the arts and culture from those engaged in artistic and other creative endeavours, and encouraging as many people as possible to access and participate in the arts and culture.

The Place, Partnerships and Communities team leads on areas which are place or communities based, including creative regeneration, community engaged creative practice, Gaelic Arts, Traditional Arts, Scots, Intangible Cultural Heritage, and programmes like our Place Partnership with local authorities and Culture Collective programmes.

Creative Scotland developed a refreshed [Strategic Framework in 2021](#), which is aligned to their remit and legislative duties and sets out priorities for supporting the arts, screen and creative industries. People and organisations working in the arts and creativity are supported to make work of quality and ambition that enriches life in Scotland for all. They work to ensure that more people from all parts of society are accessing and participating in a range of artistic and creative activities. Art and creativity is being recognised by people at home and abroad as a central part of our nation.

They do this through funding, advocacy and development work, in partnership with local and national government, other national cultural and creative bodies, and the individuals and organisations they fund, partner and support.

Creative Scotland work across 4 key areas;

- **Equalities, diversity and inclusion (EDI)** - Supporting a diverse range of creative people, communities and activity. Promoting an equality of opportunity to create, participate and engage.
- **Sustainable Development** - Helping tackle the climate emergency and supporting the growth of sustainable creative businesses across Scotland.
- **Fair Work** - Promoting fair pay, conditions and employment opportunities across the creative sector. Not just about pay and industry standards but conditions and treatment.

- **International** - Developing innovative and sustainable ways of strengthening international collaboration and promoting creative and cultural exchange.

Creative Scotland have six funding criteria, which include the four strategic priorities EDI, Environmental Sustainability, Fair Work, and International, as well as Quality and Ambition, and Engagement.

They want to support individuals and organisations across Scotland to develop and deliver high quality work that reflects Scotland's diversity and distinct identity. Quality can be evident in the creative outcome, in the creative process, in the experience for audiences and participants, or a combination of these. High quality work results from having a strong creative vision and an effective creative process and the knowledge, skills and expertise to deliver it.

In some instances, putting place and communities at the heart of this activity can provide audiences and participants with high quality cultural and creative experiences and adds value to localities and communities of practice.

People can engage with cultural and creative activity in many ways. Through being creators, participants or consumers. For some applicants to their funding, engagement may be with the communities they work in and with, or with other professionals who work in the cultural and creative sector. They want to ensure that alongside the work they fund is the opportunity for everyone in Scotland to engage with it, wherever they are. Engaging audiences in activity happens in different ways and in different settings, from cultural buildings and public institutions to smaller scale informal venues, outdoors and even in the home. Technology has changed the way everyone operates, and this is keenly felt across the culture and creative sector where it has enabled new ways of working. Focusing work on the needs of specific groups can help to shape and represent Scotland's places and communities, bring significant benefit to learners, including children and young people, and to Scotland's diverse language communities.

Creative Scotland expect all applicants to address the funding criteria, although the International criterion is optional, and should only be answered if you are engaging in international activity. They strongly advise that you read the funding criteria to fully understand each area.

Creative Scotland have four main routes for [funding](#):

- **Multi-Year (previously Regular) Funding** – this fund, which offered funding for multiple years, is now closed for applications, with the outcomes expected to be announced in October.
- The National Lottery **Open Funding** programmes are the main funding programmes.

They also have various programmes available through **Targeted Funding** and **Funding Delivered by Partners**.

For Funding specific to the screen sector, please check [Screen Scotland's website](#).

### [Open Funding](#)

The National Lottery Open Funding for Individuals and National Lottery Open Funding for Organisations are both funds with no deadlines, which can fund up to £100,000, for between 18 and 24 months, depending on whether you're applying as an organisation or individual.

The programme will fund many types of projects, from bands wanting to record albums to organisations running their yearly arts programme.



There are some restrictions on who can apply and what Creative Scotland can support. They can't support students in full-time education. They can't support organisations who are based outwith Scotland, for activity which mainly takes place outwith Scotland. They don't support activity which has already happened or applications for equipment only.

The guidance for each of the Individual and Organisation Open Funds will detail the full extent of eligibility requirements.

These are the main funds for anyone applying. These are, therefore, under severe pressure and only around a third of all applicants can be supported. Even if your application has no major weaknesses, and the assessor recommends it for funding, at the moment, they are simply not able to support most of the great projects which apply. You will be able to request your assessment, and it is recommended that everyone does this even if they are successful, but the issue may simply be that there is not enough money to go round. This can be frustrating, as there's little that applicants can do about this.

Creative Scotland has to make difficult choices and support a varied portfolio of applications: these include considering artforms, the geography and communities of Scotland, projects working with target groups like young people, the size and types of companies, and supporting good projects to continue along with ensuring that new projects can be developed.

### **Targeted Funding**

Includes:

- Youth Music Initiative – Access to Music Making and Strengthening Youth Music
- Touring Fund for Theatre and Dance
- Screen Funding

The Youth Music Initiative supports activity in music-making, and the Touring Fund for Theatre and Dance supports producing organisations to apply for funding to develop their shows for touring. One important aspect of the fund is that it is designed to support all costs of the show, and Creative Scotland expect that during the tour, the venue will retain 80% of the box office to support them to diversify their programme, with the company keeping 20% to support future development.

### **Funding Delivered by Partners**

Much of Creative Scotland's funding, including targeted funding, is delivered by partners in the sector. In many cases, they have worked with partners to develop programmes which they are best suited to deliver.

Some of these include work with [Fèisean nan Gàidheal](#), who manage and deliver Tasgadh a small grants programme for Traditional Arts, and [Maoin nan Ealan Gàidhlig](#) who support Gaelic Arts projects. The [National Lottery Awards for All Fund](#) is a partnership between Creative Scotland, [sportscotland](#) and National Lottery Community Fund. The application process is managed by the Community Fund on behalf of the three partners. Creative Scotland's investment in Awards for All is intended to extend the reach of their funding, so people already funded by Creative Scotland are not necessarily a priority for support, and it will support projects up to £10k for up to one year. The creative part of Awards for All is also under extreme pressure, with an average success rate of 35%.

### **Funding Pointers**

- Is it the right funder/funding programme.

- One of the other National Lottery distributors may be more appropriate: National Lottery Heritage Fund or National Lottery Community Fund.
- Your project may fit one of Creative Scotland's Targeted or Devolved funds better.
- Read the guidance.
- Make sure your budget adds up.
- Speak to the Enquiries team.
- Remember: there is huge demand on funds, and only around a third of applications can be supported.

Some things to think about:

Are you targeting the right funder/funding programme? One of the other National Lottery distributors may be more appropriate, for example the [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) or National Lottery Community Fund if your project is primarily about heritage or focussed on communities rather than creativity.

Your project may fit one of Creative Scotland's Targeted or Devolved funds better, so check these before applying. And sign up for the [newsletter](#) to make sure you know about new opportunities.

Rising costs and lack of funding means there is a huge demand for their programmes, so budgets are under pressure. Make sure you send in all of the documentation required.

In addition to funding, Creative Scotland are a development agency and support place-based programmes.

They deliver the [Place Partnership Programme](#) which provides opportunities to make a change in a place, based on challenges or existing issues, like in Moray. They have been operating the Scottish Borders Place Partnership for over 10 years. North and South Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway are not included as they were already doing it. They have had Place Partnerships in 16 local authorities since 2011 and the programme is ongoing.

[Culture Collective](#) started in 2020, funded by the Scottish Government, and was designed as a Covid Relief Fund to support artists and freelancers to ensure that they got paid. It has become a network of creative practitioners, organisations and communities. The projects are providing employment opportunities for creative practitioners and are actively engaging people in shaping the future cultural life of their community. It included 26 collectives delivering for up to 2 years. This has led to thinking around how they can take learning from programmes and build on it. What is important when working with communities is that you are not doing things to them, and that the work is driven and determined by the communities themselves, supported by organisations and artists.

Creative Scotland provide support for SURF as a key delivery partner and they are also proud to continue sponsorship of the Creative Regeneration Award. Similarly, they have joined [Scotland's Towns Partnership](#) and sponsor the Scotland Loves Local creative town award.

They are currently undertaking research with [Community Leisure UK](#) and sportscotland on local government support for culture and leisure in Scotland. This will help them develop their partnerships with local authorities, who are a key partner and funder of arts and culture in local communities.

Karen concluded by mentioning a recent Culture Value Summit that was held. It was not just looking at money given to local authorities but also the pressure on staff etc. They will publish later this year to start a conversation on supporting culture in communities.

[View presentation slides](#)

## Fifth Presentation Summary: [Creative Lives](#)

*Presenter: Phoenix Archer, Community Engagement Officer, Creative Lives*

Creative Lives have been around for over 30 years, previously known as Voluntary Arts Scotland, and support creative organisations to do the work talked about at the workshop.

They work to 3 main strategic aims:

- Building strong connections and relationships to support participation in creative cultural activity.
- Demonstrating how taking part in creative cultural activity improves social connectedness.
- Opening up more public spaces for creative cultural activity.

They support organisations to turn the work done throughout the sector into tangible outcomes. Working across all 4 UK nations and the RoI.

It is good to say let's collaborate but will we actually do it? Creative Lives help to support making it happen. We were all affected by the pandemic but by working together using creative arts to reduce isolation it helped to make a difference. Creative Lives supported those grassroots activities.

Post-pandemic and the cost of living crisis has resulted in empty and derelict buildings. Some have been taken into community ownership or repurposed for creative uses, such as pubs being used for creative activity. Creative Lives are now working with libraries to do the same thing. They have a [toolkit](#) on their website.

There have been changes to the organisational structure within Creative Lives. This has occurred due to changes in the creative environment, a lack of resources, and more demand from creative grassroots groups and communities. They now have Place, Policy and Profile teams. This has made the organisation nimbler to support others.

The Policy Team don't just work with national organisations but also with grassroots organisations to deliver policies such as constitutions etc. They work to raise profile for the sector through social media and influencing. Working with organisations that do similar things. All of the strands of their work are intertwined. They also now have an academic partnership with interns doing research on gender inequalities and differences in the arts.

Their [Creativity Map](#) showcases all of the grassroots organisations in Scotland and allows people to find groups near them.

Creative Lives offer a [Microgrants Programme](#), in partnership with [Scottish Communities Alliance](#) and the Scottish Government, which helps support activity such as; to a community studio to deliver various projects, events and exhibitions; and to support engagement with a wide range of participants including autistic young people, low-income families, the elderly, people with mental ill health, and disengaged youth. Creative Lives directly supported former SURF Award winner [RIG Arts](#) to adapt and respond to unique challenges presented by the pandemic, and the investment continues to benefit delivery to this day.

Post-pandemic there has been a focus on supporting organisations to let space, get materials and transport costs. Recent recipients include [Sewing2ogether All Nations](#) based in Paisley, a project for migrant women. A little bit of money makes a big difference.

They offer their own Awards scheme called the [Creative Lives Awards](#), which provide an opportunity to demonstrate best practice. Awards provide the argument for creative people being around the

table. When grassroots organisations apply for the Awards it is not just about winning but writing down what is special about them. Helps them to realise what they have achieved. Gave an example of [a project celebrating International Men's Day](#).

Phoenix highlighted their newsletter. By [subscribing to the email newsletter](#) you will receive regular updates from Creative Lives including news, opportunities, events, and resources

Creative Lives also provide opportunities to bring people together that are not normally together. They host thematic and regional networks, roundtable discussions and peer to peer groups. They also offer a specific group for local authority cultural departments. These networks and roundtables support advocacy and policy work; everyone should have the right to access creative opportunities.

You can't build resilience if you are not resilient. There is a support network around the staff team to encourage and support people to get the most out of their role. A happier, healthier organisation is better placed to support others.

[View presentation slides](#)

End of paper

Emma Scott, Events, Information and Communications Manager

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