



The SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration

Information paper

Organised by SURF in partnership with the Scottish Government

With additional support from Creative Scotland,
Scotland's Towns Partnership, Scottish Procurement Alliance (SPA),
Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and South of Scotland Enterprise.



SURF – sharing experience : shaping practice

About the SURF Awards

The SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration are organised and delivered by SURF in partnership with the Scottish Government.

The purpose of the SURF Awards process is:

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

The SURF Awards are open to any project or initiative, taking place in Scotland, which is currently in place or which has been completed within two years of the closing date.

Why You Should Enter

Demonstrating Value

The SURF Awards are widely recognised as the most prestigious in the field of Scottish community regeneration. Past winning and shortlisted projects report that recognition in the SURF Awards process has been beneficial in demonstrating their success and value to partner bodies and funding agencies.

Recognition and Team Building

The SURF Awards process is helpful in increasing wider awareness of the often underappreciated hard work that goes into regeneration projects large and small. It also supports team-building by recognising the contribution of partners, management, staff and volunteers.

Showcasing Success

Winning projects in each of five award categories will be presented with a certificate from a leading Scottish Government Minister at a high-profile celebratory dinner event on Thursday 4th December in Glasgow. Winning projects will also be showcased in a variety of SURF and Scottish Government events, publications and online channels in 2026.

National Profile

A special SURF Awards publication will highlight all shortlisted entries. It will be widely distributed to over 3000 regeneration stakeholders and key policy-makers across Scotland.

About SURF

As Scotland's Regeneration Forum, SURF uses its extensive cross-sector membership of over 300 organisations to explore current practice, experience and knowledge in community regeneration. SURF provides many opportunities for the sharing of information and ideas through its annual programme of events, research, publications and informal networking.

The outcomes of this interactive process are used to inform and influence the development of more successful regeneration policy and practice. SURF does this through its links with relevant networks and policy-makers in national and local government and other regeneration related agencies.

Further information is available on our website:

www.surf.scot

About the Judging Panel

Applications to the 2025 SURF Awards will be assessed by an experienced and independent panel of judges. They are selected from national bodies and community groups that are concerned with community regeneration in Scotland. All judges give their time and expertise to the SURF Awards process generously and without remuneration.

What is Community Regeneration?

SURF takes a wide view of regeneration as encompassing social, physical, economic, environmental and cultural activities across all geographies and sectors. While each aspect can be an important part of the process, SURF believes that successful and sustainable strategies to regenerate struggling communities will be holistic and community focused. Lastly, SURF recognises the enhancement of individual and community wellbeing as the ultimate goal of any authentic regeneration process.

SURF 
AWARDS
2025



About the Application Process

We know that those involved in regeneration at all levels are already busy, especially given the additional challenges this year, so the SURF Awards application form and process is designed to be as brief and clear as possible.

Projects can be nominated for a SURF Award by email or post. Applications can either be self-nominated or by a third party.

Projects are only allowed to enter in one category in any given year.

The judges will wish to visit at least three shortlisted projects in each category before deciding upon an overall winner. The category winners will be announced at a celebratory awards dinner in Glasgow on the evening of Thursday 4th December 2025.

Please note that the judging panel have limited time to carry out the project visits, and therefore will specify which date they will visit the project. The visit period will take place between Monday 22nd Sept and Wednesday 22nd Oct.

We will welcome and acknowledge all applications and will be able to offer limited feedback on request to projects that are not shortlisted.

Award Entry Categories

There are five categories of entry in the 2025 SURF Awards:

Improving Scotland's Places (see page 4)

Housing and Regeneration (see page 5)

Removing Barriers to Employability (see page 6)

Creative Regeneration (see page 7)

Community Led Regeneration (see page 8)

In making your entry, you are asked to respond directly to the judging criteria for the category you wish to enter.

How to Apply

SURF Award applications should consist only of a completed application form for the selected category.

The SURF Awards judging panel will consider how applicants respond to the specified category criteria in making their assessment. Optionally, applicants may also include a link to a project website and/or a YouTube video of up to two minutes in length.

Please do not supply any other materials or information as this will not be made available to the judges for consideration.

Category application forms are available by visiting the 'SURF Awards' section of the SURF website:

<https://surf.scot/surf-awards/surf-awards-2025>

You can also request a hard copy by contacting the SURF staff team using the details below.

Completed application forms can be submitted by email or post. Please email completed submissions to emma@surf.scot

The closing date for applications to the 2025 SURF Awards is 5pm on **Monday 1st September 2025**.

For any queries about how to submit an application for the 2025 SURF Awards, please send an email to Emma Scott at emma@surf.scot



Badgers are one of nature's ecosystem engineers due to their ability to alter and shape the environment. Creating better surroundings for nature and other species to thrive. In the same way, we hope that planned regeneration activity brings positive outcomes for communities.

Improving Scotland's Places

The 2025 SURF Award for Improving Scotland's Places

Context – Effective place-based regeneration is a key policy priority for the Scottish Government, Scotland's Towns Partnership, SURF and others. There is a shared interest in increased collaboration across public, private, third and community sectors to support the revitalisation of towns, villages, high streets and neighbourhoods. The practical place focus is increasingly seen as helpful in considering wider physical, social and economic challenges.

Purpose – The Improving Scotland's Places 2025 SURF Awards category will identify, celebrate and share the positive impacts of participative planning and regeneration processes in Scottish places.

Scale – Entries to this category will be considered from defined places such as towns, villages, high streets and city neighbourhoods, but not wider regions or whole cities.

Criteria – Entries will be expected to show the journey that the place has been on, demonstrating progress against the following aspects:

PARTICIPATION:

- *How has the project supported effective participation with the community, public and third sector organisations, and other bodies;*

RESILIENT ECONOMY:

- *In what ways has the project improved economic opportunities for local people and businesses, and delivered better engagement with private businesses and social enterprises;*

OUTCOMES FOR THE COMMUNITY:

- *How has the project achieved social and other benefits for local residents, workers and service users;*

PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS:

- *How has the project improved the whole place, such as better public spaces, access to public services, transport and digital infrastructure;*

PRIDE OF PLACE:

- *How has the project improved the image/ identity of the place, and enhanced 'pride of place'.*



A 2025 SURF Awards application form for the Improving Scotland's Places category is available at the following link: <https://surf.scot/surf-awards/surf-awards-2025>

The Improving Scotland's Places SURF Award category is delivered in partnership with Scotland's Towns Partnership.



Housing and Regeneration

The 2025 Award for Best Practice in Delivering Wider Regeneration Benefits from Investments in Housing

Context – The provision of appropriate, affordable, good quality housing is frequently a central element in successful regeneration efforts. The physical, economic and social impacts of housing investments have the potential to greatly enhance wider regeneration outcomes. As progressive local authorities, Housing Associations and other providers have often proved, realising those broader social benefits requires thoughtful and proactive cross sector collaboration.



Purpose – The 2025 SURF Award for Housing and Regeneration is intended to recognise and promote the achievements of all housing providers in ensuring that their investments are planned and delivered in a way which produces substantial, lasting benefits to resident communities and the shared aims of wider regeneration partners.

Criteria – Entries will be expected to demonstrate the following:

NEED:

- *The demand for the project and the appropriateness of the response;*

COOPERATION:

- *Effective partnership collaboration in producing an appropriate strategy and practical outcomes;*

ENGAGEMENT:

- *Evidence of meaningful community engagement in the development process;*

OUTCOMES:

- *Evidence of wider regeneration benefits, beyond housing itself, for the area(s) and/or target community(ies);*

SUSTAINABILITY:

- *A realistic plan for building on the initial benefits of the development, towards its wider and longer term legacy.*

A 2025 SURF Awards application form for the Housing and Regeneration category is available at the following link: <https://surf.scot/surf-awards/surf-awards-2025>

The Housing and Regeneration SURF Award category is delivered in partnership with the Scottish Procurement Alliance (SPA).



Removing Barriers to Employability

The 2025 Award for Best Practice in Removing Barriers to Employability

Context – Services that successfully support people into employment make a valuable contribution to the regeneration of places with social and economic challenges. The removal of barriers is a key component in supporting people, particularly those from excluded groups, to progress into employment, training or education.



Purpose – This 2025 SURF Award will be presented to a project that supports community regeneration by providing skills and employability support to help people fulfil their potential.

Criteria – Entries will be expected to demonstrate the following:

EFFECTIVENESS:

- *Evidence an ability to progress participants into sustained positive destinations;*

FLEXIBILITY and CREATIVITY:

- *Detail flexibility, creativity and tailored support to individuals;*

INCLUSION and BARRIER REMOVAL:

- *Showcase examples of the support offered which encourages inclusion and assists barrier removal and the successful progression into employment, education or training;*

COLLABORATION and PARTNERSHIP:

- *Evidence effective engagement with partners, or other organisations, to support participant's progression;*

LEGACY:

- *Be able to evidence successful learning outcomes, models of good practice and examples of how you have/will share this with others.*

A 2025 SURF Awards application form for the Removing Barriers to Employability category is available at the following link: <https://surf.scot/surf-awards/surf-awards-2025>

Creative Regeneration

The 2025 SURF Award for Best Practice in Creative Approaches to Community Regeneration

Context – Arts and creativity enriches all our lives; helping tell the world who we are, bringing people together, and making an important contribution to the wellbeing and economy of communities across Scotland. Creative approaches to cultural, social and economic regeneration can bring new ways of working with communities and help understand and address local challenges and opportunities. This has never been so apparent or necessary, with communities everywhere facing significant challenges.

Purpose – This 2025 SURF Awards category will reward best practice in placing artists, arts and creativity at the heart of place-based community regeneration efforts, increasing the potential of places.

Criteria – Entries will be expected to demonstrate:

NEED:

- *An evidenced need for the project, including demand from the community;*

ENGAGEMENT:

- *Involvement from the community, working with artists in the concept, design and delivery of a project which benefits the local community;*

CREATIVITY:

- *Creative approaches designed to celebrate and enhance cultural and artistic ambitions that are rooted in the local community or encourage ongoing creative activity locally. Under this criterion the judges will also consider how creative organisations support the communities, artists and creative practitioners;*

COOPERATION:

- *Evidence of appropriate and effective partnership working;*

OUTCOMES:

- *Practical benefits from the work of the project, for example, increased creative activity and resources, community cohesion and wellbeing, or localised economic growth;*

SUSTAINABILITY:

- *How the project can continue to support communities in the longer term, or develop the work of the organisation/project, such as by increasing organisational activity, capacity or environmental sustainability.*



A 2025 SURF Awards application form for the Creative Regeneration category is available at the following link: <https://surf.scot/surf-awards/surf-awards-2025>

The Creative Regeneration SURF Award category
is supported by Creative Scotland.



Community Led Regeneration

The 2025 SURF Award for Best Practice in Community Led Regeneration

Context – Community led regeneration has long been advocated by SURF and others, as the best way of achieving more successful and sustainable local outcomes. A range of national regeneration policies and resources are now aimed at supporting and enhancing the active engagement of local people and their vital knowledge, assets and initiatives.

Purpose – This 2025 SURF Awards category will reward best practice in a regeneration project which features representatives of a community of place or theme in a leading role.



Criteria – Entries will be expected to demonstrate the following aspects:

NEED:

- *The demand for the project;*

LOCAL LEADERSHIP:

- *High level involvement of the local community in the conception, design and operation of the project;*

ACTIVITY:

- *Enhanced levels of participation and cohesion within the community concerned;*

OUTCOMES:

- *Benefits for the wider community, including positive impacts in preventing or offsetting deprivation or exclusion;*

COOPERATION:

- *Evidence of committed partnership activity;*

SUSTAINABILITY:

- *A practical vision for the viability of the project in the longer term.
(If relevant to your project, you should demonstrate financial or environmental viability and/or commitment towards fair work practices)*

A 2025 SURF Awards application form for the Community Led Regeneration category is available at the following link: <https://surf.scot/surf-awards/surf-awards-2025>

The Community Led Regeneration SURF Award category is supported by Highlands and Islands Enterprise and South of Scotland Enterprise.

