

## COMMUNITY PLANNING



Scottish Urban  
Regeneration Forum

**SURF Open Forum 'Engaging with Communities for Regeneration & Community Planning Edinburgh 20.01.2005**

**Speakers:**

**Alasdair McKinley, Communities Scotland – Standards for Engagement with Communities**

**Linda MacDonald, Glasgow's Hidden Garden – Engaging with a Multi Cultural Community in Regeneration**

**Kay McIntosh, Development Officer and Morag Pinnion, Project Manager Community Links (Blantyre & North Hamilton SIP area) - A Community Engagement intermediary**

**Chair: Edward Harkins, Networking Initiatives, SURF**

**Participants:** A range of 68 delegates from Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs), Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPs), Community and Charity organisations and other partnership bodies and funding agencies such as Communities Scotland and Scottish Enterprise and private sector companies. Delegate's feedback, formal and informal, confirmed high positive scoring for the event.

**Summary of Core Issues emanating from the plenary and workshops sessions and delegates feedback:**

1. **Capacity and Standards.** A recurrent refrain from many delegates was the need for the community to be at the core and heart of *planning* public services and regeneration programmes. Alongside this emphasis, delegates raised the need for extended timescales to engender effective and productive community engagement and to build the community capacity to effectively contribute to decision-making. The Communities Scotland piloting of 'Standards for Community Engagement' was welcomed by delegates and there was clear interest in hearing of the outcomes from the piloting. Delegates underlined the need for attention to the need for an appropriate balance on the 'quantity versus quality' when seeking to

engage with communities. Community representatives and activists can become swamped and disheartened by inappropriate and excessive paperwork and meetings.

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2. **Promoting the value of Regeneration to Community Planning.** Some delegates suggested the need to promote and sell, to Community Planning Partnerships, the strategic and tactical value of regeneration activities - especially with regard to sustainable development. Delegates argued that any lack of a regeneration context brings about the risk of a continued fragmentation and compartmentalisation of public services, especially in socially excluded neighbourhoods.
3. **Appropriate styles and levels of Engagement.** Delegates emphasised the need to understand and appreciate that different communities, and different representatives of these communities, will perceive differing roles for themselves. For example, some community activists will see their work on producing a community newsletter as important, whereas others will be more focused on formal representation of their community at forums and other formal structures. Some delegates' experiences included early problems in structures such as forums due to pre-determined agendas and politics 'with a small p'. Considerable time and other resources need to be invested in developing forward from such beginnings.
4. **Building common ground with Communities at the centre.** The plenary presentations on 'Community Connections' in Hamilton/Blantyre and on Glasgow's 'Hidden Garden' in different ways highlighted the importance of generating common ground across communities. This included building common ground across thematic and neighbourhood communities. This common ground better placed individual communities to participate in and influence wider Regeneration and Community Planning agendas and programmes. Both presentations demonstrated the critical need for the 'Community' to be at the heart of the process from day one.
5. **Motivation, and organisational cultures underpinning Engagement.** Delegates recognised the need to understand and appreciate that Community Planning Partnerships, Councils and other partnership bodies will have different reasons for seeking engagement with communities. Delegates pointed out that it's important that these bodies are clear about their reasons for seeking engagement, and are clear about what they will do with the resulting information. The Communities Scotland presentation indicated that development work on their 'Standards for Community Engagement' had identified the risk of what was described as 'organisational cultures' conflicting with good practice. A well-intentioned desire to get things done and make early progress can conflict with the need for early and extensive community engagement processes.
6. **Process is as important as structures.** For many delegates it's important to pay at least as much attention to mechanisms and processes (i.e. how things are really

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working out) as to Structures (i.e. Community Forums etc.). Paying attention to processes and how engagement is working 'on the ground' is an important element in building communities' capacity for effective engagement. It is also valuable in building community trust and confidence in the partnering agencies.

7. **Local Authority Councillors and Community Planning Partnerships.** Many delegates suggested that with the development from SIPs into Community Planning, a new audience, or new reality, has emerged. This has taken the form of elected councillors' perceptions of community planning, and others' perceptions of the role of elected councillors in Community Planning. Delegates expressed fears of tensions in this area. Consequently, many delegates felt there is a need for organisations such as SURF in assisting and supporting elected councillors where they are developing their understanding and role following the rolling-out of Community Planning. In making this case, delegates also wanted to acknowledge the centrality of Councils and elected councillors in the Community Planning process.
8. **SIP/PPP Transition.** For some delegates, there was the emergence within Community Planning Partnership areas of 'tensions' between SIP localities and non-SIP localities. Delegates stressed that this is a complex subject. For example, where a strongly community-focussed SIP did exist, the community representatives are finding the transition to their 'more diluted' role in the wider Partnership environment to be challenging. Many delegates worried about the danger that there will be a loss of experienced and capable community representatives and activists through this difficult transition. Delegates highlighted how in areas where no SIP existed there are clear disadvantages with a lack of a more cohesive 'agencies network' that others can relate to.
9. **Trying to engage with Community Planning Partnerships.** Some delegates described difficulties for individuals and organisations seeking to engage for the first time *with* Community Planning Partnerships. Delegates remarked that the (welcome) absence of a one-size-fits-all template for Community Planning Partnerships means that it can be difficult to identify the Partnership members and players at a more local level.
10. **New players and the need for mutual learning.** Delegates' experiences are that Community Planning has drawn in new players around the partnership and planning table. This is very welcome. However, it means there is an existing and growing need for sharing experience and mutual learning, for example through events such as this forum. The wider inclusiveness highlighted, for many delegates, how communities can exist in 'layers' that can make it challenging to engage at the appropriate level. There is also for various delegates the questions of communities of interest and how we can reach those who are 'traditionally' not engaged with; perhaps because they *appear* not interested or 'difficult to deal with'. Some delegates stressed that whilst engagement may need to be through

short-term projects, these should be set in a longer-term context. Innovative ways should be employed to make this possible; the arts were given as one example.

- ⑤ 11. **National Leadership.** Some delegates wanted more discussion on the scope for a 'leadership role' from the Scottish Executive in Community Planning. This was seen as another challenging area. On the one hand, delegates acknowledged that the Executive had responded to early appeals from many stakeholders that there should be no 'one size fits all' on Community Planning. However, some delegates argued there was a danger of the Executive not exercising leadership in matters applying across Community Planning Partnerships. It was argued that in some matters, for example Equalities, there were standards that ought to apply nationally and consistently.

**Plenary Powerpoint Presentations.** The various speakers' PowerPoint presentations are available as attachments. These can be obtained, free of charge, from [edward@scotregen.co.uk](mailto:edward@scotregen.co.uk)

**Background to the Forum.** SURF delivers a national programme of Open Forums with the aim of offering its networking service to all of the main regeneration practitioners across CPPs in Scotland. This networking activity is funded by Communities Scotland. SURF will continue to act as the independent facilitator for the network, bringing together key players, and produce constructive Outcome Papers to help inform decision-making and practice.

**Purpose of this Paper.** This paper is intended to encapsulate the general flow of this inter-active forum comprising of the above plenary programme and subsequent workshops. It is not possible to reiterate every nuance and detail. The views stated reflect, wherever possible, the broadest consensus views of the forum participants. The paper is, for purposes of context, necessarily repetitive in parts.

Paper ends.

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SURF

lan

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**From:** Stuart  
**Sent:** 13 April 2005 10:45  
**To:** lan  
**Subject:** FW: SURF Open Forums[Scanned]

Stuart Thomas  
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-----Original Message-----

**From:** Rachel  
**Sent:** 12 April 2005 13:17  
**To:** Stuart; 'Bryan.Beattie@scotland.gsi.gov.uk'  
**Subject:** FW: SURF Open Forums[Scanned]

Stuart, Bryan,

Attached is a paper I received from a contact I made at the Culture and Regeneration seminar last month. It contains some interesting insights into cultural planning partnerships from the perspective of the little guys. I thought that we could treat this as a) a submission (Stuart) and b) background information (Bryan) for our thinking on how cultural planning partnerships might work in practice.

Regards,  
Rachel

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Edward Harkins [mailto:[edward@scotregen.co.uk](mailto:edward@scotregen.co.uk)]  
**Sent:** 07 April 2005 10:44  
**To:** Rachel  
**Subject:** SURF Open Forums[Scanned]

Rachel,

Subsequent to our recent chat, I'm sending you the attached Outcome Paper from the SURF Open Forum in January. This gives you a picture of the nature of these events I deliver for SURF around Scotland. I thought you would be especially interested in the January event in-that it was the first one I was able to draw on arts-led activities as relevant and important to Regeneration and Community Planning. Here at SURF we are keen to continue to play our part in the inclusion of the arts and other cultural activities as part of our promotion of best practice and progressive policy-making. Please get in touch if you need any further information, or can suggest topics, themes or projects that can be showcased in a Regeneration and/or Community Planning context. I have now added your name to our Open Forum distribution databank

Regards  
Edward Harkins

13/04/2005

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13/04/2005