

# MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CROSS PARTY GROUP ON TOWNS AND TOWN CENTRES

Wednesday, 13 March 2019, 13:00 – 14:30

Committee Room 1, Scottish Parliament

## 1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Deputy Convener, Gillian Martin MSP welcomed all to the meeting.

Attendees and Apologies are noted in Appendix 2.

## 2. Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cross Party Group held 26<sup>th</sup> September

The Minutes of the Meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record and P De Vink approved. There were no matters arising.

## 3. Towns: Creativity and Culture

Phil Prentice, Chief Officer, Scotland's Towns Partnership and National Director, Scotland's Improvement Districts, introduced the topic. PP also referenced the Town Centre Capital Fund and the refresh of the STP platform and town toolkit.

If you have a n underlying theme, it can bring social, economic and environmental prosperity. Creating vibrancy and a different form and function to the town other than retail. Culture and creativity is transforming many towns.

### 3.1 Guest Presentations

The following points are highlights only. Full presentations, where provided, are available in the CPG area of the Scotland's Towns Partnership website, along with a blog report of the session.

#### 3.1.1 Creativity and Culture in Towns

Presented by, Karen Dick, Place, Partnerships and Communities Officer, Creative Scotland

#### Key Messages

The arts, screen and creative industries drives cultural, social and economic wellbeing in Scotland's towns in a diverse range of ways. From inspiring landmark buildings, bringing new uses into high streets, developing skills, providing employment, attracting tourists and bringing communities together.

Public investment in the arts can represent significant value for the future cultural, social and economic development of towns. In short, participation in the arts has proven to be a cost-effective means to develop skills which enhance employment, improve our physical and mental health, improve social cohesion and provide a basis to imagine new opportunities and futures.

Where cultural development is showing success in towns, three underpinning themes are present:

- Strong leadership at a local political level

- A specific artistic vision for an area connected with each town's distinctiveness
- A genuine and empowering engagement process with the artistic and wider community

### Cultural Wellbeing

A strong sense of place is important to individual and collective wellbeing within Scotland's towns.

Each of Scotland's towns is unique and has its own sense of place; a shared history, heritage and feel which is reflected in its natural and built environment and everyday language and behaviours.

The arts are an essential means of both celebrating and reflecting upon this sense of place within Scotland's towns. It brings people together; through arts festivals and events which draw on this distinctiveness and through cultural venues, which sit at heart of everyday life in towns.

The arts are unique in how it can stretch our imagination and ambition, providing different means for us look at into the past and to imagine new futures.

This is reflected in our Ambition that 'Places and quality of life are transformed through imagination, ambition and an understanding of the potential of creativity'

### Social Wellbeing

Everyone is creative and everyday creativity is fundamentally important to individual and collective wellbeing in towns. This is reflected in our Ambition to ensure that 'Everyone can access and enjoy artistic and creative experiences'.

Participation in the arts supports personal growth, leading to enhanced confidence, skill-building and educational developments which can improve people's social contacts (and employability).

It can contribute to social cohesion in towns by developing networks and understanding, and building local capacity for organisation and self-determination.

It brings benefits in other areas such as health and environmental renewal, and injects an element of creativity into organisational and community planning.

It produces social change which can be seen, evaluated and broadly planned. It represents a flexible, responsive and cost-effective element of a community development strategy.

### Economic wellbeing

The arts, screen and creative industries can play a crucial role in within the economic development of Scotland's towns.

By necessity, the approach is different to cities and will differ for each town as they need to respond to their distinct cultural assets.

Key areas of economic impact are:

- People (including tourists) spend money on attending the arts and on local businesses. Further, local spending by these arts venues/events and supported businesses has significant indirect multiplier effects.
- A strong and vibrant cultural offer makes towns more attractive places to live, visit and invest.

- The arts are proven to be effective in developing skills, helping create confident and skilled individuals who can enter the workplace and/or create new opportunities
- Local craft can be utilised and built upon – increasing local employment opportunities and helping connect towns to the wider world.

#### Examples within Scottish Towns

- A town with significant cultural ambition: Paisley (2021)
- An artist led community development and regeneration: The Stove Network, Dumfries
- A festival which utilises unique local assets: Hippfest, Bo’ness
- Seeking to drive town centre regeneration: The Stove, Dumfries and Fresh Ayr, Ayr.
- Festivals which attracts tourists: Wigtown Book Festival, Alchemy Film Festival (Hawick) and Findhorn Bay Festival.
- Cultural activity with strong social impact: RIG Arts - Up the Broomy Project, Greenock.
- Heritage, arts and community collaboration: Ceteran’s Common Wealth
- Innovative artistic practice to support community development: Deveron Projects, Huntly.
- Creative Place Award winning towns and villages (to 2015 when programme ceased):
 

Kilmarnock	Peebles
Wigtown	Helmsdale
West Kilbride	Stornoway and the islands of Lewis and Harris
Creetown & Huntly awarded special prizes	Forres and surrounding area
St Andrews	Moniaive and Glencairn parish
Huntly	
Pathhead	
Falkirk	

#### 3.1.2 Cultural Enterprise in our Towns

Rachael Brown, Chief Executive Officer, Cultural Enterprise Office

Cultural Enterprise Office is Scotland’s creative business support. Providing dedicated support for creative industries and entrepreneurs.

#### Key Points

Scotland’s creative industries, as a whole, contribute more than £5 billion to the economy and growing. The sector regenerates new and quirky ideas and ways of working in the community that will slowly permeate more widely.

The creative industry sector accounts for 3% employment in Scotland (5% in UK) but growing faster in rural areas. 27% Glasgow-based, 21% Edinburgh-based and the rest elsewhere. A lot of entrepreneurs are returning to live in small places in Scotland - ‘creative returner group’. Over a period of 10 years people would have had 7 careers; now it’s 21. Entrepreneurs tend to be older, more experienced.

Cluster areas – if you have for example, a book town, you create other interesting things that spark other activity and business, and creates impact and impetus for public to spend their money in the town through experiencing their high street in a new way – art , food, music.

#### Examples

Susan Maxwell of Alexandria is a retired vet, who created Loch Lomond craft centre out of a dilapidated space in Alexandria, and now supports 70 artists. Bringing in tourists, she’s looking differently at her high

street, so looking at spaces for wellbeing and making the place attractive. She has a 6 figure turnover but wants to do more; demonstrating new ways of doing inclusive growth.

Ayr – creative businesses are bucking the trend – Steve Brown Arts now located in Ayr - is a multi- million-pound business trading globally. Artists are part of a global tribe. Part of CEO's role is to support that.

Alan Muir bespoke tailoring – renovated a Georgian Building, and now 40% business from in and around the local area and 60% global commissions.

#### Summary Points

In towns people including young people, want arts, music, leisure, food. People have multi-faceted lives and want something different.

CEO is a national organisation to help join the dots, pulling together skills and expertise required to make dreams and ideas flourish. Designer practice focusses on small and large practice and independent creatives. CEO is open 'til 10 and on Sundays. Their clients are not 9 - 5.

Creatives often undervalue their work – the range of talent in Scotland is immense. We must encourage people not to undervalue their work; it deserves recognition and support.

We are on the edge of something special in terms of towns and small areas; there is a massive impact on towns through returners relocating back to Scotland in rural and small towns. We have huge assets to offer in our buildings in towns – let's not be 5 years too late in grasping the opportunity.

#### 3.1.3 Embracing Creativity and Culture in Dumfries

Matt Baker, Orchestrator, The Stove Network

#### Key Points

The Stove is a civic and community centre but run by artists; involving locals in the thinking and making of their town.

What is the purpose of towns in 21<sup>st</sup> century? To grow people, create events and activity; and to grow collaborative partnerships around projects – partnering with council, NHS and the community.

It should not be viewed as a 'fluffy' organisation for the few. For example it is the base for a career development hub; it turns over £0.5m per year and employs 30 local people, 75% aged under 30.

Planning is community-led. Empowering people to have a voice in local decision-making and initiate community-led partnership projects.

The Stove produces events. The Nithraid is Dumfries' River Festival, attracting 3000 attendees. The annual music conference brings people from the music industry and runs music events for the Stove - it is a social enterprise.

Stove drew up a new charter. They aim to get people living in town again. The idea grew to takeover a set of 8 buildings, to comprise some rental housing for cross generational residents; enterprise; leisure and a little bit of retail, maker space.

The community benefits society launched April to take on properties and benefit from its purchase - over 400 people signed up. M Baker showed images of premises and plans.

#### Learnings

Having the space forms a locus for the conversation to happen; where projects are growing and people can see it happening. Start with a safe space, an inclusive space for all to be involved.

Having creative people, working in the community.

#### Investment

The buildings are so available, that's the easy bit. Investing in people is what's needed and important. Don't create a talking shop.

M Baker showed images of a national policy diagram. Culture strategy, place principle, local governance review, creating all the 'stuff' in the middle.

#### 4. Discussion

Lifestyle business is often used as a negative term. However, many global brands began or are still considered as such. R Brown – we need to move away from creatives being viewed as less important to our country.

Derek Rankine, SURF: Re Scottish Government cultural strategy - what does M Baker want to see. M Baker contributed to it; putting forward a proposal about can-do places as a way of seeding culture in communities. It's ground shifting in terms of the impact art can have on the economy and society. K Dick referred to the Scottish Government web consultation online, all contributions are there. A significant number from art and third sector talk about a different way of working through place-based approach and community.

Pippa Coutts, Carnegie: Highlights that inclusive growth to take forward culture and creativity under the SCRIG (Scotland's Centre for Regional Inclusive Growth) – CEO is the only dedicated office in Europe, showing an ingenuity to do things differently. Especially in poor areas.

Linton Smith, Falkirk Delivers (improvement district): The Stove is funded through 20% grant, 80% self-generated. How is it done? M Baker: It is a complex mix of project grant income; earned income for commissions for housing association; Local Authority; from social enterprises; self-generated projects – Mid-Steeple Quarter – has distributed profits. Similar to the idea of an improvement district – setting up businesses in such a way that they generate income for The Stove.

It was discussed as an exemplar, with possibility to be replicated elsewhere and upskill the sector to do what M Baker does. M Baker: Perhaps mentoring and study visits, advising project startups. MB emphasised importance of starting with a space and good people. MB has pitched to the new South of Scotland Enterprise Agency to create a hub and spoke regional model replicating Stove's practice. K Dick emphasised the extensive personal investment in time, ideas, hard work. People come to Creative Scotland to recreate The Stove. It's not just as easy as having a space, you need vision, the right people, buy-in from community, the right partners and people to take ownership. It happens from bottom up when people in a place want the change and buy in to the vision.

R Brown: Exceptional leadership has been shown from the beginning with The Stove; nurturing, enabling and bringing people with you from the outset of the idea. If you can't see it, you can't be it, when you're in a

community and you see it happening, you start to believe it is happening. The traditional business support network is not set up to deal with the organic nature. CEO enable the learning and support to happen in a non linear way. Reference Huntly which is “teaming with European artists”.

Peter De Vink: Praised the very interesting presentations, the information will be helpful around plans for Midlothian.

Alex Fleming, Falkirk Delivers: Interested in developing a creative hub. Has taken from today that there is a need for a mentor or advice on the ground and help to create whatever is right for each town. We should be considering creation of such roles to help drive this throughout Scotland. K Dick: Scotland lacks local support. In Falkirk there is still a Falkirk community trust with artists involved. Some places don't have this. Would encourage using them before their services are cut. R Brown referenced Can Do Places. CEO working with M Baker and Can Do Places to provide support. M Baker – use the networks of other agencies out there too.

Gillian Martin MSP thanked speakers.

## **5. Any Other Competent Business and Date of Next Meeting**

19<sup>th</sup> June (1800 – 2000). Theme to be announced.

26<sup>th</sup> March (1800 – 2000) Parliamentary Reception.

**APPENDIX 1 – RECORD OF 13 MARCH 2019 AGENDA**

**Cross Party Group on Towns and Town Centres**

13:00 – 14:30, Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019

Committee Room 1, Scottish Parliament

**AGENDA**

**‘Towns: Creativity and Culture’**

- 12:30 Meet in Parliament reception area  
13:00 Coffee, tea and shortbread available  
13:10 Welcome and Opening Remarks – John Scott MSP, Convener  
13:15 Minutes of the Meeting of the Cross Party Group held 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018  
Matters Arising from the Minutes

**Towns: Creativity and Culture**

- 13:20 **Introduction**  
Phil Prentice, Chief Officer, Scotland’s Towns Partnership
- 13:30 **Creativity and Culture in Towns**  
Karen Dick, Place, Partnerships and Communities Officer, Creative Scotland
- 13:40 **Cultural Enterprise in our Towns**  
Rachael Brown, Chief Executive Officer, Cultural Enterprise Office
- 13:50 **Embracing Creativity and Culture in Dumfries**  
Matt Baker, Orchestrator, The Stove Network
- 14:00 Discussion  
14:20 Any Other Competent Business  
14:30 Close of Meeting

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> June – Theme T.B.C.

Parliamentary Reception on a Celebration of Small and Rural Towns, Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March, The Garden Lobby

## APPENDIX 2 – ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES FOR THE CPG ON 13 MARCH 2019

### Attendees

Matt	Baker	The Stove Network
Neil	Bibby	MSP
Elaine	Bone	Scotland's Towns Partnership
Leigh	Brown	Perth & Kinross Council
Rachael	Brown	Cultural Enterprise Office
Miranda	Close	
Pippa	Coutts	Carnegie UK
Kate	Darrah	The Ridge
Peter	de Vink	EFGH
Karen	Dick	Creative Scotland
Andy	Dunlop	ER BIDs
Colette	Edenborough	ER BIDs
Alex	Fleming	Falkirk Delivers
Jocelyne	Fleming	Old Town BID
Ian	Fowell	
Rona	Gibb	Paths 4 All
Jordan	Gray	DWF LLP
David	Grove	Fife Council
Derek	Harper	Rejuvenate Scotland
George	Linton-Smith	Falkirk Delivers
David	Main	
Gillian	Martin	MSP
Margaret	McCole	The Ridge
Audrey	Michie	Aberdeenshire Council
Andrew	Ormston	Drew Wylie Projects
Phil	Prentice	Scotland's Towns Partnership
Derek	Rankine	SURF
Mark	Rowley	Scottish Borders Council
John	Scott	MSP
Tom	Sneddon	DTAS
Steve	Taylor	Giffnock Village
Sunil	Varu	Edinburgh West End
Grant	Williams	
Gary	Winning	Discover Lanark
Jeremy	Wyatt	Ayr Gaiety Theatre
Fay	Young	Walking Heads

### Apologies

Chic	Brodie	Confederation of Economic Development Ayrshire
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