

CITY REGION DEALS – INFORMAL MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL BUSINESSES, CHARITIES, CIVIC GROUPS, COMMUNITY BODIES ETC.

TANNAHILL COMMUNITY CENTRE, PAISLEY, 6 NOVEMBER, 2017

Background

Members of the Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Communities Committee met with a range of local representatives from the Glasgow and Renfrewshire area to discuss the Glasgow City Region Deal. The following is a note of the key points made by the local representatives during our information discussions. The Committee is grateful to all that took the time to take part in our meeting and to representatives of the Tannahill Community Centre for their help in setting up the meeting.



The meeting was informal, with delegates on the day split between 4 roundtables, each facilitated by an MSP.

Meeting Notes

Stakeholder Engagement

- There was a general consensus at one of the roundtables that local people and organisations were not being given full opportunity to engage with plans at an early stage despite the willingness to be involved. There was also a view that, specifically, local people should be more involved early on in the economic development aspects of the City Region Deal.
- This was reinforced on one table which had a strong message that there needed to be more communication and engagement between Glasgow City Region Deals and local community groups and charities. Lots of delegates expressed a strong appetite to get involved and **shape** the Deals as opposed to being informed about what these Deals were (with others taking the decisions). It was suggested by some that youth engagement must be a big part of this. It was also suggested that smaller, local organisations did not get as much of a look in as larger, more connected bodies.
- It was also suggested that there needs to be more ongoing consultation and co-ordination with local people and organisations, not just at the outset, as a way of keeping people informed of progress, with regular updates issued. Some delegates also suggested that project and local authority websites needed to be improved to make it easy to find information.
- Some of the community groups in Paisley that we met said they have felt disadvantaged over recent years as the majority of investment has gone to the east of Glasgow due to the Commonwealth Games. However, they believe that the City Deal has been a catalyst for change and as a result they are feeling more engaged. To date, they believe the engagement they've had from Renfrewshire Council on the City Deal has been 'deep and meaningful'. In particular, they noted that the community presentation from Renfrewshire Council had been pitched at an appropriate level for a community council.
- These community groups made a number of suggestions for improvements:
 - They had requested a City Deal Development Officer through the Community Planning Committee (to help them take advantage of and leverage all opportunities related to the City Deal) but this was declined. They believe the City Deal has 'a missing link between the strategic level and the people on the ground' – hence why they requested a City Deal Development Officer.
 - They felt it important that the City Deal engaged with small employers in the area, as 'these are just as important as big employers'. The community groups had got 85 young people into employment through a pre-existing scheme over the last year, and all of these opportunities had been with small local employers.
 - The employability aspects of the City Deal hadn't been highlighted with the community groups in their engagement to date. They were keen to

find out more about these strands. For the employability strands to be successful, they felt that these projects 'needed to use direct people on the ground who engage with the small businesses on the ground, rather than parachute in high-flying agencies as has been done in the past'.

- They were also keen to find out more about how the City Deal was going to monitor the labour market projects
- Some delegates stated that this City Region Deal could bring with it job opportunities if different bodies worked together, looking at addressing what kind of skilled people are needed within the different projects and seeking to train local/unemployed people now and give them something to aspire to.
- One example cited of good civic engagement was Glasgow 2021, which was considered as innovative, with strong local campaigns and boards made up of different members of communities with proper consultations.
- The Exhibitions Events material provided by the Glasgow City Region Deal provides an update on what's happening but does not give local people and organisations an opportunity to shape any plans. In the view of some of our delegates, during the Exhibition Events, community-based questions weren't answered and therefore local groups are unable to find a route to put forward their ideas/thoughts/concerns.

Infrastructure

- Infrastructure plans should be more than just about rail projects. Views were expressed about the need for improvements on the road infrastructure and ensuring that new infrastructure routes impact those areas and local communities that need economic growth.
- Some delegates stated that the plans for the bridge from Yoker won't help locals as, when the bridge is opened to let vessels pass up and down the river, it can take up to two hours to do this. Additionally, other delegates considered that the bridge will cause more road traffic around Renfrew making it hard for locals to get in and out. In the view of some, Renfrew has a high level of unemployment and the lack of infrastructure around this area doesn't attract businesses and people are opting to leave the area.
- Delegates also asked about the plans for Active Travel, such as Pedestrian/Cycle paths. There were some views that the connections to Glasgow Airport should be for the entire community and affordable. Other delegates wanted to see a specific focus in the Deal on improving Renfrewshire's Cycling Network, making it more sustainable, looking at improved lightning etc.
- Other delegates stated that the airport link should help attract businesses and therefore cross-rail improvements were important too. One suggestion was a rail-link from Stranraer to Aberdeen as a welcome addition to the area.

- The view of some is that more thought is needed into the route of the rail upgrade, with more engagement with local people and organisations, and that existing rail lines already in place that haven't been used for years should be considered.
- Some delegates proposed that the River Clyde could be used more to take pressure off the roads, for example, setting up a boat service to the Airport.
- Some delegates also believed that the Infrastructure in and around Glasgow Airport is currently unsustainable and this will only increase after the Glasgow City Region Deal, with questions raised on the impact on local residents. Some people proposed a short, light-rail project with local areas serviced by Park and Ride options (at Inverclyde/Bishopton/Renfrew). Some delegates thought that the Park and Ride scheme works well in Paisley and Hillington for example.
- Some of our local delegates felt that, in the past, there have been poor transport projects in the area because of individual local authority decision-making processes. However, some of our delegates said that it was a positive move that the eight local authorities are working together and that there is a regional strategy for growth.

Views from the local business sector

- From a local business perspective, we heard views that there should be a mapping exercise done with SMEs along the Clyde to assess their needs, their ideas for the future and assess if any business would any like to relocate. Local business organisations viewed the City Deal as a 'massive opportunity' to sell the region to international markets. They felt 'genuinely plugged-in' to the City Deal engagement processes. They were optimistic the small businesses in the area would benefit from the Deal through increased population, upskilling, company investment, and increased Modern Apprenticeship opportunities. However, they did highlight that there was more to be done in relation to future skills planning.
- The business community also highlighted that small businesses would need additional support to take advantage of the City Deal; especially as Business Gateway support varied from local authority to local authority and wasn't joined up with the City Deal boundary. Although they acknowledged that 'one-person-band' type businesses would struggle to take advantage of support due to limited time resources.
- We also heard views that the City Deal offers scope for enhanced business-mentoring in the region, particularly after the start-up stage where there is a deficit of support.

General issues

- Views were expressed that it was important that the University of the West of Scotland should work closely with the City Region Deal plans and create courses for upskilling local people in relevant fields to boost the employment opportunities for local people from the City Region Deal.
- A local college had been involved in the City Deal consultation process. However, they felt that communities had not been involved in the identification of the 27 City Deal projects.
- We also heard from the college sector that there had been engagement about skills planning but that this could be improved. We heard views that there should be more work to identify the types of jobs that would be required in the region in 2030 as it would help the college to put courses and curriculums in place
- The proposed 2,500 new houses in Bishopton were highlighted but views were expressed that the current infrastructure doesn't make this area a viable option for people moving into the area (it is not in the current rail-link plan but if it was it would make a difference to area).
- There were some concerns expressed about the possible environmental impact of the projects on local communities, such as increased noise pollution. There was also the suggestion from local residents in Paisley that some of the projects across the local authority border would simply result in more congestion in the area and that they didn't want simply more underpasses to be built.
- There was also a desire from some delegates for the City Region Deal to have a focus on providing more green space and more play space.
- Some delegates expressed a concern that it was difficult to clearly identify who was accountable for the City Region Deal and the different projects. This was linked to a desire from some delegates to see more central and singular points of contact for the Deal and for projects so that people/organisations know who to approach.
- There was a suggestion that more needs to be done to bring together the major local Higher Education Institutes into the Deal and encourage them to work together on projects and aspects of the programme, such as improving the environmental sustainability of projects or on how inclusive growth will be incorporated and measured.
- We also heard from a representative from a local youth football club who expressed some frustrations about efforts some had had to establish local businesses because of problems with the bureaucracy around Business Gateway funding (because a residential address and the business address were in two different local authority areas). This was similar for efforts to secure funding for Modern Apprentices. Views were expressed that nearly all enterprise

support services are delivered at a local authority level and this doesn't match with the priorities of City Deals.

- The representative also said there had been issues in gaining funding for their grassroots football pitch as it is on derelict waste ground for which they don't have a lease but have used the pitch for many years. The pitch and a deprived residential area adjacent to the pitch are just outside the boundary of the Glasgow Airport Investment Area. The representative was keen to explore how local communities themselves can benefit from the City Deal projects through the community strand of such deals.