



Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations

Community Regeneration Learning Network

**First meeting: The People and
Communities Fund**



Welcome to our new Community Regeneration Learning Network

This is the first briefing note from Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations newly created **Community Regeneration Learning Network**.

Our first meeting took place on 23rd March 2015, following a launch of the network by the Scottish Government the same day. The CRLN is a new initiative that is being taken forward as part of the work of GWSF's new Regeneration Partnership project and will provide a programme of events throughout 2015-16 that creates a space for CCHAs to get together to:

- learn about opportunities for investment, support and partnership working via the wider third sector
- hear about regeneration initiatives that have worked and made a difference to local people and communities
- develop an ongoing "guide" to local community regeneration (including information on the resources that could support this) as a product of these meetings.

The information that follows captures the content and learning from this first meeting.

Our First Topic - The People and Communities Fund

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Our initial meeting focused on **the role of CCHAs in community regeneration**, with a specific focus on the Scottish Government's People and Communities Fund.

David Cowan, Head of Regeneration at the Scottish Government opened the session by highlighting the contribution that CCHAs make to Scottish Government (SG) regeneration policy through their regeneration activity, and gave a briefing on the People and Communities Fund which was created to support Registered Social Landlords and other community anchor organisations to deliver community regeneration activities.

Members then discussed three issues:

1. **The People and Communities Fund – what are the benefits and limitations of the Fund in relation to delivering community regeneration activity?**
2. **What do CCHAs need to deliver more regeneration and to empower local communities?**
3. **What do members want from the Community Regeneration Learning Network?**

This note provides a summary of the key points raised by members in relation to each issue.



David Cowan, Head of Regeneration, Scottish Government:

Community-led regeneration is at the centre of the Scottish Government's regeneration strategy¹. The [regeneration strategy](#) recognises the need to target funding to tackle area inequality and to involve and empower communities to take action themselves.

The People and Communities Fund² was launched in 2012, specifically to promote and support the regeneration of communities. It builds on the Wider Role Fund, providing funding to support local community anchor organisations (RSLs and Development Trusts) to deliver outcomes which respond to the aspirations of their communities. The Fund is therefore a key element of the regeneration strategy, reinforcing the Scottish Government's support for community-led regeneration.

The People and Communities Fund focuses on tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion. Between 2012 and 2015, the Fund awarded a total of £18.3 million to 156 projects to deliver these outcomes in communities across Scotland.

In the Government's Programme for Scotland, the First Minister announced a new £10 million Empowering Communities Fund. This Fund encompasses the existing People and Communities budget and brings the total funding available for community-led activity to £19.4 million in 2015-16.

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In 2015-16, there were 220 applications to the People and Communities Fund:

- 197 projects have received funding totalling £12.6 million.
- The remaining budget from the Empowering Communities Fund will be allocated to projects that support a wide range of community-led initiatives (including community empowerment and community asset transfer).

What next?

David explained that the momentum for community-led regeneration was strong, and that he expected it to see continued funding for this agenda. His 'ask' of the Network was:

- To gather evidence of impact on communities to support the case for continued funding.
- To identify what more could be done to increase the impact of the fund on the regeneration of communities.

¹ Achieving a Sustainable Future: Regeneration Strategy, The Scottish Government, 2011 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2011/12/09110320/11>

² People and Communities Fund <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/community/pcf>

1. The People and Communities Fund - benefits and limitations of the fund

Members discussed the benefits and limitations of the People and Communities Fund in relation to supporting CCHAs to deliver community based regeneration initiatives.

Benefits of the People and Communities Fund

The benefits that the Fund has delivered for CCHAs in relation to their capacity to deliver community-led regeneration are summarised below.

Dedicated funding for regeneration

The fund is a dedicated source of funding for regeneration, but is also a direct source of funding to CCHAs.

CCHAs bid directly to the fund and funding is made directly to the bidding organisations rather than being controlled by or channelled through an intermediary such as local authorities, health boards and community planning partnerships.

It has enabled CCHAs to employ dedicated staff, increasing their capacity to deliver regeneration activity

However, these posts and the activity they support are dependent on on-going funding.

The Fund has encouraged partnerships with the third sector

The Fund encourages partnership working between CCHAs and third sector organisations (indeed the match funding criteria has encouraged wider partnership working).

The Fund encourages community participation in the planning and development of regeneration initiatives

The Fund enables CCHAs to tackle issues like poverty and inequality at a neighbourhood level and supports a 'bottom-up' approach.

Limitations of the Fund

Members identified a number of limitations in the Fund which acted as barriers to community-led regeneration.

Strategic approaches to community regeneration

While the People and Communities Fund has been invaluable, year to year funding is too short to enable CCHAs to 'make a difference'.

- Short-term funding does not support long-term planning to address long-term problems in communities.
- The focus of funding on specific (and changing) priorities and activities does not support a strategic approach to regeneration.



David Cowan responded that the Regeneration Committee had acknowledged the need for longer term funding, but that funding for 2015-16 was limited to one year because of the election cycle.

Timing of decisions

- Decisions were made too late to start projects at the beginning of the financial year.
- Members requested flexibility in the timescale for delivery to allow for lead-in time to get projects up and running.
- There was a suggestion of a simplified two stage process to 'sieve' applications at an earlier stage.

Part-funding of bids

- Applicants reported that they were asked to trim bids - and in some cases 'trimming' resulted in projects being untenable.
- In general, the trimming of bids left members feeling that the fund was trying to deliver too much but was 'spread too thinly'.

Fund criteria

- There is no capital funding through the fund.
- More flexibility on the requirement for match funding would be useful.
- Management costs are not eligible but are a cost to the organisation.
- It is not clear why some costs are eligible and some not.

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Funding community engagement/capacity building

- While the People and Communities Fund appeared to promote local capacity building, CCHAs reported that this element of their bids was often 'trimmed'.
- Funders need to be aware that there are gaps in the local infrastructure: "no-one else is delivering community engagement/capacity building", so CCHAs are increasingly delivering this function in their areas.

Sustaining regeneration activity

- Changing fund priorities can make it difficult to sustain regeneration activity.
- There needs to be an honest dialogue with Government about sustainability – based on a recognition that many (most) regeneration activities will never generate income.

The need for 'joined-up' government

- The Scottish Government is moving towards a holistic approach where the national outcomes provide an over-arching framework but there is a need for government to be more 'joined-up'. The Fund can be undermined by other policies/practices (e.g. DWP rules on availability for work and procurement legislation.)

2. What do CCHAs need to deliver more regeneration and to empower local communities?

Members identified that there were things that they could do differently to increase their role in regeneration but that there were also barriers which could be addressed to facilitate their role.

What could CCHAs do differently to increase their role in regeneration and community empowerment?

CCHAs recognised the need to take a proactive role in regeneration by:

- Increasing knowledge of regeneration and awareness of the funding opportunities to deliver regeneration.
- Consideration of the costs/saving associated with regeneration and therefore how they could fund regeneration initiatives from their own resources.
- Improving links with other regeneration initiatives e.g. Town Centre Action Plans.
- Developing links with other third sector organisations involved in regeneration.
- Developing knowledge/awareness of other models such as social enterprise/ community interest companies etc.
- Working in partnership and developing consortia approaches (including sharing regeneration staff, partnership working with other thirds sector organisations).

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What needs to be done to support the role of CCHAs in regeneration and community empowerment?

Members discussed barriers at the national and local level.

At the local level:

- Local authority priorities for different areas influence the resources and opportunities in different areas

At the national level there needs to be:

- recognition from the Regulator for CCHAs role in regeneration.
- greater recognition of and support for the community anchor model.
- a continued recognition and direct funding from the Scottish Government for CCHAs wider role activity
- recognition and action by the Scottish Government on the barriers to community based regeneration (e.g. procurement legislation and regulations).



Members identified three key areas in which the Community Regeneration Learning Network could support their activity.

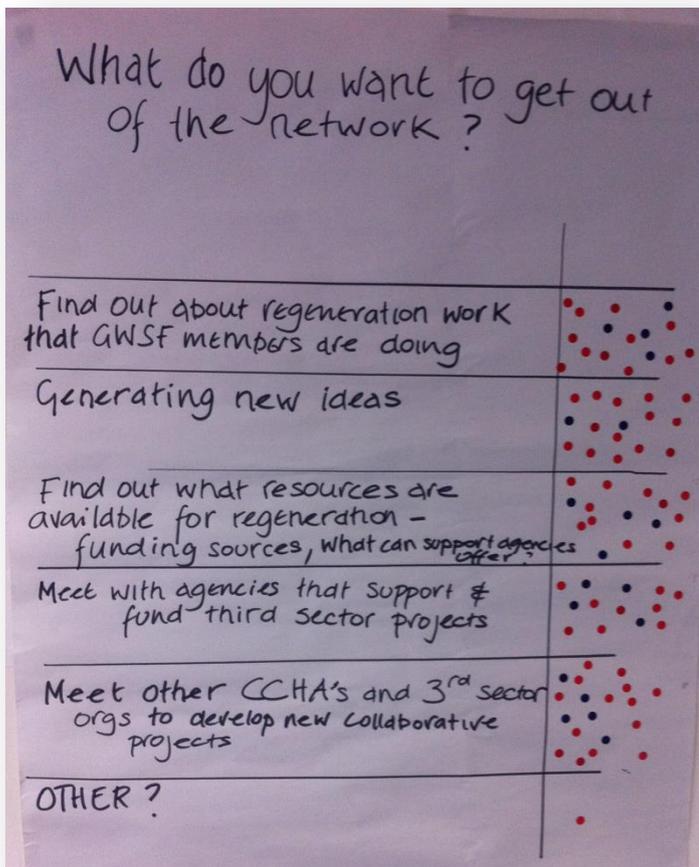
Learning and collaboration

Members wanted to find out what other CCHAs were doing, to learn from each other and to develop new partnerships and collaborations to deliver regeneration.

Members suggested that the Network could offer:

- Visits to other projects.
- Information sharing about funding opportunities.
- Expertise from outside the network.
- Mutual help with things like developing applications.
- Discussion about new ways of working/new models /new income generation opportunities including social enterprise and contracting (e.g. delivering DWP contracts).
- Development of partnerships through
 - Sharing ideas/contacts/information with a view to developing new collaborative projects.
 - Fostering relationships between CCHAs and the wider third sector to encourage more joined up thinking on regeneration.
 - Providing access for CCHAs to the resources and support available from third sector agencies.

Members also wanted the network to provide a place to discuss challenging issues and a place for honest exchange about 'what works' and why.



Promote CCHAs role in regeneration

The Network has a role to play in promoting the role of CCHAs in regeneration. It should build up a better picture of the range of regeneration activity that CCHAs are involved in and tangible evidence of impact. It could do this by:

- Developing a full list of what is being delivered through the People and Communities Fund (***We have provided a list of all projects awarded funding from the Fund in 2015/16 with this e-mail but are seeking more information about specific project activity.***)
- Developing evidence of CCHAs involvement in other agendas (Reshaping Care etc).
- Developing a simple way to capture evidence of impact which can be used by all.

Dialogue with the Scottish Government

The Network provides an opportunity for ongoing dialogue with the Scottish Government over the role of CCHAs in regeneration. The Network should:

- Keep CCHAs up to date with opportunities e.g.
 - Information on People and Communities Fund.
 - Information on other linked policy, practice and funding issues.
- Provide CCHAs with a mechanism to feedback information to Scottish Government on what works and honest dialogue on issues impacting on regeneration.

For further information about the CLRN or the content of this note, please contact:

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