

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

HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 19TH February, 2014 AT 13:00

LOCATION: COMMITTEE ROOM 2, SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

AGENDA ITEMS

1. WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

1.1 Margaret McCulloch (MMcC) welcomed members to the meeting and thanked Association for Town and City Management (ATCM) for supporting refreshments.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

2.1 The Minutes were accepted by Alistair Mitchell (AM) and seconded by Tom Sneddon (TS)

3. AGM Business

3.1 Re-election of office bearers

All undernoted office bearers agree to continue:

Margaret McCulloch MSP – Convener

Graeme Dey MSP – Deputy Convener

Tom Sneddon of Development Trusts Association Scotland and Scotland's Towns Partnership – Organisations Deputy Convener

Sunil Varu of ATCM Scotland – Organisations Deputy Convener

Elaine Bone of Scotland's Towns Partnership – Secretary

Craig McLaren of RTPI Scotland, takes over from Ross Martin, as adviser to the Convener on behalf of Scotland's Towns Partnership.

3.2 Review and Forward Plan

Formed 6 February 2013 with this remit: "analyse policy prescriptions and develop ideas and innovations. This will help Scotland's towns and town centres through the current economic climate to emerge stronger, smarter, cleaner, healthier and greener. The Group will discuss ways in which Scotland's towns can work towards sustainable economic growth through greater vibrancy and vitality. The group will also consider how best to take forward recommendations from the town centre review and the government's regeneration strategy."

Annual Review of Issues and Activities:

6 February 2013

- Presentation by Malcolm Fraser on the Town Centre Review progress.
- Iain Scott, Scotpreneur presented short film clips sharing town stories.
- Ross Martin, CSPP, outlined the role of Scotland's Towns Partnership.

17 April 2013

- Presentation on '21st Century High Streets' from David Martin, Scottish Retail Consortium.
- Presentation by Phil Prentice, East Renfrewshire Council, on 'Local Solutions' illustrating three approaches adopted in East Renfrewshire towns.
- Highlighting of Test Towns competition by Jim Metcalfe of Carnegie UK
- An appeal by Ian Davison Porter of BIDs Scotland to support campaigns to save local post offices.

12 June 2013

- Town Centre Performance – Resilience & Opportunities
- Introduced by Ross Martin
- Presentation from Chris Wade, Action for Market Towns, on Benchmarking+
- Presentation by David Stewart, National Skills Academy for Retail, promoting 'Independents Day'.

17 July 2013

Study visit to East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire towns.

11 September 2013

- Report and discussion from summer Study Visit
- Presentation by Malcolm Fraser on the final town centre review report from the External Advisory Group.
- Ross Martin highlighted key upcoming high points for towns – the Scotland's Towns Conference, Scotland's Towns Week and the Christmas trading period.

13 November 2013

- The Convener, Minister for Towns, BIDs Scotland Director and Professor Leigh Sparks gave interviews for a video media release ahead of Scotland's Towns Week (18 – 24 November 2013) and Scotland's Towns Conference at which the Leigh Sparks would host and the Minister will address.
- Minister for Towns discussed the government's response (Town Centre Action Plan - TCAP) to the Review.

- Leigh Sparks gave an analysis of the three key towns reports in circulation now – Portas, Grimsey and Fraser.

Professor Sparks set the CPG a task: “ to hold the TCAP to account”. At a 22nd January Office Bearers’ meeting, it was discussed that the Group should uphold this challenge.

The Forward Plan proposed is to focus on the different areas of the Plan, raising and discussing, and highlighting any issues around its successful delivery. This begins with today’s meeting, when the Group will hear public, private and community views on overcoming the barriers to implementing the Plan.

The year ahead also sees the Scotland’s Towns Partnership’s Annual Network Meeting on 14th May in Edinburgh, the ATCM Summer School coming to Dundee from 25 – 27 June, STP Scotland’s Towns Week from 17 – 23 November and the STP Scotland’s Towns Conference in Paisley on 19th November.

4. Alexander Nicoll – ATCM Chair

4.1 Alexander Nicoll (AN), provided an update of the work that has been carried out by ATCM, highlighting that its members work hard to address towns issues. ATCM has strands of work relevant to Scotland and its communities; indicating there is will amongst communities to pool resources and work together to develop and make change happen.

4.2 AN highlighted that the digital revolution is not just in retail but can be a useful tool and support for the regeneration of town centres.

4.3 AN emphasised we should proceed with knowledge, through researching the value of towns and cities and maintaining or improving social and economic circumstances.

4.4 AN highlighted that the contribution that town centres make to the wider economy dwarfs all other income sources. Particularly the evening economy which is vital; employing 1.5 million people.

4.5 AN extended an invitation to the group to join them in Dundee for ATCM’s summer school.

5. Discussion: How do we overcome the barriers to implementing the Town Centre Action Plan?

Public sector: Jim Galloway (JG), Head of Enterprise and Innovation at City of Edinburgh Council, & Chair of SLAED

5.1 SLAED has a background in towns and has an active [Town Centre Infrastructure group](#). JG expressed his passion for towns and that of SLAED, stating that

partnership is key to answering the agenda. All 32 local authorities are committed to town centre regeneration although with ever shrinking budgets, practitioners cannot take a back seat. We need to pool resources in these harsh economic times. Government incentives such as small business rate need more work - JG called for more to be done around this.

5.2 Through partnerships with CPG, SLAED and support from government, enterprise and innovation in our towns could lead to increased business support and innovative approaches such as business incubation; segmenting larger units into smaller retail/office space.

Business: Malcolm Brown (MB), Head of Corporate Communications, Scotmid Co-operative and Chair of Queensferry Ambition Business Improvement District.

5.3 Scotmid currently operate in 16 BID areas. MB stated that BIDs provide stabilisation for our fragile town centres which should be vibrant for the community and for future residents and employees. He went on to quote Minister for Towns Derek Mackay: "We want to take every measure possible to ensure that our town centres are vibrant places."

5.4 MB noted the barriers to establishing BIDs in the community and methods of overcoming them.

- A lack of confidence to do something new; communities are often reluctant to make changes to their area.
- Too many voices and restrictions were highlighted as barriers.
- Often communities believe BIDs are there to cure town centre ills and have little will to work with the BID improve their areas.
- Working with the community is successful, MB provided an example of a Queensferry Ambition BID heritage project, 'Shape the Future of Queensferry' where the local community can help design and plan their area. Distilling the voice of the community and local authority and getting them involved in exciting projects.
- Self-centred interests - he admitted some people are not willing to change and won't, so work with those who do have the drive to contribute to the development and vibrancy of their area. Cost is another barrier that often arises, MB states that those businesses who say they cannot afford to pay their BID levy should not be in business for the sake of £150.
- Negative business; holding the hand of businesses in the BID area is not the objective of the BID.
- General economic uncertainty is a great barrier.

5.5 MB highlights that Queensferry Ambition has provided support, advice and training for their business community to address some of these issues. Queensferry Ambition solved barriers presented by the community by bringing them together and getting them involved in their heritage project. The organiser of 'Shape the Future of Queensferry' had been trying for 11 years to arrange this project due to barriers and within six months of working with the BID it's happening. Click [here](#) for more information about Shape the Future of Queensferry.

5.6 MB states that you are only confined by the walls you build yourself and BIDs in partnership with community and local authorities are a great way of breaking down these walls to make change happen.

Malcolm's presentation can be found [here](#).

Community: Tom Sneddon (TS), Board member with Development Trusts Association Scotland and Scotland's Towns Partnership.

5.7 TS is the founder of DTA Scotland and is also responsible for the Development Trust in Carlisle. Development trusts look at town centres from a community point of view whether be it big, small or unremarkable. He highlighted that the recognition of town centres is coming to the forecourt and interest in the CPG is growing. He stated that there is great pride of place, with aspirations from the Town Centre Action Plan and the Community Empowerment Bill.

5.8 There is little direct governance in small towns; decisions are taken elsewhere by the council where direct input is reserved for statutory duties, therefore coordination is often lacking in towns with no leadership to take responsibility for marketing and activity. We need town centre managers and effective leadership; vital ingredients to developing town centres.

5.9 One idea to generate civic engagement is the Charrette process. Government will give 50% of cost and local authorities have to provide the remaining 50%. There is a need to start raising expectations, if there is a capacity issue, solve it.

5.10 Places and communities are empowered to participate and lead town centres. There should be a core capacity and support package to meet demands. Forming partnerships is key and must be properly resourced to develop. Create new platforms and take ownership by combining people and place through the infrastructure of the Community Empowerment Bill. Enterprise needs engagement with the community to support much needed leadership.

5.11 Regeneration is messy and mostly unknown; we need to ensure resources are available to sustain the regeneration.

6. Discussion

MMcC departs. Craig McLaren (CMcL) takes over as Meeting Chair.

6.1 CMcL starts discussions highlighting that JG mentioned the challenge of resources as did TS, how do we overcome this? Are there no funding mechanisms or creative ways of working?

JG - There is a vacuum of SME support and opportunities to partner up with local authorities. Small business support is key to creating economic health. CMcL - models of community ownership need to be more inventive in working together to achieve leverage. TS - we need to look at ways of working with NHS and all other stakeholders, building a platform to empower their own community and allow decisions to be taken locally. Public resource should be allocated by local geography. There are programmes out there that can be used but they are too small for what is required.

Martin Blackwell (MBI) there is a trend for the return of town centre managers and collaboration is key to pulling people together. He asks for thoughts on what to do to implement the Town Centre Action Plan.

6.2 Gordon Bell (GB) stated that he is involved in town regeneration projects and they took the approach that if there were no funds available from the council, then they would look elsewhere. With the support of Scotland's Towns Partnership's Funding Finder, they managed to identify funds. However, he emphasised that barriers still exist after funds have been identified. For example, funder deadlines are often hampered by bureaucracy. Ticking boxes to get money is very difficult. He advises seeking out support groups and working together - share knowledge and channel experience. Alastair Mitchell (AM) and MBI signposted people to the ATCM network.

6.3 Referring to CMcL's question on whether a body of evidence existed around the value of town centres, MBI said that Portas did not include the value of the evening economy which has been presented to be vital to the wider economy or highlight the importance of town centre users and jobs.

6.4 Joe Fagan (JF) - there is a real sense of urgency to address the Town Centre Action Plan for example, investment zones but these are dependent on the Community Empowerment Bill going through. COSLA is yet to agree what Town Centre First will be. The FSB want more to be done on rates. There has been action taken on business rates but still there has been no revaluation for the need of resource and as we are still waiting for the view of COSLA, how can we apply a town centre first principle?

AN - that is a matter for politicians. There is a lot of overlapping information. ATCM understands the issues and keen to push it up the agenda.

CMcL - is there a feeling that momentum has been lost already?

6.5 Ian McLelland (IMcL) - local government does not feel very local, especially in Scotland.

TS - it is a geographical issue and out of town council headquartered locations leads to a disparate approach. Each town gets 'a turn' of some support from council. There are a small number of towns in a governing structure and they are only financed for a bit. TS made reference to France's zone de concentré, and their drive to complete one task at a time. We need structure from Scottish Government to do this. There is a collective will to work together and there is knowledge within communities. Politicians need to open the door and reduce barriers; a constructive process is required.

JG - local authorities take action less quickly because they carry more responsibilities, however, they can change and adapt and there is the will to work together. The City of Edinburgh Council is set to make it easier to do business in Edinburgh. Although with local authorities, he believes there will be more centralisation and digitalisation to get the reach required. TS - capacity building is essential but the Review was place based and should be resourced.

6.6 Leigh Sparks (LS), we are aware of short term actions and there is a lot happening on the ground. Derek Mackay will present in November at STP's Scotland's Towns Conference, providing an update to the Town Centre Action Plan.

6.7 James Trolland (JT), believes that councillors are out of depth, liaising with community and engaging effectively. There is a top down approach, although government want a bottom up approach - the knowledge isn't there.

7. AOB

Denis Rodwell (DR) - knowledge transfer is key. There needs to be more positivity; less negativity. Take a look at the exposure of good things happening in Dundee, or CraftTown, for example. Where there is a clear focus on learning, we need to look at the successful solutions not at all the problems!

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 14th May 2014, 1730 – 1900, in Committee Room 4.

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APPENDIX 1 – AGENDA FOR CROSS PARTY GROUP ON TOWNS AND TOWN CENTRES MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY 2014

- 13:00 Lunch kindly supported by ATCM
- 13:15 Welcome & Opening Remarks – Margaret McCulloch MSP, Convener
- 13:20 Minutes of previous meeting & Matters arising
- 13:25 AGM Business
- Re-election of Office Bearers
 - Review & Forward Plan
- 13:30 Alexander Nicoll - ATCM Chair

Discussion: How do we overcome the barriers to implementing the Town Centre Action Plan?

- 13:35 Public sector: Jim Galloway, Head of Enterprise and Innovation at City of Edinburgh Council, & Chair of SLAED
- 13:40 Business: Malcolm Brown, Head of Corporate Communications, Scotmid Co-operative and Chair of Queensferry Ambition Business Improvement District;
- 13:45 Community: Tom Sneddon, Board member with Development Trusts Association Scotland and Scotland's Towns Partnership.
- 13:50 Discussion
- 14:15 AOCB (including suggestions for future discussion topics)
Date of Next Meeting – 14th May (5.30 – 7 pm)
- 14:30 Close of Meeting

APPENDIX 2 – APOLOGIES AND LIST OF ATTENDEES

APOLOGIES

Ewan Anderson, 7N Architects
Maggie Broadley, Craft Town Scotland
Callum Chomczuk, Pagoda PR
Kirsty Davison, WSP
Annabelle Ewing, MSP
Eric Guthrie, TACTRAN
Keith Irving, Living Streets
Alison Johnstone MSP
Stephen Leckie, Scottish Tourism Alliance
Barry McCulloch, FSB Scotland
Karen Whitefield, USDAW
Jane Wood, Scottish Business in the Community
Ralitsa Vasilovska, William Hill

ATTENDEES

Margaret McCulloch MSP (Convener)
Gordon Bell, The Retailer Group
Martin Blackwell, ATCM
Lisa Blyth, 7N Architects
Elaine Bone, Scotland's Towns Partnership and Economic Development Association
Scotland
Malcolm Brown, Scotmid & Queensferry Ambition BID
Viv Collie, Vivid Ideas & Solutions
Scott Davidson, CH2M Hill
Ian Davison Porter, BIDs Scotland
Graeme Dey MSP
Joe Fagan, Scottish Parliament
Ian Fowell, Scottish Small Towns Group
Jim Galloway, City of Edinburgh Council & SLAED
Janice Gray, Paths for All
Andy Kinnaird, SLAED
Rebecca Mather, Scotland's Towns Partnership
Craig McLaren, RTPI Scotland
Ian McLelland, East Kilbride Shopping Centre
Alastair Mitchell, Falkirk Delivers
Alexander Nicoll, ATCM
Carole Noble, Keep Scotland Beautiful
Phil Prentice, East Renfrewshire Council
Gordon Reid, Carlogie Ltd
Beria Rodwell
Dennis Rodwell, Dennis Rodwell Architecture and Planning
Lindsey Sibbald, City of Edinburgh Council
Tom Sneddon, Development Trusts Association Scotland
Professor Leigh Sparks, University of Stirling
James Trolland
Sunil Varu, Paisley BID and ATCM
Ross Williams, Pagoda PR