



Report to Argyll and Bute Council Bute and Cowal Area Committee 7 October 2014

Background

The Scottish Regeneration Forum has been commissioned by Highlands & Islands Enterprise to carry out a feasibility study into establishing if there is interest in Rothesay in pursuing an Alliance for Action based on the existing SURF activity in Govan and East Kirkcaldy.

The Surf led Alliance for action is a collaborative activity and shared learning programme that SURF is coordinating in the two case study areas of Govan, Glasgow and East Kirkcaldy, Fife.

In both of these disadvantaged communities, which have differing contexts but similar challenges, SURF is working with relevant local and national partners to:

- Build local capacity, strengthen resilience, increase practical outcomes and improve the well being of local residents;
- Link local knowledge, initiatives and assets with national networks, policies and resources in support of more coordinated and holistic regeneration activity;
- Draw out transferrable learning towards more successful and sustainable policy and practice in community regeneration.

The Alliance for Action programme is being delivered by SURF over 2013 – 15 with support from the Scottish Government and Resilient Scotland Ltd.

The Scottish Regeneration Forum has been commissioned by Argyll and the Isles Enterprise to explore the possibility of establishing an “ALLIANCE FOR ACTION” On Rothesay, based on the model used by SURF in Galaton and Govan.

In pursuing this approach, Surf suggested that the following process be adopted

Stage 1 Project Scoping

- ∇ Work Planning
- ∇ information gathering
- ∇ Rothesay and engagement

Stage 2 Research

- ∇ identifying options for a new approach

Stage 3 Developing Alliance Options / Solutions

- ∇ identifying options

Stage 4 Report and recommendations

- ∇ testing options with potential users

Stage 5 Completion

- ∇ ensuring that the proposals are embedded

(The full project plan is attached as appendix 1)

Current Position

In the event, it has not proven possible to progress as systematically as had been hoped and therefore this report is based on

- ∇ 2 Meetings with HIE Staff, 1 in Surf Offices and 1 in Rothesay.
- ∇ 1 Meeting with ABC staff on Rothesay
- ∇ 1 Meeting with Fergus Murray
- ∇ Meeting with the Council's Senior Management Team
- ∇ Desk research on the ABC documents in the Public Domain and available on their web site.

There is clear enthusiasm from HIE to see some change in the approach towards regeneration in Rothesay.

The helpful visit to Rothesay in January by Andy Milne and Brian MacDonald hosted by Kerrien Grant and David Rodgers identified some of the issues in the town based mainly on property and economic development issues which served to highlight;

- ∇ The surplus of significant buildings within the town which appear to be desired or appreciated by the community but for which there appears to be no real use.
- ∇ The contrast between the significant improvements being made in pursuit of the THI, contrasted with the continuing dereliction of sites and significant buildings.
- ∇ The apparent lack of any real coordination of activity evidenced by the project by project approach to significant buildings in the absence of a masterplanned approach
- ∇ Issues around community participation and involvement.

As a result of this meeting, a further meeting was arranged with Peter McDonald, ABC's local officer on Bute.

The meeting with Peter took place on the 28th February

This meeting provided another useful opportunity to look at Rothesay but from the perspective of someone who lived on the island and who worked for the Council.

It confirmed some of the issues identified earlier, including property, the major focus on the Pavilion, the old school the Community Centre/Library and the Council's developing office rationalization strategy.

It was also helpful to have identified the potential key players including, but not exclusively;

- ∨ Fyne Homes
- ∨ ACHA
- ∨ Area Committee
- ∨ Community Council
- ∨ NHS
- ∨ Rothesay Pavilion SCIO

In terms of the process however there are a number of issues which have to be taken into account;

- ∨ Community Consultation.
 - There is a possibility that Community Consultation may have been “done to death” without the Community feeling that it had any real influence on or ownership of change,
 - There appear to be a number of single issue groups and a potential absence of coalescing around wider “Town” issues
 - This point is reinforced by the HIE 2011 Isle of Bute Community Audit which recognized 77 groups but also recognized a possible lack of cohesion between the groups
- ∨ Action Plan
 - There did not appear to be an awareness of an action plan amongst those who provided information leading to the conclusion that issues are being dealt with in isolation. This is reinforced in part by the fact that the Council's web site describes the Rothesay component of CHORD as being the Pavilion and the THI and not the town as a whole
- ∨ Economic Development
 - The position of local businesses
 - Again reinforced by HIE Community Audit which recognized the mainly small independent businesses on the island as a whole.
 - The vision for Rothesay
- ∨ Town Centre
 - Notwithstanding the work being done by the THI there are a number of Gap sites, vacant shops and buildings which are in danger.
 - The 2011 Bute Community Study carried out for HIE found that when the respondents were asked to indicate their priorities for the future development for Bute, 81% identified improving the appearance of the Town Centre as top priority.

The meeting with Fergus Murray on the 1st of April was most helpful in terms of fleshing out some of the issues raised by those involved and in the various reports in particular reference was made to

- ∨ The significant amount of Capital expenditure on Rothesay in the recent past
- ∨ Pressure on revenue budgets
- ∨ The issues Rothesay faces in common with other small towns of the west
- ∨ The issue of excess of properties both council and private
- ∨ Housing
- ∨ The need for focus and coordination
- ∨ The lack of a USP for Rothesay

From a positive perspective;

- ∨ The Council's commitment to Rothesay
- ∨ A willingness to seek alternative solutions

As a result of this positive meeting, a meeting was arranged with the Council's senior management team on the 4th of August 2014.

This meeting was also very positive, and explored SURF's approach to the Alliance in both Govan and Kirkcaldy. Whilst recognising that Rothesay was not exactly analogous to either of these locations, it was felt that the principles involved could work well in the context of Rothesay and Bute.

Following a very useful discussion, the SMT agreed to cooperate with the feasibility study and nominate a senior officer to assist in liaison with the Council generally and a local officer to facilitate contact with groups and businesses on the island.

It was recognised however, as indicated in SURF's original proposal, that the support of elected members was an essential component of the feasibility phase and would be critical if the feasibility work were to lead to an "Alliance for Action". It was agreed that SURF would make a presentation to elected members at the earliest opportunity.

Background Information

In terms of the publically available information, the following documents were consulted;

- ∨ Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013 - 2023
- ∨ Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017
- ∨ Economic Development Action Plan 2010 (there is a later plan but it is not on the website)
- ∨ Assurance and Improvement Plan
- ∨ Local Development Plan
- ∨ Economic Development Action Plan

The Community Plan and SOA identify that for Bute and Cowal the area which includes Rothesay, the population decline is 4.8%. It also identifies that Rothesay has one area in the bottom 5% identified by SIMD.

The Community Plan identifies a number of outcomes and the stepping stones to their achievement. Those relating to Regeneration are listed

Outcome	10 year aspiration	Progress to be made in 3 years
1) In Argyll and Bute the Economy is thriving	Regeneration activity in Dunoon and Rothesay has transformed them into thriving local economies	A clear strategic and holistic focus on the Regeneration challenges in Dunoon and Rothesay will begin to show positive results and opportunities through improved connectivity being realized, increasing activity in the housing market and inward investment success
6) people live in safer stronger communities	Our town centers are thriving and vibrant. Regeneration of the built environment enhances the competitiveness of Argyll and Bute	Communities and public sector partners work collaboratively to make the best use of our natural and built environment and our culture and heritage with clear plans for development in place and investment underway

In terms of the corporate plan 2013 -2017, the Council recognizes as its Corporate Objective 2 “Working together to realize the potential of our Communities”.

It describes amongst the corporate outcomes that “The places we live, work and visit are well planned safe and successful”. It suggests that this may involve coproduction with communities and describes empowering communities to encourage appropriate developments.

The Local Development Plan is a helpful document which, amongst its many policy themes and considerations has specific policies which support the potential development of an “Alliance for Action” model for Rothesay amongst these are:

- ∇ Key objective C
 - To work in partnership with local communities in a way that recognises their particular needs to deliver successful and sustainable local regeneration.
- ∇ LDP Policy Sustainable Development Strat 1 – seeks to maximise the opportunities
 - for local community benefit
 - Making efficient use of vacant and/ or derelict land including appropriate buildings.

In general, the LDP, in recognition of falling populations and fragile economies, suggests that the Plan should capitalise on existing and new opportunities to further town centre regeneration. Throughout the Council plans examined thus far there is a theme of Regeneration of the main town centres being a key priority for the Council with an expressed recognition of the need to undertake and implement town centre action plans for each of the town centres.

In proposing an alliance for action for Rothesay the emphasis has been on the town. This reflects the fact that the commission from Argyll and Isles Enterprise focused on the town. It is recognised however that the town does not operate in isolation and is inextricably linked to the wider economic functioning of Bute and all of the issues faced on the Island and operates within that context. Where appropriate, the Alliance would take due account of these issues and would incorporate any issues arising.

It would be wrong to draw conclusions from this brief analysis of Rothesay and of the supporting documents. What can be inferred however is that;

- ∇ there are issues in Rothesay which require to be addressed
- ∇ there is a policy framework which seems to support that something should be done
- ∇ there is a community which is interested in the nature and functioning of its town

Next Steps

It is fairly clear that the Council have policies in place which allow there to be a focus on Rothesay.

Having a policy frame work is a necessary precursor to any work which is done with communities, It's equally important however to recognize that in order to take this forward there needs to be genuine commitment from the senior levels within the partners, probably at the senior group on the Community Planning Partnership to allow their staff to engage in the focus in Rothesay as outlined in the SOA.

To achieve the strategic and holistic focus on the regeneration challenges in the three year time frame will require coordinated action particularly if the Community are to be engaged. Therefore, if the feasibility study is to deliver, it's important that engagement detailed in the project plan is commenced.

SURF takes the view that, notwithstanding the fact that we have been commissioned by HIE to undertake this work; the Council is an essential part of the process without whose active support the project is unlikely to deliver.

Senior Officer Support

SURF welcomed the opportunity to discuss the project with the SMT and their support for the process.

In the absence of senior management and member buy in its doubtful that much could be achieved. The support of ABC at the highest level is critical to the success or otherwise of this project and is an important part of the project scoping exercise.

Member Support

SURF is alert to the need to ensure that elected members are sufficiently aware of and involved in the project at the correct level and at the earliest opportunity.

We are aware of the sensitivities involved in engaging with elected members and welcome the advice and support from SMT in ensuring that the correct contact is made with elected members and that all opportunities to keep them aware of activities are maximised with the intention of securing their support for the feasibility study.

Outcomes

In terms of the outcomes from an engagement with Argyll and Bute Council, SURF would welcome;

- ∇ An agreement to support the feasibility study in principle
- ∇ Access to appropriate Council Officers to understand the departmental issues in Rothesay
- ∇ Support in identifying Community Groups
- ∇ Support in ensuring that elected Members and the area committee are engaged in the study.

Brian MacDonald
Chair
SURF
The Scottish Regeneration Forum

Appendix 1 Detailed Project Plan

Stage 1 – Project Scoping

- Meetings with HIE to identify key tasks, stakeholders and influencers
- Meetings with ABC to determine interest in and appetite for the project
- Meetings with Elected Members (To be confirmed at meeting with HIE)
- Meetings with Community Groups
- Senior stakeholder level workshop, to identify the various opportunities for developing an alliance approach within Rothesay.

Stage 2 –Research

- HIE Reports on Rothesay
- ABC Reports on Rothesay
- THI Reports
- Other Relevant reports (as identified by HIE)
- Extant and Proposed project bids
- Mainstream Budgets(This will depend on the appetite displayed by HIE and ABC at the scoping phase)

Stage 3 – Options Development

Meeting with HIE to

- Report on viability and opportunities, identifying
 - Interest in Alliance Model
 - issues and options
- identify methods of taking forward developments
- identify potential barriers
- development of implementation plan

Stage 4 – Report and Recommendation

- clarity about deliverability
- evaluate potential users views.
- Meetings with Stakeholders on Rothesay and Dunoon to discuss findings

Stage 5 – Completion

We would aim to achieve consensus from key stakeholders on the implementation plan. Strategic goals and key performance indicators would be developed and a process established for delivering an Alliance strategy. As part of this work, key recommendations could be made on

integrating the new strategy with existing Council, HIE and partner agency strategies; as well as addressing the ongoing leadership of both the strategy and implementation plan.

Appendix 2 SURF

SURF is the independent regeneration network for Scotland.

Aims and objectives

SURF's overall objective is to improve the health and wellbeing of residents in Scotland's disadvantaged communities.

To meet this goal, SURF's key aims are:

- To provide a neutral space for all sectors and players in Scottish community regeneration to share their knowledge and experience
- To stimulate challenging debate about community regeneration policy and practice
- To maintain a high status for community regeneration on Scotland's political agenda
- To provide relevant and constructive feedback to key policy-makers

SURF network

The SURF network aims to be the primary arena for debate on community regeneration in Scotland. It acts as a channel for information, consultation and policy proposals, based on the knowledge and experience of its extensive membership and wider connections.

SURF network activity includes seminars, conferences, international policy exchanges, annual awards for best practice and the distribution of the regeneration policy journal, Scotregen.

This all provides a truly independent network to explore current practice, experience and knowledge, with which to positively influence the development of successful regeneration policy and practice.

Background

SURF was established in 1992 as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. It is directed by a board of voluntary directors drawn from across its wide cross-sector membership of over 250 organisations.

SURF members range in size from small community groups to some of Scotland's largest private companies. Membership organisations also include local authorities, housing associations, health boards, academic institutions, professional bodies, voluntary organisations and charities.

Since its inception, SURF has operated from two basic principles:

- Successful and sustainable regeneration is only achievable when all aspects of physical, social, economic and cultural regeneration are addressed in a holistic approach.

- The people who are the intended beneficiaries of any regeneration effort must be meaningfully involved in the process if it is to be successful in planning, implementation and maintenance.