SURF Regeneration Bulletin for SFHA Members

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## Scottish Cabinet Switch

As the dust settles on May’s Scottish elections, a quiet but highly significant shift has emerged with regard to the Scottish Government’s responsibilities for communities, regeneration and places. In 2018-21, these responsibilities were held by former Cabinet Secretary Aileen Campbell, as part of a busy departmental portfolio that also included housing, local government and tackling poverty.

Aileen did not stand for re-election in May, and the [subsequent reshuffle](https://www.gov.scot/news/new-scottish-cabinet/) created new and amended roles, including that of Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government, assigned to Shona Robison. Shona inherited much of Aileen’s portfolio, but some key regeneration items, most notably community empowerment, town centre regeneration and spatial planning, have passed to Tom Arthur in his new post of Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth. Tom is a Junior Minister to Kate Forbes, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy.

This splitting of housing, communities and place functions into different areas of the Scottish Government operating structure may appear to be unhelpful, given their interlinked and overlapping nature. The change is, however, part of a broader Scottish Government approach towards spreading responsibility for improving communities more widely across its directorates and agencies. In doing so, it supports the aspirations of the [Place Principle](https://www.gov.scot/publications/place-principle-introduction/), agreed by the Scottish Government and CoSLA in 2019, towards increasing partnership collaboration in place-based activity.

## Place Based Investment Programme

A central plank in the new Scottish Government’s support for regeneration is the Place Based Investment Programme. Initially revealed in the 2020/21 Programme for Government, the programme will distribute £325m in capital funding over the next five years to progress ambitions for the regeneration of deprived places and town centres.

The programme will build on the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund and Town Centre Action Plan, and will distribute £140m to local authorities, for allocation to projects that ‘operationalise’ the Place Principle. It will also support implementation of Community Wealth Building and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods – see the following items for more on those – as well as the continuing work of regeneration agency Clyde Gateway in Glasgow and South Lanarkshire.

The broad objective is to strategically align place-based initiatives with ambitions towards net zero, wellbeing, inclusive economic growth, inequality, and community empowerment. The programme is part of the Scottish Government’s National Infrastructure Mission, which also features actions and investments on transport infrastructure, digital connectivity, city region and regional growth deals, and the new Scottish National Investment Bank.

## Community Wealth Building

The Community Wealth Building approach to local economic development also has a key position in national regeneration policy – as indicated by Tom Arthur’s Ministerial title. The Scottish Government has committed to expanding pilot activity and development projects based on the [five core principles](https://cles.org.uk/community-wealth-building/what-is-community-wealth-building/) articulated by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies, including fair employment practices, shared ownership of local economies, and socially just use of land and buildings.

The Ayrshire Growth Deal formally agreed in 2020 included a £3m package for supporting Community Wealth Building, and North Ayrshire Council has taken a lead in being the first local authority in Scotland to launch a Community Wealth Building strategy. A [“one year on” update](https://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/news/Community-Wealth-Building-%E2%80%93-one-year-on-and-making-a-difference-to-communities-across-North-Ayrshire.aspx) highlighted progress towards the 55 actions in the Strategy, including delivery of local business procurement workshops, a multi-partnership ‘Anchor Charter’ agreement, and development plans for a community hub at Kilbirnie Loch.

The Scottish Government has committed towards supporting further Community Wealth Building strategies in the South of Scotland, greater Glasgow, Western Isles, Clackmannanshire, and the Tay Cities region (Angus, Dundee, Fife and Perth & Kinross). Scotland’s Centre for Regional Inclusive Growth is currently adding to [a library of case studies](https://www.inclusivegrowth.scot/community-wealth-building-case-studies/) of active Community Wealth Building initiatives.

## 20 Minute Neighbourhoods

A linked regeneration policy priority of growing importance is 20 Minute Neighbourhoods, described by the Scottish Government as places, “where people can meet their needs within a 20 minute walk from their house – enabling people to live better, healthier lives and supporting our net zero ambitions”.

The growing policy appetite for 20 Minute Neighbourhoods is linked to the pandemic, and the recognition of the added value for climate change, wellbeing and local economies derived from improving access to local services, amenities, green spaces, and active travel opportunities.

With Scottish Government support, SURF is in the process of establishing a [20 Minute Neighbourhood Practice Network](https://www.surf.scot/projects/20-minute-practice-network/), which will bring place-based regeneration practitioners from all sectors together to explore practical implementation of policy aspirations. The Practice Network will include regular meetings, learning reports and national conferences. 150 practitioners have already registered and SFHA Members willing to get involved in SURF’s initiative are [warmly invited to sign up](https://www.surf.scot/projects/20-minute-practice-network/). The summer 2021 edition of [SURF’s online journal](https://www.surf.scot/category/by-issue/summer-2021/) is also showcasing different views, perspectives and knowledge on 20 Minute Neighbourhoods.

## Local Place Plans

The Scottish Government recently consulted towards proposed regulations on Local Place Plans, which were introduced as a provision of the Planning (Scotland) Act of 2019. Local Place Plans are described by the Scottish Government as: “community led plans providing proposals for the development and use of land… [which] will set out a community’s aspirations for its future development”.

The regulations will set out how such Plans will operate in practice. They cover areas such as public and stakeholder engagement duties, integration with other elements of the planning system, and the process for maintaining a public register. [SURF responded to the consultation](https://www.surf.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/SURF-Response-to-Local-Place-Plan-Consultation.pdf), articulating SURF network concerns around the provision of adequate resources to enable the development of robust Local Place Plans, and suggesting two options for a minimum requirement on seeking the views of local people.

## Scotland Loves Local

Concerns about the growth of online shopping and the closure of local businesses during the pandemic has driven further action in the Scotland Loves Local campaign. Launched in 2020 by Scotland’s Towns Partnership in partnership with the Scottish Government, the campaign encourages people to spend money on retail, leisure and cultural activity in their local communities, town centres and high streets, with a view to supporting the longer term recovery of local economies.

This month, [a Scotland Loves Local gift card](https://lovelocal.scot/new-scotland-loves-local-gift-card-launched/) was launched. Operated by Perth-based technology firm Miconex, 32 gift cards will be available, one for each of Scotland’s local authority regions. Each gift card will only work in one region, encouraging local expenditure. Local authorities and participating businesses will be promoting regional roll-outs in the coming months. The campaign has a [dedicated website](https://lovelocal.scot/) including gift card information for merchants and consumers.

## Passivhaus Award Winner

Each year, SURF, the SFHA and the Scottish Government team up to identify, highlight and celebrate innovation and impact in housing led regeneration. The ‘Housing and Regeneration’ category of the independently judged SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration recognises and promotes the achievements of all housing providers in ensuring that their investments are planned and delivered in a way which produces substantial, lasting benefits to resident communities and the shared aims of wider regeneration partners.

The 2020 category winner – revealed earlier this year – is the Nith Valley Leaf Trust Community-Owned Passivhaus Project in Closeburn, Dumfries and Galloway. The project is Scotland’s first community-owned homes built to ‘Passivhaus’ ultralow energy standards, and the SURF Awards judging panel were particularly impressed at its impact in meeting local community needs around a lack of affordable housing and addressing fuel poverty. Highland Small Communities Housing Trust’s mixed use development in Gairloch, and Angus Council’s new-build project in Dunarn Street, Newstyle, were also shortlisted. Profiles of the three initiatives are available in a [summary publication](https://www.surf.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Awards-Pub-20-final-web.pdf). The [2021 SURF Awards](https://www.surf.scot/surf-awards/) is currently open for applications until 6 September.

## Working Better Together in Place

The Place-based Programme Learning Exchange is a collaboration of national organisations, including SURF, the Corra Foundation and the Scottish Community Development Centre, that champion ‘place’ in their practices.

In May, the group released a joint report highlighting what works and what doesn’t in place-based approaches. The report aims to share these key learnings to enhance both the scale and quality of place-based working across Scotland. It draws on over 50 years of combined organisational experience and learning across dozens of urban and rural place settings, and is [available on the SURF website](https://www.surf.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Working-Better-Together-in-Place.pdf).

## SURF’s Manifesto

Housing was one of eight key themes in [SURF’s 2021 Manifesto for Community Regeneration](https://www.surf.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021-SURF-Manifesto-for-Community-Regeneration.pdf), which launched earlier this year in advance of the Scottish elections, following an 18 month consultation process. The outcomes of in-depth interviews with housing practitioners and experts from registered social landlords, community trusts, national agencies and academic institutions informed the final report, which was shared with political parties and stakeholders, and which formed the basis of a Spring [hustings debate](https://www.surf.scot/projects/2021-surf-manifesto/) with leading politicians.

The supply of affordable housing was identified by consultees as the biggest policy priority in the theme. Demands for action on build quality and energy efficiency standards, remediation of brownfield sites, and the scaling up of retrofitting and empty homes programmes, also featured prominently. SURF will be working with the SFHA and other stakeholders to amplify shared demands over the course of the new Parliament.

## Get Involved

SFHA Members can participate in a number SURF events and activities this summer, including:

Attend one our free virtual [SURF Awards Shared Learning workshops](https://www.surf.scot/category/events/) in July– including one on housing led regeneration.

Sign up to our [20 Minute Neighbourhood Practice Network](https://www.surf.scot/projects/20-minute-practice-network/).

Join our free SURF Annual Conference on [Partners in Place](https://www.surf.scot/2021-surf-annual-conference-partners-in-place-3-virtual-events-24th-26th-august/), also taking place virtually, on 24-26 August.

Nominate a regeneration initiative for a [2021 SURF Award](https://www.surf.scot/surf-awards/).

Read the summer edition of our [online journal](https://www.surf.scot/category/by-issue/summer-2021/), exploring the challenges and opportunities of creating 20 Minute Neighbourhoods in Scotland.

SFHA Members that would like to learn more about the benefits of their free organisational SURF membership can contact SURF Events, Information and Communications Manager Emma Scott – [emma@surf.scot](mailto:emma@surf.scot).

Any SFHA Members with queries or comments on the content of this briefing are welcome to contact SURF’s Policy Manager, Derek Rankine – [derek@surf.scot](mailto:derek@surf.scot).

SURF website: [www.surf.scot/](https://www.surf.scot/)