



# Working Better Together in Place

LESSONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLACE-BASED WORKING

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# Place-based programme learning exchange

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## Introduction and this paper

Established in January 2019 and building on our collaborative work to support the development of the National Place Principle, the Place-based Programme Learning Exchange comprises national organisations that champion 'place' in their practices: Corra Foundation, Scottish Community Development Centre, National Lottery Community Fund, SURF and Inspiring Scotland.

As a community of practice, we come together to:

- improve understanding of each other's programmes;
- learn from each other's successes and challenges; and
- collectively inform and influence policy and practice.

We meet quarterly although our structure is informal. This allows representatives and organisations to dip in and out in a way that suits their capacity and interests. This has allowed for example, Creative Scotland to make a valuable contribution to our group.

We are fortunate to operate in a flourishing place context, supported by national government and other third sector agencies. Also, individually and collectively, we maintain a wide network of contacts and invest in collaborative working. Our aspiration, through this document and our ongoing work, is to use this context and these relationships to enhance the scale and quality of place-based working across Scotland. We welcome contributions from other organisations and communities to support this.

This document introduces the organisational members of our group and their respective

place programmes. It also draws on over 50 years of combined organisational experience and learning across dozens of urban and rural place settings to illustrate what works and does not work in terms of place-based approaches.

This aspect of our work was supported through two dedicated learning processes. The majority of the learning presented in this paper is drawn from these two exercises.

To conclude with, our paper provides short case studies to bring this learning to life and illustrate the transformational power of place-based working. In this way, we hope to catalyse a greater uptake of such approaches and to improve practice across Scotland. However, we recognise there is much to do and would welcome the input of others and requests for advice and/or support. Our contact details are provided at the rear of the document.

## Who we are

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### Corra Foundation

Corra Foundation exists to make a difference to the lives of people and communities. It works with others to encourage positive change, opportunity, fairness and growth of aspirations which improve quality of life.

Corra wants to see a society in which people create positive change and enjoy fulfilling lives.

In 2020 Corra launched a **ten-year strategy**. At its heart is the strong belief that when people find their voice, they unlock the power to make change happen.

Corra's new strategy is a response to the world we live in, and to the one we want to play a part in building. It is long term because making a difference on the big challenges will take time.

Corra believes in working with people, communities and organisations in Scotland and beyond to create the space and opportunities for change to happen. Partnership will continue to drive Corra's approach, bringing together a wealth of expertise to make a difference towards bold, shared goals. Corra's People in Place Programme is rooted in this way of working.

Since 1985, Corra has distributed almost £159m and made nearly 16,000 grants to charities. These range from the well-known to small individual community groups receiving a few hundred pounds for a local project. A full list of the grants made by the foundation is available in the Open Data section of the website.

Corra has also recently helped support the distribution of the Scottish Government funding made available to the Voluntary Sector in response to the effects of Coronavirus.

### Inspiring Scotland

Inspiring Scotland's vision is for a Scotland without poverty or disadvantage. Our mission is to change people's lives for the better. To bring together people, communities, charities and public bodies to develop solutions to some of the deepest social problems.

We achieve this by applying long-term funding and development support across a range of impact funds: Positive Destinations for Young People, Mentoring for Looked After Children, Survivors, Autism, Self-Directed Support, Learning Disabilities, Equalities & Human Rights, Perinatal & Infant Mental Health, Outdoor Play, and Community Renewal.

Our fund model adds value and increases impact by:

- Strengthening organisations and communities so they can better address the issues which matter to them.
- Informing and influencing government and public bodies so they can better understand and react to the issues.
- Fostering innovation and encouraging new ideas to tackle issues in more effective ways.
- Supporting, developing and connecting people so they learn from one another and acquire the skills to take their organisation and/or community forward.
- Enabling funding to be spent more effectively.

In 2019/20, we managed a total investment of £16m across 11 funds. This, with the dedicated work of the 175 organisations we supported and our performance advisor team, benefitted 64,300 people: 35,700 young people, 5,800 children and 22,800 adults.

## The National Lottery Community Fund

The National Lottery Community Fund is proud to award money raised by National Lottery players across the UK to good causes. It was established as a non-departmental public body by an Act of Parliament.

Its work is divided into five portfolios, covering funding across England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, and the UK as a whole. Teams all over the UK are the main point of contact for communities. They work with people to develop ideas and create opportunities for groups to come together.

In 2018/19 it awarded over £500 million to over 11,000 communities across the UK. 86% of its grants were under £10,000.

## SURF – Scotland’s Regeneration Forum

SURF was established in 1992. Its 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.

SURF’s overall objective is to improve the lives and opportunities 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.

## Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC)

SCDC supports policy and practice for community development in Scotland. We work towards an active, inclusive and just Scotland where communities are strong, equitable and sustainable.

We work directly with:

- Community groups and organisations.
- Community development practitioners.
- Government and other policy makers.
- Local partnerships and agencies across Scotland to involve communities in their work.

We work across sectors and professions and use what we learn to help shape policy for strong, influential and inclusive communities.

As part of our work to support community capacity building and community-led approaches to regeneration, SCDC has delivered the Supporting Communities programme (as part of the Scottish Government’s Strengthening Communities Programme) since 2013.

# Our programmes



Buckhynd Bakers in Buckhaven



Getting Alongside Communities in Langlees

## Corra Foundation

### People in Place

By working alongside communities and partners, the People in Place programme aims to support sustainable long-term change in each place and at a systemic level. The aim is to appreciate the distinctiveness of each local area, understand the aspirations of local people and develop ways to help meet these so that communities can:

- Develop community influence and control.
- Ensure assets and resources can be maintained into the future.
- Build social connections and networks.

The ambition for each community that we work alongside is set by the people in that place. Our commitment is to help create the conditions and connections for bold results to be achieved. The three components of our 'People in Place' programme are discussed below.

## Getting Alongside Communities

Getting Alongside Communities is currently working alongside nine communities in Scotland, supporting local people to connect, collaborate on ideas, and take action to create positive change. The communities were identified by using data, desk-based research, and conversations with a range of people.

The communities are:

- Blacklands – North Ayrshire
- Buckhaven – Fife
- Carbrain – North Lanarkshire
- Castlehill – West Dunbartonshire
- Cumnock – East Ayrshire
- Dunterlie – East Renfrewshire
- Fernhill – South Lanarkshire
- Langlees – Falkirk
- Methil – Fife

The community is at the heart of the programme. Each community has a dedicated Community Co-ordinator, who will get alongside the community by listening, bringing people together for conversations, and to identify shared priorities.

The Co-ordinators help facilitate and enable capacity building within the community; widening community participation, seeking out voices that are seldom heard; and ultimately resulting in locally-led actions being taken.

Getting Alongside Communities works at communities' pace, focussing on inclusive engagement and sustainable investment.

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## Appetite for Change

Appetite for Change looks at how learning from the Place Team's 'Getting Alongside Communities' work can be developed for larger-scale communities in Scotland. Corra Foundation is working in collaboration with communities and other partners to develop projects that are appropriate for towns, cities and rural areas of Scotland.

## Participatory Scotland

This new initiative in partnership with Participatory City Foundation, is based on the successful 'Every One, Every Day' programme in Barking and Dagenham, but tailored for the Scottish context.

'Every One, Every Day' is a globally recognised research project testing the potential of a platform approach to creating participatory culture in cities. The platform is a collection of co-ordinated and shared infrastructure that helps local people to start practical projects and activities that make their communities better places to live.

The Participatory Scotland equivalent will offer people living and working in Scottish towns and cities a simple and effective way to do the same, while encouraging their passions, interests and skills. It provides a low-risk way for people to try out ideas and projects and where relevant, develop and test collaborative business ideas.

The scale and scope of each project will differ according to local circumstances, but will likely comprise multi-site, multi-year initiatives in each place. Currently, six local authorities are interested in this approach and are supporting city/town feasibility studies as follows:

- Fife Council, Kirkcaldy
- Perth and Kinross Council, Perth City (and surrounds)
- North Ayrshire Council, Irvine (and surrounds)
- Renfrewshire Council, Paisley
- Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeen
- Glasgow City Council, Glasgow (district to be identified)



Link Up Leith



Link Up Gallatown

## Inspiring Scotland

### Link Up

Operational since 2012, Link Up enables and empowers local people (many amongst the most vulnerable) to help themselves, each other, and their community. It achieves this through skilled community development practitioners delivering three strands of work:

#### 1. Connecting people

The ingredients for lasting change already lie in our communities in the shape of the strengths of local people: their passion, skills, knowledge and experience. Our embedded workers illuminate these strengths through continuous processes of community engagement and by getting to know people.

They then harness these strengths to support people to do the things that matter to them. These activities – gardening, cooking, arts, crafts, sports and music etc – are created and led by local people. In this way, people connect with others and make Link Up what they want it to be.

#### 2. Building supportive relationships, confidence and self-esteem

By doing things together over time, people build trusting, *supportive relationships* with others. They also acquire new knowledge and learn and share new skills, many volunteering to help others and their community. This is enabled through intensive 1-2-1 and group support from our workers.

This positively redefines the person's view of their community and critically, themselves and the role they play in that community. Collectively, this builds *confidence* and *self-esteem*.

These *fundamentals* are transformational, building resilience and inspiring people to create a better future for themselves, their family and community: improving health and wellbeing including reducing drug & alcohol consumption; creating a brighter financial future by re-engagement with employment, skills training and education; and, becoming active citizens looking out for the welfare of others and seeking to help their community flourish.

#### 3. Empowering people to drive change for their community

With this active citizenship, a second phase of transformation can proceed: one in which local people seek to make local services and decision-making work with and for their community. Our workers support this activism by: building people's capabilities in facilitation, influencing and mediation as well as community-led action research, community consultation, co-production and community organising; helping people to identify and understand the issues which impact their community and possible responses; helping people navigate and engage local decision-making structures; and, building collaboratives between people and organisations where they work together to tackle local issues.



Link Up Whitfield

As a result of the above, Link Up has enabled positive changes at a wider community level including: creation of community larders and shops addressing food insecurity; establishing a bike social enterprise providing improved access to bikes and skills training in bike mechanics; formation of peer-led recovery and other support groups; establishing an award-winning tenants and residents association; a successful campaign to stop the eviction of almost 200 tenants; and, local people taking over management or ownership of community assets.

Link Up currently operates in nine urban communities across Scotland:

- Edinburgh
  - Craigmillar
  - Leith
  - Muirhouse
- Glasgow
  - Gorbals
  - Possilpark
- Whitfield, Dundee
- Gallatown, Kirkcaldy
- North-west Kilmarnock
- Saltcoats, North Ayrshire



Connect Community Trust

## The National Lottery Community Fund

### Place-based Working & Our Place

Getting closer to communities has been the focus of the Fund's work over the last 18 months. It established dedicated funding teams committed to understanding what matters to local people across Scotland.

This change allows its people to connect more communities together. The support can reach groups of all sizes and capacities and is accessible to those who have not had National Lottery funding before. In 2018/19, it supported 884 grassroots organisations right across the country and 35% of the 1,098 grants were made to organisations new to the Fund. Each of those awards began with a conversation with one of the local teams.

The majority of the Fund's grants are awarded through the National Lottery Awards for All Scotland programme. It awards grants up to £10,000 and is a National Lottery family joint programme with sportscotland and Creative Scotland.

The eight place teams are:

- Central Scotland
- Edinburgh
- Glasgow
- Highlands and Islands
- North and South Lanarkshire
- North East Scotland
- South Scotland
- West Scotland



Our Place Ardrrossan, Community Renewal

Also, in 2014, National Lottery Community Fund Scotland commenced the second iteration of its own place-based programme in seven communities across Scotland, Our Place.

Our Place's aim was to empower local people and organisations to bring about a massive and lasting positive difference to their neighbourhood. As part of this, local people and groups were supported to determine where National Lottery funding was spent in their community.

Local steering groups were formed to oversee the projects and ensure they aligned with their community's vision. Designed as a £12m, 10-year funded programme with five years of community development support (through a support contractor), Our Place sought to achieve the following outcomes:

- Communities have more influence on decisions taken locally.
- Communities have more sustainable services and facilities that reflect their local priorities.
- People say their community is a better place to live.

The community development support roles came to an end in 2019, the same time that an interim review of the programme was undertaken. This is discussed below.



SURF Alliance for Action, Dunoon

## **SURF** **Alliance for Action**

Alliance for Action builds on SURF's experience, knowledge and networks to link community assets and aspirations with relevant national policies and resources. Its twin purpose is to support better outcomes in strategically selected disadvantaged communities, while enhancing shared understanding of the realistic possibilities for successful cross-sector community regeneration in a challenging economic context.

Since launch, Alliance for Action has supported and linked activities, investments and learning in three place-focused, cross-sector collaborations.

Based on the programme's success and its relevance to SURF's core aims, as well as those of the Scottish Government, SURF and its partners further developed the Alliance for Action programme.

Local stakeholders, programme partners and contacts, and senior Government policy advisers have noted the programme's value across several inter-linked policy concerns, including: inclusive economic growth; improved public services; greater community empowerment and enterprise; place-based regeneration; locality planning; and, the overall priority of tackling poverty and inequality.

The Alliance for Action 2018-21 features five community sites:

- Dunoon
- East Kirkcaldy
- Govan
- Langholm
- Rothesay



Community Action Planning, Colmonnell, South Ayrshire



Launch of Langholm Community Action Plan

## SCDC - Supporting Communities

SCDC's Supporting Communities programme has sought to assist a wide range of community organisations and networks to address the wider social, economic and environmental opportunities in their area.

Often these organisations and networks find it harder to secure community development support which is generally in very short supply, or even non-existent in many local areas. To this end we worked with community anchor organisations and networks in 11 sites across Scotland in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

As a key element of our programme, we are providing targeted support to partnerships or collaboratives that are committed to taking forward place-based approaches in one or more locality. The work is underpinned by the Place Principle and our focus is on assisting these partnerships/collaboratives to create and maintain opportunities for community involvement in regenerating their 'places'.

Our support varies from area to area but includes:

- Training and practice development for community reps and local officers.
- Support for local place-based strategy development – working collaboratively with community reps, third sector, public bodies and funders.
- Exploring and supporting community participation in local place-based work.
- Action learning – drawing out the lessons for good practice and feeding these back to local and national partners.

More information and updates from the programme can be accessed at the [Supporting Communities page of the SCDC website](#).

## Map of place-based programmes

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The map below illustrates the spread of our respective local projects across Scotland at end 2020. This excludes SCDC's Strengthening Communities localities as these change year on year. For a list of the current Strengthening Communities sites please see the SCDC website using the link on the previous page. **The full interactive map can be accessed here.**

-  Inspiring Scotland's Link Up
-  SURF Alliance for Action
-  Corra Foundation's Appetite for Change
-  Corra Foundation's People in Place
-  National Lottery Community Fund Our Place



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## Lessons learned

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### Common learning points from across our place programmes

A critical part of our regular meetings has been to build a mutual understanding of each other's programmes and to share and discuss what we are learning about place-based approaches. This has been complemented by two key learning exercises over the past couple of years.

Firstly, a learning exchange day was hosted by National Lottery Community Fund in 2019. This brought together approximately 60 stakeholders involved in our place-based programmes – ranging from community members to local authority representatives – to share their experiences and learn from each other. To find out more about the day, please go to [The National Lottery Community's Fund blog](#).

Secondly, we agreed that one of the key outputs of this group would be a stronger understanding of each other's programmes. Even though we all have communities at the core of what we do, we work in diverse ways. That said, we know that we complement each

other's work, and contribute to the delivery of local and national strategies. Therefore, we decided to undertake a formal exercise to compare and contrast our respective approaches. Using process mapping techniques facilitated by National Lottery Community Fund's in-house service design team, this helped solidify our understanding and explore the learning we have collected thus far.

Taken together, the above has helped us to identify several common learning points in relation to our place-based working. These are presented below followed by detailed learning from each of our respective programmes.

Link Up Whitfield



Link Up Gorbals



## Challenges

- Managing relationships with agencies at a local and national level – a position often compounded by turnover of staff and knowledge within an organisation.
- System complexity.
- Personalities and vested interests.
- Power imbalances, especially between communities and key local organisations/agencies.
- Levels of sustained effort required to deliver place-based programmes.
- Resourcing and sustainability, particularly community development resources which are rarely recognised and safeguarded in the fight against poverty and inequality.
- Buy-in from gatekeepers at strategic level to influence structures and systems.
- Balancing community aspirations with capacity and resourcing to sustain assets and services.
- Levels of realised investment from national agency partners does not match the rhetoric.

## What works

- A supportive policy landscape helps to encourage and validate place-based working.
- Cross-sectoral partnerships are essential as are the facilitation of connections and interactions both horizontally and vertically within local systems and structures.
- Skilled and resourced community developers.
- A strong community focus (especially those in deprivation) matched with a belief in the power of their strengths and assets to deliver change.
- From the outset, being transparent about the challenges and conditions in a place.

- Focus on continuous learning and using this to influence the local 'eco-system' and policy, both locally and nationally.
- Sustained investment to support continuous learning which helps to strengthen the quality of place-based work and to direct its future.
- Facilitative role of third-party organisations is important alongside structural agencies.

## Successes and assets

- Long-term experience of our organisations and others of being alongside communities.
- Higher level interest in place-based working, regeneration, health and wellbeing.
- Plethora and abundance of learning and experience, collectively and individually.
- Collaboration amongst place-based organisations and funders – faith in place.
- An understanding of the incremental processes required to deliver change and realistic expectations about how long that can take.

## Limitations that require further exploration

- A clearer understanding and articulation of the role place-based approaches can play in tackling poverty and inequality at scale.
- Resourcing and specifically, how we resource such work at scale given the ongoing pressures on public finances.

# Programme specific learning

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## Corra Foundation – Learning from People in Place

The local activity and learning from each community in the People in Place programme helps shape the future plans of the community and the wider programme. So far, some common themes have emerged across the programme. These are:

### Voice

- Seldom heard voices.
- Storytelling (individual, community, Corra).
- Citizen Journalism.

### Space

- Supporting use of available space.
- Making new spaces available.
- Exploring asset transfer and community ownership.

### Participation

- In community/community activities.
- In local democracy includes 'active community planning'.
- Participatory Scotland.
- Participatory Budgeting/grant making.

### Investment

- Helping communities to access funding.
- Collective investment (from funders) into places.
- Collective investment (across sectors).
- Kinder procurement.
- Inclusive Growth/Community Wealth Building.

### Learning & development

- Sharing what we learn to shape practice [ours & others].
- Sharing what we learn to shift policy.
- Linking team and programme development.
- Connecting with national and international networks.
- Using our learning to support system change.

Due to the unique conditions in each place, the work is at a different stage in each community. In some places the focus is on listening, building trust, relationships and participation. In others, communities are using increased participation and voice as a platform to engage with local decision making and democratic structures.

Looking ahead, Corra hopes to support communities to connect with each other and to use their voice and power to influence wider system change. What has been important about the approach delivered by Corra to date is the role of Community Co-ordinator sitting alongside communities to respond and help understand their needs and aspirations. It has helped to identify the importance of:

- History of community – understanding why things happen where, and how to navigate around these and how change can have a significant impact locally. A pre-covid example from one of the communities was when the person who had played Santa each year, passed away. It wasn't just about hosting another Xmas party it was about memories.
- On the ground mapping needs to be consistent and regular. How mapping is conducted may change but acknowledging that it helps create a continual picture of what is needed.
- Relationships – highly important as can help or hinder the power dynamics that are created between people including the Community Co-ordinators and Local Authorities/communities.
- The move from leading to supporting – increase in community members being more active (often seen in small indicators) but really meaningful in terms of how they perceive themselves and their role within the community. The Co-ordinator is there to help assist this and step back.
- The power that sits within a community and how as an intermediary you help support a community respond to this.
- Awareness of what is valuable to people and recognition of the time they give.

The People in Place 2019 Annual Insight and Learning report provides further detail on key learning points from across the programme. **The full report can be accessed [here](#)**; however, we summarise below some of these and our more recent findings.

These were informed to a significant degree by the weekly logs maintained by the Getting Alongside Communities' Community Co-ordinators. These logs capture the observations and insights that have been shared with them by community members. The weekly logs are analysed and discussed regularly, highlighting the key achievements across the communities as well as reflecting on what may support and hinder community action.

In 2019, a lot was delivered across all nine communities. A total of 40 ideas were developed and over 7,000 new people reached. This represented a significant increase in the number of ideas generated by communities themselves, including participatory grant-making. In August 2020, 68% of all ideas generated over the past year were community led.

The key themes from 2019 were:

- **Supporting communities** – Building understanding on how to work alongside local bodies. For example, council, schools and churches. At times it can be difficult to understand and navigate how different local services operate. Working with communities, we can help them to negotiate access to local space, offering advice on how to shape conversations with council staff on local issues, and to explore the risks and opportunities in taking on a community asset.
- **Supporting governance** – As activities happen more regularly in communities there is an increase in the number of groups that are available to community members. Conversations with groups are ongoing and include how to best meet their aspirations, who makes decisions, how to manage funding, and what would it mean if they want to become a constituted group or charity.

- **Supporting sustainability** – There is a real desire for communities to find ways that help keep up the momentum behind activities and groups. Trying to get money, premises or other help is difficult and sometimes it can often fall on one or two people. A key focus has been to help communities to find ways that encourage other community members to become involved, develop skills that will help secure funds as well as other support.

The following extract below from our 2019 Insights Report reflects the above and other common patterns through our work:

### Patterns

- Ownership and planning of events have increasingly been identified and led by community members, with a decreasing level of input and support from Community Coordinators.
- In some of the communities there are a few people who are enthusiastic and committed to driving forward activities and ideas, however there is a risk of becoming over-reliant on these one or two people. It will be important to continue to work with people on creating the opportunities for a wide range of community members to get involved with local action and ideas.
- Working alongside other institutions and organisations can at times be difficult. Communities can find it challenging when people in power are unable to adapt to meet their aspirations or ideas.
- There have been continued challenges of institutions (for example schools, local authorities, elected members, churches) that hold power and at times have been unable to adapt to meet community aspirations or ideas.
- There has been a strong willingness from communities to take on community ownership or social enterprise.

## Inspiring Scotland – Learning from Link Up

In 2019, we concluded a review of seven years of operational learning from our Link Up Programme. This was captured in our **Flourishing Communities Report**. The review highlighted four factors as being critical to Link Up's success:

### A non-judgemental environment

Link Up is about people and their potential, not the problems they have or challenges they experience.

Our workers understand that everyone has talents, strengths, and passions, and that they have a right to be heard and a contribution to make. For these things to be realised, people need safe places, free from judgement and pressure, where their confidence and self-esteem can grow, and supportive relationships can flourish.

Our workers create these environments. As well as cultivating trust with community members, they help community members to begin trusting one another. These trusting, reciprocal relationships develop on people's own terms, with local people setting the agenda and determining the pace at which they engage and how they engage.

With local people exercising this choice and control, Link Up becomes a natural part of community life, rather than part of a prescriptive project or intervention.

In this environment, local people from different backgrounds and with a range of different experiences and challenges in their lives can engage with one another, develop trust, understanding and empathy and address their own needs and wants together.

### Open to all and engaging the most vulnerable

Link Up is open to everyone. Link Up participants know that it is first and foremost for them – as individuals, as families, as communities – and not about predetermined targets.

Link Up treats people as people, not statistics or demographics, acknowledging their individual circumstances and experiences.

Because of this, Link Up has a unique ability to engage some of the most vulnerable in society; people struggling with mental and physical health conditions, addiction, loss, loneliness, domestic violence and trauma. Those whose voices are least heard.

This is possible because our workers are genuinely interested in and take the time to understand people's lives. They support people in their pain, loss and anxiety, and celebrate in their triumphs, joys and victories. This helps build resilience and aid recovery, including for those affected by trauma.

### Kind, flexible, supported workers

Link Up works because of our workers; the kind of people that they are and the support they can provide to local people. There are three factors that make an outstanding Link Up worker:

**Kindness:** Our workers are compassionate and kind. They believe fundamentally in the power of people and are driven by a desire to help others. Their work in Link Up is aligned with their purpose, goals and values in life. They are self-aware and learn from and translate their own experiences to help others. They are calm and confident and determined to improve the lives of others no matter the barriers they may face.

**Flexibility:** We let our workers be themselves, giving them the freedom to use their personal attributes and the autonomy to help people in the ways they need. This allows them to start from a person's strengths, not their problems or weaknesses, and work in ways which encourage people's own confidence and self-esteem to grow. We give our workers time to build relationships and to understand local people and the local community. This means they can respond to individual needs and the local context. Collectively, this allows our workers to try different approaches to overcome challenges and make sure they get it right.

**Support:** The job of a Link Up worker is enormously challenging. Therefore, we provide wrap-around support to our workers. This includes close support from an Inspiring Scotland Performance Advisor, quarterly reflective practice meetings with other workers and access to professional psychotherapy support. Workers are also trained to identify people who are dealing with conflict, loss, trauma and suicidality and help them cope with those feelings. Self-care forms a core part of our training. This enables our workers to remain healthy, focused, and provide the best possible support for the long haul.

Together, these three factors give our workers the strength to persevere and the tools to make a real difference to people and the community they live in.

### Accepting and working with complexity

Link Up works because it accepts that communities are complex, fragile, messy and challenging. Each community is unique so there is no one-size-fits-all way to create lasting, positive change in the communities which need our support.

Link Up acknowledges this complexity but applies a methodical approach to navigating it.

First, it takes time. Creating lasting change in communities which have previously been defined by deprivation will never be achieved in a community planning, political or budgetary cycle.

It will take a generation or more. That's why no aspect of Link Up is time limited. We have been running Link Up since 2012 and know we need to be here for the long haul.

Second, at the heart of complex communities are the people who live in them. That's why Link Up's approach begins by connecting people and building the fundamental human needs of confidence, self-esteem and supportive relationships.

Third, these foundations help create an environment in which local people feel able to make the positive changes they want and need – for themselves, their families or their communities.

By beginning with and being driven by what local people want, Link Up is never prescriptive. Instead, it becomes what works in each local context.

Link Up NW Kilmarnock Fun Day



Link Up NW Kilmarnock



## National Lottery Community Fund – Learning from Our Place & Community Assets Funding

### Our Place

In 2019, National Lottery Community Fund conducted an interim review of the Our Place Programme. This identified several key Learning Points as follows:

**Community building** – When we asked people if they thought that Our Place was different to other funding programmes, a lot of people mentioned their community builder.

**Community Chest** – Over 500 micro grants were made through the community chest. These small awards often played an important part in the development of larger projects. The community chest also helped maintain momentum and secure “quick-wins” while larger projects were in development.

**Kickstarting or maintaining engagement in local decision-making and activities** – Communities generally reported an increase in the people getting involved with local activities and decision-making locally. Even though not universal across all Our Place areas, we saw a willingness from people beyond “the usual suspects” to participate in steering groups, forums and other local decision-making collectives.

**People feeling their communities are a better place to live** – In most cases, the annual surveys conducted by the community builders evidenced an increase in people feeling good about and wanting to stay in their communities. Additionally, communities have told us that they are more ambitious about the future, their confidence has improved, and they feel like their communities deserve better.

**Improving community buildings, landscape and physical environment** – In almost all Our Place areas, there was an asset or bit of landscape that had significant meaning to the community. The Our Place investment in assets reignited the community spirit and encouraged local people to become actively involved with the projects.

**Raising the community’s profile within the local government** – People from the communities and local authorities have claimed that the financial investment enabled by Our Place and the development of assets and services have raised the profile of the areas, particularly in local government and its Community Learning and Development teams. Additionally, the communities and their respective local authorities have developed closer working relationships as a result of the projects funded through Our Place.

And in terms of key challenges, the interim review identified the following:

**Ensuring a plurality of voices is represented in local planning and decision-making** – Community builders worked relentlessly to ensure that people in all parts of the community have opportunities to become involved in decisions, either by being part of a local forum or by contributing their views, but the reality is that many people in those communities face multiple barriers that hinder them. Barriers can include caring responsibilities, financial difficulties, work commitments, language, and many others.

**Boundaries and territorialism** – Territorialism caused complications when people from a neighbourhood were reluctant to use the available services or assets in an adjacent area, which led to concerns about service duplication. Most importantly, it raises concerns about whether the community vision truly reflected each Our Place area and its nuances.

**Clashing personalities that lead to puzzled partnership working** – The grassroots ethos of Our Place meant that relationships would be paramount. By talking to grantholders, community builders and people in the communities, we found that tense relationships often had a disproportionate impact on delivery timelines and reaching consensus.

**Achieving project sustainability after the programme finishes** – Some grantholders raised concerns about how sustainable their projects will be when their current grants lapse. In some areas, succession planning has taken place with existing or newly formed development trusts stepping in to assist with the projects that Our Place has launched. Additionally, many local authorities are heavily involved with the programme and have offered practical and strategic support to the grantholders.

The full learning report from Our Place is available on the [National Lottery Community Fund website here](#).

## Community Assets

Since 2006, the National Lottery Community Fund has invested over £113 million on Community Assets, enabling communities across Scotland to take more control and influence over their future through the ownership and development of local assets. In 2019 we closed this funding and undertook a learning exercise.

We found:

- The majority of Community Assets funding has been for community buildings which have helped to create a focal point for a community, creating spaces for casual community interactions which might not have previously been possible.
- Community owned assets can help to support and diversify local economies. This can be from leasing out space for local businesses or social economies to develop and grow.
- Meaningful community engagement as part of asset development is hugely important, particularly ensuring the local community is informed and involved in decision-making process. Creating early meaningful engagement can lead to a community building new connections and developing relationships through the shared vision for their own future.

Our Place Ardrossan



## **SURF – Learning from Alliance for Action**

SURF's Alliance for Action activity has produced significant benefits in enhanced practical cooperation and coordinated investments in the participating communities that are facing multiple social and economic challenges. The process has also produced valuable insights into how community regeneration operates, which have been debated and fed back to national policy-makers.

Some selected learning outcomes follow:

### **Enabling productive partnerships**

**Adding value** – Significant added value in local regeneration partnership activity is achievable via the role of a generally respected neutral external body like SURF, which can take responsibility for supporting a coordinated and focused approach to collaborative place-based regeneration.

Investors and policy makers appear to appreciate the opportunity to engage with the reality of a local regeneration context in a 'safe' coordinated collaboration.

Funders appear to take reassurance from the shared commitment and responsibility of other investors.

Policy makers welcome a broader understanding of the local dynamics that affect the viability and interaction of their approach. Many local players are encouraged by the level and broad spectrum of interested parties engaged via the Alliance for Action process. That breadth more accurately reflects their view of the extent and interactivity of local regeneration challenges. For most activists, it stands in favourable contrast to the conventional linear connections between individual funders, policymakers, places and specific projects.

**Making connections** – A range of more incidental benefits have arisen from SURF's facilitating of organisational and individual introductions in a local area. These include the uncovering of shared interests between previously unfamiliar individuals and organisations, with some instances of useful practical collaboration emerging.

**Reconnecting and uncovering** – Under the shared Alliance for Action focus, there have been instances of improved investment efficiency and cooperative operating climate through the diplomatic re-engagement of some historically disconnected local projects and personalities. Similarly, there have been useful examples where debilitating misunderstandings and shortcomings around effective representation and accountability have been addressed.

**More creative approaches** – While resistance to anything more adventurous than the most conventional bureaucratic processes remains high amongst some organisations and colleagues, there does appear to be a greater level of appreciation of the productive potential of artistically creative approaches. Support for more creativity as a medium for community engagement and within organisational culture has been evidenced in all Alliance for Action sites.

**Investing in success** – The noted advantages for all parties of a diplomatic and catalytic initiative (such as the SURF Alliance for Action) raises the question of how such approaches might be replicated to achieve greater levels of constructive collaboration and mutually beneficial investments in all multiply deprived Scottish places.

### Some cautionary lessons

**Preventative investment** – Many of the third sector organisations involved in the Alliance for Action have been developed locally in an effort to address some elements of disadvantage. There is strong, and broadly accepted, evidence that they provide valuable outcomes with substantial preventative spend benefits for wider society. Yet, despite the high level of rhetoric on the strategic importance of this type of local response, it is concerning that even the most respected and capable organisations, some frequently cited as national exemplars, still struggle to secure sufficient resources to survive, let alone thrive and replicate.

**Competing interests** – Present funding processes and criteria tend to set up organisations to compete with each other, rather than cooperate, and to focus on short-term outputs rather than sustainable long-term outcomes. Substantial examples of the local problems that result from this competition have been identified in multiple Alliance for Action places.

**Turf and trust** – There have been some instances of ‘professional status anxiety’ hampering the ability of Alliance for Action partners to act quickly and collectively on agreed collaborative efforts. They arise from a lack of trust between organisations under financial and political pressure, and/or a lack of empathy in some professional decision-makers for the lived reality and potential capacity of community residents and organisations.

**Effective leadership** – In some cases, these barriers have been successfully negotiated through the creative intervention of effective individuals. Such individual leadership provides a more common and timely solution than the much vaunted but, as yet, largely unrealised ‘cultural shifts’ within whole organisations.

The effectiveness of larger organisations can be stimulated or stymied by increased financial pressures. Again, the style of leadership applied is highly influential in the direction which the pressures tend to drive organisational performance.

**Encouraging deviance** – Notable examples of effective community regeneration collaborations are seen to be frequently based on individual relationships, attitudes and personal dedication. This provokes the question: how can we adequately recognise, reward and replicate such ‘positive deviance’ through national policy frameworks?

### Community context and challenges

**Community group fragility** – Community leaders in Alliance for Action sites remarked on a tendency for some professional advocates of community led regeneration to overlook the frequently challenging reality experienced by community groups. Concerns include the natural volatility and variable capacity of community groups. That reality presents closely associated difficulties in ensuring inclusive long-term access to community owned assets and sustaining reasonable accountability in decision-making processes.

**External power** – The Alliance for Action has confirmed that external public and private sector investment decisions have a much more profound effect on the lives and opportunities of local people and businesses, than even the most substantial attempts at local collaborations on regeneration.

**False narrative** – The personal and professional remoteness of decision-makers and processes from the community level tends to obscure their responsibility from those most affected by their decisions. Within that gap in understanding, relatively small local initiatives are burdened with undeliverable levels of challenge and expectation.

**Mitigation** – SURF’s Alliance for Action initiative has been successful in encompassing an extensive range of scales of intervention in all sites. Nonetheless, it has to be acknowledged that even the most substantial local regeneration efforts are focused on the mitigation of more powerful degenerative forces and the more efficient use of limited (and threatened) regeneration resources.

## SCDC – Learning from Supporting Communities

As outlined in the opening section of this paper, SCDC's Supporting Communities programme worked with community anchor organisations and networks in 11 sites across Scotland in 2019/20 and 2020/21. The programme has the following main strands of support:

- Support to groups and organisations to develop community-led action planning activity.
- Support for community-led place-based approaches.
- Support for intermediaries to stimulate and develop community-led action planning or place-based working.

Although these strands can have very separate and different characteristics, in many areas there has been a substantial overlap and, in some cases, the development of a community-led action plan has led naturally to a focus on place-based working. This overlap is recognised in the key learning points from our programme and are as follows:

### Community capacity building

- Local groups are still finding it difficult to access community capacity building support which is:
  - Trusted.
  - Appropriately skilled.
  - Consistently available when it is needed.
  - Able to work to enable involvement from different population segments locally to address inequality and include the broadest possible range of local voices.
- This has an impact on the effectiveness of community anchor roles which are essential to:
  - Stimulating and growing community infrastructure and dialogue with services.
  - Effective community action planning.
  - Community leadership in place-based activity with community planning partnerships.

### Community empowerment and participation

- The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act is being implemented, but very slowly in many places, with knock-on impacts on the participation environment and the confidence of local people in the process. The evidence of local services acting in empowering ways is very patchy leading to potential for partnership activity being lost.
- Links between engagement duties in different contexts are poorly developed e.g. health & social care planning, community justice, and children & young people services planning.
- The Place Principle is in very early stages of implementation in most locations and not well understood in terms of its expectations or potential for supporting community empowerment.
- Local Place Plans have the potential to link to the work of the programme, but much remains to be done to raise awareness of these and explore their connections to community led action planning.

### COVID-19

- COVID-19 has highlighted the potential for high quality community responses to augment and/or fill gaps in public service provision in ways which made the core public health messages workable. This needs to be improved by:
  - Reflection on the experience and its implications for communities.
  - Improving links between the existing community, resilience organisations and wider community and third sector infrastructure, who mobilised during the pandemic.
  - Addressing real challenges in coordination of services in this kind of context across sectors.

## Case studies

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### **Corra Foundation, Getting Alongside Communities – Dunterlie Case Study**

Corra Foundation recruited a Community Co-ordinator for Dunterlie, East Renfrewshire as part of the Getting Alongside Communities Programme and began working with the community in May 2017 for an initial 10 year commitment.

Although East Renfrewshire is mostly an affluent area, Dunterlie in Barrhead contains SIMD datazones that are among the 5% and 10% most deprived in Scotland. During the 19th and early 20th century, the town was a major centre for manufacturing, with industries including an iron foundry, carpet factory and porcelainware works employing generations of the town's residents. Near the end of the 20th century, the decline and closure of nearly all the industries caused decreasing local population and falling levels of employment.

#### **Community space**

Following the research and listening phase carried out in the first six months, some community members explained that they felt disconnected from the area. One of the key barriers to participation identified was a lack of space in the local community for people to come together. Dunterlie Resource Centre is the only community space in Dunterlie. It

previously housed a library, offices for local organisations and council staff but the library moved to a central location in 2017 and staff no longer worked in the building. The centre was only opening for community group access across a maximum of 3 days a week, but some local residents thought that it was closed completely.

Through consultation and discussion with the community, Corra identified that opening the centre more regularly could be of benefit to the wider community, helping to foster new activities and engagement with those not attending existing groups. In October 2017, in partnership with the Communities Team at East Renfrewshire Council, a three-month pilot was created with funds provided by Corra Foundation, opening the doors of Dunterlie Resource Centre on Wednesdays and Fridays. Local volunteers and partners were supported to deliver activities in response to the needs and aspirations expressed by community members. The pilot lasted an additional 2 months into 2018 as lots of partners delivered activities for free. This resulted in an increase in the number of people using the centre and groups hiring the space. Barrhead Housing Association also delivered programme activities at the centre and paid towards the centre costs allowing the building to be open for use.

In 2020, the Dunterlie Resource Centre programme was busy every day prior to lockdown with a broad range of groups meeting to use the space. New and existing groups benefited hugely from East Renfrewshire's Linking Communities Participatory Budgeting funding and all groups are diversifying their funding sources and looking towards the future. There is a great deal of positive energy around ensuring the centre continues to thrive and everyone is looking forward to the centre becoming busy again once Coronavirus restrictions ease.

### Dunterlie Centre User Group

The Corra Community Coordinator has been based in the building since 2017 and is always on hand to provide support and encourage ideas. One example is supporting representatives from the different groups in the centre and surrounding area to establish the Dunterlie Centre User Group who have met regularly since 2019. The group shares information with each other, organises activities, and has responded to consultations relevant to Dunterlie community, such as improvements to the adjoining park. The group is keen to explore ways in which Dunterlie Resource Centre can be a more accessible and welcoming space and are currently considering their governance structure to best allow them to affect change. Dunterlie Centre User Group have begun to host regular Dunterlie conversations since January 2020, inviting community members, key members of staff from Barrhead Housing Association, East Renfrewshire Council and East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust to make connections and work together towards creative solutions to the issues facing the Dunterlie community aligned to the locality plan.

#### Getting Alongside Communities, Dunterlie



## Dunterlie Foodshare

As local conversations developed through increased engagement in the centre, several community members wanted to address the issue of food insecurity in Dunterlie. Following a pilot in summer 2018, volunteers have been supported by the Community Coordinator to deliver a weekly foodshare. 35–40 bags of groceries are distributed each week, saving food from landfill and giving local people access to quality, fresh food. It also enables people to access services, share information and socialise.

Dunterlie Foodshare has gone from strength to strength in 2020 despite the challenges faced due to the Coronavirus pandemic. A range of partners have been working with a dedicated team of local people to run the weekly foodshare and has been a lifeline to many throughout this year. The volunteers have continued to support each other and to provide access to free, nutritious food that would otherwise be at risk of going to waste.

The volunteers are keen to share their experience and support others and have been an integral part in helping volunteers from Thornliebank, East Renfrewshire, during 2020 to plan and develop a foodshare in their area. Corra has also supported the Dunterlie Foodshare members to participate in Scottish Community Development Centre's Knowledge is Power programme and undertake a community-led action research project over 18 months from November 2019. They are also

contributing to national conversations around food dignity through Nourish Scotland and have secured funding to run until March 2022 as part of Barrhead Housing Association's Climate Challenge Fund project.

## Other selected projects

- **School Holiday Partnership with Corra and local schools and nurseries:** established to bring families together to have fun and access nutritious food during the school holidays. Partners are working together to provide experiences enabling families to learn new skills and build their capacity in taking the lead. Parents have had the confidence to share challenges that they had been facing in their home life, which has enabled the Community Coordinator and Nursery to signpost to support networks.
- **Dunterlie allotments:** Supporting the committee to consider governance structures and a potential lease from the Local Authority for additional land that will allow the community greater access to growing.
- **Comic Relief Community Led Grant Making:** A group of community members have already begun work alongside Corra Foundation staff to facilitate a community-led grant making process. The group are in the early stages of development and look to distribute £20,000 in small grants to benefit the community in the coming months.

“ The foodshare really has been a lifeline for me as a volunteer. Depression and anxiety plague me every day and the foodshare is the one place every week I feel relaxed enough to enjoy it, I don't feel judged and feel accepted. I don't know where I'd be without it”

“ I love helping out at the foodshare, it gets me out of house & feel useful. Also I attend on days I'm not volunteering. The foodshare is a lifeline and a fantastic help in our community.”

## What have we learned during the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020?

Time and energy spent building relationships and the connections people have forged with each other and with services have been vital to keeping people safe and well during the pandemic. It is due to these connections that we have found ways to keep in touch but also take forward some of the pieces of work planned before the pandemic.

The lack of access to community space has affected the wellbeing of people in our community. We plan to be ready to welcome people back into community spaces as soon as it is safe to do so.

Getting involved in community activity might look different currently, but community spirit is very much alive and well in Dunterlie. People have been keen to find ways to pull together - even if they cannot always be in the same place at the same time.

There is a large digital divide. The reasons for exclusion from digital community spaces are as varied and complex as the reasons for exclusion from physical community spaces - access to devices and internet connectivity are just the first step on the journey.

## Key learning themes

- **Relationships:** significant time has been spent supporting communication between organisations, agencies and community members. Consistent feedback from the community has been that they have really valued the fact that there is a long-term programme of support for the area, which allows partners to engage in conversations and community members are willing to invest their time. They had previously seen short term projects come and go with little sustainable impact.
- **Space:** supporting the increased opening of Dunterlie Resource Centre has been a catalyst for new ideas and activities.
- **Participation:** increasing range and involvement in community activities is stimulating new ideas and a desire to be involved in decision making.
- **Voice:** Dunterlie Centre User Group is giving the community a stronger voice.
- **Investment:** making better use of existing resources, such as connecting to separate participatory budgeting initiatives.

Getting Alongside Communities, Dunterlie



Getting Alongside Communities, Dunterlie



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## Inspiring Scotland, Link Up –Gallatown Case Study

Link Up began in Gallatown, an area of Kirkcaldy and one of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Scotland, in 2012. But our workers saw a community that had the skills, knowledge and motivation to turnaround its fortunes. What was needed was for local people to have the confidence, self-esteem and supportive relationships to harness these strengths to make change happen.

For eight years our local workers have nurtured these fundamental human needs. These, combined with the strengths of local people, have enabled the community to create a new vision of what the Gallatown can be and to begin making it a reality.

This process began immediately through participation in cooking, IT, sports and other groups. However, the safe and supportive environment created by our workers and participants catalysed wider change through the formation of the Gallatown Gala Community Group.

### Gallatown Gala Community Group (GGCG)

Run by local volunteers with support from our worker, the GGCG initially focused on re-establishing the local gala day and other community events. Their success gave volunteers the confidence to enhance their GGCG role combining that with their lived experience to help others including:

- The development of a community cafe and a health hub, with an additional focus on skills development and digital literacy.
- Supporting the redevelopment of the Overton Centre (Link Up's original base) and leading Link Up's move to the former 'Happy Days' restaurant, creating a new community asset.
- Supporting fortnightly financial inclusion advice services.
- Partnering with Fife Gingerbread, Book Bug and Kirkcaldy Early Years Networking Group to develop the parent and toddler group.
- With NHS Fife, helping local people to make positive choices about their wellbeing.

But let's be clear, communities are complex, fragile, messy and challenging environments to work in and the evolution of the GGCG has not always been straightforward. However, we knew this, and our workers' practice has been pivotal in navigating the group through its ups and downs; accepting lasting change takes time and that what we do must adapt to the local context.

This way of working has ensured the GGCG remains a force for good in the Gallatown. Recently, it supported a major consultation exercise to identify what issues really matter to local people.

## Community Priorities and Enhanced Service Provision

The consultation – developed jointly with GGCG, Link Up, Fife Council, NHS Fife and third sector organisations – identified priority areas including, support for mental and physical health, improving food security, connecting people and community safety. These priorities now form the Gallatown Neighbourhood Development Plan and led to creation of new/enhanced local services including:

### Employability programme with NHS Fife

Link Up Gallatown have been working closely with NHS Fife over the past year to provide sustainable jobs for local people. The NHS have struggled to fill some vacancies at the neighbouring Victoria General Hospital whilst unemployment stays stubbornly high in the Gallatown.

Ten Link Up participants took part in certified cleaning training. Six of those took part in a workplace trial and five have secured permanent employment as cleaners. NHS Fife are keen to repeat the pilot for other areas of work once COVID-19 restrictions allow.

### Enhanced mental health support

The consultation exercise identified that whilst local people felt able to access statutory support, this often took a long time and opportunities for early intervention were being missed. Recognising that poor mental health presented barriers to coping, moving on, participating in learning, or making progress towards employment, a series of Talking Cafés were developed.

This prevention focused approach aimed to provide a safe space for people to talk about the mental health challenges impacting their life (e.g. trauma, relationships and money worries). Over a six-month period, 37 volunteers supported 134 individuals to participate in the cafés, with the largest numbers coming from the 16–25 age group.

In addition, one of our local workers is a trained counsellor and has been offering 1-2-1 sessions for local people struggling to cope with the COVID crisis. For the most vulnerable in our community, Link Up has engaged the services of Dr Callum Munro, a Consultant Psychiatrist, who is able to offer more in-depth support to help individuals deal with more deep-rooted problems.

### New community hub

The need for increased community connectedness was also identified as being important for local people, many arguing for improved facilities. In response, Kirkcaldy YMCA (host for Link Up) affected a community asset transfer of the former Gallatown Bowling Club from the Local Authority.

Almost £1m in capital and revenue funding has been secured to redevelop the ex-club into a community facility by end April 2021. This new hub will host indoor and outdoor activities (including a bike pump track and outdoor play space), assist people in poverty and crisis, and provide learning and training opportunities. The development will be transformational and critical to the realisation of the long-term vision for the Gallatown.

Link Up Gallatown – Bike Hub



Link Up Gallatown – Bike Hub



## Gallatown Bike Hub

The Gallatown Bike Hub reflects the power of Link Up to build incrementally from individual to group to community-level change. Started as a bike club, it became a community-led social enterprise in 2016.

It currently employs 5 local people and supports 12 volunteers. As well as bike sales and repairs, the Hub is a City & Guilds accredited training centre and delivers training in partnership with local schools.

One local young person with autism and struggling to stay engaged with education (his attendance at school was virtually zero), became the youngest person in the UK to have completed the certified bike maintenance course at the age of 14. Following the course his attendance at school improved to 100% and as his confidence built, he was able to socialise more with his peers. This individual has gone on to undertake further training including cycle ride leader which is accredited by Cycling Scotland.

## COVID-19 Response

The Bike Hub has been an important part of local response efforts during the current crisis; supporting 30 key workers who were having difficulty in accessing public transport. One worker is an NHS intensive care nurse who was finding it difficult to get to her work due to her shift pattern. Since getting a bike, she is also spending more time outdoors cycling with her children, leading to an improvement in her physical and mental health.

The Bike Hub also took part in Cycling UK's COVID-19 Bike Repair fund and to date have carried out over £4,000 worth of repairs for local key workers.

The advent of COVID-19 has been difficult for all communities to deal with; however, the Gallatown has suffered disproportionately. The issues of poor mental health, food insecurity and community connectedness already identified as priorities by local people, have been brought into sharp focus.

In response, between March and August 2020, Link Up workers co-ordinated the preparation and delivery of 5,969 meals and a total of 606 phone or social media support contacts were made with people who were struggling to cope. Volunteers got involved in the delivery of food parcels and supporting their neighbours, be that through running errands for those shielding or providing a listening ear.

## Conclusion

For public sector leaders, Link Up has proven itself a unique and cost-effective model for enabling individual and community-led change at scale by:

- Focusing on prevention and working 'upstream' with the most vulnerable in our communities.
- Enabling people to make long-term improvements to their health and wellbeing.
- Empowering people to support one another as active citizens and change makers.
- Building innovative place-based collaborations to tackle poverty and disadvantage.
- Reducing the burden on over-stretched local services.

Additionally, the Link Up approach in the Gallatown is an exemplar of place-based working, illustrating the potential of the way of working set-out in the Place Principle.

More significantly, for many of the 2,900 local people who have engaged with Link Up Gallatown, the experience has improved their lives and some, materially so. Furthermore, the foundations have been laid for a process of long-term change that has the potential to turn around the fortunes of the community for good.

## The National Lottery Community Fund – Isle of Eigg Case Study

Eigg was one of the first community buyouts in Scotland and the original build of An Laimhrig completed in 1998 was the very first flagship project undertaken by the community. More than 23 years later and with a 70% population increase the building is full to bursting, with Eigg's only shop, café, visitor-facing businesses and community offices unable to keep up with all the demands put upon them. So in July 2020 the community was awarded £1,045,000 to extend and develop An Laimhrig to secure it's future.

“ This vital expansion will aid the island's economic, social and cultural development and secure Eigg's future for the next generation of residents and visitors alike.”

Rebecca Long, Business Development Manager, Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust

Isle of Eigg Community



## **SURF, Alliance for Action – Dunoon (Argyll & Bute) Case Study**

As the main town on the Cowal peninsula in the west of Scotland, an area of natural beauty just a short ferry journey from the central belt, Dunoon enjoyed a prolonged period of success as a tourist destination that started in the Victorian era. The town was initially developed by Glasgow’s merchant class, and later became popular with the city’s working people for many decades as a holiday destination ‘Doon the Watter’.

In the 1960s, however, the growth of international package holidays led to a sharp decline in tourism on the Clyde Coast. Unlike other towns in the region, Dunoon was provided with an alternative lease of life in 1961, when the United States was granted permission to construct a major naval base on the Holy Loch, a sea inlet on Dunoon’s doorstep. The town suddenly had a new purpose, hosting tens of thousands of US Navy personnel and their families over a 31-year period.

The base was a key centre for the Polaris submarine fleet until it was closed in 1992, when it was deemed surplus to requirements at the end of the Cold War. The impact of the decision to close the base was immense. An estimated 20% of Dunoon’s population was employed, directly or indirectly, by the base. \$20m per annum was lost to the local economy, as the base closed and its 4000 personnel left the town. Many local jobs disappeared overnight and there was also a massive cultural and social impact.

The 30 years since the closure have proved challenging for the town, which supports a population of around 9,500. Several parts of the town rank within the 10% most deprived areas nationally. Current social and economic challenges include high levels of unemployment and social isolation, continual out-migration of young people, vacant buildings, a fragile town centre economy, and difficulties attracting tourists.

### **SURF Alliance for Action Participation**

Dunoon joined SURF’s place programme in 2017, following a successful ‘Think Dunoon’ Community Charrette process, managed by SURF and delivered by Austin Smith Lord. The Charrette brought hundreds of residents

together with experts from multiple disciplines to explore potential responses to challenges and opportunities. The process led to the creation of a regeneration action plan from locally identified priorities, and a constituted community group, the Dunoon Area Alliance.

With support and investment from Argyll & Bute Council, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, the National Lottery Community Fund and the Scottish Government, SURF has been working closely with Dunoon Area Alliance and a wide range of other local players from all sectors, to develop and progress the priority projects identified in the action plan. These projects align strongly with Dunoon’s assets, which include access to extensive outdoor experiences and areas of natural beauty, high quality architectural heritage, the recently refurbished Queen’s Hall and Burgh Hall civic and cultural hubs, and dozens of active community, arts and sports groups.

SURF employs a Local Facilitator, based in Dunoon, to build local capacity, strengthen resilience, deliver practical regeneration outcomes, and improve the wellbeing of local residents. SURF’s Facilitator links the local knowledge, initiatives and assets in Dunoon with external agencies, policies and resources, in support of a more coordinated approach to regeneration activity in the town.

### **Selected Projects**

SURF is managing and supporting a varied portfolio of physical, social and economic regeneration initiatives that are responding to the problems and opportunities identified by local stakeholders in the 2017 Charrette.

These are based on four themes – enhancing community empowerment, strengthening the local economy, improving the tourist experience and developing the physical environment. Projects include:

- **American Years Revisited** – an initiative that preserves the history and heritage associated with the presence of the US naval facility. SURF successfully applied for National Lottery Heritage Fund resources and is working with local volunteers on the development of an archive and visitor attraction.
- **COVID-19 Support** – SURF’s Local Facilitator provided signposting and funding support to local groups throughout the pandemic, published a regular e-newsletter, and conducted a survey on post-pandemic plans and concerns, which 96 local businesses respond to.
- **Cycle Bothy** – a SURF collaboration with Cycling UK and Argyll & Bute Council to help community groups encourage active travel in the town, including by enhancing and promoting walking and cycling routes in Dunoon and the wider Cowal area.
- **Dunoon Area Alliance Renewal** – SURF is servicing and ensuring strong representation across community, public and business sectors in the community group as the town recovers from the pandemic.
- **Dunoon and Cowal Co-works** – an innovative network of home-based workers and freelancers, which reduces social isolation and increases local economic collaboration through peer to peer support, regular meet-ups and engagements with local organisations and venues.
- **Greenspaces, Signage, Streetscape and Pier** – a series of investments in the town centre, public realm, and vacant land to improve access, connectivity, social opportunities, and the visitor experience.
- **Microbytes** – an initiative that supports the use of digital skills and tools in place-based regeneration, including digital learning services for local businesses and community groups.

- **Town Team** – SURF convenes a forum of senior decision-makers from multiple sectors to share information on current organisational priorities and explore new collaborations.

### Conclusion

SURF’s ability to act as an independent broker, and to utilise its knowledge on the complex regeneration policy and practice landscape, has been welcomed by stakeholders in Dunoon. Previous regeneration approaches in the town have had a patchwork quality that tended to prioritise short-term, thematically narrow projects over strategic planning towards a long-term vision.

More than 500 people participated in ‘Think Dunoon’ Charrette workshops in 2017, which created a holistic regeneration strategy firmly based on community demand. The necessary buy in has been achieved from public, voluntary and business partners, and with support from SURF’s Local Facilitator, good progress has been made towards project delivery over the following three years. Importantly, the community led Dunoon Area Alliance vehicle has been established to monitor progress, maintain momentum and engage with authorities.

The town presents a strong example of the additional impacts that can be achieved from putting Place Principle objectives into practice, bringing all sectors together to combine resources and collaborate towards a shared long-term objective set by the local community.

SURF uses all of its Alliance for Action experiences to identify transferable learning that can contribute to wider improvements in policy and practice in community regeneration across Scotland.

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## **SCDC, Place-based work - Kyle and Lochalsh Case Study**

Scottish Community Development Centre has been supporting place-based work in Kyle & Lochalsh since 2018, as part of the Scottish Government-funded Supporting Communities programme.

Kyle and Lochalsh Community Trust (KLCT) was established in August 2012 and is committed to instigating and delivering social, economic and environmental regeneration projects and local services. Kyle and Lochalsh has been identified as one of the most economically fragile areas in the Highlands.

### **SCDC's place-based support**

SCDC initially began supporting the Trust in October 2018 to develop a Lochalsh-wide consultation to find out the issues and priorities of all the communities within the Trust's area of activity. This work naturally developed into support for a broader place-based approach and a deeper collaboration across the whole of Lochalsh. Starting in January 2019, and with the support of SCDC, the Kyle Collaboration brought together seven community councils, two community development trusts, two community companies, and representatives from a further three community organisations.

The Collaboration began a Lochalsh-wide conversation on local needs and priorities, and involved regular meetings supported and facilitated by the SCDC. The meetings were attended by representatives from the various community organisations, and participants received training on community empowerment legislation, consultation methods and tools.

Work also started on designing a community-led consultation for Lochalsh. The consultation will form the basis of seven local community action plans as well as a Lochalsh-wide plan.

In June 2019, representatives of the various groups and community councils signed a Working Agreement and the group was supported by SCDC to successfully apply to the Scottish Government's Investing in Communities Fund. This funding allowed for recruitment of a Community Development Officer for over 2 years who will work with the communities of Lochalsh to design and undertake the consultation, develop Community-led Action Plan(s) and start developing projects in the area. The funding also provided a significant budget to support barrier free access to the engagement.

The support has led to the Collaboration increasing in influence, and the Collaboration has received a written commitment from the local Community Planning Partnership that it will use the results of the community action planning engagement to directly inform the Locality Planning process.

## Response to Covid-19

As is the case for many community initiatives across Scotland, the Collaboration's work in 2020 has focused largely on the emergency response to Covid-19. Having an effective place-based partnership in existence has, in turn, helped to establish a strong cross-community response to the Covid-19 pandemic. KLCT partnered up with a number of other organisations, including newly set-up Covid-19 support groups, to form the Lochalsh Community Response network, which has been meeting regularly to discuss ways to support the local community through Covid-19.

The network set up a website, Facebook page, phone helpline and produced a leaflet providing information about available support. It also established a programme to distribute surplus food and launched a food voucher scheme for those in need. A variety of virtual activities were organised using Zoom, and a community newsletter was established when the local newspaper stopped printing its weekly paper. The partnership working on the food share scheme has recently led to the development of a Community Fridge project, working with a local church that has provided their hall.

These activities are reviewed regularly by the network via weekly video conferences, which considers the progress of projects, local need and what additional support may be required. The calls are attended by a local councillor and a member of the local TSI to ensure that local volunteer effort is linked to wider support from public and other services.

The strength of the place-based partnership work is evidenced by the fact that the network has recently been supporting the Covid-19 emergency response within the neighbouring Kyleakin & Kylerhea Community Council area.

## What next?

Further work is planned in the next phase of SCDC's support to assist the group to re-focus on the ambitious engagement targets of the collaboration and the place-based approach. This will give particular attention to support the group (and the Collaboration) to connect up more effectively with the Community Planning Partnership.

## See more

- Find out more about SCDC's Supporting Communities programme, including support for place-based approaches, at [www.scdc.org.uk/what/supporting-communities](http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/supporting-communities)
- Visit Kyle and Lochalsh Community Trust's website at [www.lochalsh.uk](http://www.lochalsh.uk)
- Read more about the Kyle Community response to Covid-19 at [www.communityscot.org.uk/news/article/responding-covid-19-kyle-lochalsh](http://www.communityscot.org.uk/news/article/responding-covid-19-kyle-lochalsh)

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Established in January 2019 and building on our collaborative work to support the development of the National Place Principle, the **Place-based Programme Learning Exchange** comprises national organisations that champion 'place' in their practices: Corra Foundation, Scottish Community Development Centre, National Lottery Community Fund, SURF and Inspiring Scotland.

This document introduces the organisational members of our group and their respective place programmes. It also draws on over 50 years of combined organisational experience and learning across dozens of urban and rural place settings to illustrate what works and does not work in terms of place-based approaches.

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