

Passion for Places in Paisley

Seeding Success Event Newsletter

Introduction

This newsletter summarises the presentations and learning exchange sessions from the Seeding Success event held in Paisley Town Hall on 10 May 2017.

The event served as an opportunity to celebrate the successes of the Stalled Spaces Scotland programme, finding out from the various groups and local authorities who have already been involved, as well as hearing how the work fits into the wider Scottish Government policy context.

The Stalled Spaces Scotland Toolkit, together with a set of case studies, was launched on the day and is now available for free from A&DS. To get your copy please contact:
stalledspacesScotland@ads.org.uk

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Legacy of Stalled Spaces Scotland - David Cowan, Head of Regeneration, Scottish Government

“The important thing is to support people who want to try something”, David Cowan said. As he reflected on the range of approaches taken to regenerating Scotland’s towns and communities, he concluded that these will only work when rooted in and shaped by the communities they serve. He suggested that when this happens, the sense of empowerment and ownership on the community’s part drives an increased sense of confidence and vibrancy in a place. In this way, harnessing such energy is perhaps the key to successful regeneration, and without it, any amount of investment can struggle to address the issues.

In this context, David highlighted the success of Stalled Spaces Scotland and the range of projects it has supported across the country as an exemplar for others to follow. In this way, the launch of the toolkit should, he said, be seen as a start rather than an end as it provides a tangible legacy of all that has been learned. The hope is that it can inspire others to tackle their own stalled spaces and give communities who want it, a chance to make the most of what they have.



The potential of stalled spaces - Ian Gilzean, Chief Architect, Scottish Government

Stalled Spaces can give new leases of life to gap sites that are going nowhere fast - bringing them back into valuable use, whilst strengthening of communities through environmental and social cohesion. Local responses to stalled spaces, have been imaginative and innovative, making big impacts with often quite modest budgets.

Stalled Spaces Scotland’s national programme was inspired by Glasgow City Council’s project. Glasgow’s initiative showed the importance of a joined-up, can-do mentality working as a catalyst. The national programme has delivered over 50 projects across Scotland since 2014. The spirit of collaboration manifests itself as community empowerment, environmental improvements, employability, healthy eating, engaged children and improved biodiversity.

This ties in the aims of the Scottish Government’s Town Centre Action Plan. Our towns should be places that people really want to go to. Underloved spaces can have a disproportionately negative effect and it is crucial to turn this around.

The Minister for Local Government and Housing Kevin Stewart was disappointed that he wasn’t able to attend today but wanted to express his congratulations to everyone as we celebrate our successes to date.

Town Centre Opportunities - Phil Prentice, Chief Officer, Scotland’s Town Partnership

Scotland is a nation of towns, and what we do in towns make a difference. The cities can look after themselves, but it is what happens in places from Ayr, to Dumfries, and from Oban to Hamilton that will matter. The town centre has been the biggest victim of the financial crisis of 2008.

Phil commented on how we’ve all been moving to the edge of town, shopping out of town and forgetting our town centres. The Fraser review of 2013 and the Town Centre Action plan resulted in the Town Centre First principle.

Key to the Town Centre First Principle are:

- Living in Town
- Accessible Public Services
- Proactive Planning
- Enterprising Communities
- Vibrant Local Economies
- Digital Towns

Phil then went on to talk about gorillas, no - guerrillas, no guerilla gardeners! His slides moved swiftly from King Kong to a community garden, showing a variety of good responses to vacant town centre space. He confirmed that Scotland’s Towns Partnerships wholeheartedly support the Stalled Spaces initiative and will promote the toolkit to support community groups on questions such as insurance, ownership, permissions and creating a group.

Future Opportunities for Communities - Andy Milne, Chief Executive, SURF

Andy Milne highlighted that while fundamentally just doing the project is important for those involved, it is also important to reflect on the bigger picture. Andy explained the background to SURF’s (Scotland’s Regeneration Forum) work which can help communities bring in more resources and

facilitate and coordinate investment to sustain long term regeneration.

On Stalled Spaces Andy highlighted the relatively high impact for the low level of investment. Taking the programme as a success, in using local knowledge and local connections to solve local problems, it is a good set of outcomes.

A bigger question though is the connection with wider regeneration issues. With inequality, poverty and inclusive growth as key areas of focus for the Scottish Government, what is the connection between small scale local initiatives and achieving significant progress in tackling poverty and inequality at a strategic scale?

Andy highlighted the roles and resources of the public, political, private and community groups with a role in regeneration. He also described the opportunities offered community-led regeneration through the latest strategies and legislation from Scottish Government such as the Community Empowerment Bill.

Is this enough to help the hardest pressed communities though? And does regeneration work in the face of big challenges such as poor wages, demographic shifts and technological advancements? With the big resources in procurement and infrastructure budgets, Andy highlighted that improving the connection between local authorities and communities is the key to unlocking regeneration benefits.

Andy proposed that Scotland has a democratic deficiency. The Gap between Europe and Scotland was highlighted – for example the average European local authority population is 5630 people. In Scotland it is 163000. The average ratio of councillors to electors is 1 to 125 in Europe, in Scotland it is 1 to 4270. Andy suggested that the gap means that connections are not made between local and strategic issues and that the scaling up of local successes to create wider community health and wellbeing benefit is compromised. Andy questioned whether we should we stitch together the gap with mechanisms, or whether we should reform democracy.

Lesley Riddell Robertson from Architecture and Design Scotland outlined the outcomes from the Stalled Spaces Scotland Programme. Since its launch in 2014 the Stalled Spaces Scotland programme has achieved:

- 50 sites reactivated over 7 local authorities
- Involvement by over 500 volunteers
- Over 4000 volunteer hours
- Over 5 hectares of land back into use

During the project A&DS promoted the benefits that small interventions to these stalled areas could have in a community.

- Stalled spaces projects can turn a problem into an opportunity
- Have a positive impact on the appearance of the area, improve the use of facilities by local people
- Engage and involve local people in making a difference
- Create opportunities for people to build skills
- Promote healthy living and improve general wellbeing
- Generate new partnerships and strengthen communities

We learned that ultimately community projects are driven by communities, where people contribute greatly while busy with work, families and homes. These projects are often driven out of a community need or lack of local resource.

In local authorities projects were most successful where individuals took ownership and there was a chance for an officer with budgetary control to lead. Local authorities learned about protocols and procedures of working with community groups.

We had to ensure that we captured and shared all the processes, learning and challenges. The Stalled Spaces Scotland Toolkit was the result and it aims to distill technical knowledge in clear and straightforward steps to support projects. The guide is now available for free from A&DS.

The Renfrewshire Story

Stuart Graham, Iain Cunningham and Tommy McGrory presented the story of Renfrewshire's Stalled Spaces - ten projects across nine locations that include growing projects, music events, a film set and a community gallery.

Stuart described how the council's motivation to be part of Stalled Spaces came from hearing community concerns about the impact of local eyesores and suggestions about assets with potential for development. Stalled Spaces Scotland offered a way to address those concerns and ideas and forge links between the council and community groups. The programme was strongly aligned with the council's community planning processes and wider objectives and council officers supported applications and funding.

Iain explained that Engage Renfrewshire are heavily involved in community action at a local level and were successful in generating community interest and getting buy-in to the stalled spaces opportunity through their network. They worked as an enabler between the big structure of the council and community groups on the ground, providing support with applications, funding and organisational needs and helping communications.

Tommy touched on the impacts of one Renfrewshire project 'Loud'n'Proud' which had used music events as a catalyst for reusing and reactivating areas of vacant and derelict land for community events.



1. East Dumbartonshire Council

Frances Tonner is the key champion in the local authority managing a Stalled Spaces fund of £30,000. This means that there is a one stop shop for council support, including legal support, capacity building and match-making groups.

Unusually the issues in East Dumbartonshire were more about underused greenspace, often rural, rather than derelict sites in urban areas.

Frances found that the temporary improvement of sites was a hard sell, so decided to piggyback onto other community events. She also used social media to ask 'what is the heart of your community?' as well as legwork, creating lists of sites and maps.

Projects have included art projects, popup cinemas and wildflower sensory gardens. Lennoxton's Gardens have established a calendar of kids events which it co-ordinates with other groups.

Initially there were 'unhealthy rivalries' between communities but eventually a more inquisitive learning culture emerged. There is a positive legacy of innovation in local thinking.

Key achievements from the project were heightened aspirations, new community forums, a sharing culture, the triggering effect of activity

(people are nosy), links with businesses through BIDS, and even pop-up pubs!

2. Argyll and Bute Council

Lorna Pearce from Economic Development at Argyll and Bute Council explained how they had secured £10,000 of Stalled Spaces Scotland funding, with the council providing match funding. She explained the geographic diversity of the council area and how in the six funded projects they were less strict on the "town" centre focus and also supported projects in large villages.

She went on to present the projects which included - an active community garden on NHS grounds in Lochgilphead which has helped the people involved grow not only vegetables, but also their confidence. Local people in Helensburgh adopted a park in disrepair and have begun to create a natural play area, and in Tarbert a previously unkempt area near the village hall has been given a new lease of life. In Rothesay, Argyll College worked with community groups to create a garden on the site of a demolished tenement and were helped by willing volunteers from the Syrian refugee community. In Oban, the funding was used to improve the environment of the former Rockfield School while local community develop plans for



the derelict building and in Campbeltown a site earmarked for Housing Association development was turned into a temporary park, with elements that can move onto another site once construction begins.

3. Fife Council

Andrew Walker from Fife Council outlined their Stalled Spaces projects featuring a range of initiatives including a growing project in Cupar, bringing the beach to the town, 50 metres of murals, outdoor storytelling and pop up cinema performance of Jaws at Kirkcaldy waterfront!

Initial responses to the call for town centre based project ideas were limited. There did not appear to be a strong base of community activity or sense of ownership in many town centres. The council took stock and in response, promoted the potential for events or cultural activity to activate town centre spaces. This approach gathered momentum with established groups taking the opportunity to stage temporary activities in unusual places.

Community capacity was discussed as a wider issue. Without support, the language and skills required to make applications may exclude some. Fife Council had supported community groups with applications. Most sites were in public ownership - there were no issues negotiating access.

The programme was felt to be a success for modest investment. In terms of impact, feedback has been very positive. People enjoyed seeing different spaces brought to life in their towns. Stalled Spaces acted as a catalyst for ongoing activity too. Groups now have the resources to enable future events and a gateway site in Cowdenbeath looks set to continue in community use with input from schools and the council.

4. West End Growing Grounds Association (WEGGA)

John Wilby of Paisley West Central Community Council presented on the work of WEGGA and outlined how they manage sites providing the local community with access to grow their own vegetables, fruit and flowers. Sites have been

developed following events to gauge the views of residents - one was a wish to see better community use of empty spaces. To date four sites have been developed, with one in development in an area in the lowest 5% in the Scottish index of deprivation. Three of these sites have been supported by Stalled Spaces Scotland.

The current site being developed is a space next to a cemetery. Stalled Spaces funding has allowed employment of a landscape architect. As with all projects this needed community buy in and this was achieved by leafleting 550 households. Following this 70 people gave their support and 43 people requested raised bed plots. The amount of interest justified approaching the council to ask for an asset transfer.

Partnerships have been highly important and Renfrewshire Council have been extremely supportive. WEGGA are now aiming to become a charity as this will release funds from Grant Aid.

John noted that community cohesion is just as important as the activity taking place. Working in deprived areas you are sometimes working with people who are less able to articulate their views to the decision makers and that's been one of our key tasks - being able to speak for others.

<http://www.wegga.org/>

5. Renfrew Development Trust

The Renfrew Development Trust received Stalled Spaces Scotland funding to support students from West College Scotland, Renfrew YMCA and residents from Renfrew Care Home to create a multi-generational exhibition - featuring memories and experiences of Renfrew's landmarks and spaces. The group received match funding to bring their project budget up to £5,000.

The exhibition is displayed on the former public toilets at the entrance to Robertson Park. The project benefited from its location next to a bus stop and has been a conversation starter between strangers waiting for public transport. Since the panels were installed there have been no reports or instances of vandalism. The project relied on 160 voluntary hours.

Following the successful delivery of the project Renfrew Development Trust are now looking to deliver another idea to map and promote heritage walks within Renfrew, this would not have been possible without the relationships that were previously formed.

6. Loud'n'Proud, Paisley

Loud'n'Proud School of Rock already had a track record of delivering busking festivals in doorways, and events on the riverside. Despite initially being unclear what a stalled space actually was, they were quickly convinced that they were ideal to highlight their potential.

Tommy McCrory explained that they wanted a visible site to showcase young musicians, which was also prominent enough to alter public perceptions. A conversation with a local pub near Sma'Shot Cottages about their adjacent derelict site led to Tommy returning with the local environmental training team to clear it up. Musical networking events in the space soon went viral, with a video featuring with the 'rawkin granny' becoming a world wide hit.

Now embraced by the owners the site has been turned into a beer garden. Loud'n'Proud are actively looking for new sites to perform and to share their regenerating talents. Links with the council and businesses are stronger than ever.

7. Engage Renfrewshire

Iain Cunningham explained how Engage Renfrewshire, was able to promote and support the Stalled Spaces Scotland project in Renfrewshire.

In a busy council area where community group land ownership requests were competing with much larger projects Engage Renfrewshire acted as a conduit between the community groups and the council helping with: informing council services that requests were on their way and what to expect and grouping stalled spaces queries together so the council can deal with them all together. With a good overview of community organisations they were also able to see that a new group in one area would be better off strengthening an existing group

in the adjacent area and working together, creating a strength in numbers rather than setting up by themselves.

Iain also spoke about frustrations around gaining permissions, including the time taken to find out about the ownership of a long strip of land along the edge of the railway line (it sat in an old Royal Burgh charter). It is now a wildflower meadow. There was also an issue with a delay in gaining permission from a very large private company to carry out a small temporary project, requiring a lot of perseverance to get the correct person on the phone.

As a whole the outcome was positive, which was well illustrated in the case of an unused piece of land in the ownership of a restaurant. Once this had been cleared for use for temporary events the owner understood its value, fencing off half to use as a beer garden and encouraging the community to continue to use the remainder of the land.

8. Maintaining Momentum - Stalled Space

Heather Claridge and Zeba Aziz from Glasgow City Council spoke about Stalled Spaces - a Glasgow City Council initiative to fund communities to reactivate temporary derelict and vacant spaces.

The council started to look at the idea 2008 - 2011 when there was a drop in planning applications due to the financial climate. This, and the statistic that 85% of people live within one kilometre of a derelict site, were the key reasons the initiative began. Stalled Spaces funds projects throughout Glasgow - the fund is for £50,000 per annum with up to £4,500 per project.

To date 130 projects have taken place in Glasgow with 53% of projects located in areas of deprivation. Stalled Space funding encourages other sources of funding. For every £1 of Stalled Spaces funding a further £3 is raised.

The Council offers support with key barriers such as letters of comfort to developers so that all involved are clear on the temporary nature of the sites and date for hand over. Leases are normally for a year with rolling monthly leases thereafter.

To date 100 communities have been involved and, as communities are encouraged to have flexible mobile structures, some move to other sites once the lease has run out.

The Council is now looking at a Barras Stalled Spaces to have more projects developed to take into account the priorities of the area. Maintaining momentum in year six and now linking projects to strategic planning is a key achievement.

9. Town Centre Living Design Advice

Steve Malone, from A&DS, spoke about how A&DS offers a design advice service to help improve the quality of proposals commissioned by public sector clients. The free service is being developed particularly around housing and Town Centre Living, in partnership with Scotland's Towns Partnership, aimed at supporting the delivery of the Scottish Government Housing and Town Centre agendas and the 'Town Centre First Principle'.

Advice is offered through a series of placemaking workshops inviting discussion from key parties around a particular area and/or proposal within a town centre. Engagement is offered at significant points in the decision-making process relative to the stage of development, typically: strategic review; business case; and design implementation.



Following workshops A&DS provides written and/or visual summaries capturing outcomes and to help inform future workplanning and engagement.

Steve shared example of where A&DS has been working with a number of local authorities to develop the service including: in Arbroath engaging with Angus council on council led proposals for an affordable housing block, using the project to lever discussion on aspirations and potential for the wider area; and in East Dunbartonshire, advising on ideas for a traffic pilot scheme to improve the pedestrian environment along a congested high street.

10. Tesco Bags of Help Community Funding

Greenspace Scotland allocates funds received by Tesco from the plastic bag levy. In Scotland alone this amounts to £3.5m per year. Emma Halliday from Greenspace Scotland explained that they hoped to see the fund reduce because fewer plastic bags are used – but for now it means that they can allocate nearly £500,000 of funding every two months to support outdoor improvements and activities.

Greenspace Scotland relies on their community enablers to work with local community champions across 75 Scottish regions to support the development of grassroots projects and the allocation of funding. Initially the fund had fewer regions but customer feedback identified that people were not voting for projects that were not local to them. The fund often changes to reflect the latest feedback.

To apply for funding for your own project head to www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/bags-of-help.aspx for further guidance and receive up to £4,000.

GIVRUM ('make space' in Danish) believe that urban development should be a democratic process undertaken through regular stakeholder forums and encourage a sustainable, inter-disciplinary approach to design via:

- Activation of empty buildings and city spaces
- Conferences and festivals
- Research and consultancy

Carol shared her experiences from several projects:

PB43, was a former paint factory in an industrial area of high crime rates and little civic life. Approaching the owners, GIVRUM negotiated two years rent free access, then put out an open call to creatives and entrepreneurs. Unfortunately in 2015 the old factory buildings were sold and any activities ended. Undaunted they decided to continue their collaborations at new premises at Nordhavn in Copenhagen. PB43 thus continues as a self-financed non-profit-making organisation, creating space for both full-time and part-time professional enterprises, non-profit projects and hobby activities.

Kronborg, Helsingør, is an old fort popular with tourists. The challenge here was to divert them towards local craft makers located in the ancillary buildings. Working with these entrepreneurs and

others, GIVRUM developed a sustainable business model through the creation of a self driven community.

In 2015 Edinburgh was invited to join the City Link festival, under the headline "Democratic Renewal", the growing international network of people interested in the development of urban spaces and culture. It started as a collaboration between Hamburg and Copenhagen a few years earlier.

Experience from Hamburg allowed GIVRUM to develop the City Link method: to involve public and private sector actors from a variety of professions and shape a cooperating culture with:

- Symposium and workshops.
- City wide indoor and outdoor exhibitions and installations including the HERE +NOW cycle path gallery and Leith Anchor story telling venue.
- Biking trips with poetic and musical features.
- Dinners with local flavours from the different cities.

This year Copenhagen will host the City Link festival (21-24 September), looking at different areas of the city, including Sydhavn home to a diverse mix of old and new neighbourhoods and an exploding urban cultural scene.



As part of the afternoon session a panel consisting of Geoff Leask, Andy Milne, Sue Evans and David Cowan, chaired by Diarmaid Lawlor, summarised the discussions held during the day, added their own particular perspective on the issues as well as taking questions and comments from the floor.

Some of the main themes emerging from the discussion included the agreement that local work is "good enough" – it helps create local connections and it recognises, rewards and respects communities that want to get involved. It serves as an opportunity to highlight what communities can do. A theme emerging was the opportunity and benefit of mutual celebration – it can provide developers and landowners with positive recognition for their support in making land available.

The panel noted that it had been inspirational to see people from different backgrounds working together – they come to the projects with different abilities and motivations and having a common project can help break down barriers and create further opportunities.

A question was raised about the opportunity to use technology to support these type of projects; the panel responded positively about the opportunity to crowdsource examples of what

works well, an opportunity to share learning and experience and to identify opportunities.

A suggestion was made to make a more formal recognition and reward for young people who are involved in projects (such as Duke of Edinburgh awards) and Geoff Leask provided examples from Youth Enterprise Scotland work with young people.

The panel also discussed various aspects of resourcing stalled spaces project – including social enterprise, collaboration with services as well as ways to influence public procurement.



Click on the image above to be taken to a highlights video.



We hope you enjoyed the day at the Seeding Success event, and we hope that you took away plenty of ideas and inspiration. Thank you to everyone who presented, participated and contributed to the day.

Please let us know if you have any feedback or thoughts by emailing: stalledspacesscotland@ads.org.uk