

Local Authority Urban Design Forum

MEETING 5: CHAIRED BY CRAIG MCINTYRE (NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL)

13 May 2015 | Lighthouse, Glasgow



INTRODUCTION

The LAUDF is a network for local authority practitioners with an involvement in urban design to share ideas on current issues, learn from each other's experience and build up resources that everyone can benefit from.

This newsletter covers the fifth meeting of the Forum, which was well attended by over 40 professionals from 25 local authorities or public bodies. Participants came from a range of professional backgrounds including development planning/management, urban design, architecture, landscape architecture, heritage management, economic development, housing and regeneration.

The agenda for the meeting was developed by the steering group following feedback that forum members were keen to look at the issue of urban design in a town centre context.

TOWN CENTRE URBAN DESIGN | LOCAL CHALLENGES

An initial workshop session, facilitated by forum members, encouraged debate around the challenges for good urban design in town centres. Participants reflected on how their organisations were responding to the increased policy focus on town centres. Discussion points included local approaches to working with the Town Centre First Principle and Town Centre Action Plans. Participants shared their experiences of what had been working well and what could be working better in their places. Some key issues highlighted by discussions included challenges with delivering the 'Town Centres First Principle' where different interests compete; the desire to create people friendly high streets and the conflicts with a roads / traffic engineering approaches; the challenges of motivating property owners to engage in positive change; the issues of leveraging in funding - particularly in town centres without conservation status. A fuller summary is included in the supporting resource sheets.

TOWN CENTRE URBAN DESIGN | POSSIBLE APPROACHES

A second workshop saw forum members share learning from their own experiences of tackling urban design challenges in Scottish town centres. The 'world cafe' style session was programmed to encourage debate on key issues. Contributors presented a range of projects and initiatives from a representative selection of Scottish town centres. Projects were chosen to highlight possible approaches to dealing with key issues. Lively debate and exchange of knowledge followed about how such issues are being tackled in towns across Scotland. Forum members had the opportunity to participate in 3 of the 5 following discussions:

- **Proactive planning for street design** (Kirkintilloch Masterplan: Jennifer Horn, East Dunbartonshire Council and Orla Rooney, Sustrans)
- **Proactive planning for public spaces** (Stalled Spaces: Lorna Pearce, Argyll and Bute Council and Emma Halliday A+DS)
- **Town Centre Living** (Glengate Hall, Kirriemuir: Kirsty Macari, Angus Council)
- **Dealing with vacancy** (Paisley's heritage regeneration and asset strategy: Elaine Troup, Renfrewshire Council)
- **Design led regeneration** (Dalmarnock: Craig Vesey, Clyde Gateway URC)

Resource sheets summarising key project information and discussion points are available through [knowledge hub](#).

Format for the session: A 5 min presentation from a subject or project 'expert' was followed by 15 mins of questions, discussion and debate from a small discussion group. Participants recorded key questions, thoughts and discussion points on the table. After 20 mins, participants moved to another table. The presenter stayed put and the process repeated.



Sustrans, Pathhead
Street Design Project,
Kirkcaldy

QUALITY DESIGN FOR ACTIVE PLACES | SUSTRANS

Sustrans presented on their work enabling more people to choose to cycle or walk for everyday journeys. Sustrans operate holistically and recognise that change happens when a combination of aspects come together. Anna Ronayne, Alex Bottrill and Paul Ruffles outlined their approach:

Active travel: Sustrans would like to see people in normal clothing making their everyday journeys by foot or by bike.

People centered: Aiming to change people's everyday habits, so work engages as many people as possible in the process. Its not just physical interventions that create change and factors other than infrastructure prevent people cycling or walking. A team of officers work on people centered initiatives to encourage active travel (eg Smarter Choices, Smarter Places and iBike with primary schools).

Inter-professional working: Sustrans run model kit session, demonstrating the value of gathering different professionals to think and discuss projects right at the start of the process.

Community involvement: Recognise local people are the experts in their area. Community interest and involvement leads to better ownership of projects after completion.

Sustrans went onto outline their **urban design approach:**

Strategic thinking: Considering the whole place and how typography affects peoples choice of routes.

Town centres: Working with local communities to understand how people want to use the space. Eg Dunblane this started bold, removing parking. Resistance minimised by demonstrating benefits.

Shared space trials: Dont be afraid to be bold. Example in Kirkintilloch to turn off traffic lights at a cross roads in the middle of the main shopping street. Subject of world cafe session.

Consider smaller interventions: Understand what each area needs. Projects neednt all be expensive or high profile. In Kirkcaldy, some smaller interventions lead to a 6 fold increase in cycling despite no new cycle lanes!

Sustrans are keen to work in partnership and can offer support and funding through partnership programmes such as Community Links. Participants were invited to get in touch with questions or ideas: scotland@sustrans.org.uk

CARNEGIE TRUST

Georgina Bowyer of the Carnegie Trust gave a introduction to the organisation and its operations in relation to town centres.

Recent examples were given of Carnegie Trust's involvement in partnership initiatives to improve community health and wellbeing. This work included input into the Scottish Government's Town Centre Review and initiatives such as 'Pride in Place', 'Places that Love People' and the youth enterprise project 'Test Towns'. Test Towns seeks to involve young people in addressing the oversupply of town centre property and undersupply of good, sustainable, attractive business ideas. A call for **Test Towns 2015** is open until 15th June 2015.

Participants were given a more detailed introduced to the Trust's work on **Understanding Scottish Places**. The online web resource was developed by a consortium of organisations including the Carnegie Trust to improve data relating to town centres in Scotland.

The online toolkit help towns practitoners and communities better understand the function of the towns they live and work in. The site's primary function is a diagnostic tool which describes whether a town is dependent, interdependent or independent. Beyond that offers the opportunity to compare and contrast data about the characteristics and an type of communities across Scotland. The tool also assist with measuring the progress of a town as new strategies are developed and implemented.

More information on The Carnegie Trust and its projects can be found [here](#).

AND FINALLY...

- Thanks to all the speakers, world cafe contributors and participants who helped make the fourth meeting of the forum a success.
- A questionnaire has been circulated to gather feedback and seek input on future meeting themes.
- The steering group works with feedback from the group to develop future agendas and would be pleased to hear from anyone interested in helping influence the future direction of the forum. The group meets on a quarterly basis. Please contact kate.givan@ads.org.uk for more information.
- Forum members are encouraged to register with the online **knowledge hub** site for the LAUDF. Presentations and related resources will be made available through the site. It's your site - please use it to contact forum members, start discussions or post information about events that may be of interest to members in between meetings.
- The LAUDF is intended not only for urban design specialists, but for all local authority or public agency staff working on issues relating to urban design. Please do encourage colleagues to attend future events, particularly where their area of work relates to a particular topic.
- The next full meeting of the LAUDF is proposed for Autumn 2015.

Newsletter produced by A+DS on behalf of LAUDF steering group. If you would like to know more about the items in this newsletter or about getting involved with the Local Authority Urban Design Forum, please contact kate.givan@ads.org.uk