

Agenda Item	4.
Report No	COG 03/18

## Chief Officers' Group – 26 April 2018

### National Strengthening Communities Conference - 21/22 September 2017 - Aviemore

#### Recommendation:

COG are asked to note that the National Strengthening Communities Conference, held 21/22 September in Aviemore, was very well received by those attending.

#### 1. Objectives of the SC Conference and relevant aspects of it to Community Partnerships

The first National Strengthening Communities Conference was conceived and hosted by HIE in partnership with the Scottish Government (Regeneration Team).

The conference was aimed at communities, community development organisations and practitioners alongside intermediaries, enablers and policy makers from across Scotland. It sought to highlight best practice, innovations, and the current and evolving policy and legislative environment, with a focus on maximising impact from an **assets and place based approach**.

Conference organisers aimed for a 60:40 split of community activists to enablers, and achieved around 50:50.

The format of the conference was a mix of informative presentations covering the policy position, best practice and looking to the future, augmented with ample networking opportunities. In addition there was also a 'market place' for exhibiting and inspiring collaboration, innovation and adoption of ideas, all in the pursuit of strengthening communities.

Agenda: <http://www.hie.co.uk/community-support/community-conference/presentations.html>

Workshops: <http://www.hie.co.uk/community-support/community-conference/workshops.html>

Speakers: <http://www.hie.co.uk/community-support/community-conference/speakers.html>

Videos: <http://www.hie.co.uk/community-support/community-conference/videos.html>

## **2. Brief synopses of the key workshops (all with relevance to Community Planning)**

### **W1 - Opportunities for all - practising inclusion**

Community-led development is inherently inclusive in character, how it is governed, consults and makes decisions. What's less clear is how we recognise how inclusive the economic and social progress made through that effort is. This workshop explored the characteristics of what we might call inclusive growth. What are the KPI's that make sense for organisations?

### **W2 - Putting the community in community planning partnerships**

A chance to hear about progress being made in getting the grass roots community voice more integrated in community planning efforts, and to explore how we can make faster progress in mainstreaming community-led participation in CPPs.

### **W3 - The importance of skills to Community Development**

As well as retaining and developing the skills of local people, community led projects are a vital part of opening up new opportunities for the local workforce. Stephen Sheridan of Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is hosted this session to discuss the importance of talent attraction and retention to communities. SDS offered practical advice on topics including the Apprenticeship family, workplace development and succession planning.

### **W4 - Calling time on vacant and derelict land**

Over 12,000 hectares of developable land in Scotland is vacant or derelict, and that doesn't even include land which might be considered abandoned or neglected. Hamish Trench, Chief Executive of the Scottish Land Commission outlined why so much land remains an ongoing blight to our communities. Dave Thomson of Scottish Government's Community Land Team then explain how communities can seek to bring land, coming under all of these various descriptions, back into productive use, through the forthcoming 'Abandoned, neglected and detrimental land' legislation.

### **W5 - Powering up community energy in new ways**

The Scottish Government has been consulting on a new Energy Strategy. It is leaning towards a new joined up power, heat and transport strategy for energy supply framed within a low carbon context. With subsidies being reduced the time is now for communities to plan

how best for them to do this with the renewable and low carbon resources they have available. Participant heard from a group that have done just this!

### **W6 - Enterprising communities – building a long term successful community business**

Participants heard from two long standing community led businesses on how to build and sustain a successful business; the importance of diversifying income streams, effective financial management and strong community support.

### **W7 - Building your community-led housing project**

Affordable housing is at the heart of building sustainable communities. Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust and 2 successful community housing projects presented on the funding and delivery mechanisms available to communities and top tips for success.

### **W8 - Ready for investment?**

Moving from asking to earning – understanding the potential of social investment for social enterprises and communities. The workshop demonstrated how social investment, in the right circumstances, can liberate and enable organisations to take control of their own futures. By explaining the social investment landscape and the various players within it, using case studies, social enterprises and communities gained insights on how they can access the right money reflecting their development stage and specific needs.

### **W9 - Getting creative with Heritage**

This workshop explored opportunities to incorporate emerging virtual reality and augmented reality digital technology, through a heritage sector example.

GSA in conjunction with Archaeology Scotland give an overview of the emerging technology landscape, and highlighted the most obvious opportunities for communities.

### **W10 - Engaging your community – make it happen**

In the area of simple tools for organising community events to bring people together, exchange ideas and make stronger, more active communities, participants found out what the Leapfrog project is all about, and heard from a community that's tried it.

**W6** and **W10** were the highest rated by participants, followed by **W2** (led by Pablo Mascarenhas) and then **W4**. **W7**, **W3** and **W5** were also highly valued. **W1**, of particular relevance to CPP, discussed the SG's evolving thinking and was perhaps pitched in much in

