

CROSS PARTY GROUP ON ARCHITECTURE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

MINUTES OF MEETING

Meeting: "Waterfront Communities Project – European Lessons" - held at 5.30pm on Wednesday 3 May 2006 in Committee Room 5, The Scottish Parliament

Our Ref: EM SL R10-mins030506

PRESENT

Shiona Baird MSP	Scottish Parliament
Stuart Beith	Clyde Waterfront
Heather Chapple	Architect
Christopher Dingwall	Scottish Garden History Society
John Gerrard	Rural Scotland
Alistair Hackland	Hackland & Dore
Jack Hugh	EAA
Robin Harper MSP	Scottish Parliament
Gus McDonald	RIAS
Alice McGlone	City of Edinburgh Council
Liz McLean	East Lothian Council
Eugene Mullan	RIAS
Cllr Gordon Munro	City of Edinburgh Council
Miles Oglethorpe	RCAHMS
Ann Packard	-
Douglas Read	Dignan Read Dewar
Sara Thiam	Waterfront Communities Project
Steven Tolson	Ogilvie Group Ltd/RICS
Deidre Brock	Assistant to Rob Gibson MSP
Brian Monteith MSP	Scottish Parliament
Jim Mather MSP	Scottish Parliament
Dougal Mather	-

APOLOGIES

Derek Elder	ICE Scotland
Bob Foggo	Scottish Executive – Tourism & Architecture Policy Unit
Howard Little	GAIA Group
Ian Munro	Scottish Arts Council
Jo Robertson	BEFS
Graham U'Ren	RTPI

DISTRIBUTION

Robin Harper MSP (Convenor)
Brian Monteith (Vice Convenor)
Graham U'Ren (Treasurer)
Eugene Mullan (Secretary)

1.0 WELCOME, PRESENT AND APOLOGIES ACTION

- Robin Harper MSP welcomed all present to the meeting.

2.0 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

- The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2005 were approved.
- It was noted that a re-convened AGM was held on 30 March 2006, there were no comments on these minutes, these will be formally approved at the next AGM.

3.0 MATTERS ARISING

- There were no matters arising from these meetings.

4.0 INTRODUCTION TO MEETING THEME

- The Secretary gave a brief introduction to the meeting theme.
- Waterfront regeneration is a popular topic at present. Not least within Scotland along the River Clyde and Edinburgh's Waterfront. The changes to port activities, the high pressure for development land and the possibility to create distinctive neighbourhoods have provided opportunities for comprehensive regeneration. Often creating new areas of city bigger than some of our largest towns.
- This is not new, London's Docklands has been underway for at least 15 years. Barcelona got a "leg up" from the Olympics and Dublin from the Celtic Tiger.
- So have lessons been learned from previous mistakes? Are we confident that the result of these large-scale regenerations will be "successful places"? Are our legislative and statutory tools assisting or hindering the quality of the end result?
- Edinburgh is one of nine cities in Europe considering these issues and sharing information in the form of the Waterfront Communities Project.

5.0 PRESENTATION – SARA THIAM – PROJECT MANAGER OF WATERFRONT COMMUNITIES PROJECT

- The Secretary gave a brief introduction to Sara.
- Sara Thiam manages the EU funded Waterfront Communities Project for the City of Edinburgh. She previously led the EU Demos project which fostered innovative ways of improving citizen participation in local government across Europe. Sara is a French graduate and has over 15 years' experience in European policy information and funding at local, national and EU level. Before joining the Council she was

based in Community Learning Scotland and managed the Eurodesk European Youth Information Initiative across the UK on behalf of the British Council.

- Sara's presentation provided information on the Waterfront Communities Project, which is a learning network of 9 North Sea cities including Edinburgh, Gothenburg, Schiedam, Hamburg, Gateshead, Oslo, Aalborg, Hull and Odense. The Waterfront Communities Project aims to foster and test innovative ways to create sustainable, economically vibrant and socially inclusive waterfront areas in European cities and to re-connect the city to the sea.
- Project outputs include:
 - A learning network.
 - The framework for organising knowledge of key concepts in urban sustainable development, which will inform policy and action requirements.
 - An international database of Good Practice of waterfront redevelopment.
 - A Best Practice toolkit with guidelines for achieving high quality waterfront regeneration aimed at a wide range of players.
- Sara provided brief information on the North Sea context shared by the partner cities, the challenges and opportunities they face and the 9 themes which they are investigating.
- Sara concluded her presentation by identifying 5 key findings from the project of particular relevance for parliamentarians. These are as follows:
 - To maximise opportunities and benefits, waterfront regeneration is most effectively carried out in **the context of the city-region**. Here planning is about both linking the waterfront with the city and region in forward strategies and about broad-based participation. There is commitment to city-regional planning in Scotland in principle, but much needs to be done in practice to develop a workable system which genuinely involves stakeholders from around the Forth Estuary. (Example: Hamburg)
 - In this context, **integration of land use and transport** to and from the waterfront is critical to achieving sustainable development. For Edinburgh, commitment to the tram system is fundamental to Edinburgh's waterfront meeting 21st century standards, as may be proposals for ferries linking Edinburgh and Fife. The "ten mile boardwalk" shows a commitment to pedestrians and cyclists which would otherwise be lacking, and making the waterfront open to all. (Examples: Oslo, Gothenburg)
 - There is real danger of homogenised, mediocre waterfront regeneration, which is marketable but not innovative. **Innovation** requires strong, visionary leadership and ensuring that development is "world-class" in creating 21st century neighbourhoods, for example, by architectural competitions. It also requires careful integration of various new developments along the waterfront,

and new neighbourhoods with existing neighbourhoods. (Examples: Aalborg, Hamburg)

- To achieve commitment to innovation from stakeholders, **leadership needs to be complemented by partnership**. Real partnerships involve all stakeholders in decision-making in a systematic, consultative manner, which builds commitment to innovative action and finance, and organisational innovation which drives forward regeneration. (Example: Hull)
- **Partnership needs to be complemented by broad-based participation**, in which all the citizens of the city-region, and local neighbourhoods, need to have creative opportunities for participating in the regeneration process. At the city-regional level, there should be opportunities for celebrating the role of the waterfront in city life. Local neighbourhoods, such as Pilton and Leith, need more systematic and influential participation through Community Planning arrangements. (Examples: Schiedam, Hamburg)

6.0 PRESENTATION BY CLLR GORDON MUNRO – CHAIR OF WATERFRONT COMMUNITIES PROJECT

- The Secretary gave a brief introduction to Gordon.
- Gordon is the Chair of the Waterfront Communities Project. A City of Edinburgh Councillor for Harbour West, he is also a member of the Planning Committee and Chairs the North & Leith Local Development Committee of the Council. He was elected in May 2003 and graduated from the Open University with an Honours degree in Human Geography at the end of May 2003.
- Gordon followed on from Sara's presentation quoting various examples of high quality regeneration and particularly Bo01, Malmö. Gordon highlighted that many of the projects being put forward in the UK as Best Practice, such as South Staithes. Gateshead by Wayne Hemmingway, are not considered innovative in a European contexts and that there is a requirement to raise our aspirations in this respect. For example, Bo01 Malmö established a target right at the beginning of the project of 100% meeting its own energy requirements, a target which has been achieved.
- Gordon tabled a number of publications which were circulated for information as follows:
 - Scottish Executive Planning Advice Note 67 Housing Quality.
 - Euroscape – INTERREG North Sea Programme
 - Sustainable City of Tomorrow, Bo01 – experience of a Swedish housing exposition.
 - Energy Efficiency and Micro-Generation Bill, Sarah Boyack December 2005.
 - Choosing Our Future (Fragile, Handle With Care), Scottish Executive, December 2005.

- Gordon concluded by highlighting that there are clear signs of intent, however we do not seem to be able to turn this into reality.

7.0 DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

- There was a broad based discussion of the issues raised with a particular emphasis on endeavouring to establish the aspects of our current legislative environment, which both assist and hinder the achievement of successful regeneration as follows:
 - Public sector are risk averse, relying on others to implement the regeneration within the context of regulations to ensure quality of the outcome. In other countries public sector is proactive and prepared to take the risk.
 - There was general discussion on the relationship between the Edinburgh Waterfront Development areas, City of Edinburgh Council's strategic overview of the entire Waterfront area and the role of the Waterfront Communities Project in providing Best Practice information and influencing the developments within these areas. It was acknowledged that some work needs to be done to achieve the best result in these areas.
 - The importance of historic buildings being maintained and refurbished within regeneration areas in order to retain a distinctive identity was highlighted.
 - The role of the community planning process in consulting local communities affected by regeneration proposals was raised. Robin Harper particularly highlighted the importance of positive feedback to local people in these circumstances. He also highlighted that for many people, a successful neighbourhood is one with the corner shop, appropriate play spaces and the ability to walk to school.
 - A query was raised about the role of the state in providing appropriate infrastructure, investment regulations, tax laws and VAT. All of which have a substantial influence on the regeneration process. The perception is that local government in Europe has greater powers than that in Scotland and that in many cases, their ownership of the land ensures a greater control of it. The role played by different planning systems was also highlighted and the Edinburgh project team have produced summaries of the different planning systems to facilitate comparison of the different systems. These are to be published shortly and will be available from the Project Management Office.
 - The importance of building procurement process was highlighted. Currently funding for infrastructure tends to rely on Section 75 Agreements, rather than up-front investment. Many of the Masterplan areas are being handed over to private house builders, thereby resulting in "housing led" regeneration and a high risk of "dormitory areas" with no real community facilities.
 - The importance of affordable housing was highlighted. This is heavily dependent on the planning system. It was noted that although there have been

5,000 consents for affordable housing, in the Edinburgh waterfront area only 200-300 houses have been constructed. The amount of affordable housing constructed is dependent on the house sale rate, which is not ideal.

- There was a discussion on methods of improving the sustainable design aspects of house building. Ken Livingstone is proposing a minimum of 20% renewables for all projects in London. The Borough of Merton requires evidence of 10% renewables before approving planning applications. The importance of BREEAM Eco Homes was highlighted although the building regulations is the most powerful tool in this respect. It was noted that there is a strong political will to increase the building standards in this respect but often this is watered down by the regulatory impact assessment.
- There was a discussion on encouraging housing developers to build more sustainable designs. Generally this involves a higher capital cost and reduced running costs. Therefore there is limited incentive. A Halifax survey suggested that only 5% of purchasers were prepared to pay more for a house with sustainable design technology.
- Sustainable aspects of re-using existing stock were highlighted, not just conservation of listed buildings. Concern was raised about Historic Scotland's role in protecting the built environment, which often involves resisting energy improvements such as double glazing.

8.0 SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

- Ten key themes can be identified from the meeting as follows:
 - The context of the city region.
 - Integration of land use and transport.
 - Innovation in procurement and design.
 - Leadership and the necessity of it to be complemented by partnership.
 - The necessity of partnership to also be complemented by broad-based participation.
 - The Public Sector being risk averse in the implementation of regeneration.
 - The role of the Public Sector/State in providing infrastructure, appropriate investment regulations, tax laws and VAT.
 - The importance of the building procurement process.
 - The need to increase Building Standards – a strong political will to do so but in reality, often watered down by the regulatory impact assessment.

9.0 CLOSE OF MEETING

- Robin Harper thanked all present for attending the meeting and contributing so effectively to the discussion.
- Next meeting will be on 21 June 2006 entitled "Scotland's Landscapes – Valuing the

Past, Investing in the Future” – a presentation by the Scottish Garden History Society.