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15th March 2013

Delivery of Regeneration in Scotland Inquiry Call for written evidence

Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS) welcomes the opportunity to provide written evidence on the delivery of regeneration in Scotland. BEFS is a unique body which brings together professional and voluntary non-governmental organisations under one umbrella to influence strategic policy relating to the protection, management and enhancement of Scotland's built environment. Represented within BEFS membership includes the interests of historic environment organisations in Scotland reaching out to over 500 local groups.

The remit for the inquiry is: "To identify and examine best practice and limitations in relation to the delivery of regeneration in Scotland". In this evidence BEFS seeks to illustrate the **integrated benefits associated with area-based, heritage-led regeneration**. We refer predominantly to projects located within Conservation Areas that have received targeted investment via the **Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)**. This scheme is led by Historic Scotland and, through grant-aided repair work to historic buildings and the public realm, is reaping positive benefits in the heart of places across Scotland.

CARS projects typically comprise investment in the high quality repair of a small number of 'priority' historic buildings along with: improvement and maintenance works carried out to a wider group of properties; public realm works; a training element in traditional building skills targeting the local workforce; and awareness-raising and education initiatives run in partnership with local community groups and schools. Since 2005, five application rounds have awarded £26 million of investment in nearly fifty Conservation Areas across Scotland. Investment via this scheme often forms part of complex funding packages with projects securing funding from amongst others the Heritage Lottery Fund, (including Townscape Heritage Investment - THI), Big Lottery Fund, European Regional Development

Fund, LEADER and the relevant Local Authority. The following examples give a flavour for the nature of these projects in terms of scale, scope and outcomes.

Campbeltown: A CARS was successfully run in Campbeltown from 2007 to March 2012. A grant award of £382,500 from Historic Scotland acted as a catalyst for heritage-led regeneration. In 2009 Heritage Lottery Fund Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) funding was secured which increased the total funding pot to £2 million, along with additional contributions from owners, the European Regional Development Fund, Council housing grant and others. A key objective from the outset was that the project was community-led with a steering group comprising a wide range of stakeholders of the built heritage. An accessible town centre CARS/THI office is shared with the local development trust and this has become a community hub with best practice and information shared between many of the community groups in the area. Outcomes represent a blend of environmental, social and economic elements - physical repair work has been carried out on fifty town centre buildings, total spend amounting to £4 million, with thirty-five local contractors involved and 250 people participating in training events.

Dalkeith: The Dalkeith CARS and THI is a partnership scheme between the Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Scotland, Midlothian Council and Dalkeith Business Renewal. The scheme is a 5 year project, running from 2010 – 2014. Again key to the success of the project has been to involve local groups - the community council, history society, local schools and youth forum, local traders, owners and tenements of priority buildings, local councillors and officials, local contractors and building professionals and the local and national press. Through the scheme owners of properties in multiple-ownership have been guided and supported in coming together to co-ordinate repair work. Impacts in terms of physical repair work have been highly visible in the High Street and feedback has indicated an increase in pride of place and more confidence about the town generally. Some shops have reported an increase in trade, for example trade increasing by 40% following creation of a new shop front. Another positive output has been the increase in maintenance work generally in the town centre on buildings that were not grant-aided.

Kilmarnock: The economic impacts are echoed in experience in Kilmarnock where approximately 8178 m² of space have been brought back into use. Here a significant component of the scheme was the conversion of an important building, the Johnnie Walker Bonded Warehouse within the heart of the Conservation Area. The project involved a comprehensive conservation, repair and maintenance programme to the exterior fabric of the building ensuring the longevity of this locally important building. The importance of this building and its end-use as an office accommodating 283 East Ayrshire Council employees bringing jobs into Kilmarnock Town Centre was recognised recently through the formal opening ceremony conducted by HRH The Prince of Wales on 11th May 2012. During the lifetime of the scheme an additional £1.4 million investment was secured through the Scottish Government Town Centre Regeneration Fund. This funded a programme of public realm improvements within the Conservation Area included high quality resurfacing of footpaths using indigenous materials such as silver granite setts and Caithness slabs.

Brechin: The Brechin CARS was launched in April 2008 with an award of £370,750 towards building repairs in the central Conservation Area. The CARS funding was incorporated within the City of Brechin Townscape Initiative Scheme with a total funding package of £2.9 million. The balance of the funding was met from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Angus Council. As in Kilmarnock, additional funding of £1.8 million was awarded to Brechin by the Scottish Government's Town Centre Regeneration Fund. This resulted in the Council's acquisition of two vacant buildings which were subsequently awarded funding through the CARS/THI scheme. The project facilitated the comprehensive repair of six out of seven of the earmarked priority project buildings and owners from a further 28 buildings benefitted from grant funding to facilitate repair works and the reinstatement of architectural detail. The majority of the grants were awarded to private owners. In terms of outcomes the investment has directly led to the removal of three buildings from the 'Buildings at Risk Register', including one 'A listed' building. There has been a marked improvement in civic pride and a newly formed retailers group has developed a number of promotional events which have helped build confidence in local businesses. Vacancy levels recorded in the most recent town centre health check shows a drop in levels by at least 2% compared to 2010.

Falkirk and Bo'ness: The Town Centre Regeneration Fund features again in Falkirk, where it has generated benefit through the regeneration of the town centre graveyard. Beyond this physical outcome, a more subtle consequence was that this gave confidence in the assessment of Falkirk Council's bid for THI funding. Progress is now ongoing with the proposed Falkirk THI which has recently been awarded £2 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund and £1.6 million from Historic Scotland. Nearby in Bo'ness, the legacy of THI investment again relates to renewed confidence – the restoration of the previously derelict, yet truly iconic, Hippodrome Cinema playing a symbolic role in raising aspirations. Here public realm improvements have helped raise the bar and level of expectation for improved standards in future infrastructure development. The overall effect is a more confident town centre which is stimulating additional restoration and private investment. There is also a renewed focus on tourism with the attainment of World Heritage Status for the Antonine Wall, through the Bo'ness Railway Preservation Society and events such as the town centre markets and Victorian Street Fair. It can be said that the primary objective of the August 2000 Economic Development Review of Bo'ness Town Centre – to enhance the town's appeal to visitor and investors through the identification of realistic measures – has been achieved.

Edinburgh World Heritage: The involvement of communities in regeneration has a long track record in Edinburgh. This final reference (not a CARS) is to the work of Edinburgh World Heritage, and its predecessors, which have more than forty years of experience in supporting regeneration through community-led repair schemes. The key message here is the long-term nature of the game. The nature of property ownership in Scotland means that there can be typically a dozen owners to bring together to undertake a repair scheme. The key attributes here are the need for patience, diplomacy and access to the necessary

professional expertise. Steady investment at a low level is as effective, if not moreso, than a single big hit, since it creates the confidence for others to invest. Creating a sense of ownership by the community, and giving meaning to place is a prerequisite for successful regeneration in the long-term.

All of these examples illustrate a recipe for success. Common to all are the area-based approach – renewing historic buildings and the spaces between, creating a sense of ownership by involving the community, collaborative steady investment, building awareness, emphasis on quality and use of appropriately qualified practitioners to guide and manage.

These ingredients generate **confidence** which acts as a catalyst for further private investment, initiative, enterprise and activity in a place. The spin-offs reach far beyond the physical interventions to ‘make good’ our historic buildings. Buildings that have long stood empty, yet are ever present, continue to hold enduring value - in more ways than one.

If you would like further information on any of these CARS projects, the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme in general or work of Edinburgh World Heritage, please get in touch.

Yours faithfully

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