



## **Small Places, Big Issues**

A report on Scottish Executive regeneration policy

Prepared on behalf of Craigmillar Community Council  
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success.

Economic growth is the route to a fairer society, to social justice, and to securing equal opportunities for all. Regeneration is a crucial part of growing the economy and improving the fabric of Scotland.

*(Malcolm Chisholm, MSP, quoted from the foreword of People and Place: Regeneration statement)*

And money is like muck, no good except it be spread

*(Francis Bacon, 1561-1626)*

## **Small Places, Big Issues**

### **Introduction**

This paper documents views expressed during a seminar organised by Craigmillar Community Council in May 2006, to discuss issues associated with community regeneration. It is written for a variety of audiences including local communities throughout Scotland, local authorities and the Scottish Executive. It aims to aid and inform debate.

The paper is split into three different sections, a brief summary of each is provided below and readers should access the sections most relevant to themselves;

1. Background (pages 5 & 6) – This section puts the seminar in context and explains the motivation for organising it.
2. Speakers' contributions (pages 7 to 10) – This section outlines the main points made by key speakers
3. Participants' workshop discussions (page 11) – This section outlines key points raised during plenary and workshop discussion

## **Background**

Over the past thirty years, the UK has witnessed a significant increase in poverty alongside growing disparities between the countries richest and poorest communities. By 1997, when New Labour was elected to office, the number of people living in poverty had exceeded 13 million; this figure having doubled from 6 million during the early years of the Conservative party's 18 years in power. Nine years later, 11.4 million people still live in poverty ([www.poverty.org.uk/summary/key\\_facts.htm](http://www.poverty.org.uk/summary/key_facts.htm)). Similarly, the income gap between the countries richest 10% of the population and the poorest 10% has also continued to increase during this time. Between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of national wealth held by the wealthiest 10% of the UK population increased from 47% to 54% (The Indypedia, Facts and Figures of Modern life, 2006).

Policy initiatives designed to address such stark inequalities have been rolled out on the back of empowering language, suggesting that successive governments have been serious in their efforts to regenerate deprived communities. Policy literature accompanying the launch of initiatives such as New Life Partnerships (Conservative Government), Priority Partnership Areas (Conservative Government) and Social Inclusion Partnership's (New Labour Government), have spelt out the need for innovative approaches which bring the private sector together with public authorities and local communities to create joined up solutions that are needed for specifically affected areas. Whilst it cannot be denied that this approach has witnessed some interesting and meaningful results, there is a growing feeling amongst members of these communities that such developments have been the exception rather than the rule.

This strength of feeling is supported by a range of academic literature, which suggests that such partnership arrangements produce strategies that wield little sustainable benefits for communities and which can actually work to enforce the wider political aspirations of government upon communities (Collins & Lister, 1996; Collins, 2000; Mayo, 1997; Webster, 2000). Such strategies, it is argued, are laden with assumptions about the nature and causes of poverty where there is a direct attempt to divorce the issue from the consequences of public policy and economic strategy and to put the blame firmly upon the characteristics and motivations of the poor. These assumptions can be witnessed in the general focus of many of the services developed through such partnership arrangements, where one of the key priorities is to make the poor more 'work ready', whilst all the time ignoring the fact that the majority of job creation in the UK has been toward the lower paid, flexible and insecure end of the market (Bauman, 2001; Maguire and Maguire, 1997; Mizen, 1999).

Recent policy initiatives look set to continue these trends. The Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 brought about the introduction of yet another partnership arrangement, the transition from Social Inclusion Partnerships to Community Planning Partnerships, which will now co-ordinate the efforts of local communities in regard to social and economic regeneration. The Act also created the legal space for the Scottish Executive to introduce Urban Regeneration Companies as the preferred vehicle to take forward the wholesale physical regeneration of deprived communities. Like the general partnership approach described above, Urban Regeneration Companies are

designed to bring the private sector in from the margins to take on a mainstream role within the physical redevelopment of run down areas.

Craigmillar lies in the south east of Edinburgh and residents have witnessed all of the government initiatives mentioned above. The community was created in the late 1920's by the City Council as it attempted to reduce overcrowding and squalor within the City Centre. Since this time the history of the community has been characterised by long periods of struggle and hardship, offset by temporary periods of economic stability and social cohesion.

Poverty is still very much an issue for Craigmillar residents. Recent research conducted by Craigmillar Social Inclusion Partnership shows that 64% of households in the area have a total equivalised household income below £10,008. Similarly, the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics, which are compiled by the Scottish Executive, provide richer detail about the problems many of our local neighbourhoods face i.e. high levels of alcoholism, drug abuse, mental health issues and educational failure ([www.sns.gov.uk](http://www.sns.gov.uk)).

As anticipated in the title of this paper, these issues are not specific to Craigmillar. Many communities throughout Scotland face similar problems. But after 30 years of government initiatives which have all been designed to respond to the problem of poverty in pretty much the same way and, as the research above shows, have done very little to challenge poverty in any serious or sustained way, can local communities really be expected to be convinced about the introduction of Community Planning Partnerships and Urban Regeneration Companies?

It was with this question in mind that Craigmillar Community Council organised the seminar. The next section goes onto detail the main inputs.

### **Speakers' contributions**

The debate featured 3 key inputs. Dr Chik Collins spoke about the general political ideas he believes are informing the Scottish Executive's regeneration policies, Professor Greg Lloyd spoke specifically about the key ideas informing the development of Urban Regeneration Companies and Valeria Skafida spoke about Craigmillar's recent experience of working with an Urban Regeneration Company.

#### Dr. Chik Collins

Chik Collins lectures in the Social Sciences faculty at the University of Paisley; he spoke about the history of community regeneration initiatives within the Scottish context. He argued that whilst there have been plenty of such initiatives over the past thirty odd years (i.e. Community Development Projects in the late 1960s and 1970s, Urban Aid projects in the 1970s and 1980s, New Life Partnership's in the late 1980s and Social Inclusion Partnerships in the late 1990s and early 2000s), they have achieved much too little in practice.

Chik qualified this point by showing that whilst vast sums of money have been spent on areas such as Westerhailes in Edinburgh and Ferguslea Park in Paisley, research shows that such areas still suffer very high levels of poverty and experience a range of associated social problems. Chik drew on recent research which shows that Ferguslea Park has one of the highest incarceration rates for young men in the whole of Scotland (comparable to those of young black men in California, which is commonly cited as one of the worst rates in the developed world), to argue such indicators suggest that rather than being regenerated, Scotland's poorest communities, including most of those that have been targeted with comparatively well-funded initiatives, have continued to undergo a sustained process of degeneration.

Chik went onto argue that if regeneration initiatives have failed in their stated aims, perhaps they have served an alternate agenda. Referring to a number of government reports which are peppered with the language of big business and free market economics, he claimed that regeneration initiatives have served as laboratories for wider public sector reform, where the ultimate aim is to decrease public service provision and increase the public's exposure to market forces.

Chik went onto demonstrate that this process is now being accelerated, through government reports and literature surrounding Community Planning Partnerships. In a report titled *People and Place*, which was published by the Scottish Executive earlier this year, Chik pointed out that the main thrust of regeneration policy is underpinned by wider economic assumptions about the need to grow more large, competitive businesses through privatisation – and in particular privatisation of public services like health and education. Chik argued that 'regeneration' was being used as a kind of 'cover' for making progress with this privatisation agenda.

Chik suggested that the announcements of a number of Urban Regeneration Companies around the country are strongly linked to this agenda, and that the intention seems to be to use these as

'pilots' for initiatives which will then be disseminated more widely via Community Planning Partnerships across Scotland's local authority areas. He argued that this is being driven by private economic interests, and by the Royal Bank of Scotland in particular. He referred to a report launched by the Royal Bank in 2004, entitled *Wealth Creation in Scotland* which argued that Scotland needs big companies to compete globally and that such a strategy relies upon the privatisation of public services.

Chik concluded his input by arguing that such policies will likely lead to the further degeneration of Scotland's poorest communities. He argued that the last thirty years of policy has failed to restore such communities to the relative (though far from perfect) balance they enjoyed in the post war welfare era, and that the intensification of privatisation will only make matters significantly worse.

### Professor Greg Lloyd

Professor Greg Lloyd lectures in the department of Town and Planning at the University of Dundee; he used his input to answer a few key questions, which are noted below –

1. What are Urban Regeneration Companies?
2. What ideas are they based on?
3. What are their strengths and weaknesses?
4. Will they deliver the intended outcomes?

Greg commenced by tracing the changes in political ideas over the past forty years in regard to urban regeneration. He argued that the post war welfare era was dominated by strong and centralised state control, with a clear focus on public sector provision in an attempt to cater for the needs of local communities. With the election of the Conservative government in 1979, Greg noted that the agenda changed somewhat. The key ideas, he argued, revolved around beliefs that regeneration should be property led instead of needs led, and that it should be taken forward through private services instead of public agencies.

Finally, with the election of New Labour in 1997, Greg argued that there has been a general continuity with the approach of the Conservative party. He argued that though there has been an increased role for national and local government under New Labour, this role has been limited to the regulation and governance of projects instead of getting involved in direct service delivery, which is still seen as the role of the private sector.

Greg traced the introduction of Urban Regeneration Companies to a report made by the Urban Task Force in 1999. The Urban Task Force, Greg explained, was set up by New Labour to advise the government on how to regenerate Britain's largest cities. Greg explained that by 2000 there were 15 companies operating in England; they were introduced to Scotland in 2003 through a report commissioned by the Scottish Executive, titled *Urban Regeneration Companies; Challenging Practice, Testing Innovation*.

Greg moved onto outline the key functions given to Urban Regeneration Companies. The essence of these functions revolve around the creation of stand alone private companies to co-ordinate and

lead regeneration initiatives in specific areas. Greg then moved onto explore some of the advantages and disadvantages. In terms of advantages, he argued that URC's are highly visible organisations who use sophisticated marketing techniques to create an image of change within an area, Greg added that, through this, they can attract substantial additional investment.

In regard to disadvantages, Greg argued that URC's are dependent upon market confidence – he pointed out that sometimes the market can dip and projects can go into negative equity. He also argued that the market tends not to favour the interests of the poor, and substantial sections of local communities can miss out. Finally, Greg argued that as such companies tend to favour the interests of big business instead of the needs of local communities, their practices can result in a substantial democratic deficit.

### Valeria Skafida

Valeria Skafida recently graduated with an honours degree from the University of Edinburgh after studying Social Policy and Social Anthropology. During her final year, she completed a 10 week research project exploring the work of Parc Craigmillar, which is an Urban Regeneration Company taking forward the physical regeneration of the Craigmillar community; her input focused upon this project.

Valeria spoke initially about the *Craigmillar Urban Design Framework* (hereafter referred to as CUDF), which is the title of the master-plan that Parc intend to use to regenerate Craigmillar. Valeria explained that the CUDF is informed by a number of related documents, including Parc's business plan and the *Craigmillar Interim Planning Framework*, which was produced by the City of Edinburgh Council in 2003. She went on to explain that the framework must also accord with the provisions laid out in the *South East Edinburgh Local Plan (2005)* and the *Edinburgh and Lothians Structure Plan 2015 (2005)*, both of which have been produced by the City of Edinburgh Council.

Valeria explained that though the CUDF had 10 different chapters focussing upon different aspects of regeneration, the most substantial elements related mainly to housing design. She informed seminar participants that Parc plan to build 3200 new homes over a fifteen year period and that 86% of these will be released for private sale at a starting price of around £90,000.

Valeria referred to the 2001 census, which shows that only 52% of Craigmillar's eligible work force is economically active. Drawing upon research compiled by Craigmillar Partnership she demonstrated that the average salary for an employed person living within Craigmillar is around £14,000, but that 64% of all households living in Craigmillar have a total equivalised household income of around £10,008. Drawing on these figures, Valeria concluded that it is highly unlikely that local residents will be able to afford even the cheapest property built by Parc.

Staying on the subject of housing, Valeria explained that 1066 existing public sector housing units will be demolished over a fifteen year period and that Parc intend to replace only 536 of these; she advised that these proposals are not in keeping with the provisions laid out in the Craigmillar Interim Planning framework which states that developments on Greenfield sites must provide 20% 'affordable' housing. Parc's plans contain only 14%. Valeria referred to a range of literature produced by the City Council which demonstrates that there is significant overcrowding within many homes in Craigmillar, she suggested that Parc's proposals are unlikely to alleviate the problems these families face.

Valeria then referred to Parc's business plan, which shows that the construction of private housing will be prioritised over the construction of public sector housing. Drawing upon the business plan, she explained that after 3 years of construction, Parc will have built around 300 homes for private sale and only 60 for public rent – she informed the seminar that some tenants may face the possibility of having to wait twelve years before they can return to Craigmillar.

Valeria concluded this section by pointing out that Parc propose to build 80 homes to each hectare of land. She advised that this contradicts advice published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, which, following research undertaken by the Urban Task Force, advised that housing densities in new build developments should not exceed 50 dwellings per hectare. Valeria reminded people that Craigmillar has a long history of failed high density housing schemes, which have contributed to a range of complex social problems.

Valeria moved onto take up Greg Lloyd's point about the potential democratic deficits that can result through the practices of URC's. She explained to the seminar a range of problems that the Craigmillar community has experienced over the years. She informed participants that though Parc has appointed two community representatives to their board of Directors, none of these have any voting rights. She also explained that the agenda of each board meeting is constructed by a small executive where there is no community representation.

Valeria concluded her input by informing the seminar audience that Parc's board of Directors comprises three senior Labour Councillor's and two senior Council Officers. She advised that two of the Councillor's sitting on the board also serve on the City Council's Planning Committee and that there were genuine concerns amongst Craigmillar residents about the amount of influence that these individuals may exert on the Committee.

### **Participants' contributions**

The seminar involved plenary and workshop discussion; the points raised can be reduced to two general areas of critique. The first relates to the general operation of URC's and the second relates specifically to the work that Parc are undertaking in Craigmillar. Both of these areas are explored below –

#### Urban Regeneration Companies

1. The Scottish Executive should develop a national standards charter which Urban Regeneration Companies have to adhere to
2. Such legislation should ensure that Urban Regeneration Companies construct their design frameworks around the social and economic needs and priorities of existing communities.
3. Legislation should also be developed to ensure that consultation work is rigorous and meaningful in order to ensure trust between different parties.

#### Parc

1. Parc should increase the number of homes for rent within their plans and these should also be prioritised within the construction timetable.
2. The housing being built for private sale should be sold at prices affordable to local tenants and residents.
3. Parc have consistently failed to take the views of local groups seriously; they would do well to start from scratch and to consider the democratic view of the wider community.

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