

Response ID ANON-WPFF-8JTS-V

Submitted to Community wealth building consultation
Submitted on 2023-05-09 16:10:30

General advancement of the Community Wealth Building approach

Q1. a) We are proposing a duty to advance Community Wealth Building, which form do you think this duty should take:

Option C

Please provide a reason for your answer:

We support the general principle of community wealth building (CWB), particularly if it is genuinely supportive of community empowerment and focused on tackling inequality and we say more about this in our responses to the questions below.

We have selected option C (a combination of A and B) as we believe that while option B is the best approach for coordinating CWB at a local level, it is also important that national policy takes the same approach, which can best be done through a wider duty such as in option A.

Which bodies should be covered by the proposals?

We believe that all current community planning partners, as listed in part 2 of the 2015 Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act, should be included. All public bodies should be included in the wider duty.

Our reason for including all public bodies is that all public bodies are important to the local economy and communities they are based in. This goes beyond planning and decision-making at a strategic level. Public bodies are important local employers, and also have an impact in terms of who they choose to procure services from, whether that is in terms of who they commission to help deliver their core service remit or who provides catering, cleaning, IT and other services.

How to best ensure accountability for implementation to the Scottish Parliament

We support the proposal contained within the Scottish Community Alliance's response that a Community Wealth Building Commission be established, similar to the Scottish Land Commission, to ensure that that community wealth building remains firmly on the Scottish public policy agenda.

It is worth noting that where accountability is not ensured through, for example, strict enforcement of reporting or an appeals process, legislation to promote community empowerment and address inequality has been less successful. This includes parts 2 and 3 of the Community Empowerment Act (Community Planning and Participation requests respectively). We know, from our extensive and ongoing work and engagement with community organisations and other stakeholders (including a recent survey on participation requests reaching more than 200 respondents), that awareness, use and faith in these parts of the Act to deliver on their ambitions is low.

How to best ensure the involvement of local communities, business and the third sector in the implementation of the duty

We believe it is particularly important to ensure the involvement of community organisations, which we also see as crucial to ensuring the involvement of local communities, given their reach into, understanding of, and trusted role in disadvantaged and marginalised communities.

Community organisations, from development trusts and community food organisations to equality groups, have a key role to play in terms of awareness-raising and also representing the voice of communities in implementing the duty. The reach, understanding and trust they have in their communities enables them to respond to local needs and priorities. They are best placed to know what interventions are required now, and in the future, and have a first-hand understanding of how different policies and decisions will affect the people they work with.

The starting point for engaging with community organisations is to reach them through the various voluntary and community sector network organisations that community organisations are part of. These include local organisations such as Third Sector Interfaces as well as local thematic groups – for instance, community food growing, equality, social enterprise and community-led health networks. National voluntary umbrella organisations and networks are also important in terms of reaching local groups. Useful organisations at a national level include members of the Scottish Community Alliance and it is vitally important to include national equality networks.

Local community development teams, such as those based in local authorities have a key role here too, particularly in identifying and supporting groups in disadvantaged and marginalised communities to be involved. Community organisation is fragile in disadvantaged communities where there are fewer resources. People living in these communities are likely to face greater barriers to engagement, and will find concepts such as community wealth building hard to relate to. Resources should be directed towards supporting participation of these groups, working in collaboration with partners from the public, voluntary and community sector.

The National Standards for Community Engagement should be adhered to throughout, which are recognised within a range of wider legislation, by Scottish Government and a range of public bodies, as good-practice principles designed to improve and guide the process of community engagement. They are a way to ensure that engagement is early, collaborative, meaningful and includes all groups likely to be affected.

Furthermore, the Scottish Government should re-commit to reviewing part 2 of the Act on community planning, so that community planning partnerships become more effective at addressing inequality in partnership and involving community organisations in community planning. Finally, by strengthening part 3 of the Act on participation requests, communities will be able to have a stronger voice in shaping economic decisions and other planning and

services.

Q1. b) One way Scottish Government could support the implementation of the proposed Community Wealth Building duty is to provide statutory or non-statutory guidance. Would this be helpful to partners in meeting the proposed duty?

Yes

Please provide a reason for your answer.:

If written clearly and accessibly, guidance can help duty-bearing public sector partners to understand their responsibilities and people in communities to know what to expect and what opportunities are, or should be, available to be involved.

Our view is that the guidance should be statutory given the need to ensure the legislation is taken seriously and public bodies are held accountable.

Areas in which it would be helpful for this guidance to focus on:

Community-led wealth building

For community wealth building to have the desired impact in terms of local sustainability and social wellbeing, it needs to be bottom-up, or community-led. On the one hand, this means that people in communities, including community organisations that work with them, need to be meaningfully involved in how community wealth building is planned for, and implemented, at a local level. The guidance therefore needs to strongly emphasise the role of communities in shaping community wealth building. The following tools, resources and approaches need to be referred to and linked to:

- Links to wider legislative requirements for community engagement, participation and capacity building, such as the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act, local place plans, community justice outcome improvement plans, children's services plans, the integration of health and social care and community learning and development plans.
- The National Standards for Community Engagement
- PB Scotland, and the PB Charter
- Resources for deliberative democracy, including citizens panels
- Tools and resources for supporting communities to organise and have influence (including SCDC resources such as Building Stronger Communities)
- SCDC's participation request resource pack, which supports communities to initiate dialogue with public bodies in a co-productive manner.
- The Scottish Co-production Network
- Tools for communities to identify their own priorities and actions to achieve these such as community-led action plans.
- Information and resources on the community-led solutions identified in our response to q3 below.

Inequality

Related to the need for the guidance to be community-led is the need for the guidance to have a focus on inequality (including those arising from socio-economic inequality and those faced by groups with protected characteristics).

Many of the same resources listed above in relation to community-led approaches are also relevant to addressing inequality. In addition, the guidance should strongly link to the Fairer Scotland Duty as well as equality and human rights legislation. The Fairer Scotland Duty, in particular, is an under-utilized piece of legislation. If this duty is properly enforced and public bodies are given better guidance and support on how to use it, we believe it has the potential to further community wealth building by helping to address inequality.

Q2. a) Are there other non-legislative measures that you believe are required to accelerate the implementation of the Community Wealth Building approach in Scotland?

Yes

Please provide a reason for your answer.:

The two key areas we would like to see more focus on are 1) policy measures to address inequality and to redistribute resources and 2) capacity building.

Tackling inequality

Inequality, including health inequality, is now increasing again, a trend which Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis have exacerbated but which is routed in government policy – mainly the UK Government's 'austerity' policy but also missed opportunities to use new tax raising powers in Scotland. In this environment, public service reform, democratic renewal and community empowerment risk contributing to rising inequality, with stretched resources being diverted towards high-capacity, affluent and active communities. There is also an understandable concern that such policy is being used as a justification for cutting back further on public services, particularly where these are needed most.

Therefore, big political decisions about redistribution are required, with significant resources being invested in the infrastructure to make policies such as community wealth building 'transformational'.

Funding for capacity building

In line with our responses to the questions above, the key ingredient that is missing from public service reform and community empowerment in Scotland is support or capacity building, both for communities and staff with public bodies.

SCDC works at the interface between communities and public bodies and provides a level of much-needed support for fields and approaches ranging from community engagement to community-led action planning. Across all our work over the past 10-15 years we have heard time and time again that the enabling legislation is heading in the right direction for community empowerment but that, at the time when it is needed most, the workforce in terms of community development practitioners (whether in the public, voluntary or independent sectors) has been thinned out to such an extent that it is impossible to provide effective support for disadvantaged and marginalised communities to benefit from the legislation.

Therefore, we would like to see actions aimed at increasing capacity building and support for disadvantaged and marginalised communities to be in a position to benefit from these ambitions. If more resources were made available for this, then it is not hard to envisage legislation requiring public bodies, in collaboration with voluntary and community sector partners, to work with communities to help them be in a position to develop their own community-led wealth building activity.

Q2. b) Are there specific actions required to advance delivery of the items contained within the Shared Policy Programme outlined on page 11?

Yes

Please provide a reason for your answer::

As above, we believe community capacity building and public sector capacity building is key to delivering in these areas. Without this, there is a risk that the first two items will only benefit high-capacity communities which tend to be more affluent.

Aside from this important point, legislation should require public bodies to do the things contained in these items unless they can show there is strong reason not to. Taking the example of food, where larger private sector providers are the only viable option, they should be commissioned on the condition that they themselves source food locally and sustainably. Community benefit requirements should include this requirement.

We agree with the Scottish Community Alliance's call for greater decentralisation of decision making which is contained within their response to this consultation. The Local Governance Review is an opportunity to fundamentally reshape how local democracy works, shifting power to communities. We believe the scope of the review will include whether to devolve decisions about investment, procurement, public services, tax and spend to a local level while increasing community influence and involvement in these decisions – all of which is at the heart of community wealth building.

Without this, it is hard to see how large public bodies and public services, working at scale, can change their practices sufficiently enough to make community wealth building work, including in the area of procurement.

Spending pillar

Q3. Are there ways in which the law could be changed to advance the spending pillar of Community Wealth Building?

Yes

Please provide a reason for your answer. :

The recommendations we made in our response to q2b above also apply here, particularly in relation to the need for capacity building and greater decentralisation of decision-making.

The consultation sets out the existing procurement duties. We would argue that these would not be a strict enough requirement to lead to genuine community wealth building. Being required to consider the social and environmental wellbeing of public procurement simply enables public bodies to pay reference to these outcomes without taking proper actions to improve them. This is all the more so when economic considerations are placed alongside environmental and social considerations as if they have equal value. Economic growth, even when talking about wealth at a local level, is not an outcome in itself – at the most, it is a means for achieving greater wellbeing.

This is why we believe that any procurement duties should require public bodies to procure solely on the basis of achieving greater social and environmental wellbeing and, on the other.

We agree with most of the individual suggestions for how to achieve the spending pillar, but we would like to see much greater emphasis on the role the community sector can play in contributing to a local, sustainable and ethical economy.

The community sector can contribute to the spending pillar in the following ways:

- Social enterprise – the model of social enterprise we advocate for is not-for-profit and community-led. SCDC/CHEX, along with Social Enterprise Scotland and Scottish Communities for Health and Wellbeing, has been supporting an innovative model of distributing small grants to community organisations to buy in activities provided by social enterprises which promote mental health. <https://communitywellbeingexchange.scot/>. (A case study of this has been provided in Scottish Community Alliance's response to this consultation)

• Social prescribing, particularly if resources are invested in the community organisations which provide 'prescribed' services. We are also interested in models of social prescribing in which community and voluntary organisations have a pivotal role in supporting individuals from the start, such as in the SPRING model <https://www.springsp.org/>.

• Community shares and co-operatives.

• Community food growing – links should be made with Part 8 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act on allotments and community growing - another under-utilised piece of legislation.

• Community cafes and catering

More generally, community organisations provide a whole range of services and improvements to facilities for the benefit of their communities.

A diverse range of examples include:

• Inspiralba's development and maintenance of children's playparks in Argyll and Bute
https://www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk/search/show/search_view.aspx?ID=MAR140173

• North Coast Connection, a community group which runs a community wellbeing hub from the Kyle Centre in Tongue, Sutherland. This was established through a service level agreement with NHS Highland as well as an asset transfer. In addition, transport to the Kyle Centre is provided by a local community transport group Transport for Tongue Ltd (T4T). <https://northcoastconnection.org.uk/NCC%20Website%20-%20About%20Us%20Page.html>

• Burnbank Community Hub in South Lanarkshire, which, like many community organisations currently, provides a warm space for community members struggling with the cost-of-living <https://www.communityscot.org.uk/news/a-vital-resource-burnbank-community-hub>

• Cycling Without Age Scotland's provision of accessible cycling in the Falkirk area, which has benefitted people with limited mobility across the region and wider <https://www.communityscot.org.uk/news/enriching-and-enhancing-lives-cycling-without-age-scotland>

Sometimes examples such as these are provided through service level agreements or on some other kind of contractual basis, but many are not, and community and voluntary organisations are left struggling to search for funding. Their role in helping to provide vital public services should be recognised properly and resourced appropriately. The voluntary and community sector should not be seen as a way of cutting costs – the issue of pay and conditions in this sector needs to be addressed as part of community wealth building.

Workforce pillar

Q4. Employment law is reserved to the UK Parliament. Are there other devolved areas where the law could be changed to advance the workforce pillar of Community Wealth Building?

Yes

Please provide a reason for your answer. :

Community wealth building legislation is an opportunity to give proper recognition and improved protection to the huge workforce employed in the voluntary and community sector in Scotland as well as the huge numbers of unpaid volunteers in this sector who make a vital contribution to Scotland's wellbeing. In terms of direct employment, the voluntary and community sector in Scotland employs over 100,000 paid staff. The sector also makes a valuable contribution in terms of training and employment support, with many voluntary and community organisations helping people back into further education, training and employment.

Similarly, volunteering provides people with transferable skills and makes a direct contribution into a wellbeing economy. Here, it is important to distinguish between volunteering for good causes and the more community-embedded form of volunteering (as with community organisations) where people collectively organise in their community on a long-term basis. Both are of great value and there can be overlap, but there are different strengths and challenges. For instance, community organisations are particularly strong when it comes to building confidence, skills and influence of their communities – key components of community wealth building. However, they are already under huge pressure in terms of dealing with the enduring impact of Covid-19, and the rising cost-of-living which is exacerbating existing poverty and inequality.

Volunteers working for community organisations are continually reporting that they are facing 'burn-out' due to these challenges, as well as finding it increasingly difficult to sustain their organisations. Policies such as community wealth building must acknowledge the unsustainability of this situation and put in place funding and legislative mechanisms which invest in, support and protect people volunteering in this sector.

Whilst we do not have expertise in employment and procurement law, we would see the spending and workforce pillars as connected in that, as far as is possible, changes to procurement legislation should require that public bodies ensure the organisations they commission/fund (or otherwise) to deliver services have employment/volunteering practices, pay and conditions that both meet the ambitions of this pillar and are commensurate with their own policies.

Land and property pillar

Q5. Are there ways in which the law could be changed which are not already covered in the proposals for the Land Reform Bill to advance the land and property pillar of Community Wealth Building?

Yes

Please provide a reason for your answer. :

A key focus of SCDC's work with community groups across Scotland addressing inequality. Some community organisations face more barriers to achieving their aims than others. These could be groups that are based in areas with higher levels of poverty, or remote rural areas, or groups that represent communities who are more likely to experience discrimination

The use, management or ownership of land and buildings is often identified as a key means to achieving better outcomes around inequality and poverty. Crucially, it is mostly the control of small pieces of land or buildings that make the difference to whether such communities achieve their aims. Our view is therefore that the legislation should aim to help, rather than hinder, disadvantaged communities to have more control over local land and buildings, whatever their scale. This applies as much to urban communities as it does to rural communities and we would like to see legislation continue to reflect this, building on more recent land-reform policy.

Once again, proper investment in community capacity building is key to advancing the land and property pillar in a manner that provides opportunities for all communities. Much of the existing support and advice which is referred to in the consultation document is focused on supporting groups who are already in a position to acquire and manage land and buildings. Of course this is needed, but it needs to be accompanied by the same type of community (as well as staff) capacity building that we have outlined in our responses to the above questions.

Inclusive ownership pillar

Q6. Are there ways in which the law could be changed to advance the inclusive ownership pillar of Community Wealth Building?

Yes

Please provide a reason for your answer:

We support any efforts to grow social enterprise, cooperative models and community-ownership. Furthermore, we agree with the policy recommendations put forward by the Scottish Community Alliance in response to this consultation, namely:

- Full implementation of the SCDI Business Purpose report recommendations, to ensure that all business record, measure and improve their social and environmental impacts and prioritise the needs of local communities and local economies.
- Incentivisation of small/family businesses to adopt social enterprise models.
- Development of ALEOs as local, employee-owned cooperatives and social enterprises
- That the Scottish Government make good on its commitments to further urban land reform.
- Greater cross-eligibility of asset transfer and land reform.
- Simplification of community right-to-buy.
- Strengthening of asset transfer legislation and extending the asset-transfer model to collective ownership models.
- Reform of subsidies and tax exemptions, improved regulation of large-scale landownership and a redistributive community wealth fund.

We would add that for these measures to be genuinely inclusive, they must be accompanied by proper support and capacity building targeted at disadvantaged and marginalised communities.

Finance pillar

Q7. Are there ways in which the law could be changed to advance the finance pillar of Community Wealth Building?

Yes

Please provide a reason for your answer. :

It is worth restating, in relation to this pillar, the 2 points we have tried to emphasise already – redistributing resources to address inequality and capacity building. We believe these to be key to the finance pillar and would recommend the following policies as a means of achieving progress in these areas:

Redistributing resources to address inequality

- The Scottish Government should put in place a concerted national drive/campaign to eradicate inequality, with an accompanying high level promotional campaign.
- The implementation of a national living wage
- Progressive individual and corporate taxation (wherever possible given many tax powers are reserved).
- Stronger legislation, or enforcement of existing legislation (such as the Fairer Scotland Duty) to make strategic planning focus on eradicating inequality.

Capacity building

- Increased funding aimed directly at growing capacity of communities and public sector so that more communities can be supported to participate in community wealth building. Funding for community and voluntary organisations should be for at least 3 years.
- Within legislation, more emphasis should be placed on capacity building of public sector bodies to understand and support community-led approaches, participation and co-production. This includes pre-existing legislation such as the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act as well as new community wealth building legislation.
- Ensuring that the application criteria for all Scottish Government funding criteria for community wealth building projects includes a requirement for projects to be designed and delivered in partnership with local communities, including community and voluntary sector organisations, and also to have a clear focus on eradicating inequality.

Other policy measures

- As Scottish Community Alliance have set out in their response, measures to devolve powers and budgets to a local level are required, including community-led local development funding building on LEADER, developing the Local Action Group Model, a Community Wealth Fund, changing the focus of the Scottish National Investment Bank towards generating community wealth and exploring opportunities for a tourist tax and from community benefit payments.
- Using stage two of the Local Governance Review to strengthen the power and influence of the community and third sector within local democracy.

About you

What is your name?

Name:
Andrew Paterson

What is your email address?

Email:
andrew@scdc.org.uk

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

What is your organisation?

Organisation:
Scottish Community Development Centre

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

Publish response with name

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

I confirm that I have read the privacy policy and consent to the data I provide being used as set out in the policy.

I consent

Evaluation

Please help us improve our consultations by answering the questions below. (Responses to the evaluation will not be published.)

Matrix 1 - How satisfied were you with this consultation?:
Slightly satisfied

Please enter comments here.:

Matrix 1 - How would you rate your satisfaction with using this platform (Citizen Space) to respond to this consultation?:
Slightly satisfied

Please enter comments here.: