



# Supporting Communities Programme

**Supporting place-based approaches  
in Moray**

**Final report – 31/9/21**

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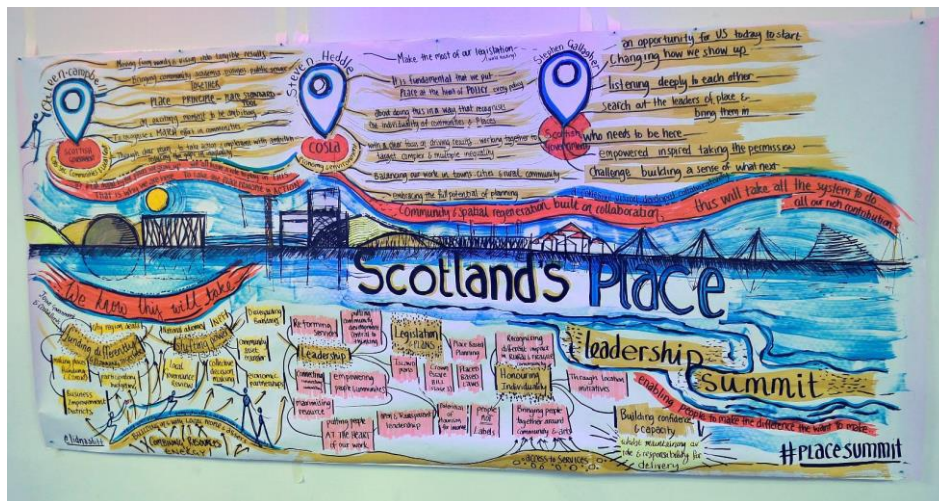
## Section 1 Background

Scottish Community Development Centre, as part of its Supporting Communities Programme has been working to support the implementation of place-based approaches in community-led regeneration.

The term ‘place-based’ ... is currently used to describe a range of approaches, from “**grant-making in a specific area to long-term, multi-faceted, collaborative partnerships aimed at achieving significant change**” ... (Lankelly Chase)

In 2015 the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act came into force. Part 2 of the Act placed a great deal of emphasis on supporting and developing community involvement in Community Planning. The Guidance for this Part of the Act provided a lot of detail on how this should be achieved and how Community Planning Partnerships should work towards increased community involvement. This provides an important legislative context for the development of the Locality Planning pilots in Moray over the past 3 years.

Also, over the past 3-4 years Scottish Government has developed the ‘Place Principle’ which emphasises the need for a more **collaborative** and **participative** approach to how services, assets and resources are directed and used in places (as defined by the people who live there). The application of the ‘Place Principle’ in Moray is explored in more detail later in this report.



After initial exploratory discussion SCDC agreed to progress with Moray as one of the ‘place-based’ sites in the Supporting Communities programme.

The work in Moray has focused on supporting the locality plan pilots as follows:

- Buckie Central East Locality Plan Pilot
- New Elgin East Locality Plan Pilot

## Section 2 Programme and Outcomes and Outputs

### Programme Outcomes

The specific planned outcomes from the Supporting Communities support were as follows:

- Participants and partners have a shared understanding of the community engagement process in developing the locality plan pilots and have learned about enablers and barriers to this process.
- There is improved/enhanced community capacity in both pilot areas.
- There is increased capacity across community planning partners to implement the locality plans, and roll-out locality planning across Moray.
- There is common agreement and commitment from community planning partners on how best to use the experience to progress locality plans at the end of the pilots.

### Programme Outputs

In order to achieve the above outcomes SCDC delivered a programme of work which included the following key elements:

**Action learning** with each of the locality 'teams' (workers and community representatives) to enable them to:

- Reflect on community engagement so far, learn from experience and share practice.
- Identify (and take) practical actions to further develop community participation in the locality planning process.
- Reflect on these actions, share learning and develop further actions through a co-inquiry process.

#### **Capacity Development:**

Support has been provided for the officers and community reps involved in the locality plan development. This has included support around community action planning, community engagement and community capacity building.

#### **Strategic Development:**

Inputs on the national programme and local programme development have been provided to the LOIP Oversight Group and CPOG.

#### **Other Support:**

In addition, SCDC has provided some info/comms support, and has enabled programme participants to take part in shared learning opportunities both online and with other Supporting Communities sites across the country.

## Section 2 Review of the Locality Planning Pilots

This review has been conducted primarily through review sessions held with both of the Locality Planning groups in Buckie and New Elgin which were held in the summer of 2021. The feedback in this section covers the views of participants in the process from both areas and the points made apply to both areas unless specified. The review builds on the findings of the earlier interim review carried out with the locality teams in early 2019.

### Development and Implementation of the pilots

This section looks at the process of putting the plans together and then how the plans have been implemented since that stage. An important part of the context for this has been the Covid-19 pandemic which hit just as the implementation of the plans was beginning to gain momentum. This is referenced and acknowledged throughout.

#### Putting the Plans Together

The experience of developing the plans was viewed as being positive overall. Participants felt included throughout the early stages although 1 or 2 of the community members did feel slightly out of their depth at the start. This was addressed effectively by the support workers as it was recognised that for the process to work well, all participants needed to be involved on an equal basis.

“... made sure people were treated equally and made to feel welcome whether they were local residents, workers or councillors” (New Elgin local resident)

There was some concern in Buckie about the drop off in numbers after the early stages in the process and the community members felt that they might be left to get on with things on their own. However, this hasn't happened, and the community members have continued to receive strong support throughout.

The content of the plans was heavily informed by residents' views and there was strong involvement from the partners and other community groups in the early stages. There was a lot of positivity about the process and a sense of excitement about what could be achieved although there were some reservations about the quite tight timescales for production of the plans.

## Putting the Plans into Action

The early excitement and enthusiasm has been somewhat overtaken by events. The major factor has been the Covid 19 pandemic which has had a real impact on the local groups ability to take forward a lot of what was outlined in the plans.

In Buckie the involvement of community members and officers has tended to diverge across the different theme groups. The community members have been more involved in the 'community voices' theme group and feel that they have made some progress but they're less involved in the other theme groups and there has been less officer involvement in the 'community voices' theme. There is a feeling that both the community members and officers are in their own comfort zone and are not collaborating so well across the locality as a whole. The community members are also still unclear about the overall Community Planning structures and how they relate to them.

In New Elgin, resident involvement has dwindled due largely to the impact of Covid 19 with people being less willing to engage online. This is partly due to access to IT/skills to work online but also how this compares to their previous positive experience of direct face-to-face engagement.

There is a real sense in both areas of the need for a re-launch or re-energising of the locality planning process and to get some momentum going again post-Covid. There is also a concern that a lot of what was promised in the plans hasn't happened due to the pandemic and the breakdown in direct engagement in each of the localities. There has been a strengthening of community bonds during the pandemic and it is important that this isn't lost as we start to re-engage with the local communities. The flip side of this is that some people have retreated back into their homes and there is a tension at the moment between re-starting engagement but doing this safely and re-building trust between communities and the partner agencies.

## The Place Principle and its application in Moray Locality Planning

In this section the key elements of the 'Place Principle' are outlined along with an assessment of the position in the Moray locality planning pilots.

- **Place Principle Element - There is a shared understanding and agreement of the boundaries of the 'place' and how these are defined. There must be an agreed common bond and boundaries must make sense to the collaboration.**

The application of this element of the Place Principle in Moray Locality Planning has been problematic. Neither of the 2 areas selected for the locality planning pilots made much sense as community areas. The difficulty is largely down to statistics - the areas are based

on 'intermediate data zones' which are decided centrally in Government to allow areas to be comparable – but they don't tend to correspond to natural communities. Some of the statistics have also changed during the period of the pilots. The lack of identification with the selected areas has caused some difficulty in achieving community buy-in and supporting community engagement in the process. In reality, both groups have tended to work with the more natural community boundaries that residents identify with – Buckie and New Elgin.

- **Place Principle Element - There is desire for change in the collaboration and some urgency or energy to make this change happen.**

The application of this element of the Place Principle has been mixed across the 2 areas and within the overall CPP structures. There was a clear initial drive for change coming from the CPP arising from the requirements of the Community Empowerment Act. However, there is still a lack of understanding and poor communication from strategic level downwards about the Locality Plans and how these relate to the overall Community Planning processes. There is a clear desire for change evident amongst the community members who are involved in the process. This has been particularly evident through the pandemic and as we start to look at 'building back better'. However, this may be based on some unrealistic expectations and timescales of what is and isn't achievable in the localities, particularly in the light of the impact of Covid-19 on the implementation of the plans. It also is not widespread across all partners or at all levels within the partnership. In Buckie particularly it has been highlighted that the desire for change amongst some partners may be focused on their own topic or area of interest rather than on the locality as a whole – there is a need to work on developing a better shared understanding of what Locality Planning is meant to achieve.

- **Place Principle Element - There are multiple partners in the collaboration – e.g. community, 3<sup>rd</sup> sector, public sector, private sector – involved on an 'equal' and shared basis in terms of power/influence, vision, understanding.**

There are clearly multiple partners in the collaboration in both localities. The key missing partner does appear to be the private sector which was identified in the early stages of the locality planning process. The development of collaboration on an equal and shared basis is progressing reasonably well and there is a strong commitment from the local practitioners and identification with their locality. There is more of a concern that some partners are reducing their involvement and not supporting their local practitioners as fully as was the case earlier in the process.

- **Place Principle Element - Effective collective decision-making takes place in the collaboration – this is based on trust, openness and mature relationships between partners.**

The application of this element of the Place Principle varies across different levels of Community Planning. It is clear from the locality groups that they feel that there is strong collective decision-making in the parts of the process that they are involved in. There seems to be a genuine 'community-first' spirit amongst all of the participants in the locality groups. However, there is some concern that this doesn't apply at other levels within the CPP – there appears to be a lack of communication about how decisions are made and how monitoring reports are received, dealt with or acted on.

**Place Principle Element - There is a collective strategy for change with agreed outcomes, goals and measures.**

Although this is generally the case in the localities there are some concerns. In Buckie, where the plan implementation has been split across theme groups, there is a desire amongst the community members to bring the whole locality group together, or at least for the theme group chairs to meet more regularly. This is aimed at developing a better shared understanding of the collaboration and decision-making processes. The participants were also unsure if there is a clear strategy across all the partners. Again, there is an issue with communication between the CPP Board/Strategic level and the Locality Groups.

**Place Principle Element - Resources are in place or are being sought to support the collaboration over time (at least 2-3 years with a vision for longer-term change)**

In Moray, resources had originally been put in place to support the collaboration through to completed production of the locality plans. It was also recognised that successful implementation of the plans would require on-going support for the community representatives to continue to be actively involved. The participants in the localities strongly reinforced the value of this support from the local CSU and Health Improvement officers. This has been a hard task, particularly during the pandemic, and has highlighted the need for skilled community workers to facilitate this process. There was some concern about how the locality planning process would continue to be supported in the future. There were some suggestions that for example, a dedicated development officer, for each locality or covering a couple of localities would help to take things forward, take the onus off volunteers and help to access wider funding to support implementation of the plans.

Resources for implementation of the actions proposed in the plans are tight due to the continuing restrictions on public budgets and the impact of the pandemic. This makes large-scale service change unlikely. All participants recognise this but would be keen to look at other funding routes and models e.g. the establishment of local community development trusts or similar structures which could access a wider range of funding to help support plan delivery.



There had originally been plans to roll out the locality planning model to other areas in Moray. While this is understood to not be going ahead there is still consideration being given to supporting other community-led local planning processes. If this is going to go ahead it is important to ensure that learning from the pilots is gathered and fed into the planning process in other localities.

## Section 4 Learning from the Programme and Recommendations

There are some important themes which have emerged across both areas as follows:

1. The continuity of involvement of the participants (officers and community members) in the process is important. This drives ownership at a community level and so buy-in and on-going resourcing from Community Planning partners is needed.

**Recommendation – the CPP should ensure that all participants (including partner organisations, their officers and community members) have a clear idea of expected commitment from the outset. This should be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure consistency of approach as plan implementation progresses.**

2. There is a need for better shared understanding amongst all partners about the purpose of community planning and locality planning and their roles within it.

**Recommendation – the CPP should raise awareness amongst all partners from the outset around the following key elements:**

- **The overall purpose of Community Planning and the structure of the CPP**
- **The purpose of Locality Planning and the roles of those involved in Locality Planning processes**

**Ideally this should be done on an annual basis to allow for new participants becoming involved.**

3. There is a need for consistent and clear communication with all participants and at a range of levels. This has been identified as a significant area of concern by the participants in the locality groups. There is a particular need to ensure that there is a strong connection between what is happening at the locality level and decision-making at management/ strategic level within the CPP (and the individual partner agencies).

**Recommendations –**

- **The CPP should make all participants aware of their decision-making structures and processes and how the Locality Plans will feed into this.**
- **Feedback on monitoring reports should be given on a regular basis with a clear description of how these contribute to overall CPP decision-making.**
- **More opportunities should be provided for Locality Planning participants to engage directly with the CPP Board.**

4. There needs to be sufficient time and resources to support inclusion and to conduct robust engagement. It is important to note that robust engagement processes cannot be rushed and are highly dependent on relationship building. It is vital that community capacity building support aims to develop local ownership of the implementation of the plans as well as their creation. This is a discrete element of the support and should be recognised as such in the planning and review activities, as well as in any wider development of community-led action planning in Moray.

**Recommendation – on-going skilled community development support is vital for the effective implementation of the Locality Plans. The CPP and their constituent partners should ensure that this is available through their own resources or should seek to establish new structures which could provide this such as local Community Development Trusts or other local community anchor organisations.**

## Section 5 Summary and Conclusion

There are clear areas of progress in the development of Locality Planning in Moray. The breadth (and depth) of community engagement in the early stages of the plan development has been particularly noteworthy. The attention to inclusion, and the flexibility of approach employed by the locality teams led to genuine community engagement and in some cases the involvement of people who have not previously been involved in community activity. This has been sustained during the difficult circumstances of Covid 19 which has been testament to the commitment of the local participants and the support they have received from the CSU and other staff>

There are still challenges, however, particularly in looking at how the locality planning context connects to and informs both the strategic planning processes of the Moray CPP and the operational planning of the main Community Planning partners.

There are also key challenges in the next stage of the process in continuing to develop the capacity of community members to continue and deepen their involvement, and to ensure that this is sustained over a longer period of time>

Covid-19 has presented particular challenges for the Locality Groups and for Community Planning as a whole. However, it was clear from the review sessions with participants that there is still an appetite and an energy for change. There is an opportunity, as we emerge from the pandemic and the associated restrictions, to re-energise and re-launch the locality planning processes to create a bigger impact for the communities of New Elgin and Buckie.

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