

## Response to the Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy

Consultation Response 2013

The Carnegie United Kingdom (UK) Trust welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy.

The Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work. The Carnegie UK Trust was established by Scots-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1913.

We have chosen only to respond where we have experience and relevant evidence. Further information on our work is available on our website [www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk](http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk).

**1. LOCAL DECISION MAKING: Do you think that decisions about local issues and services are made locally enough in Scotland at the moment? If not, what does deciding 'locally' mean to you? Please illustrate your answer with any examples from your own experience.**

The 2007 Concordat between local and national government allowed for greater flexibility in how agreed outcomes should be achieved at the local authority level. The Carnegie UK Trust believes, however that there is now opportunity to go further and to give individuals and communities more direct control over local decisions and services.

In our [Enabling State](#) project led by Sir John Elvidge we have been exploring a paradigm

shift in the relationship between the state and communities and individuals in Scotland and the four other jurisdictions of the UK and Ireland.

We have seen common shifts in each jurisdiction from the traditional welfare state to a more Enabling State that gives communities and individuals more opportunity to take part in public service deliver and to use their own experiences and capacities to shape the services they receive. In our new report [The Rise of the Enabling State](#) we describe these common policy shifts in more detail and identify 7 key aspects:

- From new public management to public value
- From central to local states
- From representative to participatory democracy

- From silos to integration
- From crisis intervention to prevention
- From recipients to co-producers
- From state delivery to the third sector

Drawing on our Enabling State research we would like to see individuals and communities more able to take an active role in the planning, delivery and governance of public services. We believe there is opportunity to devolve greater powers down to the 'hyperlocal' level.

In particular we would like to see:

- More opportunities for citizens and communities to take part in **participatory democracy**: including participatory budgeting and more 'community led' community planning (see our answer to Question 3). In addition we would like to see more support at a national and local level for community councils and other local voluntary groups seeking to engage in local decision making - particularly in areas facing significant social, economic and environmental challenges where communities may not already have appropriate expertise or bridging capital.
- A greater emphasis on **transformational co-production**: the direct involvement of users in the production of their own services. Transformational co-production goes beyond user consultation. It taps into users' own strengths and experiences and puts service redesign, delivery and development in the control of service users. Contemporary examples of transformational co-production such as The Self Management Fund and Local Area Coordination can be found in the Trust's recent report [The Enabling State: From Rhetoric to Reality](#).
- More opportunities for community led organisations to take part in the local **social economy** including taking on ownership/

control of local land and/or assets; or challenging and taking over the running of local public services where the local community feels that they could do a better job. The forthcoming Community Empowerment Bill proposes a range of new community rights that will help encourage this. We are currently preparing our response to the most recent Community Empowerment Bill consultation however you can access our initial response to the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill [here](#).

## 2. LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY: How important do you think it is for locally elected people to be responsible for decisions about local issues and services? Do you have any examples of why this is the case?

Local people often best understand what kind of decisions need to be taken to improve wellbeing within local communities. For this reason the argument that locally elected people should be responsible for decisions about local issues and services is strong (although there are clearly some issues - such as those affecting communities of interest- where national coordination is useful).

Our concern however is that engagement with local politics is currently low. Voter turnout at the last local elections in Scotland in 2012 for example, was under 40 % compared to 52 % in 2007<sup>1</sup>.

In response to question 1 we outlined a range of actions that would give individuals and communities the opportunities to take more responsibility for local decision making. In our experience this is equally important in the pursuit of local accountability and it is our belief that an increase in opportunities to take part in participatory democracy, coproduction and the social economy could help address some of the

<sup>1</sup> SPICE, Local Government Elections 2012 <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB12-38.pdf>

fall off in engagement with local representative democracy and help ensure greater local accountability.

**3. LOCAL PRIORITIES: How well do you think that communities' local priorities are accounted for in the way that national and local government works at the moment? What is effective, and if there is room for improvement, how should things change?**

We believe that there is opportunity for communities' local priorities to be better heard at national and local government level and for locally set priorities to be more effectively delivered. In 2012, only one-fifth (21%) of adults in Scotland agreed that they can influence decisions affecting their local area and around a third (33%) said they would like to be more involved in the decisions their council makes<sup>2</sup>.

The recommendations that we laid out in response to question 1 would go some way to addressing this.

There is a particular opportunity to engage communities and civic society in national and local debates about our vision for social progress and what social, economic and environmental outcomes we should be pursuing to improve our collective wellbeing.

Why is this important?

**1. It is increasingly clear that GDP is an inadequate measure of social progress and therefore an inadequate priority for governments.** In advanced democracies like Scotland an increase in GDP does not bring about a linear increase in the quality of people's lives. To make policies that really improve people's lives we need to ensure that

we are paying attention to a range of social, economic and environmental factors and we need to engage the public in a debate about what improves their quality of life. The National Performance Framework (NPF) and locally agreed Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) place social and environmental outcomes on a level footing with economic outcomes. If implemented more effectively they could provide a powerful framework for cross sectorial working and preventative investment and improved wellbeing.

**2. At the moment there is very little public debate about wellbeing in Scotland.** The general public – who are best placed to tell us what influences their own wellbeing -are however (with some notable exceptions) not currently formally involved in the development of the NPF or SOAs. This means that not only does the NPF and local SOAs lack a degree of public legitimacy but civic society is not making best use of these frameworks to call local or national government to account on their performance.

Recent international [research](#) on wellbeing carried out by the Trust highlighted that Scotland is poised to become a world leader amongst jurisdictions taking a wellbeing approach to public policy. But at the moment the link between the NPF, Scotland Performs, SOAs and policy development is not strong enough and we are failing to engage the public in national and local debates about wellbeing and in the development of the NPF and SOAs.

In our recent report [Shifting the Dial in Scotland](#) we outlined the steps that Scotland needs to take at both a national and local level to become a world leader. Our recommendations below describe how we can seize this opportunity and ensure that communities priorities are accounted for and effectively followed through into national and local policy:

<sup>2</sup> The Scottish Government, Scotland's People Annual Report: Results from 2012 Scottish Household Survey <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/08/6973/0>

- Embed Scotland Performs and the NPF in legislation:** Our international research highlighted the importance of ‘leadership’ in embedding wellbeing measures into the policy cycle. Putting the NPF and Scotland Performs on the statute books sends out a strong signal that increasing GDP should no longer be the sole priority of government and that rather a more holistic approach to policymaking should be taken. It also ensures that the NPF and Scotland Performs out lasts any one political administration. Finally, it allows the Scottish Parliament, civil society and the wider public to more readily call the Scottish Government to account on Scotland Performs and opens up new opportunities for civic debate on national wellbeing. The Community Empowerment Bill consultation contains proposals to embed Scotland Performs and the NPF in legislation. The Trust will indicate our support for these proposals in our response to the consultation.
  - Engage the public in a refresh of the NPF, Scotland Performs and SOAs:** Our international research showed that Scotland was alone amongst other jurisdictions pursuing a wellbeing approach in not having engaged the general public during the development of the Scotland Performs dashboard. There is an opportunity now to refresh the NPF, Scotland Performs and the SOAs/Community Planning process and to engage the public from an early stage. Particular attention should be paid to engaging groups that would not typically participate in consultation exercises. The opportunity should also be taken to improve communication with the public, politicians and the public sector about the wellbeing approach of the NPF and SOAs.
  - Support Community Planning Partnerships to see Single Outcome Agreements as a wellbeing approach:** While some Community Planning Partnerships engage the public on the development of Single Outcome Agreements few seem to see these as a wellbeing issue.
- Community Planning Partnerships (CPPS) need support and guidance to understand the links between local and national outcomes and to use SOAs as a tool to identify and achieve a local vision of wellbeing (see recommendations below).
- Set up a review of the impact of the NPF and SOAs on public policy development at a local and national level:** We believe that the NPF and SOAs are not currently being used to their full effect to inform public policy making at the national and local level. We think that there are opportunities to better use Scotland Performs (at the national level) and SOAs (at the local level) to identify gaps in policymaking and to contribute to public service reform priorities such as preventive policy making and joined up working. Putting the NPF and Scotland Performs on the statute book as the Community Empowerment Bill proposes is a crucial step forward however it is just as critical that the reporting is of practical use and that the outcomes approach of the NPF and Scotland Performs is implemented properly. We recommend that a short lived expert working group is established to identify how Scotland Performs, SOAs and other data can be best used to inform and evaluate effective public policymaking.
  - Capitalise on the interest from civil society organisations:** Scotland Performs and SOAs are the perfect starting point for a dialogue between the public sector and wider civil society about why some groups of society perform better than others or why locally and nationally we are doing well on some indicators but not so great on others. The aim would be to shed some light on some of these complex areas of policy. The Scottish Government and COSLA should seek to use the NPF, Scotland Performs and SOAs to open up these discussions by establishing an advisory group on measuring wellbeing.
  - Issue guidance on using the NPF and SOAs to holistically evaluate national and local**

**policies:** At the moment we know very little about what kind of impact that the NPF and SOAs have had on policy and vice versa. If we are to move toward more joined up policy and delivery and to preventative approaches it is vital that we move beyond silo based evaluations of policy and that we better understand the holistic impact of our policies.

#### 4. STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY: What do you think should be done to strengthen local democratic decision making in Scotland? Do you have any ideas or examples about how this could improve people's lives?

As outlined in response to questions 1 -3 we believe that providing opportunities for communities and individuals to take part in participatory democracy (and particularly in developing national and local outcomes), transformational coproduction and the social economy is a key component of strengthening local democracy.

Our report [The Enabling State: From Rhetoric to Reality](#) contains 12 contemporary examples of a more enabling approach to public services and offers a flavor of how more participatory approaches can improve people's lives. We have picked out the four Scottish case studies that feature in the report as examples below:

- **The Self Management Fund:** is a fund developed for and with, people living with long term conditions. The fund has allowed 81 local voluntary and community organisations to support over 132, 789 people living with long term conditions to learn more about their condition and improve the quality of their lives. This has reduced reliance on traditional services and increased peoples' ability to self manage. The Self Management Fund was a recommendation of 'Gaun Yersel' – a Self Management Strategy for Scotland that was itself co-produced directly with those living with long term conditions.

- **Inspiring Scotland and Link Up:** The Link Up programme is active in 10 communities facing social and economic challenges in Scotland. Link Up seeks to reconnect communities and build trust between fellow residents through shared activities. Residents are engaged in discussions about what is good in their local community and supported to take forward their own activities. Crucially Link Up workers are not working to a fixed agenda and their activities are entirely led by the local community's interests. They have the flex and autonomy to help the local community to rapidly put their ideas into action and a strong respect for community participants. Although early days 55 Link Up activities, led by 300 volunteers with over 5000 participants have so far taken place and individual stories of increased confidence and improved wellbeing are emerging as participants find work, reduce their alcohol intake and start eating better.
- **The Violence Reduction Unit and Hawkhill Community Centre:** The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) takes a preventative, public health based approach to violence reduction and in 2011 began working with NHS Clackmananshire and other strategic partners to deliver an asset based approach to health improvement and crime reduction in the small community of Hawkhill, Alloa. A full time community police officer seconded to the VRU works in the community as a 'community catalyst' building relationships with community members and helping them make the connections and access the resources they need to achieve the things that are important to them. This has included upgrading a local footpath, turning waste ground into a community garden and setting up a successful men's health group. All of these activities have been delivered by and for the community and specific support and contributions from external public, private and third sector partners has been negotiated by community members. Local people are

reporting feeling happier and healthier and police reports of anti-social behavior are down.

- **Laggan Forest Trust:** Are a community–led development trust in the small community of Laggan south of Inverness. The Trust formed following concerns that the local forest was to be sold off to private interests. 20 hectares of Strathmashie forest is now under community ownership and a pioneering forest management partnership with the Forestry Commission has been set up. The Trust’s aim is to manage the forest for the benefit of the local community, promote community interests and to halt the decline in the local population and bring new jobs to the local area. The Wolftrax mountain bike trail which is jointly managed with the Forestry Commission is now one of the leading tourist attractions in the local area, a range of educational and cultural activities now take place in the forest. There are plans to develop a range of forest based local enterprises.

support for less affluent communities and individuals is therefore crucial.

This might include:

- financial support
- access to skills, knowledge and training
- linking support – facilitating the building of relationships within communities and between communities and services and communities and influential people or organisations.

## 6. OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES: Do you have any concerns about strengthening local democratic decision making in Scotland?

The greatest challenge in strengthening local democratic decision making will ultimately be the unequal capacity of individuals and communities to engage in local decision making and to have a more direct role in the services that they use. There is a real risk that more affluent communities who may already be relatively well ‘heard’ gain the most from increased opportunities. We see this already in the pattern of community ownership in Scotland where Over 90% of community owned assets are located in the 80% least deprived neighbourhoods in Scotland and just 3% in the most deprived neighbourhoods<sup>3</sup>. Appropriate

<sup>3</sup> Wallace J, The Rise of the Enabling State, Carnegie UK Trust: Dunfermline 2013 <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2013/the-rise-of-the-enabling-state>

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