

Response to the Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework Consultation

Consultation for the Department of Social Development, Northern Ireland

The Carnegie United Kingdom (UK) Trust welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Urban Regeneration and Community Policy Framework. 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 to the questions where we have experience and relevant evidence. Further information on our work is available on our website www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. Do you agree that the four policy objectives in the Framework for urban regeneration and community development are the right ones?

In order to address the underlying structural problems in urban areas and to help strengthen community development throughout Northern Ireland, the four policy objectives to tackle area-based deprivation, to strengthen the competitiveness of our towns and cities, to improve linkages between areas of need and areas of opportunity, and to develop more cohesive and engaged communities, are crucial.

The Carnegie UK Trust particularly welcomes the policy objective to develop more cohesive and engaged communities. Over the past 100 years

we have been actively involved in community assets and empowerment, originally through grants for public libraries, playing fields and village halls, and more recently through support to the community land trust movement in Scotland and across the UK as a whole.

The Carnegie UK Trust has a long history of supporting effective community engagement. Our experience in a number of areas, including public libraries, improving local environments, broadband deployment, children and youth participation and rural development, suggests that there are a number of key components to effective engagement:

- the community as a whole must be aware of the opportunity to participate and actively encouraged to do so. Our experience across a range of policy areas is that sustainable

solutions to community problems are often community-led solutions.

- the community must be involved in defining what the problems and priorities for action are, as well as providing their views on options for delivering services. Our experience from our [Pride in Place: Tackling Environmental Incivilities](#) report (Carnegie UK Trust, 2012) shows clearly that local people may well have different priorities to those assumed by service providers.
- the organisation carrying out the engagement process must have the skills to engage effectively, and have a culture of valuing contributions from a range of stakeholders.
- the organisation carrying out the engagement must provide clear and publicly available information on their role and vision for the community.
- the organisation carrying out the engagement activity must report publicly on the outcome, including the difference that occurred due to community engagement.

In terms of measuring the impact of this activity, over time, we would expect successful community engagement to lead to increased numbers of people who say that they are involved in local decisions in subsequent Northern Ireland Life and Times Surveys.

The Carnegie UK Trust also welcomes the inclusion of the objective to strengthen the competitiveness of towns and cities across Northern Ireland. In many towns and cities, a healthy high street mixture of retail, leisure, civic and service uses is under significant threat. The retail crisis is being fuelled in large part by the departure of large and medium sized businesses from the high street environment.

Whilst food and drink, health services and other non-retail provision are moving into vacant retail units left behind by national shop chains, high streets are unlikely to be re-energised by these alone. They will also need to harness the spirit of innovation generated by younger entrepreneurs, capable of commercialising innovation that will tempt their contemporaries – the new, young consumers – back to town centres in the years ahead.

The Carnegie UK Trust's understanding of the economic environment suggests that there is a deficit in retail innovation on the high street but a surplus of innovation, energy and retail experience amongst younger people, many of whom are looking for real opportunities to experiment with small business ideas ([Enterprising Minds](#), Carnegie UK Trust, 2012).

3. Do you agree that the enabling objectives in the Framework are the right ones?

The Carnegie UK Trust welcomes the enabling objectives:

- to maximise the potential of urban regeneration and community development by establishing an evidence-based policy environment.
- to maximise the resources available for urban regeneration and community development by supporting an innovative financial environment.
- to develop skilled and knowledgeable practitioners in urban regeneration and community development.
- to promote an effective and efficient voluntary and community sector.

To promote an effective and efficient third sector, the Trust particularly welcomes the proposal within the consultation to investigate the potential for community asset management and ownership. Unused and underused public

assets can have a significant negative impact on communities, particularly where they are allowed to fall into disrepair. Our experience from our [Pride in Place: Tackling Environmental Incivilities](#) research (Carnegie UK Trust, 2012) shows clearly the impact of the local environment on the wellbeing of individuals and communities. Conversely, we have seen how community ownership of land and assets has transformed many communities, as demonstrated in [From the Low Tide of the Sea to the Highest Mountain Top](#) (Island Book Trust/Carnegie UK Trust 2012). We strongly support opportunities for both urban and rural communities to take greater control and ownership of the assets in their locality, where they are interested in doing so. We are currently advising the Scottish Government on similar proposals through membership of the Ministerial working group on the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill.

The benefits of community ownership or stewardship can be:

- financial: levering in finance from other sectors and other fund raising activities.
- economic: contributing to the regeneration of the local economy which will improve the value of local land and buildings.
- social: opportunities for participation, pride in the local environment and individual and community wellbeing.

Options for community ownership of assets include asset transfer from local authorities, long-term leasing, joint or co-operative ownership and gradual equity purchase. There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to identifying the correct solution for community assets but all should be considered by the public authority and community groups.

In order to understand the assets in their area, local people need to be provided with the opportunity to explore these issues together.

There are many techniques for facilitating discussions about local assets, including asset mapping, appreciative enquiry and community-led planning. To be effective, they must start with assessing the views of people in the community as to what they think the assets are. This can help communities to build greater confidence and a stronger political voice with which to engage with the political system.

However, taking over community assets must come from a desire from the community to do things differently, not pressure from public authorities to take responsibility for assets that they can no longer maintain effectively.

4. Are there any additional enabling objectives which should be included in the Framework?

The Carnegie UK Trust supports the enabling objective of learning from good practice but would stress the importance of learning from jurisdictions outside Northern Ireland and how they have developed cohesive and engaged communities. In [Appreciating Assets](#) (Carnegie UK Trust, 2011) there are a number of case studies of local success stories from Canada, Australia, and Scotland, about engaging communities to achieve social regeneration and the community ownership of land and tangible assets. Our [Pride in Place: Tackling Environmental Incivilities](#) report (Carnegie UK Trust, 2012) provides case studies of community-led projects from Belfast to Glasgow to tackle issues such as vandalism, graffiti and litter which have a disproportionate impact on those living in the UK’s least affluent communities. Forthcoming report [Shifting the Dial: From wellbeing measures to policy practice](#) (Carnegie UK Trust, 2012) looks beyond the UK to international jurisdictions such as France, Canada and the USA to learn what is happening in other countries to develop community cohesion and engagement.

The Carnegie UK Trust would also welcome a commitment to develop the attitudes of young people in Northern Ireland to enterprise and entrepreneurship in order to strengthen the competitiveness of Northern Ireland's towns and cities, as an additional enabling objective. Our recent research project [Enterprising Minds](#) (Carnegie UK Trust, 2012) explores the attitudes of young people to enterprise, education, and the future in a changing economy. It focuses on how students view practical enterprise – starting a business or working self-employed – and the contribution education systems make to the understanding of these work types. On most measures within our survey, students in Wales and Northern Ireland rated as more 'pro-enterprise' than their contemporaries in England, and slightly more so than in Scotland. They were more likely to see themselves starting businesses after college, were generally more confident that enterprise had been incorporated into their educational experiences, and were more inclined to admire and seek to follow the examples of enterprising people.

The Department should therefore capitalise on this entrepreneurial spirit among its young people and work with colleges and supporting organisations to create more opportunities to develop practical enterprise skills that build on their retail experience and extracurricular interests. This may include student-led projects, competitions, and opportunities to design retail ideas with industry experts.

5. Do you feel that the emphasis on an outcomes-focused approach, as exemplified by the use of the Logic Model, is appropriate?

The Carnegie UK Trust supports the move towards an outcomes focus which we see as part of a wider movement towards understanding, measuring and improving the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

An outcomes based approach, of the kind proposed in the consultation paper, is a step forward towards considering the impact on policies on the wellbeing of people. However a more comprehensive approach would involve looking not just at the outcomes from one intervention, but the outcomes for government activity as a whole. Taking a system-wide approach to the overall impact of government activity can encourage joined up working and help services consider their unintended impacts, as well as those that they proactively seek.

As the Department may be aware, the Scottish Government has moved towards an outcomes based system of performance management through the National Performance Framework (see [More than GDP: Measuring What Matters](#), Carnegie UK Trust, 2011). We would recommend that the Northern Ireland Executive consider the experiences of Scotland in taking forward this agenda.

It is also essential that an outcomes-based approach is used to influence policy development, in addition to its use as a tool for performance management. Our [Shifting the Dial: From wellbeing measures to policy practice report](#), available shortly, looks at how we can ensure outcome measures are factored into the policymaking process, so that what we measure is what really matters. The report draws lessons from France, Virginia (USA), the City of Somerville (USA), the City of Guelph (Canada), Vital Signs Toronto (Canada) and the Canadian Index of Wellbeing. Our case study research shows that policymakers can use wellbeing measures as a way to monitor our overall progress and direction as a society. Our key findings are that moving towards wellbeing measures requires both leadership and a broad-base of support from communities and civil society organisations. The process of agreeing what outcomes are to be achieved, and reporting on progress requires a consultative approach bringing in views from

outside government, not merely a technocratic approach to developing indicators.

6. Do you agree with the Department’s definition of “urban” or should a more flexible approach be taken in future?

The Carnegie UK Trust considers the Department’s definition of ‘urban’ as settlements of over 4,500 people, and those below this figure as rural, problematic. This definition of urban creates difficulties in perception as it may make some areas unsure of whether their community is covered by the Policy Framework. For example, suburban, town and even some village settings may have more than 4,500 inhabitants but would not consider themselves to be ‘urban’.

Many of the proposals in the consultation paper would apply equally well to rural locations as to urban ones and we would caution against creating two markedly different structures for ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ communities. All communities embarking on a journey, for example, to own a community asset, require advice and support. Strict, inflexible distinctions between urban and rural may hinder their ability to access such support and create unnecessary duplication of effort both in public authorities and the third sector.

The Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through 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 and we are delighted to be celebrating our centenary in 2013. Please see our website for further information on our centenary plans.

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