

Report on event

## Scotland's Towns Partnership "Your Town : Creating Health, Wealth & Happiness"

Where : A+DS, 9 Bakehouse Close, Edinburgh  
When : 25/04/18, 13.30-16.30

The event was chaired by Phil Prentice, Chief Executive of Scotland's Towns Partnership and gave an update on their work and gave an overview of the range of resources, supports and partners. To quote from their website :

"STP is the go-to body for Scotland's towns; a hub for promoting all things towns, and a hive of activity to help you learn, connect, find practical support and advice, and share good practice and knowledge. It is a repository for a wealth of intelligence around the [Town Centre Action Plan](#) and other policy conversations. Our deep rooted knowledge of the towns landscape and our extensive range of services, supports the Scottish Government's ongoing commitment to secure a positive future for Scotland's towns. Our work ensures better informed policy makers, more effective practitioners, better connected governance mechanisms, better value investment decisions, and critically, more sustainable and attractive towns across Scotland. STP is Secretary to the [Cross Party Group](#) on Towns which helps profile the issues relating towns.

The STP website [www.scotlandstowns.org](http://www.scotlandstowns.org) collates these resources and gives a hub for knowledge and good practice within Scotland's towns, giving support to organisations and groups that have an interest in or ownership of them and supports the Scottish Government's ongoing commitment to secure a positive future for Scotland's towns.

### **Kate Houghton : Policy & Practice officer, RTPI Scotland**

Kate Houghton outlined the work RTPI carry out in supporting delivery of the type of places in which people can thrive and explained how the RTPI proactively influence policy to this end. Health and wellbeing improvements by increasing activity levels within towns can achieved through design that prioritises pedestrians and cyclists"

- 40% increase in trade within town centres when walking is prioritised.
- £900m saving to health budgets if people did recommended levels of exercise.
- 168:1 cost ratio benefit for projects that prioritise cycling.

The RTPI has produced recent documents on Dementia & Town Planning (2017) [www.rtpi.org.uk/media/2213533/dementia\\_and\\_town\\_planning\\_final.compressed.pdf](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/2213533/dementia_and_town_planning_final.compressed.pdf) and champion West Lothian Council's recent "Health Impact Assessment" planning guidance [www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/2472/SPG-Health-impact-assessment/pdf/SPG-healthimpact.pdf](http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/2472/SPG-Health-impact-assessment/pdf/SPG-healthimpact.pdf).

### **David McAllister : Manager - Communications, Planning Aid for Scotland**

David McAllister of Planning Aid for Scotland [www.pas.org.uk](http://www.pas.org.uk) gave an overview of PAS' activities, providing free support during the planning process, concentrating on engagement and getting

people of all ages and backgrounds to participate in placemaking at the earliest opportunity. Using their SP=EED guidance document can help undertake effective community engagement in the planning process.

Placemaking is a preventative spend and can reduce social isolation through design. The population aged 65+ in Scotland is increasing at four times the rate of younger generations so inclusivity and design for an ageing population should form part of the decision making process. Community-led placemaking plans can be informative in shaping future development. An example was given on the Isle of Rum : Community Land Use Plan (2015)

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/15041/2015\\_isle\\_of\\_rum\\_community\\_land\\_use\\_plan](https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/15041/2015_isle_of_rum_community_land_use_plan) which has since been adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

### **Sandy Robinson : Principal Architect at Planning & Architecture, Scottish Government**

The development of the Place Standard <https://www.placestandard.scot/> gives a tool which gives a simple framework to structure conversations about the physical and social attributes of a place. Physical activity is the 4th greatest threat to health and the Place Standard tool can be used to assess pre and post planning to inform decision and understand how a place has changed. Health is not just about nutrition; resolving issues around poverty and deprivation is key to inequality in life expectancy.

### **Surgery Sessions**

Group sessions with experts provided advice on specific issues to improve place:

- Cycling Scotland - Kath Brough, Behaviour Change Manager
- Generations Working Together - Kate Samuels, Communications and Policy Assistant
- Greenspace Scotland - Ea O'Neill, Programme Manager
- Living Streets Scotland - Penny Morriss, Project Coordinator (Communities)

### **Summary**

The challenges facing Scotland's places to improve health, wealth & happiness are multi-faceted. Early engagement with the community prior to project planning is key to a positive response from the community. Engagement should focus on all age groups and abilities to get a clearer view of what is important to users as a whole. The speakers' and experts' organisations can provide sound guidance on how to approach the planning process and give advice on common issues that can help improve spaces and create a stronger sense of place. This is applicable to existing communities as well as newly-establishing design projects. There is a strong and readily available support network that gives Landscape Architects a sound set of principles to help plan for change in Scotland's towns and landscapes.

Sam Shaw

April 2017