

Lecture 4 – Planning and regeneration, sustainable and healthy
Tuesday 15 January 2013
Canada Room, Queen’s University Belfast

Background information: A ‘whole of society’ approach to improving health and wellbeing goes beyond institutions: it requires mobilisation across policies, Departments and delivery agents. For sustainable, healthy and holistic regeneration it is vital to address the future of both people and places. Local Government will soon take on responsibility for land use planning and community planning – this is the time to work to ensure that health and wellbeing are a priority within these new revised structures.

This lecture explored the links between the built/natural environment and health as well as providing many practical examples of how regeneration and healthy urban planning supports the building of community assets.

Opening Address: Suzanne Wylie, Belfast City Council

Presentation: Regenerating the city: planning for a new era

Suzanne’s presentation focused on Belfast City Council and their role and plans in terms of regeneration. She indicated that there has been substantial investment by local government in an attempt to address issues and problems that people face. She emphasised new powers through the Review of Public Administration (RPA) will allow the Council to do this in a more systematic way and provide increased leverage for integrated working looking at addressing health and life inequalities and regenerating the city.

Suzanne spoke about the growth of Belfast from an historic point of view including the shipbuilding industry and the building of the City Hall which demonstrated wealth in the city however not everyone had a share in the wealth and this is still the case today. If we are going to be successful Belfast needs to have both improved ‘economy’ and ‘quality of life’ as these are foundations to ensure growth of a city. In the city there is a young workforce, a wide skills base, and these needs to be aligned better in terms of job creation.

Local government has more freedom for borrowing public money than government departments to help invest in regeneration which has helped in the development of the Investment Programme for Belfast. A joined up approach is required to implement this programme successfully.

Belfast has recently been accepted as an IBM Smart City. This will ensure investments have a better impact on people and can be measured. This will help the council use information in a more intelligent way.

Suzanne highlighted Belfast Healthy Cities links with Belfast Strategic Partnership in terms of the Regeneration and Healthy Urban Environments (R&HUE) Thematic Group. She explained that some of this work involved rolling out demonstration projects and includes, for example, the broad

themes of child friendly cities, age friendly cities, active travel and climate change.

She also outlined important factors for future work:

- Focus on place shaping
- Focus on investment
- Better evidence
- Maximise opportunities/new powers available to local government

Mr Chris Bailey: Head of Partnerships and Innovation, Westway Development Trust: *Presentation: Making a purse from a sows ear – how imaginative regeneration can create added value from neglected spaces*

Chris's presentation outlined the work of the Westway Trust in London and regeneration initiatives over the past 40 years. The Trust was established in 1971 following the building of the A40 Westway flyover through North Kensington within the boundaries of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, which left 23 acres of derelict land underneath it. The Trust was created to develop this land for the benefit of the community.

Westway Development Trust works to benefit the diverse local community in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea through a huge range of projects and initiatives, in areas as varied as school sports, services for ethnic minority communities and adult education. The Trust works with numerous community groups, in partnership with the local voluntary sector and with the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea council. The Trust also runs Westway Sports Centre and the Portobello Green Fitness Club.

The work began with the involvement of only several community workers. A community consultation suggested the need for a whole range of services in this economically challenged pocket of in a rich area of London. Chris stated that five years into the project numerous ideas were available which required additional financial resources. The Trust used commercial loans, private loans and other funding streams to raise revenue to build their first building.

Using community assets the work progressed. Initially, local residents raised concerns as to what was happening in relation to the building of the A40 Flyover but this conflict resulted in greater community engagement and agreement to plans. An area of shops, units and community resources/services were built below the flyover which served the local people and helped to create a vibrant and connected community.

Chris outlined the situation today:

- 20% of current buildings are rental buildings providing an income for the Trust

- Regeneration is now taking place on properties originally restored in 1970s and 80s.
- Promoting the existing market – now specialising in vintage clothing and items are very popular with people far and wide
- An annual carnival takes place and the Trust provides funds for youth artist activity during the year
- The area has a well accessed community gym – incorporating a GP referral scheme as well as paid public membership of the gym
- The Trust and its workers look to inspire new ideas and models of best practice for services and delivery for local people
- Westway Development Trust provides small grants to the local community, helping to test new ideas through a community based approach
- In the past 40 years the initial staff team of two has increased to 150 employees.

Chris stated that in terms of regeneration it is important that you do the things that people notice - making people aware of what they can achieve.

Dr Aideen McGinley: former Chief Executive Ilex Urban Regeneration Company *Presentation: Mobilising partners: One Plan for Derry/Londonderry*

Aideen introduced the 'One Regeneration Plan for Derry/Londonderry'. The mission of which is to deliver Renewal – Economic, Physical and Social, building a stronger and more vibrant economy with increased prosperity for the City and Region in ways, which ensure that opportunities and benefits from regeneration are targeted towards the most deprived groups in the community. The presentation focused on the process of mobilising or actively engaging with partners and stakeholders in the development and ultimate delivery of the plan.

Dr McGinley stressed that communities do not just happen they are consciously created and formed by the people within them. She added that people do not live in silos and are affected by the political and economic climate and wider environmental conditions of Northern Ireland. In terms of inequalities, in comparison to other areas Derry/Londonderry experiences a lower level of education skills such as literacy and numeracy. A unique asset however is the increase in tourism and short term visitors to the area.

Before the 'One Plan' various strategies existed with a focus on regeneration but lacked active engagement from people on the ground. Aideen stated that that the 'Future Search Event' was used as a methodology for supporting community engagement, integrated working and for brokering and negotiating relationships. In addition, 80 local workers were trained to scope issues with

hard to reach groups (City Scope). This helped highlight areas where regeneration work should begin and tackle disadvantage.

In terms of the development of the plan:

- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provided an international perspective
- There were approximately 1000 people involved in writing the plan, 12 Intersectoral groups (490 people), 22,000 children were engaged through schools and homework clubs
- It took two years to create the plan with regular meetings and communication with departments and stakeholders
- 189 priorities were divided into five core themes:
 - Employment and Economy (aiming for 12,000 new jobs)
 - Education and skills
 - Building Better Communities
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Sustainable and Connected City Region

Aideen concluded the presentation highlighting four important factors in successful regeneration:

- Good ideas and resources
- Effective institutions
- Able leadership - growing capacity
- Collaborative working partnership

Dr Russell Jones: Public Health Programme Manager, Glasgow Healthy Cities *Presentation: Healthy Cities, Healthy people and planning – the links*

Russell highlighted the work of the Glasgow Centre for Public Health (further information at www.gcph.co.uk) which seeks to improve the health of the people of Glasgow and address inequalities. Even after investment Glasgow still experiences vast inequalities in pockets across the city.

Russell outlined the emergence of Healthy Urban Planning and linked it to the World Health Organisation Healthy City movement which sparked interest in the area of work in the 1980's. He explained the impacts of the environment on health in particular the links with quality of place and the direct link with mental health, wellbeing and quality of life. Also, outlining the link with greenspace and mortality rates stating that communities with access to greenspace have better mortality rates.

Russell spoke briefly about the impact on climate change in relation to health urban planning in terms of flooding and the 'heat island effect' as is frequently experienced in London during hot temperatures.

One of Russell's final points highlighted a problem in our cities today which needs to be addressed by planners for the benefit of improved health outcomes. He said 'traffic is to modern day health, what sewage was to the 1920's'

Summary of key points identified by speakers during the panel debate:

Suzanne: to create integration and bring policy makers and stakeholders together requires 'real' leadership.

Chris: it is important that communities are able to take responsibility and are self-managing and confident in the decisions that they make, social enterprises being part of that.

Aideen: genuine stakeholder engagement is essential not just a tick box exercise but an actual process. Communities need to feel that what they have said is valued and listened to and you need to demonstrate this.

Russell: 'it is worth it' don't give up on ideas no matter how difficult the barriers you may face. The work may end up going in a different direction but the effort is worth it.