Evaluation of Community-led Design Initiatives: impacts and outcomes of the Charrettes and Making Places funds

PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

social
research

Evaluation of Community-led Design Initiatives: impacts and outcomes of the Charrettes and Making Places funds

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Contents

Photo credit: Action Westbank Team

Executive Summary

The Scottish Government set up the Charrette Mainstreaming Programme in 2011, following on from the Charrette Series Pilot in 2010. The Programme was set up to encourage local communities to play a role in the development of their local area by supporting the design process. The Programme has taken on various forms as it has evolved – most recently becoming the Making Places Initiative, which broadened the scope of the programme, and supports local communities to participate in a wider range of participative design events, including smaller-scale events.

Through the Programme, over £1.4 million in funding has been awarded to supporting 78 design events across Scotland between 2011 and 2018. Initially aimed at local authorities and other public bodies, since 2014 the Programme has placed particular emphasis on applications from community and third sector organisations.

The key aims of the Programme at present are to:

- develop an effective method of design which focuses on 'place' and outcomes for local communities

- encourage the mainstreaming of creative design processes in planning and community planning

- place local communities at the centre of the design process; and

- foster collaborative working between public sector organisations and local communities

Scope of the evaluation

In February 2019, Scottish Government commissioned Blake Stevenson Limited working with Watson Burnett Architects to undertake an evaluation of community-led design initiatives.The aims of the evaluation were to:

- assess whether and how the Programme has succeeded in achieving its aims to date

- assess the impact and outcomes of funded design events at a local level

- explore whether/how outputs (e.g. action plans) have been implemented

- create learning about the impact of the Programme that can be used to inform its future development, such as funding decisions

Three key research questions were developed for the evaluation:

- how effective are the design processes in encouraging and empowering local communities' involvement in the design of places?

- what factors influence the implementation of outputs?

- what has been achieved through these design events in terms of longer-term outcomes for communities and partners?

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation involved analysis of data from across all funded projects, in-depth fieldwork with 10 sample projects (involving visits to the projects and interviews with design event organisers, facilitators and participants), a brief literature review, and analysis and reporting.

Key findings

Effectiveness of the design processes in encouraging and empowering local communities' involvement in the design of places

The design events have been generally successful in engaging local people in the design of their local place. Across the sample areas, participation was perceived to be wider than would be usually achieved at community engagement events, with a good cross-section of the community attending. Members of the community and local stakeholders described feeling inspired and empowered by these events and spoke of the events being well facilitated, varied in their approach, inclusive and accessible, as well as suited

to participants of all ages. Members of the community also reported feeling that they could actively contribute at these events, with a sense that there were real opportunities to influence future planning and design for their area. Many participants went on to become more actively involved in their community as a result of taking part in the Programme.

This success has not been universal, with some local stakeholders citing other events they had been involved in as less effective. Some of the reasons given for these events being less effective included: weaker facilitation, poorer attendance, and lack of clarity or focus.

Where they worked best, design events gave the community a platform for influencing the design of their local area, and in some instances have led to local authorities embedding community engagement more effectively into their planning processes.

Delivery of events and implementation of outputs

A number of key factors appear to have affected how well the design events themselves were delivered. These included: adequate lead-in time; effective facilitation by independent external providers; clear focus around the purpose of the events; flexibility and pragmatism in relation to what could be achieved; good management of participants' expectations; and an iterative process involving a series of events that gave time in between for ideas to be further developed and then re-visited.

All projects were required to submit a final report to Scottish Government and all did so successfully. These usually described the design event process, priorities agreed by the community, and anticipated future outcomes and impact. Some went as far as to include a precise action plan and timeframe for achievement of outcomes, whereas others were broader in their description of next steps.

Outcomes for communities and partners

All of the sample projects were able to demonstrate achievement of postiive outcomes to varying degrees. Examples of short-term outcomes could be identified across all of the sample projects visited. These commonly included: the creation of new local groups (including some with specific remits for taking forward actions from the design event process), aesthetic improvements to the local area such as painting local landmarks, introducing community activities such as a street market, installing new signage, and developing information materials. These short-term outcomes were important in ensuring momentum was maintained, and were a good way of demonstrating to communities that the design events were leading to action being taken.

Some areas were also highly effective in achieving longer-term outcomes and impact. Examples of some of the longer-term outcomes included: reversing a

local authority's decision in relation to the use of a local site; changing a road running through a town centre from dual to single carriageway; developing active travel links; establishing a wellbeing centre; and refurbishing key tourist sites. This type of more substantive impact was often achieved in areas that were already well-served by engaged local people with the skills and knowledge to support development of their area. Other areas, however, were less successful in this respect. This seemed to most commonly have been the result of a lack of engagement by the local authority and other local organisations, apathy within the community, or a lack of skills and capacity within the local community. Key factors for achieving impact are illustrated below in Figure A.

Figure A: Key factors for achieving impact
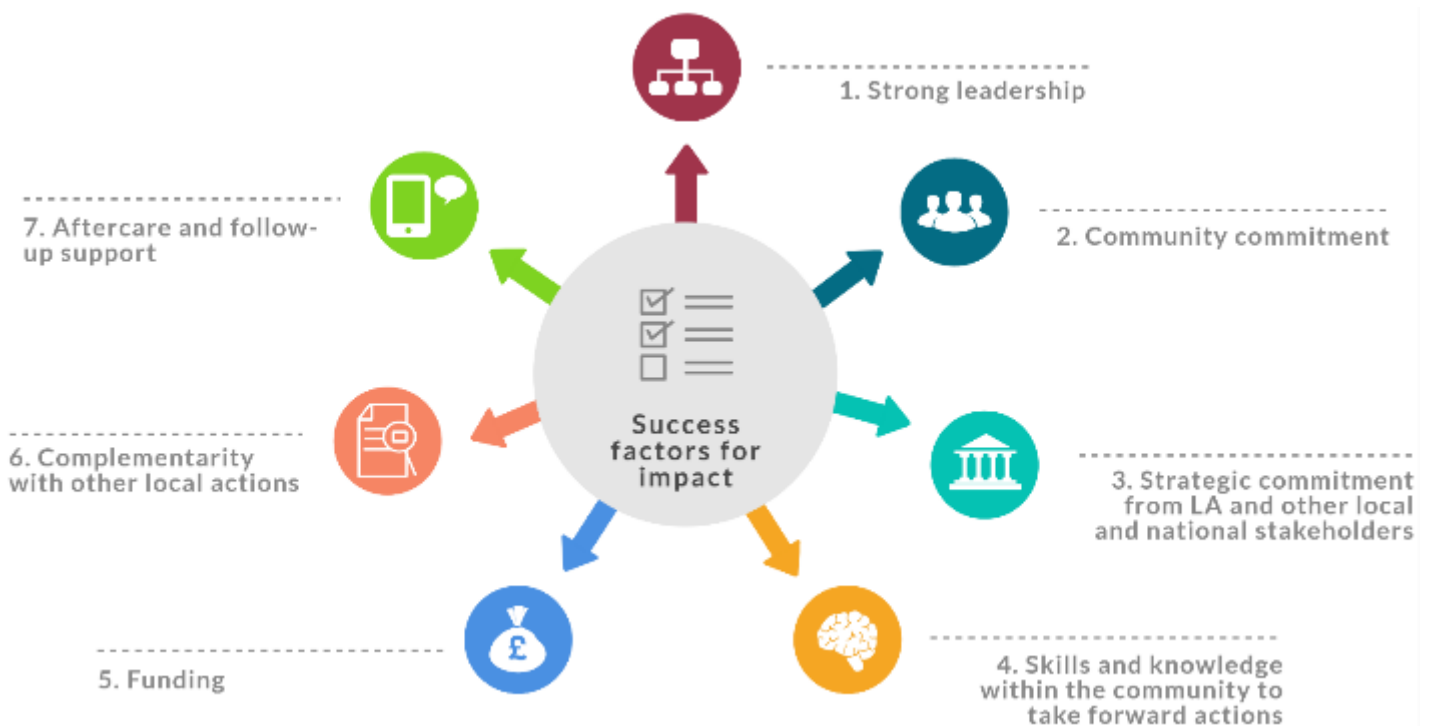
Key learning points

The evaluation led to a number of learning points being generated:

Learning Point 1: Design events funded through the Programme appear to be a successful method of engaging the community in design of place and their continued use as an approach should be welcomed.

Learning point 2: There are a range of key factors influencing successful delivery of design events, implementation of outputs (e.g. action plans) from the events, and in achieving impact. These are summarised in Figure B below, and could form the basis of guidance to local areas in applying for funding. The factors listed in the overlapping section relate to both delviery and impact.

Figure B. Factors influencing effective delivery and impact

Effective delivery

Focus and clarity

Good facilitation

Flexibility and pragmatism

Management of expectations

Preparation and lead-in

Iterative process

Effective feedback mechanisms

Strong leadership

Community commitment

Local authority commitment

Skills and knowledge

Impact

Funding

Complementarity with other local action

Aftercare/follow-up

Learning point 3: As part of the process of applying for design event funding, or at latest in the final report produced after the design event, areas should outline at a high level the resources they have available or intend to pursue to fund actions coming out of the design event process. Likewise, the role of key partners, organisations and members of the community in implementation and delivery should be clear. This is more likely to lead to achievement of desired outcomes.

Learning point 4: Ensure timeframes for delivery and production of outputs, including the final reports and action plans from design events, is realistic. Experiences to date suggest that ensuring adequate lead-in time (a minimum of three months), and longer timeframes for delivery are more effective in ensuring a high-quality process is followed, and a high-quality final report is produced.

Learning point 5: National bodies can have an important role in supporting local design events, and the implementation of subsequent action plans, with knowledge, advice and funding. Flexibility and capacity within these organisations to support delivery of local priorities is important.

Learning point 6: Local areas should ensure a realistic budget is set aside for facilitation of design events. While volunteers have an important role to play in the process, over-reliance on volunteers could lead to a reduction in quality.

Learning point 7: Some local areas are well-placed to deliver effective design events that lead to substantive impact. Others have fewer local assets, and in these circumstances more support and capacity needs to be provided by statutory services to enable design events to be delivered successfully and to achieve impact.

Learning point 8: Achieving short-term outcomes has been shown to be critical in empowering and galvanising communities to take action following design events, and in a more sustained way. Setting aside dedicated funding to take forward a number of actions immediately following a design event can be helpful in supporting this.

Learning point 9: While some local areas are well placed to take forward actions following a design event, others are not. A formal follow-up process at regular intervals following the initial design event – potentially at six months, one year and five years – would enable progress to be assessed, reasons for lack of progress to be identified, and the extent to which communities have taken forward actions and local organisations have embedded design event outcomes in their own planning processes to be examined. There may be value in this follow-up support being provided by someone external to the area (e.g. independent facilitators or Scottish Government officials).

Learning point 10: In some places, design events have already become an important catalyst for improving planning and creating a better sense of place. Given the significant impact that design events are having in some areas, there is potential for these to become a more fundamental part of planning processes more widely.

Learning point 11: Design events may have more impact if they are given more formal status – with an expectation or requirement that local authorities and other local bodies reflect the outputs of such events in their local development plans.

1. Introduction

This report sets out findings from an evaluation of community–led design initiatives funded by the Scottish Government: the Charrette Mainstreaming Programme and the Making Places Initiative. These initiatives are referred to in this report as 'the Programme'.

This chapter provides information about the origins of these initiatives and their policy context, provides an outline of the Programme, and describes the evaluation aims and methodology. Chapter 2 presents an analysis of the projects funded through the Programme.

The findings of the qualitiative research are discussed in the chapters that follow. Chapter 3 discusses the design event processes, including a breakdown by geography and the value of awards. Chapter 4 focuses on impacts and outcomes, covering issues such as impact on physical infrastructure, partnership working and local capacity. Chapter 5 discusses key factors influencing succesful delivery and impact of design events.

Chapter 6 presents conclusions from the research, discussing the findings in relation to the aims of the Programme. Finally, the report identifies eleven key learning points to inform the future development of the Programme.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Community-led design

The Scottish Government is keen to support the design of places that foster a high quality of life and allow communities to grow and help to challenge inequality. It aims to do so by involving community members in decision-making processes and encouraging them to play a role in shaping the development of their local area. This process has become known as community-led design.

1.1.2 Policy Context

The 2016 independent review of the Scottish planning system called for more community involvement,[1] but the role of communities in shaping public spaces has featured in policy debate in Scotland for some time. The Carnegie UK Trust's (CUKT) 2014 report *Places that Love People: Learning from the Carnegie Prize for Design and Wellbeing* emphasised the importance of well-designed public spaces and the need for community-led public space improvement to become a priority in town centre regeneration.

Community-led design and regeneration is underpinned by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (the 2015 Act), which empowered communities through the ownership or control of places and spaces, and strengthened their role in making decisions about public services.[2]

In December 2015, the Scottish Government and partners launched the Place Standard tool to help communities to identify aspects of a place that need to be developed to improve health, wellbeing and quality of life. This tool is used to encourage conversations about the physical and social aspects of a place within a community.[3]

The growing emphasis on community-led design in Scotland is also reflected in Scotland's National Performance Framework (first published in 2007 and updated in 2011 and 2018), which contains indicators around improving people's perceptions of their local area, access to green and blue spaces, influence over local decisions, social capital, and places to interact.[4]

The Scottish Government's commitment to community involvement in design and planning was further confirmed by the development of the Place Principle.[5] This is aligned to the National Performance Framework and aims to encourage better cross-sectoral collaboration and community involvement in the development of places designed to support sustainable and inclusive economic growth. It states that "all those responsible for providing services and looking after assets in a place need to work and plan together, and with local communities, to improve the lives of people, support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and create more successful places". The Place

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[1] https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2016/05/empowering-planning-to-deliver-great-places/documents/empowering-planning-deliver-great-places-31-2016-pdf/empowering-planning-deliver-great-places-31-2016-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/Empowering%2BPlanning%2Bto%2BDeliver%2BGreat%2BPlaces%252C%2B31%2BMay%2B2016.pdf

[2] https://www.gov.scot/publications/community-empowerment-scotland-act-summary/

[3] http://www.healthscotland.scot/tools-and-resources/the-place-standard-tool

[4] https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/

[5] https://www.gov.scot/publications/place-principle-introduction/

Principle factsheet published by Scottish Government includes examples of tools, resources and applications that can help achieve this, including the Place Standard, the USP Your Town Audit, the Planning for Place programme at the Improvement Service and Scotland's Centre for Regional Inclusive Growth (SCRIG).[6]

As noted in *Delivering for Today, Investing for Tomorrow: The Government's Programme for Scotland 2018-19*, the Planning (Scotland) Bill of 2017 was introduced to provide confidence for communities and investors involved in planning. Under the current programme, the Scottish Government has committed to expanding its support for community-led design, using the Place Standard tool to ensure that communities are key to shaping developments in their local area from an early stage.[7]

The Planning Bill, recently passed by the Scottish Government, aims to update and streamline Scotland's town planning system. One of the Bill's key features is the introduction of Local Place Plans (LPPs) in order to improve community involvement in the planning system. The Bill enables local communities to prepare an LPP, which is a proposal on the development or use of land. A Community Council or another community body as defined by the 2015 Community Empowerment Act will have the power to produce an LPP, and the planning authority must take this into account when preparing or reviewing the LDP.[8]

These policy developments align with the aims of the Programme which supports communities to engage in design and planning in their local area. The Programme, which is described in the next section, comprises a number of funds which have evolved in response to need.

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[6] https://www.gov.scot/publications/place-principle-introduction/

[7] https://www.gov.scot/publications/delivering-today-investing-tomorrow-governments-programme-scotland-2018-19/

[8] https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Bills/Planning%20(Scotland)%20Bill/SPBill23BS052019.pdf

Community participation in the design process, Portobello charrette

Photo credit: Action Westbank Team

1.1.3 The Programme

The Programme has its roots in the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative which was set up in 2008 to encourage the design of places which foster a high quality of life and to support a vision-led approach by project teams in designing a built environment. Through the SSCI Charrette Series which ran in 2010, three projects in Ladyfield (Dumfries), Lochgelly and Grandhome (Aberdeen) enabled the public to participate in interactive design workshops with local professionals and stakeholders to produce a masterplan.[9]

Following the Charrette Series pilot, the Charrette Mainstreaming Programme was set up in 2011 to encourage local communities to play an active role in the development of their local area by participating in the design process.[10]

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[9] https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/345635/0115038.pdf

[10]
https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/form/2017/09/making-places-initiative-2017-2018-prospectus-form/documents/f50f5dd5-fb5d-4db9-a9ad-ba7f8c79658f/f50f5dd5-fb5d-4db9-a9ad-ba7f8c79658f/govscot%3Adocument

Aimed at local authorities and public bodies initially, the programme funded design charrettes that supported the production of local development plans (LDPs).

In 2013-14 the fund was split into two streams, one continuing to support the development of LDPs and a second, open to communities, third sector groups and local authorities to fund charrettes in support of town centre regeneration. In 2015-16 these streams were consolidated into a single fund for communities, local authorities and third sector organisations to access support for charrettes covering a wide range of issues, including linking spatial and community planning outcomes.

It was recognised that communities may need support not only in creating a vision for their area, but before and after they reach this stage as well. It was also recognised that large-scale charrette style design events may not be appropriate for community groups that do not have the capacity or confidence to undertake a design event. As a result, in 2016-17, the Charrette Mainstreaming Programme was broadened into the Making Places Initiative, which supported a wider variety of participative design events than charrettes, including smaller workshops.[11]

Distributing over £1.4 million in funding, the Scottish Government assisted 78 design events through the Programme between 2011 and 2018, enabling communities to develop ideas about the future of their local area. The key aims of the Programme at present are to:

- develop an effective method of design which focuses on 'place' and outcomes for local communities

- encourage the mainstreaming of creative design processes in community planning

- place local communities at the centre of the design process

- foster collaborative working between public sector organisations and local communities

The Programme's funding award process is a competitive one. Organisations wishing to apply for funding must submit an application form evidencing how their project will engage local people in the process, combat inequalities and

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https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/form/2017/09/making-places-initiative-2017-2018-prospectus-form/documents/f50f5dd5-fb5d-4db9-a9ad-ba7f8c79658f/f50f5dd5-fb5d-4db9-a9ad-ba7f8c79658f/govscot%3Adocument

disadvantage and make a difference to the local area, as well as outline how any actions from funded events will be taken forward.

Applications are considered by assessment panels. Until 2015-16, all assessment was completed by Scottish Government staff. However, with an increased emphasis on community-led projects, it was decided to bring in external partners with expertise in either working with communities, design events or other grant award processes to take part in the assessment process. External assessors have been provided by the Scottish Community Alliance, the Scottish Community Development Centre, COSLA, Big Lottery Fund and the University of Dundee. A new panel has been formed each year and panellists are required to confirm they have no conflict of interest in the process due to (in some cases) their close working relationships with communities.

1.2 Aims of the evaluation

In February 2019, the Scottish Government commissioned Blake Stevenson Limited working with Watson Burnett Architects to undertake an evaluation of the Programme.

Although many design events have been funded through the Programme to date and final reports describing the immediate outcomes of these processes were submitted to Scottish Government, no cross-cutting evaluation has been conducted to date that explores the success of these events in empowering local communities to develop ideas about the future of their local area.

There was also a desire on the part of Scottish Government to find out whether outputs from funded community-led design events had been implemented within local communities and, if they had been, what had been achieved.

The aims of the evaluation were to:

- assess whether and how the Programme has succeeded in achieving its aims to date

- assess the impact and outcomes of funded design events at a local level

- explore whether/how outputs (e.g. action plans) have been implemented

- create learning about the impact of the Programme that can be used to inform its future development, such as funding decisions

Three key research questions were developed for the evaluation:

- how effective are the design processes in encouraging and empowering local communities' involvement in the design of places?

- what factors influence the implementation of outputs?

- what has been achieved through these design events in terms of longer-term outcomes for communities and partners?

1.3 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation was overseen by a Research Advisory Group (RAG) which met twice during the study – at the outset, following the inception meeting, and at the end to discuss the draft final report. As shown in Figure 1.1, the evaluation involved three key phases.

Figure 1.1 Three phases of evaluation

1.3.1 Phase 1: Planning

The first stage of the evaluation involved an inception meeting, which provided the opportunity to clarify the aims and priorities of the research. Following the inception meeting, the team undertook desk-based research, involving a review of project-related documentation such as application forms and design event reports.

The evaluation activity focused on ten completed projects from across Scotland. The following criteria guided the selection:

- funding initiative and year in which design events took place (to ensure that progress was examined in areas where the design events had taken place recently and less recently)

- geography

- urban/rural locations

- socio-economic profile of areas

- event facilitators (to ensure that design events facilitated by a wide range of organisations were examined)

- type of activity

- level of funding received

On the basis of these criteria, the 10 projects selected to be part of the study were:

- Girvan

- Kindcardine

- Dunfermline

- Portobello, Edinburgh

- Muirtown & South Kessock, Inverness

- Arbroath

- Rothesay

- Callander

- Pollokshields, Glasgow

- Glenrothes West

Figure 1.2 on the following page shows the location of the projects.

Figure 1.2: Sample projects

Callander
2011/12

Muirtown & South
Kessock, Inverness
2013/14

Arbroath
2016/17

Rothesay
2015/16

Glenrothes West
2016/17

Dunfermline
2016/17

Girvan
2011/12

Kincardine
2016/17

Pollokshields
2015/16

Portobello
2017/18
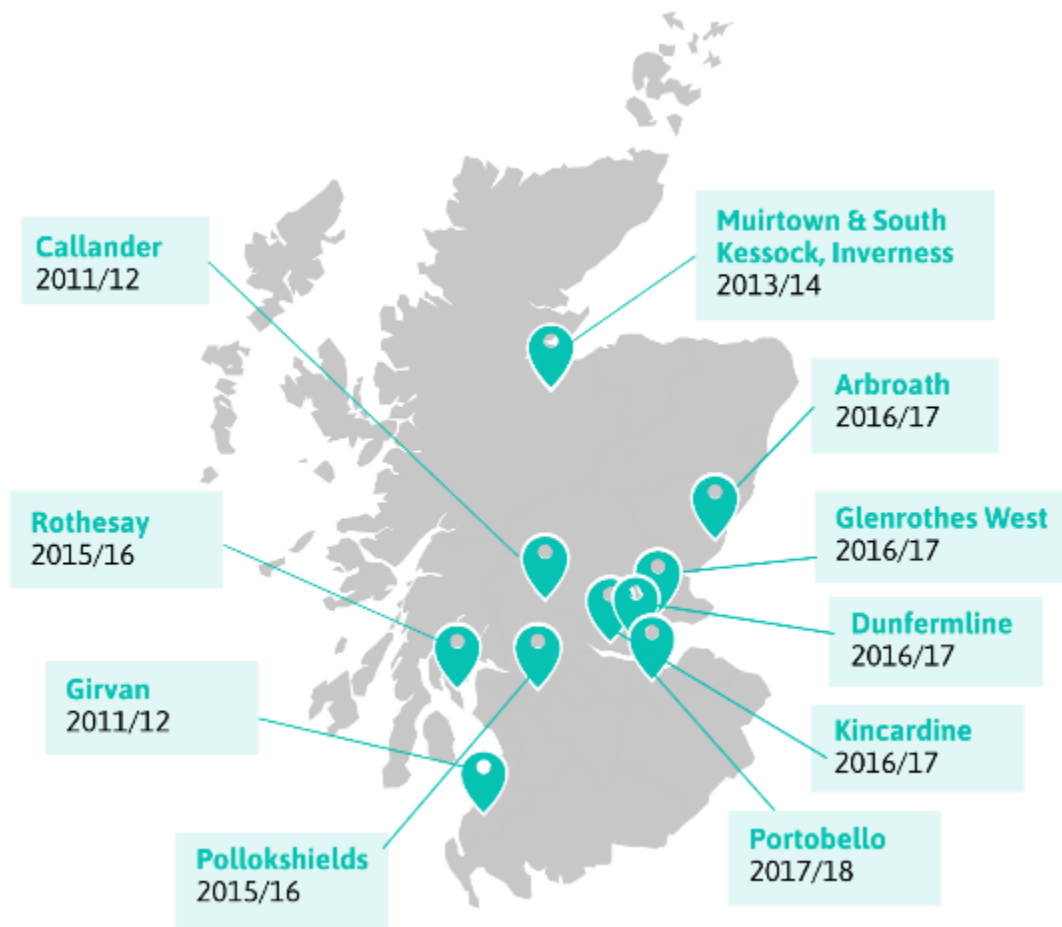
During this initial phase the research team undertook a series of fact-finding calls with stakeholders from each of the sample projects.

Blake Stevenson also hosted a workshop involving a selection of facilitators from across Scotland, most of whom had been involved in multiple design event processes. This workshop was an opportunity to discuss their experiences of design events more widely, and their input informed the development of research tools for the fieldwork phase.

1.3.2 Phase 2: Fieldwork with the sample projects

The evaluation activity involved visits and fieldwork with each of the sample projects. Researchers interviewed representatives from the local area including the key delivery partner, the design event facilitators, local authority officers, and a range of individuals from the community.

The aims of the visits and the follow-up phone calls were to:

- gain a fuller understanding of the processes involved in organising the design events, the purpose of these in each area, and the numbers and range of people attending

- assess the impact of the funded design events locally and what outcomes were achieved at the time or subsequently

- understand how outputs have been implemented since the events, the extent of involvement of those interviewed, and the extent to which this is an ongoing process

- explore factors which affected implementation of outputs, any facilitators or constraints, and lessons learned

- explore the extent to which participants/members of the community were empowered by the design processes and have continued to be engaged in the processes since the design events

1.3.3 Phase 3: Analysis and Reporting

The fieldwork and desk research generated substantive data from which key themes were extrapolated. These themes were examined in relation to the evaluation aims and objectives, and variations in delivery, outputs and outcomes in each of the areas were examined. During the analysis, examples were selected to illustrate key findings related to the effectiveness of the programme in involving communities, public sector organisations and third sector groups coming together for a design process.

This report presents the findings from the evaluation.

Photo credit: Austin Smith Lord & Angus Council

2. Analysis of projects funded through the Programme

In conducting this evaluation, desk analysis was undertaken of all 78 projects funded between 2011 and 2018 through the Programme. This chapter provides an overview of geographical spread of projects funded, the number and value of grants awarded to date, total project costs, and Scottish Government's contribution to total costs.

2.1 Breakdown of projects by geography

As shown in Figure 2.1 below, the projects that have been funded through the Programme between 2011 and 2018 are situated in a range of locations across Scotland. Most projects are located across the central belt, with a smaller number located in the North East, South West, and the Highlands and Islands.

Figure 2.1: Project locations

2.2 Lead Partners

Of those 78 projects, 27 of these have been led by the community, and 51 have been led by local authorities or other public bodies.

2.3 Number and value of funded projects

As highlighted earlier in the report, the application process is a competitive one and not all applications are successful each year. Figure 2.2 shows that while there have been fluctuations in the number of projects funded year on year, the number of funded projects has steadily increased, from 3 in 2011/12 to 18 in 2017/18. This was a result of confidence in the Programme growing, and more funding being made available for the Programme.

Figure 2.2 Number and value of grants awarded by year and programme:
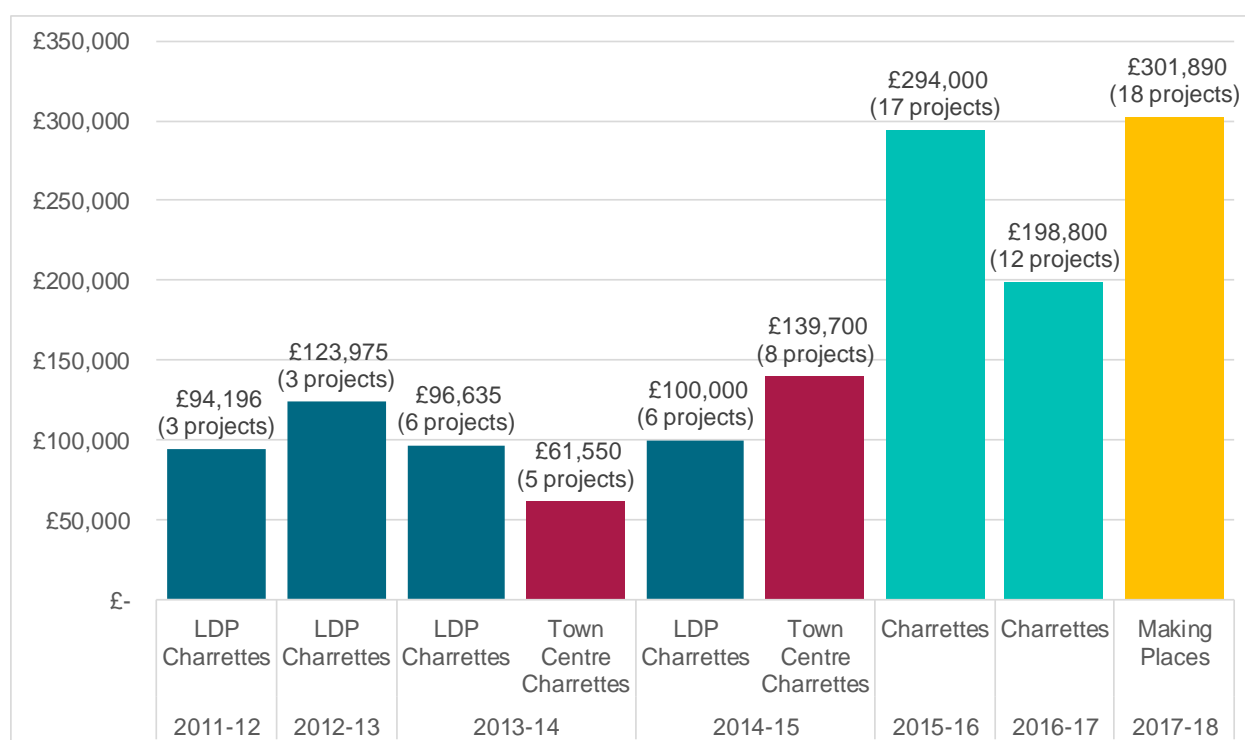
The value of grants awarded ranges from £4,005 to £55,000 (although this largest grant covered a series of charrettes rather than a single project), with an average grant size of £18,086. However, these figures do not give a complete picture. In the early years of the Programme, Scottish Government funded 100% of the project costs. As the Programme progressed, Scottish Government's contribution to total costs reduced, with participating local authorities or public bodies being required to contribute 50% of the total costs of the project and Scottish Government funding the remaining 50%. As the Programme widened to allow community-based organisations to submit applications for funding, they too were encouraged to meet 50% of the costs of the project, although some flexibility was applied where this was not feasible.

As shown in Figure 2.3 on the following page, 52 of the 78 projects funded between 2011 and 2018 received a 50% contribution from Scottish Government towards their total project costs.

Figure 2.3 Percentage of project costs funded by Scottish Government
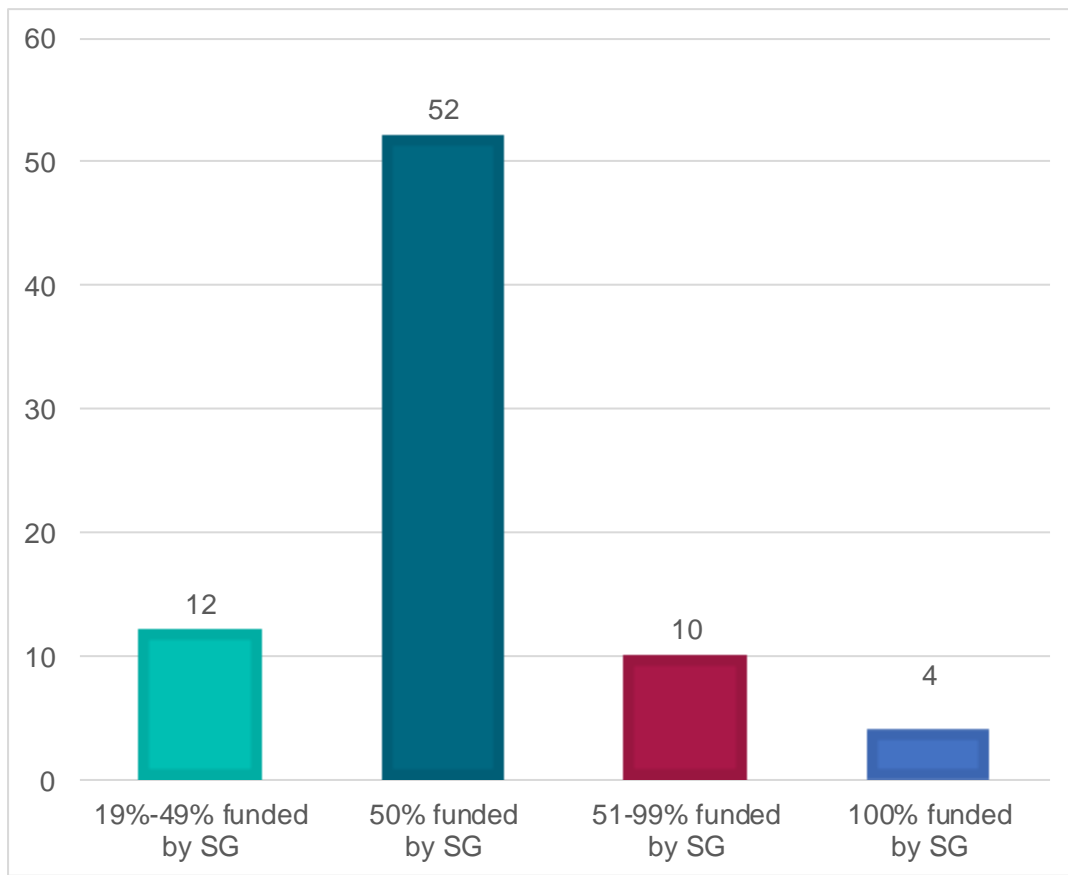
The total cost of projects ranged from £8,010 to £74,468, with an average total project cost of £33,930. The variance in total costs is due to a wide range of factors, including the number of design events being run through each project (ranging from one to many), geography, facilitation costs, and the focus of the projects.

3. Design event processes

There was variation in the ways in which design events were organised across the sample projects examined during the evaluation. This chapter describes how this was undertaken in the sample project areas and explores preparation and set-up of design events; recruitment of participants; role of the community in producing outputs and outcomes; engagement of local authorities and local politicians; costs of facilitation; and compares community-led processes and local authority-led processes.

3.1 Preparation and set-up of design events

All areas examined used their funding to appoint external facilitators to organise and run their community-led design events. Lead facilitators tended to be architectural practices with experience of running design events.

These facilitators were involved in a range of tasks including:

- advertising the design events

- engaging with local community representatives and organisations to seek their participation

- engaging with members of the local community to encourage their participation

- preparing materials for the design event

- developing design options for discussion at the events

- facilitating the design event events; and producing the final report, which was submitted to Scottish Government.

These tasks were not usually conducted by the facilitators on their own, but also involved local volunteers and staff from the local authority or other local organisations.

Having external facilitators was considered by all of the research participants interviewed to be important for a number of reasons:

- it gave additional capacity

- independence

- credibility

- expertise/knowledge

- enabled expectations of outputs to be managed

- enabled constructive challenge

Facilitation in the 10 sample projects was reported to have been of a high standard. The lead facilitators were experienced organisations with good track records in this type of work.

Research participants seemed to particularly value facilitators' independence; their ability to stimulate discussion and encourage participation; their ability to challenge; their role in defining parameters and managing expectations; and their creative approaches to engaging the community prior to and during the design events.

Effective pre-design event engagement activity seemed to be highly valuable, preparing the community for the design conversations which lay ahead. Creative arts and theatre-based activities were reported to be particularly successful, creating energy and interest. Essentially, this activity provided an early understanding of the ambition of the event.

The use of the word "charrette" was a source of concern and some stakeholders believed that this may have dissuaded some people from attending. Some areas, in identifying this issue, adapted language for their local community to address this challenge – often billing the design events in a completely different way. Subsequently, the use of the word "charrette" has been widely avoided, with reference now being made to "design events" in recognition of these concerns.

> **"Imagine setting out on a supposedly meaningful, open community engagement process, using a title which none of them can understand?" (Stakeholder)**

All of the research participants were positive about their experiences of taking part in the design event process. There was a sense across the sample projects that the design events had been professionally run, were engaging, and encouraged enthusiasm.

Key features of successful design events included:

- accessible information suited to different age-groups

- lots of visuals which brought ideas to life

- interactive activities

- a wide range of mechanisms to feedback progress to the community

Research participants reported that having a structured, organised and professional event gave them confidence that things were being taken seriously. There was a sense that having external facilitators added weight and credibility to the process and gave participating members of the community confidence that they were being seriously engaged.

However, some of the stakeholders interviewed during this evaluation had also taken part in design events in other local areas, some of which they reported had been more poorly facilitated, and they believed that there had been a direct effect on the quality of outcomes as a result. This highlights the importance of good facilitation in these processes.

3.2 Recruitment of participants/analysis of reach

All of the projects studied emphasised the importance of ensuring that as many members of the community as possible were given the opportunity to take part in the design event. In addition, in some areas there was a desire to particularly encourage certain groups to engage (for example, young people).

Facilitators were heavily involved in supporting areas with recruitment, and across the projects there was good use of social media and more traditional recruitment methods.

Community participation in the design process, Portobello charrette

Photo credit: Action Westbank Team

There was good use of traditional newspaper editorial and advertising sections, as well as newsletters produced during and following the design event activity. Social media provided passive outreach through high levels of chatter on local sites.

"Prior to the charrette, the community had many individuals with low self-esteem. These folk embraced the process, distributing leaflets, participating in community barbeques and moving in to new units in the Centre." (Local authority)

Creative methods included advertising and event sign-up on an island ferry, and the use of a special high profile advertising vehicle. Primary school children in one area were engaged very early through an exciting arts programme, disseminating their ideas to the wider community including parents, grandparents and siblings.

Turnout at design events was affected by many different factors – interest and motivation; levels of awareness; and poor weather were amongst those most commonly cited. Other reasons included area-specific issues such as a ferry strike and a general election.

Efforts were made to reach beyond the usual suspects but the extent to which areas did so successfully varied.

> **"For the first time it got beyond barriers in the community, e.g. community councillors and development trusts driving the agenda." (Member of the community)**
>
> **"It avoided a certain demographic driving the agenda – young people were really involved for the first time." (Member of the community)**

There were some good examples of facilitators working hard to engage with harder-to-reach groups. For example, in one area facilitators visited a local group for recovering addicts and invited them to participate in the design event – in response to local people referring to a heroin issue in an area close to the town centre. However, some projects reported not reaching as broad an audience as they would have liked to.

Recruitment was more successful in some areas than others and numbers attending varied significantly. Turn-out in one area, for example, was over 1000 people over a weekend despite weather challenges (it took place during the extreme cold weather spell in spring 2018, 'the Beast from the East'). In another area, on-street consultation was made more difficult by winter weather and this was felt to have impacted on how many people then took part in the design event.

Lead-in time also affected how successful recruitment was in some areas and the facilitators interviewed emphasised the importance of having sufficient lead-in time to ensure that harder-to-reach groups in particular could be engaged.

> **"A three-month plan of engagement would have been good." (Stakeholder)**

Apathy was a further challenge identified in some areas and one that some found difficult to overcome:

> **"We reached the usual suspects but not much beyond that, there is lots of apathy in our area." (Community organisation)**

Several reasons were cited for apathy. Some stakeholders suggested that it was likely that while some people were aware of the events they simply chose not to attend due to a lack of interest. However, they also noted that non-attendance is not necessarily an indication of a lack of interest. In one of the areas visited, stakeholders described some residents as on the fringes of society, through poverty, health and lifestyle issues. Stakeholders in that area felt that some of them may not have had the confidence to attend. There was a recognition that they may need more support and encouragement to take part than others.

Some facilitators consulted with local representatives ahead of reaching out to the community. In one area, for example, facilitators ran a briefing session with all of the ward councillors and local authority officers at the outset. This gave them the opportunity to "de-mystify" the process, gain buy-in, and encourage people to act as ambassadors. It also gave them insight into challenges or difficult issues that were likely to be raised during the design event. They, and stakeholders in these areas, considered this to be an important part of the preparation ahead of the design event.

All sample projects recognised the value of involving young people. Some areas managed to involve young people better than others. This was often done through schools (with mixed success across the sample projects), and through local groups supporting young people.

> **"Old people talk about the past…the young talk about the future."**
> **(Community organisation)**

The views of school pupils were widely welcomed, and in one area, for example, the first design event event took place at the local high school. The views of the Sea Scouts in another area were also sought, as they were regarded as significant stakeholders in the waterfront re-development ideas.

Workshop with Rothesay Academy pupils

Photo credit: IceCream Architecture

In one area, young people's involvement was co-ordinated by the local Development Youth Trust, which set up a youth committee and involved sub-groups of children from the local schools. During the design event they were allocated their own space and the main design event was streamed to them

via a video link which enabled them to be involved in their own environment. Their input became central to many of the outputs. One young person suggested a new bridge because it would shorten his walking route to school, and the proposed bridge became one of the central outputs from the design event. Stakeholders who organised the events received feedback that the young people really felt that their voice had been heard – unlike other processes that they had experienced. One stakeholder in that area described their challenge – "We had been asking young people the wrong questions in the wrong places up until the design event". Another person described how involving young people completely shifted the agenda.

> **"It broke down barriers to future development, which older people had put up." (Member of the community)**

3.3 Role of the community in delivery of the design event

Although paid facilitators were a key component of the sample projects, local people were also heavily involved in preparing for and delivering the design event. Many emphasised the significant role of volunteers in implementation.

Local skills and knowledge were a key factor in the communities' ability to be involved in delivery – this was more present in some areas than others, and this issue is re-visited later in the report (see 4.8 and 5.4).

> **"We had good people with mixed skills available to us – finance, communications, politics, architecture…" (Facilitator)**
>
> **"We have a wealthy community in terms of skills and people willing to contribute." (Member of the community)**

However, it is also important to note that whilst considerable talent and skillsets were available within communities, community-led design is a dynamic process. Some research participants gradually found their voice during the design event process. As a result of their views being heard and acknowledged, these reticent participants sometimes grew in confidence, to become highly valued contributors.

> **"Brilliant to see how empowered the community became." (Local authority)**
>
> **"This place sometimes gets a very bad press. I'm a resident of the town and I want to do everything I can to make it as good as it can be." (Member of the community)**

Local people's role in supporting design events is discussed further in 3.5.

3.4 Engagement of local authorities and politicians

All of the sample projects involved local politicians in some capacity. The extent of their involvement varied between areas. Sometimes, their role was integral to the process, and in other cases their role was more peripheral.

In one area, for example, all four councillors from different parties sat down with local representatives to discuss and agree how the process could be taken forward. This unity gave them a strong voice within the local authority.

Local authority roles were varied and included them being the applicant organisation with overall responsibility for the community design event, active participants in a process led by the community, and less active participants. In some of the sample areas, research participants noted they would have liked more active engagement from the local authority. In other areas, research participants felt that the local authority had been supportive and engaged.

In one area, for example, the local authority played a highly significant role in the process, starting with pre-design event engagement with the community via the community development team. This built a picture of the local need and established a strong position of trust and working relationships between parties. This was not regarded as 'another tick box exercise', but as a genuine exercise to provide an evidence base for the local authority to present to the political leadership within the council. The local authority participated within the design event process, with contributions from all key departments. The outcomes of the design event provided a mandate for change within the community. Post-design event, the local authority has continued its involvement, investing in critical Legal /Estates/Housing issues, which will be used to follow through a compulsory purchase order, and the political leadership of the Council has sanctioned a £1.5m capital budget to allow the a significant redevelopment project to be progressed – a key output of the design event.

3.5 Facilitation costs

As shown in Chapter 2, funding awards varied considerably across the programme, as did the percentage of the contribution by Scottish Government to total project costs. These also varied across the 10 sample projects – with total project costs ranging from £15,000 to £58,000. Even the highest of these costs is relatively small for the scale of activity that happened, and this is largely due to the significant amount of volunteer and local authority staff time which was contributed.

A full assessment of value for money did not form part of the evaluation, but costs related to facilitation were raised a number of times throughout the research. Many of the facilitators who participated in the research emphasised the small amount of funding that had been included in the bid for the project

and made available to them for the facilitation element of the design event, and how challenging they found it to deliver on budget. This seemed to be particularly the case in relation to community-led (rather than local authority-led) processes.

> **"You have to throw away the idea of a set number of days – budgets are small. You spend much more time than is billed for." (Facilitator)**

Facilitators often engaged with the design event processes as a "loss leader" which could lead to other opportunities, or as an opportunity for staff to gain experience of working with communities. Some were also involved simply because they enjoyed the process and it gave them design inspiration. However, the level of funding available to facilitators created challenges for most. One architect's view was that design events are unsustainable work for practices to undertake regularly.

> **"We had stayed away from design events – there's not enough funding to do them well and it can be unclear where the work goes and the extent to which they inform planning in a meaningful way. But this one felt right, it was a well-structured tender and I live in the area. It was intense, all-consuming and a very positive experience but we could not do more than one a year and function as a practice because it requires you to embed yourself within the community in a way they hadn't before in order to establish that dynamic relationship." (Facilitator)**

Another observed that:

> **"Commercially this has been a huge disappointment. A big investment in time and effort which goes nowhere." (Facilitator)**

One person reflected that small budgets for facilitators necessitated more local input:

> **"Small budgets for facilitators may be a good thing – it forces the community to do lots for itself." (Community organisation)**

Certainly, volunteers played a key role in boosting capacity to deliver the design events effectively – and areas without a high level of volunteer contributions at their disposal would almost certainly have been more limited in what could be achieved. Across the sample projects, volunteers were involved in a wide range of roles including recruitment, facilitation, design of materials for the design events, engaging with policy makers, and follow-up work following the design event.

> **"In our area, the level of quality and what was achieved for the money was phenomenal. Volunteers were central to this." (Community organisation)**

However, where a substantive level of volunteer input is not available locally, the role of the facilitator then becomes even more crucial. Significant expertise has been built up across the organisations involved in facilitation. Recompensing facilitators adequately is important to ensuring an ongoing supply of experts is available to support these processes.

3.6 Community lead partner versus Local Authority lead partner design processes

The sample projects were led by a mix of both community groups/organisations and local authorities, and the effect of this variation in relation to delivery was examined as part of the research.

3.6.1 Community-led processes

Communities usually had specific motivations for applying for community-led design grants. In one area, the motivation was a decision taken by the local authority regarding the use of a site which the community was opposed to. They used the design event as an opportunity to develop alternative proposals that could inform the council's decision-making processes.

In another area, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation carried out research on the impact of the 2008 financial crash on communities. They then commissioned the Scottish Urban Regeneration Forum (SURF) to research this further in other areas. SURF applied to Scottish Government for 'Alliance for Action' project funding which was extended to include the sample project area. The feasibility study identified many established community groups, but these were working in isolation and required co-ordination. There was a strong grass roots desire to improve the town, and SURF supported the establishment of a local group to co-ordinate regeneration work and hired a project co-ordinator. Crucially, local interest and ambition were already there. Charitable foundation and SURF input led to Scottish Government support, which in turn strengthened the community's desire and awareness of the need to support regeneration – this was a clear and natural progression.

Community participation, Rothesay charrette

Photo credit: IceCream Architecture

In another sample project, the main trigger was the planned closure of a local power station. There was huge community concern for the future of their area. The Coalfield Regeneration Partnership developed a five-year action plan through the Community Futures Programme. As this was coming to an end, an application was made to Scottish Government for the Charrette Fund. The key driver was the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, but with very strong commitment from the community.

Community members participating in the research seemed to have more confidence in the design process if it had been led by a community organisation. The best examples of these involved processes led by a well-respected local person or organisation, in partnership with a broad spectrum of local stakeholders with visible local authority support. However, if a process is community-led, research participants highlighted that the key players must have the right skills to build capacity, make strong connections within the community and effectively and regularly communicate progress.

> **"This needs individuals and teams who have the skills to take things forward and make them a reality". (Community organisation)**

If it is community-led and there are clashes of personalities or a less inclusive approach then disengagement can result, as was reported in one of the sample projects.

> **"When community-led there needs to be a system that doesn't rely on personalities and the delivery of the design event initiatives cannot be 'owned' by any one group or handful of individuals". (Community organisation)**

Facilitators involved in the evaluation also spoke of the different role that they had to play in volunteer-led projects – more time was required to support volunteers, and that time had to be used more flexibly. Others noted that key parts of the process could require more lead-in time as volunteers got up to speed with the task.

> **"We worked for a number of months in helping the group to decide on the best process for consultation which resulted in development briefs for the site to give to the council." (Facilitator)**

They also spoke warmly of the inspiration that this can bring to their role as a facilitator and reflected on how volunteers' enthusiasm can inspire others.

> **"Working with volunteers is a more liberating and inspiring way of working. Volunteers are on a high and really want to achieve something." (Facilitator)**
>
> **"Paid people wanted to match the ambition and aspiration of the volunteers." (Facilitator)**

3.6.2 Local authority-led processes

Community-led design events can be effective vehicles for enabling local authorities to strengthen relationships with local communities, create opportunities for more open dialogue and to gather views from a wide range of people. A number of the sample projects examined were local authority led and the local authorities' motivations for applying for funding to run these were mixed.

In one area, the design event was a response to a lack of consensus between the community and public bodies about the best options for the town.

> **"We had various attempts at community engagement in our town, but not very successfully. It gave us an opportunity to put the community at the heart of it." (Member of the community)**

> **"We wanted to get everyone on the same page, that's why the design event process was so appealing." (Local authority)**

In another area, the local authority hoped that the design event would enable them to re-engage with the community positively, following a challenging process of engagement in relation to the proposed closure of a local sports facility.

In another sample project it stemmed from a council committee seeking to actively pursue the approach identified in the Christie Commission report, which highlighted the need for local authorities to move from service delivery to enabling community. This was coupled with the continued reduction in available funding and a bank of competent and inspired volunteers actively seeking opportunities to lever in funding to shape and inform the area. The Scottish Government funding was considered an excellent way to harness interest and formulate actions led by the community.

In one sample project, the design event process was initiated through a very strong collaborative partnership between the council's community development team and the community. The local authority awarded a £10K community participative budget, which was spent working together using the Place Standard Tool – this was very successful in raising levels of community ambition. The council then applied to Scottish Government for funding for a design event.

A further example is a design process that began with a long-standing successful working relationship between Scottish Canals and a local authority on themes such as economic growth, leisure and tourism. Scottish Canals initiated the application to Scottish Government for design event funding. While there was some community interest already, this was only piecemeal due to the huge geographical scale of the project. This community interest was harnessed as the design event process began. The key in this case was the ambition and commitment of Scottish Canals, with strong local authority support – it was not community-led, but local communities were critically involved in the process.

Community participation, Rothesay charrette

Photo credit: IceCream Architecture

In another area, there was a desire on the part of the local authority to use the design event process as a vehicle for improving their engagement with the community and they decided to keep the design events based on town centres. The design events fed directly into local development plans but the local authority was clear that the design event process should not be seen as belonging to the local authority. They recognised the importance of ensuring that there was local ownership and that the focus was on what the community and partners could do to deliver on priorities set.

Compared with community-led projects, projects led by local authorities have had the advantage of more resources being available to them – in the form of expertise and staff time.

4. Impact and outcomes

All projects funded through the Programme were required to submit a final report to Scottish Government, and all have done so to date. These reports were an important output of the process in each area and usually described the design event process, priorities agreed by the community, and some form of action plan for taking these forward.

Contributions from the community, Portobello Charrette

Photo credit: Action Westbank Team

However, communities have also continued to be active in delivering on priorities set within these reports, and this chapter describes the range of short and longer-term outcomes arising from design events funded through the

Programme as reported by research participants. The evaluation aims to establish the impact of community-led design processes on those involved – including the community of that area, local organisations, and other stakeholders in the process, and these are reported in this chapter.

The outcomes identified are grouped thematically, and give a flavour of the range and extent of impact of the sample projects examined. This chapter focuses on community empowerment; short-term outcomes of the design processes; infrastructure; partnership working and decision making; ongoing local engagement; local knowledge and capacity; and outcomes with regards to funding.

4.1 Extent of impact

The extent of impact varies across the sample projects. Short-term impact can be evidenced to some degree across all of the sample projects examined, however, the initial flurry of activity and energy generated by the design events was not always sustained. Some of the sample projects have been successful in continuing to deliver impact over the longer term. In other areas, despite initial enthusiasm, follow-through has been weaker and there has been less impact as a result.

> **"We had an 18-month action plan which is continually updated. Most of it has been delivered." (Local authority)**
>
> **"The design event report doesn't play any role. Nobody has been driving it forward." (Local stakeholder)**

Most of the sample projects achieved a mix of short and longer-term outcomes. Usually this was intentional, with areas recognising the importance of quick wins to maintain community interest, combined with longer-term outcomes that can deliver more substantive impact. Frequently, research participants were of the view that either outcomes would not have materialised had the design event not taken place or that outcomes would have happened more slowly.

Areas rich in local assets, namely a concentration of local people with pre-existing knowledge and understanding of how and where to access funding, were most successful in achieving long-term impact. Where there was less of this local capacity, impact was reported to have been more limited.

4.2 Community empowerment

Across all of the sample projects, research participants were universally positive about their experiences of taking part in the design events. They described having enjoyed taking part, felt they had been well facilitated and had left feeling more engaged and empowered.

> **"The charrette got to grips with the key issues, through its intensity of focus, and in allowing the community to open a dialogue with a team of experts. It also managed people's expectations in terms of affordability and practicality."** (Stakeholder)
>
> **"An extremely positive community exercise. There had been lots of previous attempts along more traditional lines – experts had been parachuted in to implement change in the community. These had been consistently unsuccessful, as the ideas presented had belonged to the experts and the consultants – not to the community. Here, people really did engage enthusiastically. They very quickly took ownership of the event and its processes."** (Member of the community)
>
> **"A proper community led event, as opposed to a few folk in a room making decisions which affect the whole community."** (Member of the community)
>
> **"Let's give this a try. It can't be allowed to be the next thing that's failed in our area."** (Member of the community)

In the short-term, the design events seem to have been successful in galvanising community spirit and generating support for a shared vision for the area. Participants at design events described a positive energy and enthusiasm that inspired the community, but it was the ability to take actions and drive changes forward post-event that seems to have empowered or disempowered the community longer-term.

> **"The charrette empowered the community to believe it can influence decisions – this is good for democratic participation, and for people's own empowerment."** (Local authority)
>
> **"The process has given people confidence that they have power and influence that they didn't realise, but there is no easy formula for getting voices heard."** (Member of the community)
>
> **"Even if the outcome of the charrette had been unsuccessful, the community would have been in a better place – more empowered, greater capacity etc. The social dimension can change – there can be a change of mindset."** (Community volunteer)
>
> **"It cemented the community's belief that they could make things happen and led to more discussion about community ownership of assets. It gave them confidence."** (Public body)
>
> **"The charrette stopped a very difficult conversation being difficult."** (Local authority)

> **"The local authority had committed to place-making but weren't really doing it. The charrette was a good example of how it could be done."** **(Local authority)**

Some projects successfully capitalised on the energy created by the design events and were able to build on this longer term. In some areas, however, the design event process was far less successful at engaging the community longer-term.

> **"Charrettes are good enablers for community groups, but you need drive alongside it. That didn't happen in our area."** **(Member of the community)**
>
> **"You can't create a community – it has to evolve. In our area, people were initially enthusiastic but that waned really quickly."** **(Community volunteer)**
>
> **"Paid staff can act as gatekeepers to the local community. Often there are local people who are willing to be involved – but because the local authority has worked the way it has for many years, local people perhaps don't get the opportunity to be involved more extensively."** **(Community volunteer)**

4.3 Short-term outcomes

Many research participants spoke of the importance of short-term outcomes, or what they frequently referred to as "quick wins", to ensure that the community remains engaged and has faith that the process is delivering results. Quick wins keep awareness of progress in delivering design event priorities high, and give a clear message to the community that they have been listened to.

Girvan landscape
Photo credit: Blake Stevenson

In one of the sample projects, for example, a community art event created a hugely popular quick win, transforming an unsightly and unpopular concrete underpass into an exciting colourful entrance. This simple enhancement was achieved within three weeks of the project's inception, demonstrating to the community that the design event process could actually make things happen. It became a much talked about symbol of success and resulted in enhanced levels of community involvement and optimism. The ultimate message as one stakeholder explained, was:

> **"… that this is not just a talking shop – we're going to get things done here" (Stakeholder)**

In another of the sample projects, an enterprise support hub was created, with a pop-up shop within a former bank building in the town's high street which again demonstrated the success of the project in a visible, tangible way. It enabled local people to share their ideas and ambitions collectively in a place they felt belonged to them. In another example, a project was established to interpret and promote the medieval/market-place heritage of a particular street in the town.

In one project, stakeholders described the selection of the host venue for the design event event itself as a subtle quick win. The former community library had been recently closed following a local authority budgetary review. They felt that the choice of this venue, right at the heart of the subject area, demonstrated the potential for positive change. They also noted that it had the added benefit of making the community feel comfortable in a place that they felt had always belonged to them.

Research participants understood that not all successes can be achieved quickly. However, where progress is likely to be slower, research participants emphasised the importance of effective feedback mechanisms for the community so that they understand that while progress is not visible, this does not mean that there will be no change in the long-term. Without this feedback, some research participants reported that people were left feeling like their expectations had not been met.

Slow progress led to frustration for many, and resulted in a loss of goodwill. In some areas, momentum created by the design event process was lost as a result and consequently, in these areas, the longer-term impact of the design event process has also been more limited, due to a lack of capacity or enthusiasm for change.

> **"The process became long and drawn out, and the decision kept being deferred by the Committee in the local authority. That was tricky – people lose motivation, and you lose the goodwill from the people involved. You also lose the positivity and energy gained at the event. (Community organisation)"**
>
> **"It has dragged since the charrette due to the council being stretched." (Community organisation)**
>
> **"The participation request has still not been signed off by the local authority – they have reverted to the "Council time zone". Citizens struggle with this!" (Community organisation)**

Ensuring realistic expectations at the outset, and ensuring sufficient focus on both short and longer-term outcomes, were also recognised by research participants to be important components of successfully achieving impact.

4.4 Local infrastructure

4.4.1 Creation of new local groups/local structures

Some areas set up new groups specifically tasked with taking forward actions from the design event. Examples include:

- The Town Team in Girvan
- Macedonia Action Group in Glenrothes
- Go Forth Kincardine
- Bute Island Alliance
- Aspire Arbroath
- Pollokshields Heritage Trust
- Charrette Champions' Group in Arbroath
- Community Connectors in Arbroath

In the projects included in the study sample, these new groups had varying degrees of success in driving forward some of the quick wins referred to above. While these dedicated organisations can be helpful drivers in the early stages post-design event, enabling focus to be placed on delivering priorities agreed during the design event, this success can be short-lived. Some of the groups reportedly remain active and are focused on delivering the priorities set by the design events. However, others have folded, lost focus on these priorities with the passage of time, or have undergone a change in their remit.

4.4.2 Physical infrastructure

There have been significant physical outputs resulting from priorities agreed during the design event process. These have been varied and have been a very visible way of demonstrating to communities that change is happening as

a result of design events, with many of these outcomes being a direct result of priorities agreed through the design events. They range from small-scale, short-term changes that positively impact the "look" of local places, to more major and longer-term infrastructure projects.

There are a large number of short-term initiatives which have come out of the design event process. These varied significantly from place to place and are testament to the commitment of the local communities involved. Some of the examples cited by research participants are listed below:

- a street market now taking place once a month in a participating town

- the introduction of more Men's Sheds in an area, mostly located in former local authority buildings

- sourcing funding for bunting and painting old bikes and planting flowers in their baskets to decorate one part of a town centre – which was among improvements which led to full occupancy of shop units in that area

- a well-being centre established within a local park which will be used by the local cycle club as a base, and out of which a bike-borrowing service will be run

- new signage being installed in a town centre

- water fountains established in town centre

- local shop fronts painted to make the High Street more attractive and encourage in new businesses (although not without a protracted process of planning permission)

- a community art event was held which transformed an unsightly and unpopular concrete underpass into an exciting colourful entrance

- launch of a destination website for one local area

View in Girvan
Photo credit: Blake Stevenson

4.4.3 Longer-term infrastructure change

Some of the infrastructure changes delivered as a result of priorities set through the design event processes required more lead-in time and in some cases were not achieved until months or years after the original design event had taken place. In areas where feedback to the community had been effective, research participants were still able to draw a direct line of attribution back to the design event process. Some examples of this longer-term impact of the design events included:

- a hydro scheme was installed in one area and while research participants clarified that this was not an explicit output listed in the design event report, it was described as having been "spurred on" by the design event

- a dual carriageway in one area is in the process of being converted into single carriageway through the town centre. This process has required multiple stages of funding to take them from conception to design and is now moving towards implementation. Research participants felt that this would not have happened had it not been set as a priority through the design event

- a new pedestrian and vehicle bridge is being progressed in one area – this is a long-term project, but its conception was a direct result of priorities agreed through the design event

- in another area, they refurbished a local historical landmark which is scheduled to re-open in 2019 with a cultural hub as a welcome point for visitors

- in one area, local volunteers are in the process of negotiations with the council. The Council Committee has instructed council officers and the community to work together to develop a masterplan for the site (that was the subject of the design event) to replace the plans which were in place prior to the design event. They are hopeful that this will influence how the authority approaches similar processes in future

- active travel links being developed in conjunction with Sustrans and one of the local authority areas examined

- one area built a hostel that now generates its own income – members of the community indicated that the design event process was instrumental in encouraging local people to lead on projects of this nature and scale

- involving local landowners in the design event process in one area has resulted in a site being made available for 50 affordable homes. Research participants noted that this would not have been achieved without the impetus from the design event

- an enterprise support hub was created, with a pop-up shop within a former bank building in a High Street

- established self-guided walking routes supported by technology

- in one area, a townscape heritage Wayfinding and Public Realm project has been successfully implemented

- in another area, creative industries touchdown space has been established within the local library and gallery in partnership with the local Cultural Trust

- innovation workshops have been held in one area to encourage businesses to leverage heritage tourism opportunity

Many of these longer-term infrastructure projects are highly visible and tangible, and they were often helpful in demonstrating to the community that public bodies had listened and acted on priorities set through design event processes.

4.5 Audits and feasibility studies

Various audits and feasibility studies have been conducted in response to priorities set by design events. These include an audit of accessibility in one area, and a feasibility study into the narrowing of a road from a dual to single carriageway. These audits and studies have led to some of the physical infrastructure projects described above.

4.6 Partnership working and local decision making

Participants in most of the areas examined described significant improvements to local partnership working, and more effective and joined-up decision-making processes.

> **"The charrette helped a variety of agencies to work together better. It has improved communication in our area." (Stakeholder)**

Some also described local stakeholders being more engaged and proactive since the design event. Significantly, some areas also described more effective local decision-making processes as a result of the design events, including improved decision-making across community planning, for example:

- strengthened community planning within one local authority which has had an impact beyond the local area

- in another area, the council has changed its approach to assets more generally

- in one area, the community engagement processes trialled through the design event have been embedded in planning processes since the design event

- in one area, working partnerships have now been established between Scottish Canals, Highland and Islands Enterprise (HIE), Sustrans and Scottish Natural Heritage to deliver the outcomes of the design event

- in another area, the Bute Island Alliance has established improved partnership working with HIE, Argyll and Bute Council, SURF and Mount Stuart Trust

However, this type of progress did not occur in all of the sample project areas, and some research participants in these areas considered this to be a missed opportunity to capitalise on the momentum created by the design event.

4.7 Local engagement

In some areas, local engagement has also improved since the design events took place. Some projects described local people becoming more involved in local action (for example, a member of the public at one design event was inspired to go on to become a local councillor). In one area, stakeholders reported that community groups are more engaged with young people than they were previously and now understand better how to engage with them meaningfully. In another area, membership of local groups had increased significantly since the design event.

Some areas also described local authorities and other larger public bodies using the design event process to gain a better understanding of how best to engage with the public on planning issues – and changing their wider approach to it as a result.

Community participation in the design process, Portobello charrette

Photo credit: Action Westbank Team

4.8 Local knowledge and capacity

Some of the sample projects were located in areas that were already rich in local resources i.e. with committed, active communities with expertise, knowledge and motivation to improve their local area. Other areas had fewer of these assets available within their communities. In both sets of circumstances, research participants fed back that the design event process had improved local knowledge, capacity and confidence and saw this as a significant outcome of the design event process. In one area, for example, a group of secondary school pupils who participated in the design event were engaged by the local authority planning department to participate in a further project. This project sought their contributions in helping to identify opportunities for the community in the formulation of future Local Plans.

> **"Building capacity of the community is as important as the actual intended outcomes." (Stakeholder)**
>
> **"The charrette process has helped us to grow community knowledge of the costs of projects, the complexities of maintenance etc." (Member of the community)**

However, some areas remain better placed than others in relation to knowledge, expertise and confidence, and while the design event process may have supported some development in this respect, there are areas that remain in need of support to drive forward change.

> **"There remains a need to develop communities' capacity to understand where the funding opportunities are, and what is involved in applying for and delivering projects." (Community organisation)**

4.9 Additional funding

The design event process has led to substantive funding being attracted into some of the sample project areas. They have given local areas improved intelligence about priorities for the area, and have also given some funders a "short-cut" to knowing how best to use available funding in some areas. The examples below are only a snapshot provided by some of the sample projects, but they give a sense of the scale of funding that has been attracted in to some areas:

- in one area, a City Deal application focusing on physical infrastructure is bringing significant funding to the area. The bid was directly informed by priorities outlined in the community-led design event report.

- a Landscape Partnership bid was submitted to support the wider vision for heritage work in one area. The design event report informed this bid

which attracted some £2 million from Heritage Lottery Fund for a landscaping project.

- a follow-up process which involved developing a design guide and options for the main town square in one area resulted in some £120,000 of external funding being made available to take the work forward.

- in one area, a successful application was made to Sustrans to undertake an accessibility study into connections around the town. This helped the area to build a case for more significant levels of funding.

- funding to enable construction work to begin on a major route through a town centre (reducing it from dual to single carriageway) was informed by consultation and exploration of solutions with the community during the community-led design process.

- £1.5 million funding has been provided by a local authority for work to a local community centre as a direct result of consultation undertaken during the community-led design process.

- £10,000 funding contribution from a local trust, combined with £2.25 million from a range of other funders, including Heritage Lottery Fund, has contributed to the implementation of a townscape heritage wayfaring and public realm project.

- £2m funding leveraged for an outdoor hub project, including improvements to the quality of a local towpath.

- in another area, delivery partners have funded a project investigating a potential enterprise park on a decommissioned site which had been the subject of discussion at the community-led design event, and one of the original triggers for the process to take place.

Whilst it is not possible to determine whether this funding would have been attracted in to areas without the design event process, many of those interviewed were confident that it was additional.
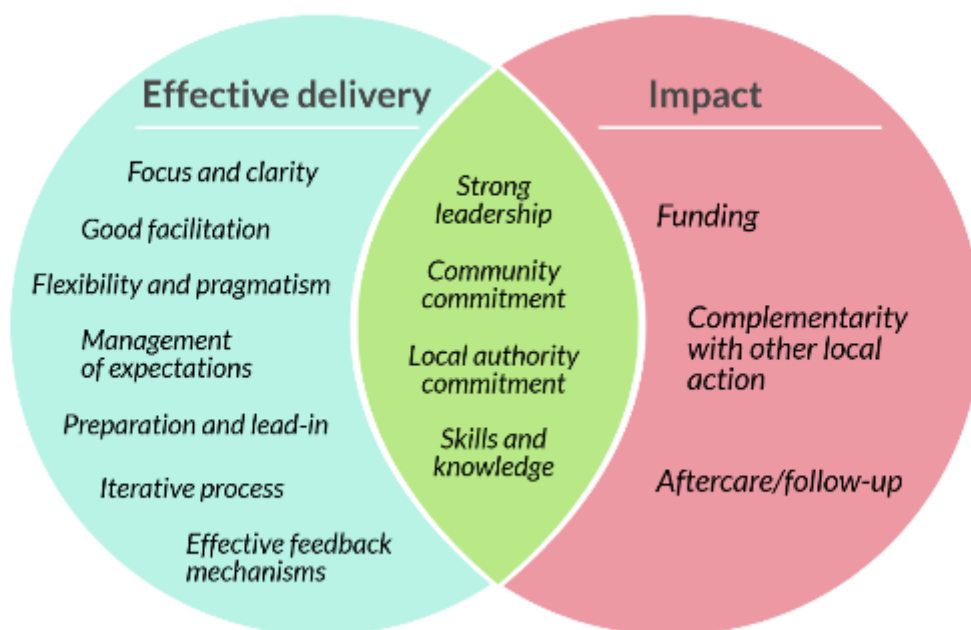
Photo credit: Austin Smith Lord & Angus Council

5. Key factors influencing successful delivery and impact

As discussed in Chapter 4 the extent of impact varied across the sample projects examined, and this is likely to be reflected across the wider group of 78 projects funded between 2011 and 2018.

This chapter discusses the key factors that influence whether design events are successfully delivered, and whether they have longer term impact. These factors are listed in the diagram below and discussed further throughout the chapter. The factors listed in the overlapping section relate to both delivery and impact.

Figure 5.1: Key factors that influence successful delivery and impact

Effective delivery
- Focus and clarity
- Good facilitation
- Flexibility and pragmatism
- Management of expectations
- Preparation and lead-in
- Iterative process
- Effective feedback mechanisms

Strong leadership
Community commitment
Local authority commitment
Skills and knowledge

Impact
- Funding
- Complementarity with other local action
- Aftercare/follow-up

5.1 Enablers and barriers to delivery of design events

5.1.1 Preparation and lead-in

Facilitators, lead partners and volunteers all emphasised the importance of good preparation and sufficient lead-in time (described as at least three months) for design events. Research participants highlighted this as particularly important in relation to recruitment, but also in relation to other aspects of delivery. In some areas, preparation for the design events included "warming up" the community ahead of the charrette taking place.

> **"One of the successful aspects was briefing the community ahead of the charrette. It provided clarity about the actual situation." (Stakeholder)**
>
> **"Pre-engagement did not take place. In hindsight, we should have engaged an artist in pre-engagement warm-up events (used successfully elsewhere)." (Stakeholder)**

Others noted that it could be useful to consider what issues that were likely to be raised ahead of the design events and to consider what some of the practical implications of addressing these might be so that expectations could be managed reasonably at the design event itself.

> **"We should have looked forward more before the events and anticipated what might have come up and what the implications of these were. It might have helped to manage expectations." (Local authority)**

5.2 Format of design events

Traditionally, design events have taken place in a consolidated format – usually running on a number of consecutive days, although more recently Scottish Government has encouraged projects to deliver these more flexibly. Feedback suggests that iterative processes are most effective - where events are held at intervals with time in between for reflection and further development of ideas and materials. Research participants, and facilitators in particular, reported greater impact where this was the process followed.

Some also felt that it was too demanding to ask local people to participate in a design event over a number of consecutive days, and some believed that it impacted on attendance numbers and how representative those attending were of the wider community.

Research participants also noted that a more compressed format did not give the design teams in some areas time to reflect, to consult on policy or technical issues, or to check the feasibility of some of the proposals. It also put

them under pressure to produce an output within a short timeframe which did not enable the best quality output to be produced. However, some of the lead partners and facilitators also highlighted the tension of costs versus time required for a more protracted process.

5.3 Focus and clarity of purpose

In many areas, the design events were used as an opportunity to create a future vision for an area or develop a town plan or similar. While many of those involved welcomed the opportunity, some also reflected that it led to a lack of focus:

> **"There wasn't enough clarity about what we wanted from it in our area. It wasn't clear enough what people were being asked to contribute towards." (Local authority)**
>
> **"Our charrette was too general. There was no specific output in mind." (Member of the community**

In some areas, however, the focus of the design event was narrower – in one area, for example, the focus was on developing alternative design options for a specific site for the local authority to consider instead of a design they had intended to approve. A narrower focus seems to have been helpful to the success of driving forward progress – it enabled those involved to be equally focused in relation to prioritising actions and pursuing these.

> **"To make progress we set narrow parameters. We had a clearly defined purpose – to design a mixed-use development for the site." (Community organisation)**
>
> **"The extensive geographic subject area was actually a benefit. This allowed us to take a bigger picture and examine a number of interlocking themes and to explore how the canal fitted in so significantly from a variety of different perspectives." (Stakeholder)**

5.4 Skills and knowledge

Having local people with the skills and knowledge to support the design event process stood out as a key factor influencing success. Having a key contact with the skills and abilities to engage the community and harness local enthusiasm and commitment was a further strength. Where these were present, progress was far more substantive than in areas that relied on local authority staff or other local staff to take action forward.

> "Awareness and knowledge of opportunities like participation orders and community buy-outs is not as high in all areas." (Community organisation)
>
> "People need to know what levers and opportunities are available. There is also a need for more awareness amongst elected representatives of these. They are the link between the 'body' and the 'people'." (Community organisation)
>
> "It's difficult to get the right people involved in taking actions forward. We don't have a bank of professionals like architects or lawyers in the town." (Member of the community)

5.5 Good facilitation

As noted earlier in this report, good facilitation was key to successful delivery of the design events. A good facilitator crucially brought credibility and independence to the process. Strong facilitators were also able to offer substantive support in reaching out to a wide audience within the community, and creating a design event that engaged people of all ages.

Research participants also emphasised the importance of information and materials provided at the design event suiting a wide range of ages, being engaging and fully accessible.

> "Don't expect people to take in vast amounts of technical information." (Facilitator)
>
> "Some of the designs shown in the publication of the charrette report have been turned into reality. The pictures gave people a much more tangible sense of how things could look if we delivered on the priorities set through the charrette." (Local authority)

Good facilitation ensured that local people felt their voices were being heard and led to clarity about the outputs that would be produced from the design event.

5.6 Managing expectations

The most effective facilitators were also able to manage expectations, ensuring that participating members of the community understood what was viable and what was unrealistic. The discussion in one area around the viability of changing a dual carriageway to a single carriageway was a good example of this judgement being applied effectively – a less experienced

facilitator may have shut down this option as unviable. This was important in relation to ensuring longer-term buy-in from communities. Local partners also played an important role in managing the communities' expectations.

> **"Communities have expectations that things can happen quickly but sometimes they take 10 years. Managing expectations is important."** **(Local authority)**
>
> **"We also need to manage expectations about who can take action – it's not just about the local authority doing things." (Local authority)**
>
> **"There is frustration in the community about slowness of process. Maybe there is not an understanding about the level of justification required for things to happen – or of the cost involved." (Member of the community)**

5.7 Community commitment

Local commitment to driving forward change was another key factor influencing success. Where there was pride in a local area, and local people willing to commit substantive time and energy to support the process, the impact of the design events was often more significant. This level of commitment was usually evident before the design event process had begun.

A strong sense of community and local pride provided a strong foundation to build the discussion and to take forward the priorities identified in the event report.

> **"The work from the charrette has rested on the significant voluntary contribution by an army of individuals who have a passion for their place" (Member of the community)**
>
> **"We need to get all interested parties together to agree the best way forward. That should be the role of the our local organisation but it doesn't have the motivation or the support." (Community member)**
>
> **"It was clear to us that the charrettes could not be seen to be a council thing. It was also about what the community and partners could do." (Local authority)**

5.8 Strong leadership

Many research participants emphasised the importance of strong local leadership, from local politicians, local authority staff, and leadership in other local organisations, to support the design event process, as well as encourage and support local people to take forward priority actions arising from it.

> **"Getting the right people to lead on issues helps to move the community away from dependency on the local authority. They need help to think in a different way, and it takes time, but it is essential."** (Community organisation)
>
> **"We got good leadership from some local organisations, but we didn't get the same buy-in from the council. There were lots of changes of chief executive and a vacuum in the way they engaged."** (Member of the community)
>
> **"Under-resourced, over-worked workers won't engage if it's not a leadership priority."** (Community organisation)

Strong leadership from national bodies to support local design events was also considered to be important. Research participants were able to identify some national bodies that had provided good support, but others were seen to be inflexible and unresponsive. Some suggested that the mindset in some national organisations needed to change to better respond to communities' priorities.

> **"Rather than saying no, because that's the way it has always been done, these organisations need to grasp the nettle and see the design events as an opportunity to change the way they do things."** (Member of the communtiy)
>
> **"They contributed to the vision but when it came to diverting funding, there was more resistance."** (Member of the community)
>
> **"There is a role for Scottish Government in encouraging these national bodies to engage differently and more flexibly."** (Stakeholder)

Numerous research participants also noted a challenge in getting key people involved to cascade to others – highlighting that when they leave there is often a gap in knowledge and progress stalls as a result.

5.9 Local authority commitment

Research participants reported varying levels of commitment from local authorities to the design event process. Some were highly engaged and able to release staff to support the design event process, but local authorities in some other areas were far less supportive and their input was seen as tokenistic.

> **"The local authority doesn't have a real vision for our area. They have not helped us to take forward actions." (Member of the community)**
>
> **"The Locality Planning Officers that are pending need to get more engaged and be more strategically involved." (Community organisation)**

There was widespread agreement that local authorities needed to be supportive and enabling, but many recognised that some local authorities have been under-resourced and unable to provide an appropriate level of support in recent years. They also emphasised the inability or slow pace of some local authorities to change how they work in response to communities' priorities:

> **"The council just wants to do things the way it always has – it is an oil tanker that is hard to turn. There is genuine willing to change, but it is very slow to happen." (Stakeholder)**

However, many also recognised the need for collective responsibility and that implementation of actions coming out of the design event should not be left to local authorities alone to deliver.

5.10 Feedback mechanisms

Feedback and ongoing awareness-raising in relation to progress on delivering priorities from the design events was an important part of keeping the community engaged beyond the lifetime of the design event itself. Feedback mechanisms were varied, and the extent of feedback to the community also varied considerably between projects.

Some areas had robust feedback mechanisms in place. For example, in one area a Facebook page that was set up for the design event has been kept live and is updated to inform local people of progress with actions since the events; and in another area a local group (funded by the local authority) remains a key mechanism for feeding back to the community about progress on outcomes. However, in many of the projects examined, feedback mechanisms were reported to be lacking in structure, ad hoc, or in some cases non-existent.

> **"Our local authority doesn't ever feedback enough. They are not creating the conditions to sit down and discuss and review key issues."** (Community member)
>
> **"People put a lot of effort in – they gave up their whole weekend to do it. They need to see tangible results. At our Community Council so far, the report has been that there is nothing to report."** (Community member)

5.11 Flexibility and pragmatism

A number of research participants recognised the value of a measured and pragmatic approach to decision-making and influencing in relation to the design event process. In one area, local stakeholders recognised the ability of the volunteers involved in the project to approach a set of sensitive issues with real pragmatism which many involved believed was key to their success in making progress:

> **"The reasoned and flexible approach of the local volunteers helped to take it forward."** (Facilitator)
>
> **"In our area, the technical constraints provided by the Trunk roads infrastructure meant that a pragmatic approach was required."** (Member of the community)
>
> **"In our area, the key local volunteers understood that the local authority has huge financial pressures, and they were willing to engage in a realistic way."** (Facilitator)

5.12 Funding for delivering outcomes

A dominant theme in the research was lack of funding to support the design event process and for implementation of outputs. Many research participants noted the challenge in identifying funding for taking forward priorities, and the impact of local authority cuts in particular.

> **"There is no funding to create additional capacity. The local authority has the burden of this. It limits how many of these processes can happen and the quality of the outcomes."** (Local authority)
>
> **"Reducing resources is a key issue – the timings of the charrettes was unfortunate. Ten years ago it would have been easier."** (Local authority)
>
> **"The charrette process didn't include the detailed financial plan for priorities set. The charrette reports need to look carefully at deliverability, ownerships of actions, and funding available. A 5-year development plan would be good."** (Community organisation)

A number of research participants suggested that local authorities or Scottish Government should consider providing a small annual pot of funds as seed funding to help communities get going with implementation – as it did at one point through the Activating Ideas Fund.

5.13 Complementarity with other local action

Many of the research participants, particularly local stakeholders, noted the importance of aligning design event outputs with other local action to maximise impact. Integrating the design event priorities with other local priorities was seen to give them credibility, and funders could then have greater clarity about how priorities fitted with the wider picture in an area. A number of examples of this happening were given:

> **"In our area, Locality Plans were directly informed by the outcomes of the charrette process and partners on our local body set up to take forward short-term actions from the charrette) were asked to join the locality partnership." (Local authority)**
>
> **"The community still refers back to the charrette at community meetings. The charrette outcomes are still used to put pressure on the local authority and National Park Authority to deliver outcomes." (Local stakeholder)**
>
> **"The Charrette Report produced at the end of our design process was owned and implemented by the local community planning partnership with realistic project outcomes embedded within the local community plan. This not only provided a direction and focus but formed the basis for future funding applications." (Local stakeholder)**

Some local stakeholders interviewed also emphasised the importance of the design event work being better joined up with other local mechanisms such as participatory budgeting, locality planning, local development plans and Local Outcomes Improvement Plans.

5.14 Follow-up

The evaluation examined the extent to which formal or structure processes for follow-up were in place in the sample project areas. The picture was mixed, with some research participants reporting some formal processes for follow-up in place in their area, but from others there was a strong sense that areas have been left to get on with it themselves since the design events took place.

Many of the research participants recognised the importance of local ownership, however many also felt that some form of aftercare support would improve the current process and would minimise the risk that the time and resource invested would not yield impact.

Some research participants noted serious concerns about design event follow-up.

> **"The circle doesn't close. The design event provides an excellent vehicle for people to express their dreams for their community. The process then sifts and prioritise the ideas presented. The missing link is the economic development support required to convert the ideas into reality." (Community organisation)**
>
> **"The charrette is not an end in itself. A structured follow up is essential – a process of baton handling, with someone identified in the role of project champion." (Community organisation)**
>
> **"The outcomes need to be embedded in local authority action plans. They need to resource next steps, or simply confirm that no further action is being taken – muddling along is not an option." (Stakeholder)**

Some suggested that Scottish Government has a role to play in aftercare, for example that Scottish Government could fund follow-up support at regular intervals (for example, after 6 months, one year, and 5 years) following an event.

> **"There should be an after-care package provided by independent brokers, which would enable local areas to explore blockages, re-ignite good conversations etc." (Stakeholder)**

Local authorities were also seen as key to the follow-up process. The extent of their involvement in this varied across the sample projects. In one area, despite cuts to local authority budgets, the council has continued to fund staff to provide support to communities to develop their capacity. Individual staff members have responsibility for a locality and a theme. They are now moving towards a fully locality-based approach.

Photo credit: Austin Smith Lord & Angus Council

6. Conclusions

The purpose of this evaluation was to establish whether and how the Programme has achieved its aims to date, the extent to which outputs arising from the design events have been implemented, assess the short and longer-term impact of the Programme, and to identify learning points to inform future development of the Programme.

The evaluation examined whether design events have been an effective mechanism for engaging and empowering local communities, and the extent to which they have changed practice in relation to planning for place. It also examined the effectiveness of the Programme in achieving longer-term outcomes for communities and project partners.

Across the sample projects examined, delivery of design events has been of a high standard with participants confirming good quality facilitation, the accessibility of venues and information, and events that have enthused and engaged. While quality across the wider programme is reported to have been more mixed, with some research participants describing the quality of events in some other areas they experienced as poorer, the consensus from research participants was that this was a valuable and effective programme that is significantly improving community engagement in relation to the design of places and that has the potential to continue to impact positively in future.

6.1 Effectiveness of the programme in encouraging and empowering community involvement in the design of places

A key tenet of the Scottish Government's community-led design programme is to place local communities at the centre of the design process. Through design events, Scottish Government has set out to involve communities in

decision-making processes and encouraged them to play an active role in developing ideas for the future of their towns, villages and neighbourhoods.

The evaluation explored with local people their experiences of taking part in design events, and the extent to which the events led to them feeling more empowered to take part and to be influential in the design processes for their local areas.

Overwhelmingly, research participants found the design events themselves to be inspiring and empowering. Participation in the events was often believed to be wider than participation in previous community engagement events, with a strong sense that a cross-section of the community was involved.

External organisations involved in providing facilitation support were widely praised for the quality of their input, and activities delivered at the design events were often described as varied, inclusive and suited to all age ranges.

Research participants reported feeling that they were able to actively contribute at these events, and that there was real scope to influence future planning and design for their area. Some were enthused to become more involved in improving their local area as a result of taking part in the Programme.

Where they work well, design events have given the community a strong voice in the design of their local area and have resulted in local authorities embedding community engagement more effectively in their planning processes.

6.2 Effectiveness of the Programme in achieving longer-term outcomes for communities and project partners

All of the sample projects examined in depth demonstrated short-term outcomes, including smaller-scale improvements to the aesthetics of local areas, creation of new local groups, and increased membership of local groups. These were an important means of signalling to communities that their input to design events was valued and that action was being taken to deliver on priority actions agreed. Delivering these short-term outcomes was important in maintaining momentum following an event.

The Programme has also been highly effective in achieving longer-term impact in some (but not all) areas – this included impact on local physical infrastructure, local capacity, and community cohesion. This was more often, but not exclusively, the case in areas which were already rich in local assets i.e. engaged local people with the skills and knowledge to support improvements to their area.

In some areas, however, the impact of the Programme has been far less substantive and less strategic. This has most commonly been a result of a combination of apathy within the community, a lack of local capacity to take forward actions, and a lack of engagement by the local authority and other local organisations in relation to implementation.

6.3 Key factors for achieving impact

As discussed in Chapter 5, the evaluation identified a number of factors for success. Successful achievement of impact seems to be affected particularly by the factors shown in Figure 6.1 below:

Figure 6.1: Key factors for achieving impact
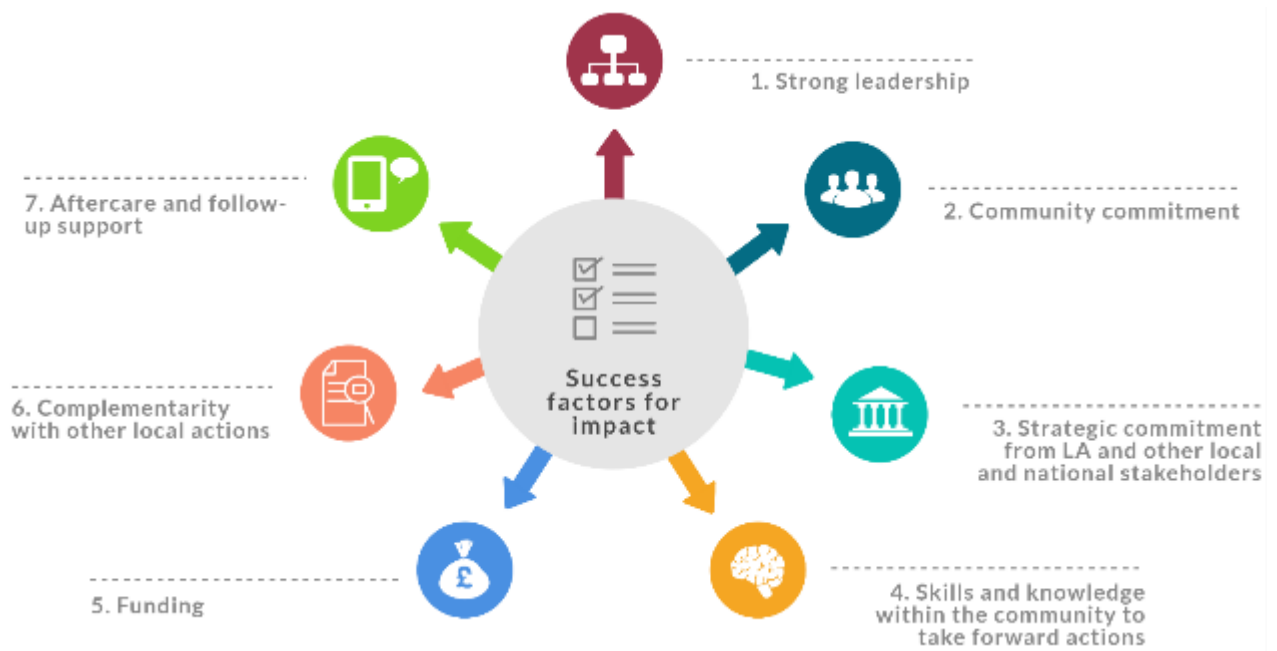
The size of an area or whether an area is urban or rural does not appear to be a determinant of success – pride in place, as well as an active and engaged local community is much more likely to determine success. Areas that saw the most impact from the Programme had often been in a better place to start off with – with a strong sense of local pride, active and engaged members of the community with skills and knowledge, as well as joined-up local agencies.

Where the enablers shown in Figure 6.1 are present, success in implementation and subsequent achievement of impact is much more likely. Where these enablers are less evident, it is likely that local communities will need more support to achieve the same impact.

These findings are in line with the findings of other research examined as part of a brief literature review conducted as part of this evaluation. The literature review confirmed the findings that design events vary in terms of a number of factors, such as cost, format, duration, and approach; that pre-engagement

and awareness raising is crucial to participation rates; that they can strengthen local people's voices; and that their success can vary depending on the differing resources available to local communities. Further details can be found in the full literature review in Appendix 2.

6.4 Sustaining the impact of design events

The timing and status of the final reports varied across projects. In some instances they were commissioned by the local authority to inform the development plan process, sometimes they pre-dated this process, and sometimes they were commissioned subsequently. Although there was no official status of the report and no obligation on the part of the local authority to take notice of the final reports produced, many were used in the development plan process. The status and impact of design events led directly by the community is more uncertain and generally relied on some cooperation in advance of the design process. Ensuring that these final reports are seriously considered in development plan processes has been a common challenge – and their status is influenced by the level of local buy-in, and by who has commissioned the work. However, with the passing of the Planning Act (2019), these reports can be included as part of the process as a Local Place Plan.

Where they currently work well, the design events have been shown to give the community a strong voice in the design of their local area and have resulted in local authorities embedding community engagement in their planning processes. In some places, design events have already become an important catalyst for improving, planning and creating a better sense of place and there is a sense that this impact could be realised more widely.

Over the course of the Programme, the Scottish Government has been responsive to learning about what worked well and less well, adapting the Programme accordingly. The new Investing in Communities Fund, part of the Empowering Communities Fund, is a further development of the Programme. This new fund aims to promote a more responsive, community-led place based approach, one that is flexible and can adapt to existing and emerging community issues, circumstances and priorities; and that encourages more effective strategic place based partnership working. In so doing, it aims to support the best and most effective use of resources available to and within communities.The fund aims to help support disadvantaged communities to develop and deliver sustainable local solutions that address local priorities and needs; increase active inclusion; and build on the assets of local communities, which should address a number of the issues identified by this evaluation. Significantly, the new programme offers multi-year funding, taking account of the need for longer-term planning for some projects; can fund projects of up to £250,000 in value, and can be used to fund activity that has already been designed.

It is important that communities continue to have access to funding and support to take forward community design events, enabling community-led design to be further embedded in planning processes. This new fund is a good opportunity to build on the successful work undertaken through the Programme to date. The key learning points in the next chapter may provide helpful learning in taking forward the new fund.
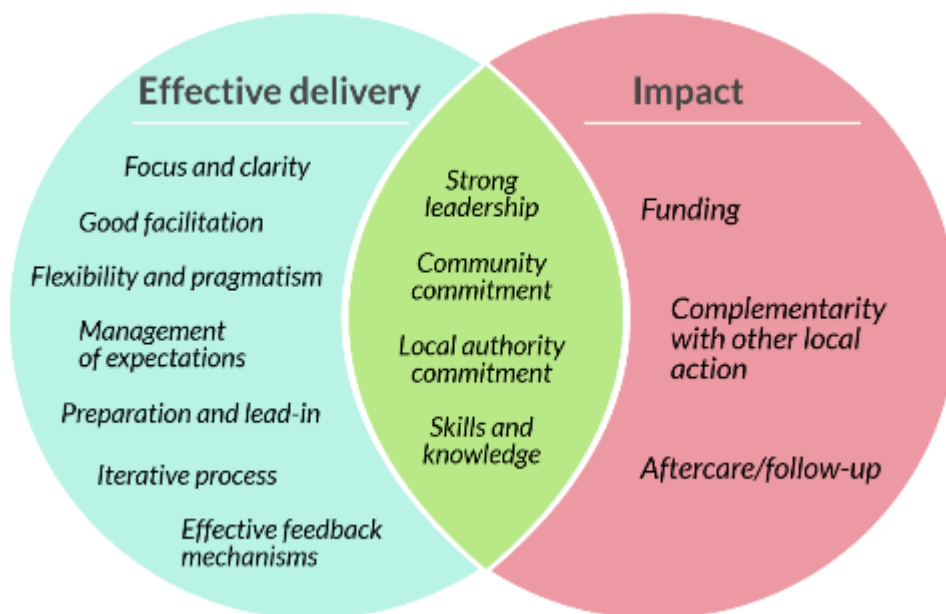
Photo credit: Blake Stevenson

7. Key learning points

Learning Point 1: Design events funded through the Programme appear to be a successful method of engaging the community in design of place and their continued use as an approach should be welcomed.

Learning point 2: There are a range of key factors influencing successful delivery of design events, implementation of outputs (e.g. action plans) from the events, and in achieving impact. These are summarised in Figure 7.1 below, and could form the basis of guidance to local areas in applying for funding. The factors listed in the overlapping section relate to both delivery and impact.

Figure 7.1 Factors influencing effective delivery and impact

Learning point 3: As part of the process of applying for design event funding, or at latest in the final report produced after the design event, areas should outline at a high level the resources they have available or intend to pursue to fund actions coming out of the design event process. Likewise, the role of key partners, organisations and members of the community in implementation and delivery should be clear. This is more likely to lead to achievement of desired outcomes.

Learning point 4: Ensure timeframes for delivery, and production of outputs, including the final reports and action plans from design events is realistic. Experiences to date suggest that ensuring adequate lead-in time (a minimum of three months), and longer timeframes for delivery are more effective in

ensuring a high-quality process is followed, and a high-quality final report is produced.

Learning point 5: National bodies can have an important role in supporting local design events, and the implementation of subsequent action plans, with knowledge, advice and funding. Flexibility and capacity within these organisations to support delivery of local priorities is important.

Learning point 6: Local areas should ensure a realistic budget is set aside for facilitation of design events. While volunteers have an important role to play in the process, over-reliance on volunteers could lead to a reduction in quality.

Learning point 7: Some local areas are well-placed to deliver effective design events that lead to substantive impact. Others have fewer local assets and in these circumstances more support and capacity needs to be provided by statutory services to enable design events to be delivered successfully and to achieve impact.

Learning point 8: Achieving short-term outcomes has been shown to be critical in empowering and galvanising communities to take action following design events, and in a more sustained way. Setting aside dedicated funding to take forward a number of actions immediately following a design event can be helpful in supporting this.

Learning point 9: While some local areas are well placed to take forward actions following a design event, others are not. A formal follow-up process at regular intervals following the initial design event – potentially at six months, one year and five years – would enable progress to be assessed, reasons for lack of progress to be identified, and the extent to which communities have taken forward actions and local organisations have embedded design event outcomes in their own planning processes to be examined. There may be value in this follow-up support being provided by someone external to the area (e.g. independent facilitators or Scottish Government officials).

Learning point 10: In some places, design events have already become an important catalyst for improving planning and creating a better sense of place. Given the significant impact that design events are having in some areas, there is potential for these to become a more fundamental part of planning processes more widely.

Learning point 11: Design events may have more impact if they are given more formal status – with an expectation or requirement that local authorities and other local bodies reflect the outcomes of these in their local development plans.

Appendix 1 - Sample Projects

Initial year project took place	Project	Location	SG Grant	LA /Public Body/ Community -led	Focus of the project	Facilitators
2016/17 (Design events)	**Dunfermline**	East	£24,810	Public Body	Inspire and excite the community about heritage, and work towards a town masterplan.	Sam Foster and Oliver Chapman and others
2011/12 (LDP Design events)	**Callander**	Central Highlands	£34,436	Public Body	Shared vision and masterplan for the future of Callander.	7N Architects
2015/16 Design events	**Arbroath**	North East	£15,000	LA	Development of long-term vision and strategy for Arbroath town centre.	ASL
2015/16 (Design events)	**Pollokshields**	West	£25,000	Community	Consultation on the East Pollokshields and Port Eglinton Planning Study to inform the City Development Plan. Diverse community involved.	Collective
2016/17 (Design events)	**Glenrothes West**	Central	£20,000	LA	Masterplan for the area with a particular focus on redevelopment of the Glenwood Centre.	PAS
2017/18 (Making Places)	**Portobello**	East	£12,000	Community	Community-led design weekend about the future of the Pitz/Tumbles site in Westbank in Portobello. Still active.	Nick Wright Planning

2015/16 (Design events)	**Rothesay**	W Islands	£25,000	Public body	Design event to address issues in respect of the town centre and identify opportunities for the proposed Phase 2 TH project. SURF connection and active and ongoing.	Ice Cream Architecture
2016/17 (Design events)	**Kincardine**	Central	£20,000	Community	Part of Coalfield Longannet Initiative with purpose of plan to regenerate central Kincardine. Led by Coalfield Regeneration Trust	Oliver Chapman Architects
2013/14 (LDP Design events)	**Muirtown & South Kessock, Inverness**	North	£17,500	Public body	Brief to consider the whole area and how it adjoins the city centre.	Michael Laird Architects (and others)
2011/12 (LDP Design events)	**Girvan**	South West	£29,850	LA	Vision and masterplan for the future of Girvan linking public spaces with the beachfront, harbourside and retail area.	John Thompson and Partners

Appendix 2 - Literature Review

Introduction

This brief review of other literature on community engagement in planning in Scotland, includes articles and publications from academic, government and professional publications.

The literature review explores some of the key themes arising and discusses these in relation to the evaluation findings.

Charrette delivery processes

The University of Strathclyde published a review of charrettes undertaken between 2011 and 2016 and this highlighted that there is no one uniform approach to delivering a charrette. The study found that charrettes vary in terms of objectives, recruitment and engagement methods, cost, duration, geographical boundaries, and whether the process is led by the local authority, the community or another client[12].

Pre-charrette engagement

An article published in Urban Realm emphasises the importance of pre-charrette engagement work in building awareness of and engagement in the charrette, particularly among people who might not normally take part in planning activities: "Part of this work involves breaking down walls that have traditionally silenced the shy, disaffected and cynical… it is about going out to the pubs, clubs, shops and bus stops to promote discussion and set the agenda before the charrette commences"[13].

Benefits of charrettes for communities

The literature review also highlighted evidence that charrettes offer communities the opportunity to take on a strong voice in the design of their local area which can

lead to improved local services, facilities and spaces, and this in turn can result in positive outcomes for residents' health and wellbeing[14,15].

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[12] Kennedy, Ainslie (2017), Scotland's approach to participatory planning: characterising the charrette, in International Journal of Architectural Research, Vol 11 No 2, p101-122: https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/61442/1/Kennedy_ArchNet_2017_Scotlands_approach_to_participatory_planning_characterising_the_charrette.pdf

[13] Ibid

[14] Rolfe, Steve (2016), Assessing the impacts of community participation policy and practice in Scotland and England. PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, http://theses.gla.ac.uk/7309

[15] Murphy, Niall (2018), Charrettes and Challenges in Pollokshields, BEFS News and Comments, https://www.befs.org.uk/latest/charrettes-and-challenges-in-pollokshields/

Apathy

The evaluation found that apathy among local communities can be a deterrent to participation in charrettes. A Scottish Government study provides further evidence of this, noting that apathy towards the planning system among members of the public has led to reluctance to engage in planning decisions: "At present, only a small minority appears to be motivated to engage in planning"[16].

This apathy stems from a lack of trust in the planning system, a perception that the system is not fair or equitable, and a feeling that engaging in the planning system does not make a difference. As the Scottish Government's report states, "there is a gap between the rhetoric of community empowerment and communities' experience of trying to influence the planning system… More people may be encouraged to get involved if there is evidence that engagement can make a difference"[17].

This view is confirmed in an article in Scottish Planning and Environmental Law, which notes that "there is a long-standing tendency for developers, planners and policy-makers who do not like what they are hearing to dismiss the views of planning's engaged public as belonging to a minority NIMBYist group within society that does not reflect the opinions of the 'silent majority'... This frequently leads to people's experiences being overlooked, undermined, worked around or just plain ignored"[18].

Implementing the outcomes of charrettes

The evaluation found that, even where charrettes have successfully engaged the local community, the ideas generated are not always implemented. One article noted that "how to get community-led charrettes adopted into policy by councils does seem to be the Achilles heel of the process with the risk of thwarting community enthusiasm which could descend into cynicism and distrust"[19]. This was an issue also identified by the Scottish Government-commissioned report into Barriers to Community Engagement in Planning[20], and another article commented that "the intensity of the initial sessions all too often dissipates due to a lack of follow up action"[21].

This situation contributes to a perception among community members that their views are not taken into account by decision-makers, leading to the apathy towards the planning

[16] Scottish Government (2017), Barriers to community engagement in planning: a research study, https://www.gov.scot/publications/barriers-to-community-engagement-in-planning-research/

[17] Ibid

[18] Symonds, Clare (2017), Constructing barriers to engagement or knocking them down? (public engagement in the planning process), in Scottish Planning and Environmental Law, No 183 Oct 2017, p112-114

[19] Murphy, Niall (2018), Charrettes and Challenges in Pollokshields, BEFS News and Comments, https://www.befs.org.uk/latest/charrettes-and-challenges-in-pollokshields/

[20] Scottish Government (2017), op cit

[21] Kordas, Michael (2019), 50 years since Skeffington (community engagement with planning), IN Scottish Planner, No 177 Apr 2019, pp10-11, https://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/3334566/Scottish_Planner_issue177_08.pdf

system noted above, and this acts as a deterrent to people taking part in planning processes: "These experiences risk further eroding an already fragile trust in both planning and planners and pose the question 'why participate at all?' to local people"[22].

In one article, a professional involved in delivering charrettes suggests that "there should be a method to identify an after-care process for the charrette where nine months later we do a post-charrette review of what's working and what's not and try and help unpick any blockages"[23].

Inequalities in implementing ideas from charrettes

The evaluation found that charrettes are more likely to have led to changes in areas rich in local assets including engaged local people with the skills and knowledge to support improvements in their area.

A PhD thesis from the University of Glasgow supports this view, and asserts that the areas most likely to have these local assets are more affluent localities: "In particular, the stark differences in resources available to affluent and disadvantaged communities point to a distinct socio-economic gradient in community capacity"[24].

Another article argued that charrettes can have a greater impact in more affluent areas because people in these areas are more likely to engage with planning activity: "a chief driver of community interaction is the relative affluence of the population, with Elgin driving more active participation than down at heel Johnstone where apathy was order of the day"[25].

Managing expectations

The evaluation commented on the importance of identifying short-term 'quick wins' that could be achieved quickly and galvanise community spirit. The literature confirmed the importance of identifying realistic and achievable short-term goals: "from day one the first thing we did was have a cost consultant onboard... one of the things that emerged was the possibility for lots of short term changes"[26].

"Should a series of small 'quick win' local environment projects be prioritised against the 'big ticket' pieces of infrastructure that often top the wish lists of local people? Finding such a balance can be challenging. However, when planners are honest about what can and cannot be achieved, this is also likely to help repair trust"[27].

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[22] Ibid

[23] Glenday, John (2015), Charrettes: consultation overdrive, in Urban Realm, Vol 5 No 24 Winter 2015, p56-58, 60-61, https://www.urbanrealm.com/features/518/Charettes.html

[24] Rolfe, Steve (2016), op cit

[25] Glenday, John (2015), Charrettes: consultation overdrive, in Urban Realm, Vol 5 No 24 Winter 2015, p56-58, 60-61, https://www.urbanrealm.com/features/518/Charettes.html

[26] Glenyday, John (2015), op cit

[27] Kordas, Michael (2019), 50 years since Skeffington (community engagement with planning), IN Scottish Planner, No 177 Apr 2019, pp10-11, https://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/3334566/Scottish_Planner_issue177_08.pdf

Appendix 3 – Research Materials

NB: Throughout all these tools, the interviewer will refer to the design event using the name given to the event locally.

<div align="center">

Interview guide - fact finding calls

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Introductory information

At the beginning of each interview, the interviewer will give an introduction explaining the purpose of the interview and the research. He/she will refer to the Participant Information Sheet and give reassurances about the anonymous and voluntary nature of the research:

Everything you say will be anonymised, and we will delete your information when the project ends in July 2019. We might use things that you say in our report, but we will not attribute these to you and we will not include any information that could be used to identify you as an individual.

Taking part is voluntary and you can withdraw from the research at any point.

If you have any questions about how we use the information we gather from you, or if you would like to withdraw from the research, you can get in touch with us at any point.

Are you happy to proceed with the interview?

Progress update discussion (in brief, as they will be formally interviewed about their views later in the process)

- What were the original triggers for the application and how did this address community need locally?
- Who was involved in the design event originally (numbers and type of participants, groups etc.)?
- What were the key successes of the design event?
- Were there any barriers or challenges to the holding of the design event?
- What progress has been made and what outputs have been delivered since the final report was submitted? How have you been measuring progress?
- What is the current status of the project?
- Have there been any barriers or challenges to the successful implementation of the outputs of the design event?
- What are the anticipated longer-term outcomes?

Discussions about fieldwork set-up
To be discussed:
- Who should be involved (including numbers)?
- How they will be contacted.
- Where should the interviews take place?
- Any anticipated additional needs (interpreters, signers, amended research tools, accessibility requirements)?
- Consents

Introductory information

At the beginning of each interview, the interviewer will give an introduction explaining the purpose of the interview and the research. He/she will refer to the Participant Information Sheet and give reassurances about the anonymous and voluntary nature of the research:

Everything you say will be anonymised, and we will delete your information when the project ends in July 2019. We might use things that you say in our report, but we will not attribute these to you and we will not include any information that could be used to identify you as an individual.

Taking part is voluntary and you can withdraw from the research at any point.

If you have any questions about how we use the information we gather from you, or if you would like to withdraw from the research, you can get in touch with us at any point.

Are you happy to proceed with the interview?

- How did you become involved as a facilitator for community-led design work in this area?

- What did this role involve, and what is your role in relation to this work now?

- Can you describe your relationship with the development partners and how you worked together?

- What were the key successes of the design event?

- Is there anything you would have done differently?

- What is the current status of the project?

- Were there any barriers or challenges to the successful implementation of the outputs of the design event, or in making progress since?

- What progress has been made and what outputs have been delivered since the final report was submitted?

- How did these differ from what had been anticipated/hoped at the outset?

- Were there any challenges in taking forward the work coming out of the design events?

- Were participants in the original design events empowered by the process? Have they continued to be engaged in any way?

- Do you think the outcomes would have been any different if the design events had not taken place? How would they have been different? Why?

- What are the anticipated longer-term outcomes?

- Are there any barriers to these being delivered?

- Is there any additional support required to help these to be delivered? How will you access this support?

- Overall, what have been the benefits of this process for:

- The local community?

- Public sector organisations?

- Collaborative working between public sector organisations and communities?

- Do you have any further reflections on your experiences of the design events?

Interview guide – Delivery partners

Introductory information

At the beginning of each interview, the interviewer will give an introduction explaining the purpose of the interview and the research. He/she will refer to the Participant Information Sheet and give reassurances about the anonymous and voluntary nature of the research:

Everything you say will be anonymised, and we will delete your information when the project ends in July 2019. We might use things that you say in our report, but we will not attribute these to you and we will not include any information that could be used to identify you as an individual.

Taking part is voluntary and you can withdraw from the research at any point.

If you have any questions about how we use the information we gather from you, or if you would like to withdraw from the research, you can get in touch with us at any point.

Are you happy to proceed with the interview?

- How did you become involved as a delivery partner for community-led design work in your area?

- What did this role involve, and what is your role in relation to this work now?

- How time-intensive is this role?

- Can you describe your relationship with the facilitators and how you worked together?

- What were the original triggers for the application and how did this address community need locally?

- What were the key successes of the design event?

- Is there anything you would have done differently?

- What is the current status of the project?

- Were there any barriers or challenges to the successful implementation of the design events, or in making progress since?

- What progress has been made and what outputs have been delivered since the final report was submitted?

- How did these differ from what had been anticipated/hoped at the outset?

- Were there any challenges in taking forward the work coming out of the design event?

- Were participants in the original design events empowered by the process? Have they continued to be engaged in any way?

- Do you think the outcomes would have been any different if the design events had not taken place? How would they have been different? Why?

- What are the anticipated longer-term outcomes?

- Are there any barriers to these being delivered?

- Is there any additional support required to help these to be delivered? How will you access this support?

- Are you aware of any additional funding applications based on the outcomes of the design event?

- Overall, what have been the benefits of this process for:

- The local community?

- Public sector organisations?

- Collaborative working between public sector organisations and communities?

- How, if at all, has the process influenced the mainstreaming of creative design processes in community planning?

- Any further reflections on your experiences of the design events?

Introductory information

At the beginning of each interview, the interviewer will give an introduction explaining the purpose of the interview and the research. He/she will refer to the Participant Information Sheet and give reassurances about the anonymous and voluntary nature of the research:

Everything you say will be anonymised, and we will delete your information when the project ends in July 2019. We might use things that you say in our report, but we will not attribute these to you and we will not include any information that could be used to identify you as an individual.

Taking part is voluntary and you can withdraw from the research at any point.

If you have any questions about how we use the information we gather from you, or if you would like to withdraw from the research, you can get in touch with us at any point.

Are you happy to proceed with the interview?

- how did you find out about the events? Who encouraged you to take part?

- what sorts of things were discussed at the event? What did you think about the event (prompts: interesting, engaging, boring)?

- were you able to tell people your opinions in some way? Did it feel like you were helping by being part of the process?

- did you enjoy taking part? What did you like best? What did you think was not so good?

- did the person running the event do a good job of getting you all to take part? Could they have done it better in any way?

- did it feel like they were properly listening to you?

- did they tell you how they would use the information they gathered from you?

- have you heard anything more from the organisers since you first took part? If yes, what have you heard? Do you feel you have heard enough?

- would you take part in a similar event again? Why/why not?

- is there anything else you think it would be useful for us to know about the event you took part in?

Appendix 4 – Study Limitations

The methodology for this study was designed to provide a robust evaluation of community-led design initiatives, and is outlined in Chapter 1.

The study was designed to focus on 10 sample projects. We selected these 10 projects in discussion with the Research Advisory Group for this study to ensure the sample included:

- an appropriate geographical spread

- projects led by local authorities as well as those led by communities or public bodies

- projects with a range of values

- events that took place at different times throughout the period covered by the programme

The findings provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences and outcomes of these 10 projects, and allow valuable insights to be generated. However, it should not be assumed that the findings apply to all 78 design events funded by the programme.

Selection bias

Blake Stevenson recognise that there is potential bias as a result of the methods used to identify research participants, which relied on project leads and partners recruiting interviewees. Although a wide range of community members and other stakeholders were engaged, there is a chance that those who were willing to take part in interviews were more engaged or more active in the design event than others, and therefore may have had different views than other potential interviewees who were not reached.

Open and honest discussions

Interviewees took part in a one-off interview with a member of the research team, who, in most cases, they had not met before. While this one-off contact was the most appropriate approach, because repeated engagement would have been unnecessary and burdensome for the interviewee, it is possible that research participants may have felt inhibited in discussing their views of the design event with someone they were not familiar with. However, several steps were taken to ensure that interviewees felt comfortable and able to talk openly about their experience, including: holding interviews in places familiar to them and at times convenient for them, the friendly and non-judgemental approach of the researchers, and the assurances provided to interviewees about the anonymous and confidential nature of their participation.

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