

It was recognised that, historically, the record of successful mainstreaming examples could be strengthened across the UK. It was also recognised that the current financial context will throw up more challenges for mainstreaming, perhaps as well as some opportunities. The main focus of the workshop was to therefore use the differing UK experiences in order to try and draw out some useful practical lessons and strategies that we can all benefit from.

The event format included four introductory keynote speakers who provided practitioners with a variety of research, experience and policy perspectives. Their informative inputs were followed by facilitated discussion groups and a plenary feedback session designed to share and draw out the experience and knowledge of the participants.

The key speakers were as follows:

- Peter Allan, Community Planning Manager, Dundee City Council
- Nicky de Beer, Head of Operations, Leadership Centre for Local Government
- Paul Dear, Head of Communities First Unit, Welsh Assembly Government
- Keith Sutherland, Planning and Transport Policy Manager, Belfast City Council.

What are the main issues?

1. How can we capture the added value of local experience and knowledge while working at a local authority wide level?
2. How do we successfully refocus budgets and services and become more effective at using the range of resources available to us?
3. How can we ensure regeneration activity remains a priority for resource allocation in a time of financial restraint?

What do we know already?

- 'Mainstreaming' is normally understood as a process in which local authorities take an issue such as tackling poverty and regeneration and integrate aspects of it throughout their core services. Allowing them to 'bend the spend' and approach issues in a more holistic, effective way. It also refers to the process by which local authorities take on a successful approach developed by a local project, and embed it in their own service department outputs to help them address a task more effectively.
- At the end of 2009, the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) agreed a Joint Statement and Action Plan to continue tackling multiple deprivation in disadvantaged communities beyond the Fairer Scotland Fund.



- The £435 million Fairer Scotland Fund (FSF) was a Scottish Government resource allocated to all 32 local authorities and their community planning partners over the three years to March 2011 to support local partnerships to regenerate communities, tackle poverty and improve employment prospects. The ring-fence associated with FSF ended in March 2010, so resources are now rolled-up into local authorities' general revenue funding.
- Effectively mainstreaming poverty and regeneration initiatives is becoming an increasingly important issue as the public sector faces a tough economic climate and new challenges in the move to Single Outcome Agreements.

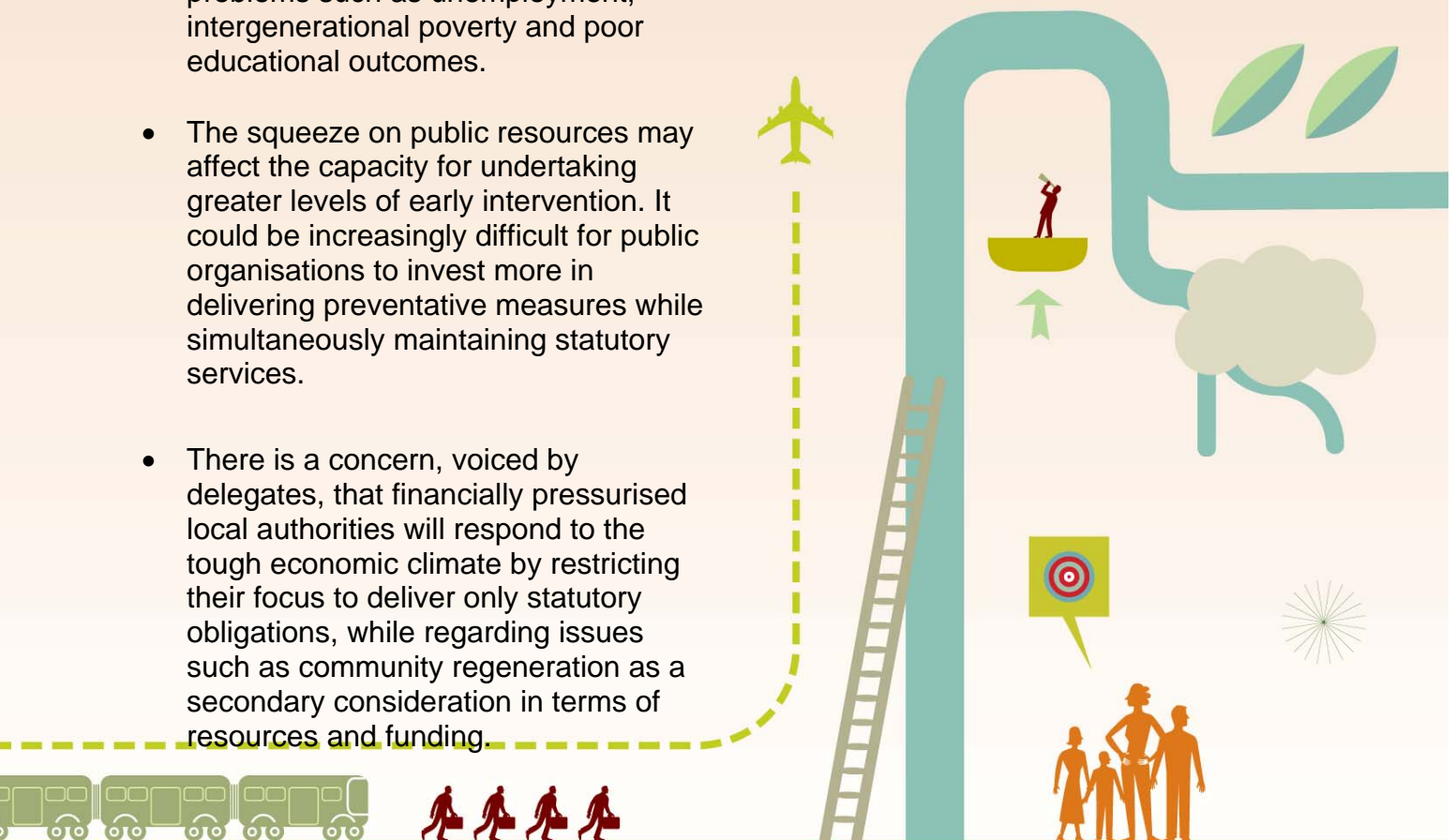
What have we learned?

There are many challenges ahead

- Delegates felt that substantial public sector budget cuts are likely to exacerbate current regeneration problems such as unemployment, intergenerational poverty and poor educational outcomes.
- The squeeze on public resources may affect the capacity for undertaking greater levels of early intervention. It could be increasingly difficult for public organisations to invest more in delivering preventative measures while simultaneously maintaining statutory services.
- There is a concern, voiced by delegates, that financially pressurised local authorities will respond to the tough economic climate by restricting their focus to deliver only statutory obligations, while regarding issues such as community regeneration as a secondary consideration in terms of resources and funding.

There will, however, be substantial opportunities for innovation

- The property-led economic regeneration model of the last two decades, which relied on delivering regeneration efforts via rising property values, is no longer viable in the recession. New approaches are therefore required to address the challenges the sector faces.
- The community has an opportunity to act as a responsive source of constructive ideas for well-targeted, cost-effective services. A healthy dialogue between the community and the local authority may result in more progressive discussions about what is both realistic and achievable in neighbourhood-level regeneration.



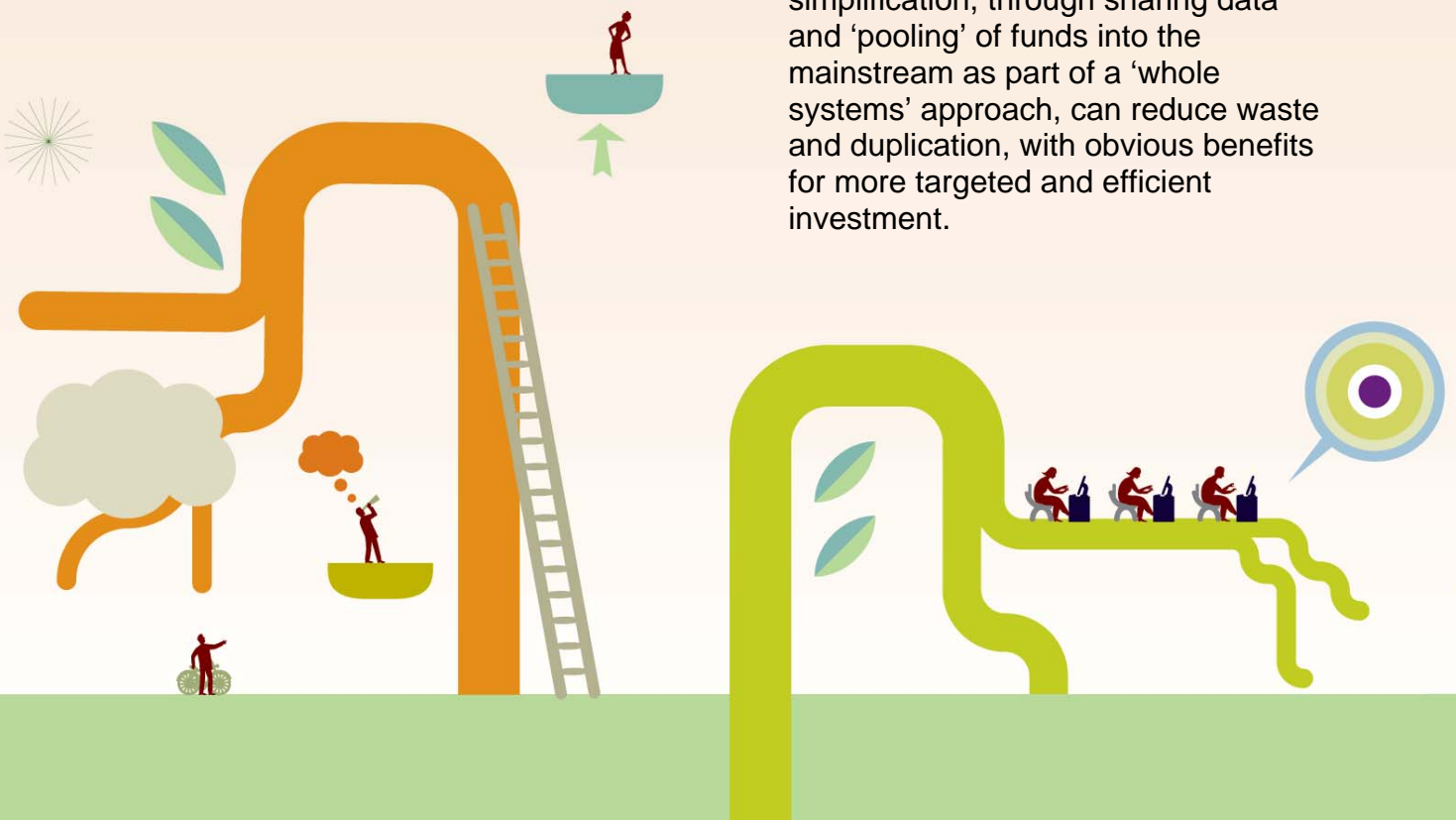
- The voluntary sector in Scotland has also suffered in the recession, but remains a valuable resource of innovation and delivery. Many voluntary organisations would welcome the opportunity to work more closely in partnership with local authorities to explore opportunities and ideas relating to mainstreaming local initiatives and service innovations.

Mainstreaming can be effectively supported by national approaches

- In **Wales**, the Welsh Assembly Government runs 'Communities First', which is a high-profile programme aimed at raising the living conditions and prospects for people in disadvantaged communities across the country. The programme has been running since 2001, and currently operates in 188 areas.
- The Communities First programme emphasises a 'bottom-up' community leadership approach. It directly funds projects operated by over 150 local partnerships which have public, private, voluntary and community involvement.

- In 2008, an Outcomes Fund was brought in to the Communities First programme. The expressed purpose of the Outcomes Fund, which is worth £25m in 2009-12, is to encourage effective programme 'bending' and the mainstreaming of successful projects. The Outcomes Fund is a useful resource for local authorities in Wales to complement and support their existing mainstreaming efforts.
- In **England**, opportunities for a more efficient, cost-effective and holistic approach to public service delivery is being explored in an ambitious 'Total Place' programme, which is led by the Leadership Centre for Local Government. The programme is currently being piloted in 13 areas on different community regeneration themes; for example, the Durham Total Place pilot is focusing on housing and regeneration.

- Total Place has highlighted the at times unhelpful complexities in regeneration-related budgets and administration processes. For example, in Durham, there are 47 funding streams for 25 providers of social housing covering 19,000 homes. Total Place suggests that simplification, through sharing data and 'pooling' of funds into the mainstream as part of a 'whole systems' approach, can reduce waste and duplication, with obvious benefits for more targeted and efficient investment.

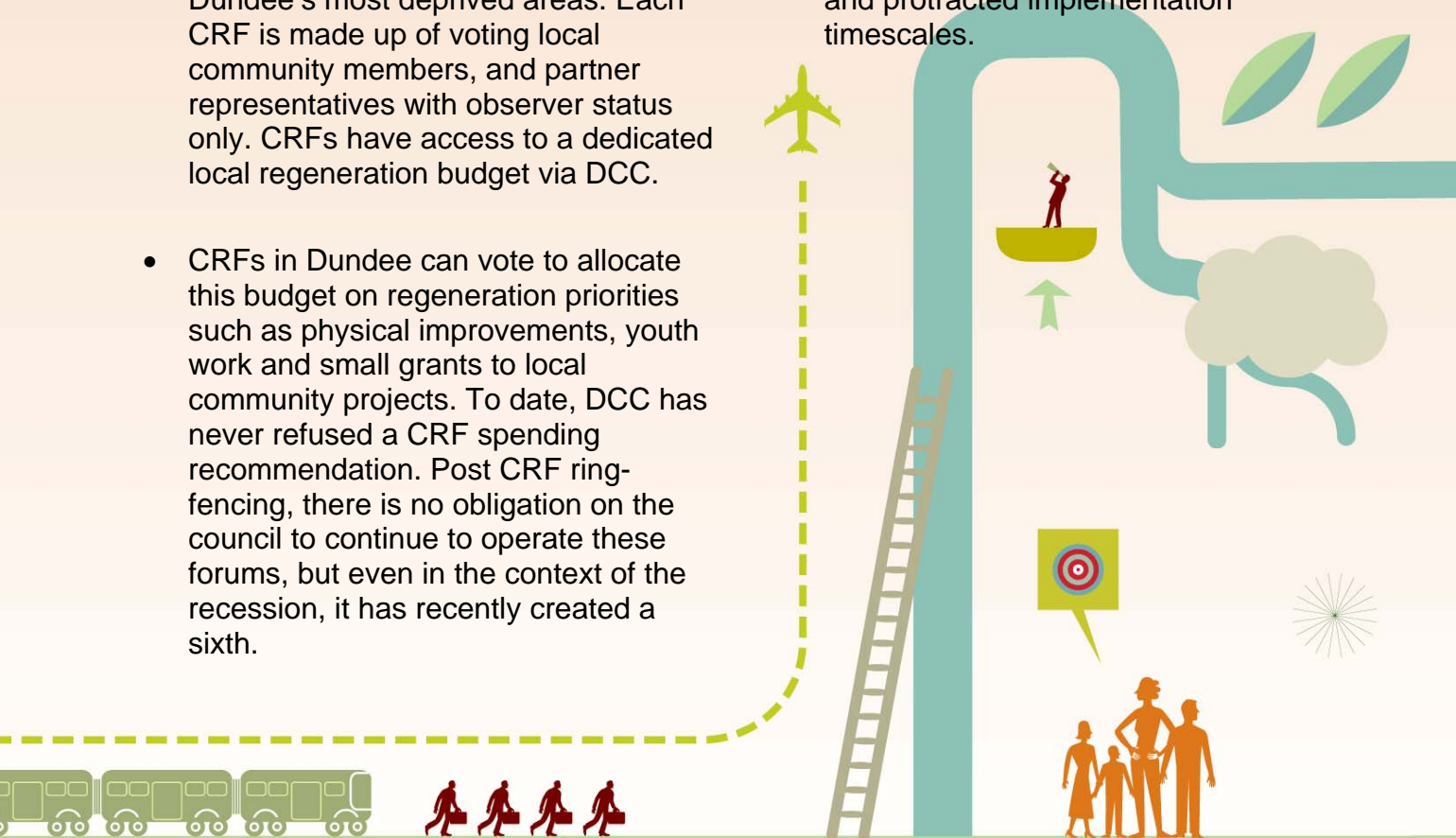


More can be done to capture local value

- The recipients of services can be a valuable source of expertise, experience and ideas on how to improve delivery. Local authorities should ensure that they are taking effective measures to capture such local knowledge and experience. Consistent with this, one of the fundamentals of the Total Place approach is starting with the 'customer'.
 - Community engagement can be seen as an expensive activity for local authorities; but when resources are restricted, it can become even more necessary to increase efficient targeting and sustainability potential by discussing local regeneration plans with the intended beneficiaries.
 - In **Scotland**, Dundee City Council (DCC) presents a good model for community engagement and empowerment. Through the Dundee Partnership, it supports five Community Regeneration Forums (CRFs) in Dundee's most deprived areas. Each CRF is made up of voting local community members, and partner representatives with observer status only. CRFs have access to a dedicated local regeneration budget via DCC.
 - CRFs in Dundee can vote to allocate this budget on regeneration priorities such as physical improvements, youth work and small grants to local community projects. To date, DCC has never refused a CRF spending recommendation. Post CRF ring-fencing, there is no obligation on the council to continue to operate these forums, but even in the context of the recession, it has recently created a sixth.
- This indicates the value that DCC places on community empowerment, which it believes also produces real value-for-money benefits.

Finding opportunities in fragmented governance

- In **Northern Ireland**, local authorities operate in a different context, compared with elsewhere in the UK. In addition to the 'post-troubles' environment, a disjointed historical political arrangement has a strong effect on regeneration project developments.
- Northern Ireland Assembly Government Departments have a complex relationship with the country's 26 local authorities. For example, Belfast City Council is required to liaise with 7 central government departments on planning matters. With responsibility for key regeneration functions distributed across various departments and agencies, there are issues of accountability, slow decision making and protracted implementation timescales.



- This 'organisational clutter' makes the development of a coherent national government approach to mainstreaming difficult. One benefit, however, has been to encourage smaller-scale, locally-focused activity which can offer a pivotal community engagement and regeneration role.
- A good example is the 'Renewing The Routes' project, which operates in some of the most deprived urban areas in Belfast, focused around some of the main roads which run through them. These commercial and community routes have been affected by considerable economic decline in recent years. The project addresses this by investing directly in, among other things, commercial and environmental improvements and heritage preservation.
- Although the project is city-wide, it has a community focused approach and operates through local partnerships. City officials input helps ensure integration with existing local regeneration plans. The small-area focus has been beneficial in inspiring community spirit, and allowing experimentation. It has also been conducive to the collecting and monitoring of economic data, which has demonstrated project demand to funders and informed decision-making.

Poverty and the political agenda

- Since the 1980s, tackling poverty has moved steadily up the political agenda. In the context of the recent UK Government Budget, policy-makers in the devolved administrations are keen to ensure that the poorest are not hit hardest by public sector budget cuts.
- Widespread political support for tackling poverty offers opportunities for promoting the mainstreaming of activities which address disadvantage. However, some delegates believed that the so-called 'softer' side of regeneration, such as environmental improvements, which can make a significant difference to community pride, may be in danger of being overlooked as a result. As such there was a view that in the current economic and policy environment, it may therefore be beneficial to emphasise the 'anti-poverty' outcomes of community regeneration activity.
- The 2010 Equality Act, and its explicit focus on reducing socio-economic inequalities, can be used to support the mainstreaming of community regeneration projects. The historical mainstreaming of equalities legislation may also present a good example for anti-poverty activities to follow.



- Rigorous monitoring and evaluation is important, but does not always help projects survive at a local level; whereas strong leadership often does. Being able, however, to make the 'business case' for a project in terms of savings and economic growth is essential for its mainstreaming potential in the current policy context.

Strong partnership and effective leadership can help weather the storm

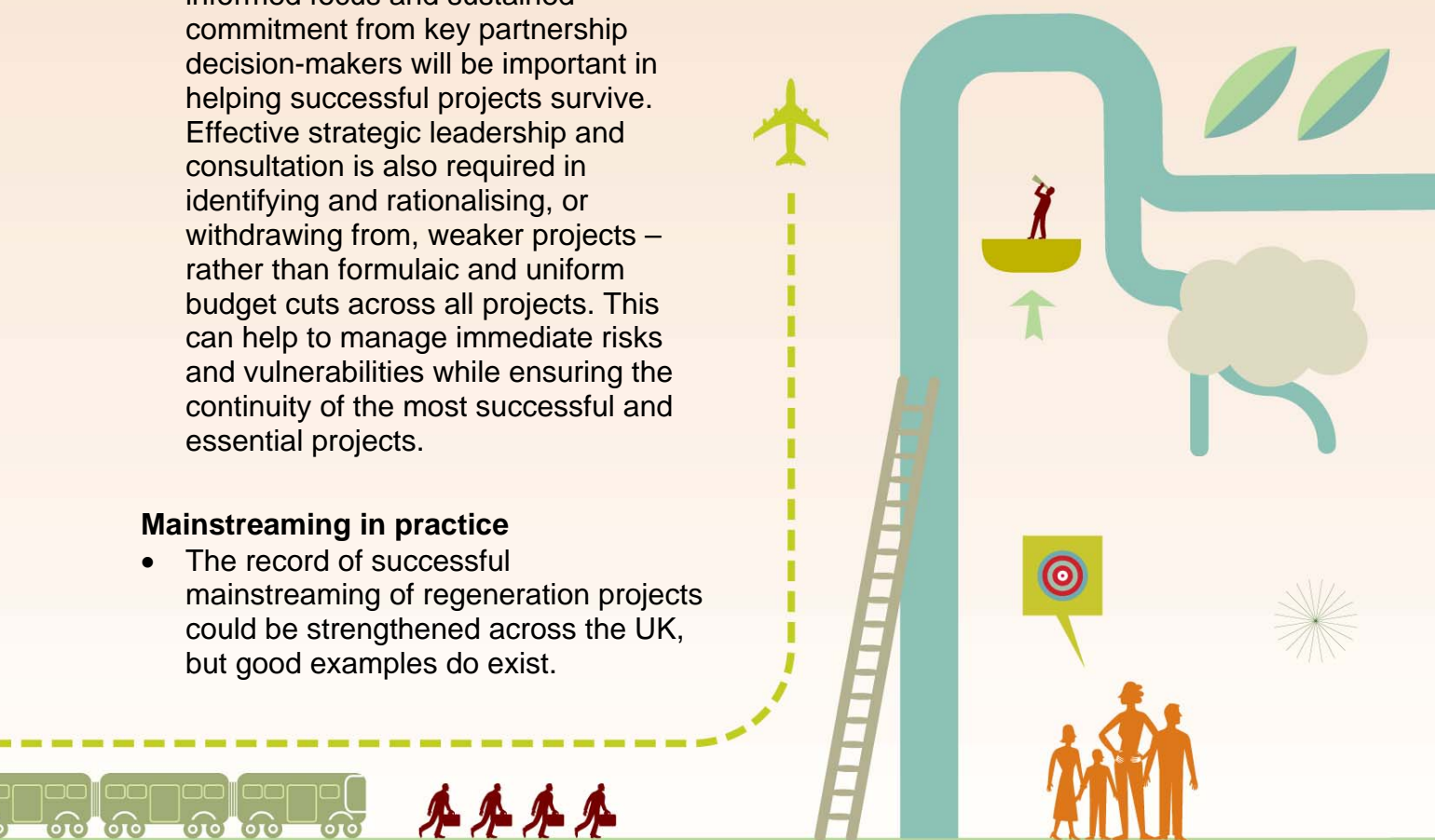
- Genuinely strong project partnerships will be more sustainable in this challenging climate and will be important in offering potential solutions to some of the problems caused by the recession. If the anti-poverty challenge is to be met, it will be necessary for partnerships to move beyond the conventional meeting and information exchange culture to more active intervention.
- Strong but inclusive leadership, informed focus and sustained commitment from key partnership decision-makers will be important in helping successful projects survive. Effective strategic leadership and consultation is also required in identifying and rationalising, or withdrawing from, weaker projects – rather than formulaic and uniform budget cuts across all projects. This can help to manage immediate risks and vulnerabilities while ensuring the continuity of the most successful and essential projects.

Mainstreaming in practice

- The record of successful mainstreaming of regeneration projects could be strengthened across the UK, but good examples do exist.

- One is the 'Communities@One' project, a digital inclusion initiative that has improved broadband internet access in deprived neighbourhoods across Wales. The project was funded by the Communities First Programme, and implemented locally by public and voluntary sector service providers in close consultation with community members.

- The Dundee Healthy Living Initiative uses a community development approach to deliver health improvement activities that are identified by local people in the city's deprived areas. These activities include healthy eating classes and walking groups. The initiative has a strong influence on the developments of mainstream services and the role of voluntary sector partners.



- In Fife, a local project encouraging young people to become 'active citizens' has been successfully rolled-out to address anti-social behaviour and littering in disadvantaged communities across the Kingdom. The Fife Community Wardens Scheme works closely in partnership with a number of local and regional groups, including the police service and schools, to increase project effectiveness.

- Fife Partnership, the Community Planning Partnership led by Fife Council, has also developed a 'Fairer Fife Framework'. This represents a mainstreaming of the Fairer Scotland Fund commitments into wider service delivery areas outwith statutory obligations.

Mainstreaming challenges

- Mainstreaming has a clear range of benefits. However, there are also a number of challenges for those involved. For example if you successful in managing to 'bend the spend' and gain access to other service's budgets, the 'credit' may only be attributed to one of the partners. As such it may be useful to agree a system of joint measurement in advance.

- Flexibility and innovation are important factors, but practitioners must be aware that because approaches are new they may not fit into a standard appraisal and may require a bespoke system.
- It can be difficult to reconcile 'bottom-up' and strategic approaches to the satisfaction of all stakeholders.
- It is easier to plan for mainstreaming from the start than try to retrofit.

What next?

The issues identified at this event will form part of a programme of activities for the Community Regeneration and Tackling Poverty Learning Network. This Learning Network supports Community Planning Partnerships, and their partners, to improve activity to regenerate communities and tackle poverty. It is led by the Scottish Centre for Regeneration, and links up with learning promoted by other parts of the Scottish Government.

The Learning Network will provide support and help people to exchange information and ideas. This will include organising events to share good practice; identifying and publishing information about case studies of good practice; and developing other opportunities for sharing experiences through study visits and working groups.

You can join the Learning Network online at Partners in Regeneration (www.partnersinregeneration.com) or contact Heather Smith, Learning Network Co-ordinator, on 0141 271 3736.



SURF will also continue to explore this theme in its own programme of events and publications. Further information on SURF and its work is available on the SURF website (www.scotregen.co.uk).

Further information

England

- Total Place website:
www.localleadership.gov.uk/totalplace
- Total Place online community at Communities of Practice:
www.communities.idea.gov.uk (search for Total Place)
- Further details on the Total Place housing and regeneration pilot in Durham:
 1. www.durham.gov.uk/pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=7453
 2. www.localleadership.gov.uk/totalplace/totalplaces/pilot/durham/

Northern Ireland

- Belfast Renewing the Routes project:
www.belfastcity.gov.uk/renewingtheroutes/
- Northern Ireland Executive government departments:
www.northernireland.gov.uk/gov.htm

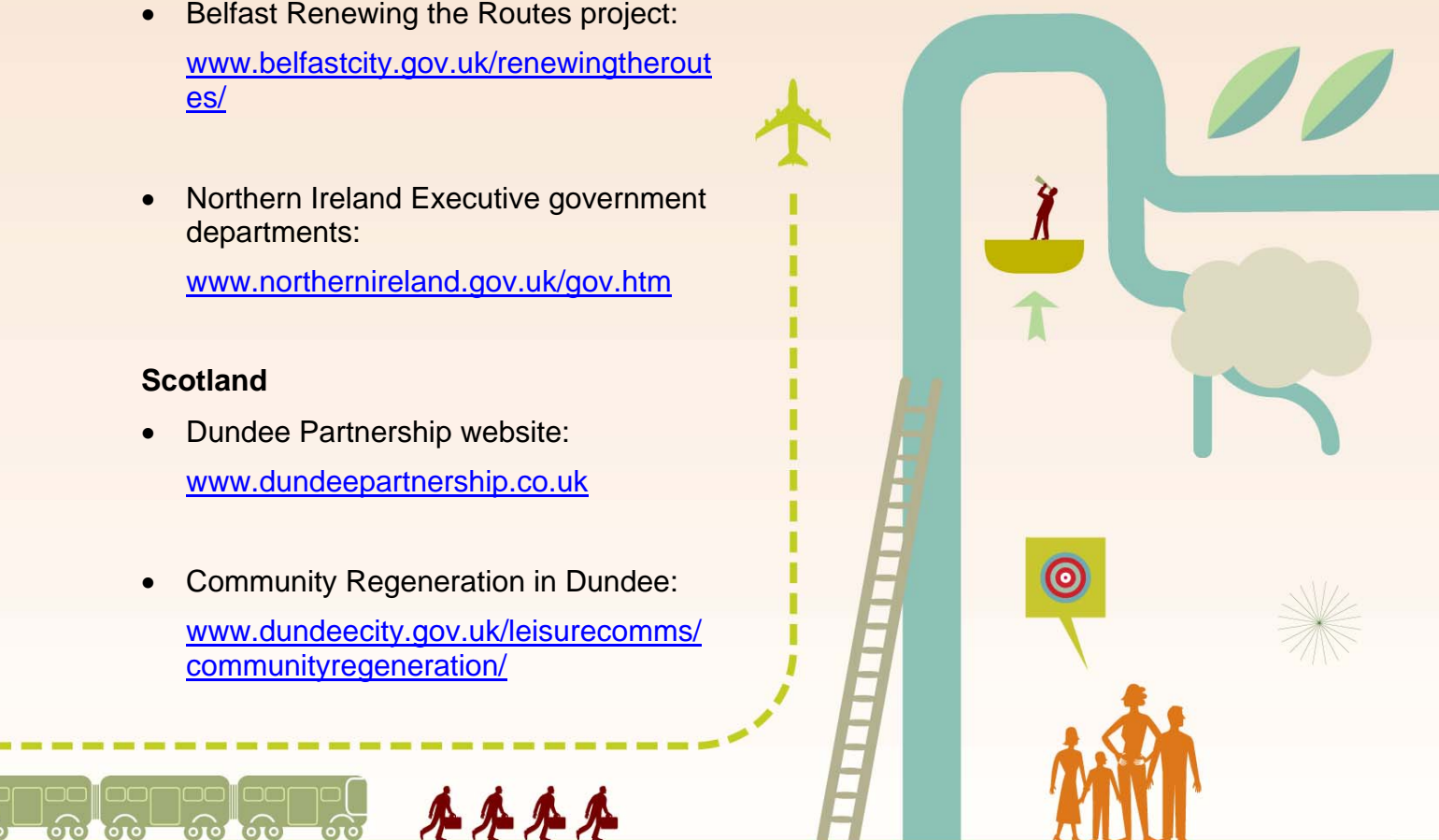
Scotland

- Dundee Partnership website:
www.dundeepartnership.co.uk
- Community Regeneration in Dundee:
www.dundee.gov.uk/leisurecomms/communityregeneration/

- Dundee Healthy Living Initiative:
www.dundeehealth.co.uk
- 'Equal Communities in a Fairer Scotland': A joint statement by CoSLA & Scottish Government:
www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/1031/0088727.pdf
- Fairer Scotland Fund – information from Scottish Government website:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/fairer-scotland-fund>

Wales

- Communities First website:
www.wales.gov.uk/communitiesfirst
- Communities@One project website:
www.communitiesatone.org/



- Welsh Assembly Government departments:

<http://wales.gov.uk/about/civilservice/departments/>

SURF

As Scotland's independent regeneration network, SURF uses its extensive cross-sector membership of over 250 organisations to explore current practice, experience and knowledge in community regeneration.

SURF provides a neutral space to facilitate this sharing of information through its well-recognised annual programme of activities and informal networking. SURF uses the resulting feedback from interaction across its membership to constructively influence the development of more successful regeneration policy and practice through its links with key policy advisers in the Scottish Government and elsewhere.

SURF website: www.scotregen.co.uk

Scottish Centre for Regeneration

This document is published by the Scottish Centre for Regeneration, which is part of the Scottish Government. We support our public, private and voluntary sector delivery partners to become more effective at:

- regenerating communities and tackling poverty
- developing more successful town centres and local high streets
- creating and managing mixed and sustainable communities
- making housing more energy efficient
- managing housing more efficiently and effectively

We do this through:

- coordinating learning networks which bring people together to identify the challenges they face and to support them to tackle these through events, networking and capacity building programmes
- identifying and sharing innovation and practice through publishing documents detailing examples of projects and programmes and highlighting lessons learned
- developing partnerships with key players in the housing and regeneration sector to ensure that our activities meet their needs and support their work

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Website: www.partnersinregeneration.com

The views expressed in learning points are not necessarily shared by the Scottish Centre for Regeneration or the Scottish Government. July 2010