

DTAS16: Climate Change, Localism & Social Justice

Every year, around the beginning of September, community activists from all over Scotland (and a few from elsewhere) gather together to share innovation, success and experience at the annual DTA Scotland Conference. Now in its 13th year, the theme for this year's conference was "[Climate Change, Localism & Social Justice](#)".

Bringing together experts on climate action with development trusts and other community bodies, the conference was once again a sell-out, with delegates from city, town, rural and island locations the length and breadth of Scotland relishing the opportunity to come together to network and learn from their counterparts.

"Don't just survive, thrive"

This, the opening plenary key message from Pam Candea from [Scottish Communities Climate Action Network \(SCCAN\)](#), was echoed throughout the course of the 2 days, emphasised through awe-inspiring visits to [Barmulloch Community Development Company](#), and [Woodlands Community Development Trust](#), motivating member stories from the likes of [Applecross Community Company](#), [Callander Community Development Trust](#) and [Greener Kirkcaldy](#), right through to our closing plenary, '*Ambitious for Change*' featuring Phil Knibb from the remarkable [Alt Valley Community Trust](#) and an address from the captivating Rob Hopkins from the [Transition Network](#).

"We're going to do something that has never been done before"

This year's programme contained a number of firsts for DTAS: we were delighted to feature a photographic exhibition from the [Sheila McKechnie Foundation](#), detailing the life of Sheila, a great campaigner, activist and self-professed "*fully paid up member of the awkward squad*" – a sentiment that many, if not all, of the DTAS16 delegates could identify with.

In what is a true marker of the maturity and growth of the development trust movement in Scotland, we also held dedicated (and very popular) sessions on the capture and measurement of development trusts' impact, building on an innovative [pilot programme that DTAS members participated in with Education Scotland](#), where HMI inspectors visited members over the course of a week, producing reports on the organisations at the end of the process. And, although the study sampled 3 very different development trusts, significant common conclusions stood out:

Development trusts have a positive impact on the lives of the community in which they operate and that each makes a strong contribution to the local economy alongside a significant contribution to the place-making agenda.

Continuing on this positive note, DTAS16 was timed perfectly with the analysis of the results from our most recent membership survey. In what has been an unprecedented time for community-led regeneration in Scotland, the work on the ground of DTAS members continues to be ambitious, successful and innovative. One of the most stand out statistics from our point of view however, would be that when taking account of volunteer hours (calculated at the recognised living wage (£4,184,366)), combined with self-generated trading income (£21.1 million), communities in the form of development trusts contribute over £25million in regeneration activity in Scotland – a remarkably impressive achievement on any scale.