

SPEECH

City Living, The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Glasgow Conference 2019

Introduction

- Thank you Brian and good afternoon; I am absolutely delighted to join you at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Conference to consider city living and the role housing plays in providing safe, secure and stable homes in integrated communities. I know that you have had a full and interesting 2 days and as the Conference draws to a close, I would like to talk to you about how the Scottish Government is contributing to these very important issues.
- We are joined today by many delegates from other parts of the UK, European Union and indeed further afield. I have no doubt that by now you will already have discovered the warmth of a Scottish welcome - of which we are proud!
- Something else we are justifiably proud of is our approach to housing, which reflects the very distinctive needs of Scotland. And there is no better city to visit than Glasgow for witnessing some of the best examples of good practice.
- Glasgow City Council has shown great vision in spear heading collaborative approaches to housing led regeneration.
- The city has been transformed through regeneration, both in terms of Glasgow's traditional tenements and the provision of new homes - with Community Controlled Housing Associations at the forefront of much of this. And more than 2,000 new homes and many improved homes have also been delivered following the transfer of the Council's housing stock in 2003
- The Scottish Government's ambition is that everyone in Scotland should live in high quality, energy efficient homes that are affordable and that meet their needs. We want to support our most disadvantaged communities and create great places that promote wellbeing. And we want this be sustainable for the future.

- Housing is embedded in so much that we want to achieve. It has a vital role to play in meeting many of our aspirations, including eradicating child poverty and homelessness, ending fuel poverty, tackling the climate change emergency and promoting inclusive growth.
- We know that the way in which we consider and design our environments can greatly influence the quality of life that is experienced. Place has powerful effects on our prosperity and our wellbeing; on whether we experience loneliness and isolation or whether we have a sense of identity, belonging and connectedness; on whether we feel safe; on whether we have genuine opportunity to learn, to find good quality employment and to have access to thriving local centres that meet our needs.
- Understanding and harnessing the influence of place on our lives and our prosperity is essential and that is why we worked with local authorities across Scotland to develop and adopt the Place Principle.
- Simply and at its heart, The Place Principle should be putting people and communities first and at the centre of decision-making. It's about working alongside communities and not doing things to them.
- It may sound like common sense, but a place-approach requires decision makers to fundamentally rethink how things are done.
- Our best and most successful places are multifunctional – they don't simply provide housing, or business land or infrastructure or greenspace – they provide opportunities and they provide a sustainable way of life. They are flexible assets that can adapt to changing circumstances that attract investment and people, and that support resilient, thriving communities.
- Transforming Communities: Glasgow, a Place-Based approach to the regeneration of 8 of Glasgow's most deprived communities, is an outstanding example of what can be achieved through a joined up, collaborative and comprehensive approach to housing led regeneration.
- While each of these 8 areas share common issues and challenges, the purpose of the approach in each areas is to deliver a tailored, housing-led regeneration project specifically for that area.

- Glasgow City Council are to be commended for their commitment to Transforming Communities: Glasgow, a credible strategic approach that will offer long-term solutions shaped and influenced by local people.
- Considerable progress has already been made within the 8 areas including: 23 ha of vacant and derelict land brought back into use; apprenticeships, work experience and training places for 294 local people; and 20 industry wide awards for the quality of design, construction and environmental improvements carried out.
- I understand that yesterday you had a very successful visit to Lauriston, the first area declared by Glasgow City Council as part of the Transforming Communities: Glasgow approach. I hope you had an opportunity to see for yourself what has been achieved through community, Council and agency partners working effectively together.
- At the heart of this change in Lauriston is New Gorbals Housing Association, a Community Controlled Housing Association, which has been pivotal in driving social, economic and health improvements through the delivery of 2500 new and improved homes.
- Community Controlled Housing Associations are embedded in the history and change that has occurred in Glasgow over the past 4 decades. These grass roots organisations have made a unique contribution to Glasgow's regeneration. And I wonder whether any other European city has managed to deliver such a major housing regeneration programme that has fully involved and benefited some of its poorest citizens.
- The Community Controlled Housing Association approach to housing regeneration has produced a broad range of social and economic spin-offs. These Associations offer their communities far more than just homes. They work hard to empower their communities and to drive notable and sustainable change.
- I was encouraged to read in the "Glasgow Declaration", adopted earlier today, that "community controlled delivery and management should sit alongside government and private sector provision of social housing"
- If we are to deliver successful places that meet the challenges of the future then it is essential that Place Principles, and the collaborative values that it promotes, be at the core of all that we do.

- The challenges of the global climate emergency is an area where our approach to developing places can be a positive and powerful influence on our behaviour and our impact on the environment.
- We have been clear in the recently published Programme for Government that Scotland's answer to the climate emergency requires us to work across the public, private and third sectors and across Scotland's diverse communities.
- And Scottish Ministers have been clear that the transition to a Net Zero economy must be a Just Transition – a transition that considers the needs of our communities most vulnerable to the changes of the global climate emergency.
- There are a number of potential co-benefits associated with our actions on climate change, and the built environment and place agenda can play an important role. Improvements to the energy efficiency of our homes can have benefits for our health and for people living in fuel poverty, which in turn can help to reduce wider inequalities in our society.
- Understanding the relationship between how the places in which we live affect the climate and our quality of life is key.
- I was delighted to hear the news this week that Glasgow has been confirmed as the host city of the United Nations climate talks in November 2020. It is right that this conference should come to Scotland given our leadership in climate action.
- A key commitment in our Programme for Government is to produce the fourth National Planning Framework. This Framework will provide a long-term spatial strategy for Scotland to 2050 and will bring together policies and programmes to enable sustainable and inclusive growth across the country.
- Because of the new Planning Act, the fourth National Planning Framework will have enhanced status as a part of the statutory development plan. It will guide spatial development, align infrastructure investment, set out national planning policies, designate national developments and highlight regional spatial priorities.
- In last year's Programme for Government, we made a commitment to plan together with stakeholders for how our homes and communities should look and feel in 2040 and the options and choices to get there. Since then, we have been engaging with a variety of stakeholders, including local government, businesses, the third sector, homeowners, tenants and others to help shape a draft vision and principles for housing to 2040.

- We are adopting a whole-system approach to housing that takes into account the people, place, environment and communities in which our homes, both new and old, rural, urban and island, are located.
- We recently published a draft vision for 2040 and the principles that will underpin and inform the development of policy choices and options for further engagement on Housing to 2040 later this year. As part of that, we will continue our conversation with a wide range of people across Scotland. The outputs from this next round of engagement will help to inform the vision and a route map to 2040, which we will publish in 2020.
- The core of our vision for Housing to 2040 is that the Scottish Government absolutely recognises the importance of good housing: it is central to our aspiration to build a fairer Scotland, to improve lives and tackle inequalities. And a key component of this is delivering high quality, affordable new homes suitable for people's needs.
- Working with Councils, Housing Associations, and the wider housing sector we are proud of what has already been achieved. Since 2007, more than 86,000 affordable homes have been delivered – that's more homes than there are in the whole of Dundee!
- We are on track to deliver over this parliament our ambition to provide 50,000 affordable homes, with 35,000 of these for social rent. This is backed by £3.3bn of investment – the biggest investment in housing since devolution.
- Within Glasgow, this investment is over £520m which is expected to provide over 8300 affordable homes in the city over the lifetime of this parliament.
- I know from Scottish Government officials, who have been here for the past 2 days, that there has been lots of healthy debate and discussion. And I am pleased that through the Place Commission, supported by Glasgow City Council and Professor Brian Evans, Glasgow's City Urbanist, that work will continue to generate a clear, cohesive narrative to influence the direction of Glasgow's place-based design approach.

CLOSING

- I often call Scotland an optimally sized economy, one small enough where you can get hold of the people who can make a decision in one room, but one big enough to accommodate your ambitions.

- I hope that over the past two days you have seen and heard what can be achieved with housing led regeneration which is grounded in good collaboration, better use of resources and effective community participation at a local level.
- The Scottish Government is - and will continue to be – focused on doing all that we can, to support housing led regeneration that supports urban, rural and island communities throughout Scotland.
- Thank you again for inviting me along to deliver the closing keynote address at this conference on city living.