

## **Interview recorded with Colin Roxburgh 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015 at Buchanan House**

Colin has a back ground in community development and worked on some of the early community business projects in the Strathclyde Region in the late 1970s, such as LEAP and later Strathclyde Community Business. He left SCB in 1989 and since then has worked as a freelance community consultant in Scotland, Ireland, New Zealand and Canada. He continues to work in this area.

*So Colin I'd just like to start off our discussion today by asking you how and at what point in your life did you become involved in social enterprise?*

Well I suppose social enterprise is a modern term, it was really community business as it was known as, I got involved in 1980/81. I think it was '81 when I joined the Local Enterprise Advisory Project to work with John Pearce, Duncan McTavish, Margaret Lindsay and Glen Buchanan.

So there were four or five of us that were then working out of the Local Enterprise Advisory Project (LEAP) which at that time was based in Paisley College, being sponsored by Ron Young who was a Councillor at Strathclyde Regional Council. He was very keen on encouraging the idea of looking at how communities, particularly deprived communities, or as the regional council called them at that time 'areas of priority treatment', might be supported to look at creating their own enterprises. So that's when I got involved.

Prior to that I'd been a rural community worker in Cumbria. It's interesting to see that job be advertised, the LEAP job be advertised, because I've been working in communities in Cumbria, one in particular which is the highest village in England in the Pennines, and the foundry there had closed.

I got some money at that time to make a film of what was going to happen to the community and in talking to people you realise that people had ideas for enterprise for things that might be run by the community, but it was an idea that had no home to go to at that time.

There was that wee missing bit of thinking around a community itself being able to own or start up its own enterprises and businesses. So partly because of that experience and thinking about these things I was then enticed back to Scotland and to Glasgow in '81.

*You mention that at that time the areas you were working in were known as 'areas of priority treatment'. Could you tell me a little bit more about life in those areas at that time?*

That's a good question. It'd be interesting to know how much of a difference in life there is in these areas now because I suppose one of the sadder things to report is despite all the work and investment in time that people have spent some of these areas are still hard hit and still suffering.

I think just comparing life then and now maybe there's more of a sense of what's possible now than there was back in the late 70s/early 80s because so much has happened since then in terms of community endeavour and community activism. And a lot of that was just hatching, or it felt like it was just hatching, round about then. There were wee beacons, things like Craigmillar Festival and Easterhouse Festival where communities were thinking about doing things often around the Arts that were a kind of inspiration in a way that triggered some of the follow on thought about communities that are actually trying to create their own employment.

But back in the 80s there was very very high levels of unemployment, generational unemployment, very high levels of council housing obviously back on those days 70% /80% council housing in a lot of these areas and a sense of...I'll just tell you a wee story 'cos actually it highlights some of that.

One of my first experiences of work in APTs if you like was in Forgewood and Renton down the Vale of Leven and Forgewood in North Lanarkshire near Motherwell. I'll always remember talking to somebody who said the Council are absolutely terrible, the Council are absolute rubbish. My window's been broken, my door and window's been broken and it's been broken for six months and the Council won't come out and fix it. And I said to him well how did it get broken? He said well I came back drunk one night and couldn't find my key so I smashed my door and my window [Laughter]. So he did that. He smashed his door and his window to get in but then he wouldn't make the connection between him needing to get that fixed, that was the Council's job.

So it was very much a kind of dependency culture and the whole thing of getting them to fix it for us, to do it for us. That whole sense that the answer lies elsewhere was huge and that wee story just sums up that prevailing attitude.

And its only very few folk that thought well maybe we should be trying to do something for ourselves and I suppose that's what we're trying to tap into.

***So when you started with the Local Area Advisory Project what was your role in that?***

I can't remember my official title but it was to help set up community businesses in the areas that I was working in, which primarily were Forgewood and Renton to start with and later on I had a much wider role for developing community businesses in and around the Greater Glasgow area. I ended up working in places like Possil and the East End of Glasgow, Drumchapel, Easterhouse, Castlemilk, Maryhill, Ruchill, with a much wider remit.

***And so what kind of people were you meeting? You mentioned there's the chap who breaks his own door, waits for the Council but you said there was another group of people interested in getting active in the community. Could you tell me a bit more about those people?***

Yeah, I think it's probably true anywhere you go that there are a group of people that you'll find that are wanting to do things. They might be kind of small things like running an arts festival or getting a football team up and running or doing something about an open space that needs looked after or something like that. Or people with ideas for how they might take on an empty council flat and turn it into a community flat, so it's people like that that we're working with who are also keen to talk to us about what might happen.

And some of these folk would be in existing community groups of one kind or another, and I think in terms of a direct connection some of these community groups may have had some experience of temporary employment schemes.

One of the pushes for community businesses in general came from the fact that people in some of these communities had experience of temporary employment programmes but were also frustrated by the restrictions. Frustrated that as a community group you can maybe take on somebody as a trainee for six months or a year but then they were gone.

The rules were such that you couldn't create out of temporary employment schemes full time work within the organisation that was doing the training or receiving that person for a short time. So as ever there were some crazy rules that people were thinking I wonder how we get beyond them? And maybe we can use training programmes to create real jobs, real jobs that the community actually have set up, developed and then manage into the future.

So there was a wee bit of a spark and some fertile territory for looking at creating community owned businesses.

***Looking back was it work spaces or shops or what kind of initiatives do you remember taking hold in those communities?***

Yeah, it varied fantastically from place to place. The thing that was quite important was to engage with people and communities, with communities themselves, to look at what the communities themselves had as assets or as needs or as opportunities that might be developed. So it wasn't necessarily coming with a fixed idea of why don't you set up a works bit, why don't you do this? Or equally from the local community's point of view a burning idea they already had it was often a sense of let's sit down together and look what might be possible.

And that could lead you to say well there's a derelict open space that might be turned into a community garden or there's an empty block of flats that might be turned into small workspace units or into a wee café or something like that.

So it was from looking at what was there and I think that's an important thing that workers like myself went in and did with communities, we actually sat down and said what has this community got? What does it need? What are the opportunities? Where can we take this?

And also looking at what skills people had, or might have, or might be interested in acquiring. There's a lot of talk nowadays of asset based community development as if it's just been discovered but it's actually right at the heart of what community enterprise, community business work was about. It's taking that look both at the assets and need of a community.

And that was quite unusual at the time because when we would go to the likes of, say, Scottish Development Agency in the early 80s they would say oh we can't come and work with you in Possil or wherever, Renton. There's no point in us working there because there's nothing to develop. They actually said that. They said there is no economy in these areas so it's not an area that we would work in.

So doing that work in that way was actually very important, to look at what might be developed.

I became quite keen looking at the service sector where if you like there was quite a lot of bad practice in terms of employment but we also had a lot of people in communities saying also in a huge way 'we could do that, gie us a job'.

So Possil is a fantastic example of that in that walking around the streets with people in Possil, young guys, they would say: 'see these security guards, they're not doing a good job at all, they're drunk half the time, they're only in looking after properties when they're being renovated and actually properties are vandalised. on either side of

them doing that job. we could do something much, much better'. And that led to the creation of a security company in Possil that still exists, what's this twenty/thirty years on now?

Similarly in Possil a group of women said to me we could do that, we could clean the houses along Maryhill Road near Possil. They're all being built by Lawrence currently. It's an opportunity, but how do we get into that? So we just walked into these housing developments and talked to quantity surveyors at Lawrence and started to understand what it would be like to create an industrial cleaning company. And that company still exists today, twenty/thirty years later.

But it was just that process of walking alongside people, literally walking alongside them and saying well what could be done here? And I guess one of the things about LEAP and Community Business Strathclyde, was that we had time to do that. And it would be interesting to know if anybody does that now. I'm not sure that they do.

***So when you began working with LEAP did you have any ultimate aims in mind when you started that work or was it very much experimental?***

It was experimental at the time but it was quite focused as well in the sense that the aim was clear, that you want to go and work with people in communities to look at setting up community owned businesses that would create jobs, so the creation of jobs and/or training opportunities for people that might then turn into jobs.

So it was a very clear remit and it was different to generic community work which had maybe less of a focus. We had a very clear focus and I suppose throughout the 80s you saw that with LEAP and Community Business Strathclyde, we had a very specific focus. But equally there were people wanting to set up food co-ops or credit unions that also had a clear focus of what they were trying to do in communities. So it was quite an exciting time actually. Started the community business thing, food co-ops, credit unions, community arts activities, the birth of some housing associations as well.

There was quite a shift from, if you like, that dependency culture that we're talking about to one of a more how can we do things and how can we do them at a more local community orientated, community owned type way?

***That's really interesting. Do you know where that energy came from? Do you have any ideas about why it happened at that moment?***

Yes [Laughter] it's a good question. I mean in very sort of borrowed terms I think it did come from community groups who had some experience of temporary employment schemes like I mentioned. There was an experience growing of

community groups not just being volunteers, having some staff, having...and I guess through Urban Aid funding, Manpower Services Commission, it might have been called something different at that time.

So communities getting hands on money that came and went, or training opportunities that came and went and I think that then led to them having a sense of well can we not create something a bit more permanent, a bit less dependent on grant money coming in or training money that's controlled from outside the community?

So I think it came from that so it was a mix probably of some people starting to recognise that you couldn't just rely on the Council for everything on one hand so thinking about shifting away from that dependency culture.

Also recognising that the whole nature of work and jobs was changing in that huge large scale employers in shipping or mining or whatever or steel had gone, or weren't going to be there for very much longer and that there was a need to look at other types of employment.

So I think just the start of that sense of enterprise was coming in and then of course we had the start of Thatcher years and in a way this was almost a response to that. It's maybe tapping into some of that but actually it was a kind of alternative response to it.

Probably in about '84/'85 we had an emissary from Downing Street come up to look at what we were doing.

One of the interesting things about this, this was so new we got visited at LEAP and particularly Strathclyde Community Business by people from all over the world but also including folk from Downing Street who I remember taking out to Possil and showing them what we were doing there and them coming away very, very perplexed. They said on their way out, they said: 'this is fantastic but we're not sure if it's Capitalism or Thatcherism or Communism [Laughter]'. They couldn't work it out. They were definitely perplexed.

So there was maybe a wee spark of something shifting away from dependency, experience, practical experience on the ground and then a desire to create some alternatives to some of the 'there is no such thing as society'. To show there was society, there were communities and they could take part in this enterprise culture as well and maybe do it better than some in the private sector.

***Yeah that's very interesting the analogy between this struggle between left and right as you might characterise it in is this community business Capitalism or Communist. Which is it for you? How do you see the position of community business within that scale?***

Well I think probably the answer's as somebody once said to me he said... 'cos we were setting up... this was more recently, albeit twenty years ago, and I was working in a place and a local businessman got heavily involved and other businessmen were challenging him and saying to him: 'why are you getting involved with all this community stuff? We're just business folk, we should just be doing our own thing. Is this not Communism, all this community ownership control?' And he said: 'well actually no it's not, economy communism is ruled from the centre and is centralist and controlling, whereas this is run from within with love'. And so he said that's right he said: 'Communism is run from the top, from the centre with fear and this is communitarianism which is run from within with love'.

And I thought that was absolutely... you couldn't say any better than that.

So, yeah, I wouldn't say it's either left or right it's something that comes from within a community and tries to create that grass roots sense of ownership and control and wellbeing if you like.

***I think it's interesting that you characterised community business as trying to create some kind of wellbeing. Reflecting on that in terms of the frustrations communities were feeling at the time, with job creation schemes and whatever, how was the jobs created by community business, were they different from the jobs that were created through job creation schemes? 'Cos I know sometimes community businesses also made use of certain schemes. How did they reconcile that tension or did they try to tweak them in any way to reorientate the kinds of jobs that were available in areas like Possil or wherever?***

A great thing for us was that we battled for years with Manpower Services Commission over the types of training places that they had and the rules that bound them and made it difficult to use these schemes to create full time jobs.

So European Social Fund money in the mid '80s again was very very important 'cos we were able to devise our own training programmes within the framework of community owned companies that were able to access these training programmes, use them for six months training for job opportunities that we'd identified would be possible.

So we were able to make a link, a direct link, that hadn't been possible until '84, until Strathclyde Community Business was created to make that link and we could get our hands on [European Social Fund] ESF money ourselves. That we could then create a direct link between training for jobs that we'd identified that might be possible.

If you look at the Possil, under cleaning companies, as it's now known as, we identified through walking with people the potential for industrial cleaning. We then looked at who was doing that and the people in private companies who had virtually no training.

We were able to design an ESF tailor made ESF training programme that would train local women in industrial cleaning that would then enable them to get jobs doing that work on the edge of their community in a way that was better than a private company could offer. And so we were able to make that very strong link between training and local job creation.

So the tools and the access funding and how it was managed was actually very important. In the community side the fact that you'd created within Possil or Renton, Forgewood or wherever, a community owned company as a structure, that community owned company was then able to make sense of training schemes creating jobs that would be income generating and give people a proper source of employment within their community. But equally we're doing other things as well that might be not so income generating.

You had I think the culture of creating a structure of a community owned company then it allowed people to tap into these opportunities. You had to change the culture within the community but also externally in terms of funding regimes and how many was provided to support that endeavour. That's why Strathclyde Community Business was an important step from LEAP to that body. It was able to not only just develop in communities but develop and fund things.

***I think the concept of community ownership is a fascinating one. How do you maintain community ownership over time?***

It's a very good question. My own view is you have to keep renewing that process regularly. My work, which is a step away from what we're talking about but it's something I took out of the community business work that I did, is that you need to enable communities to be enterprising and to do that you need to enable communities - it's quite simple - to be able to plan, to be able to organise to implement their plans and then to make things happen and that might be about creating jobs or owning bits of land or whatever.

But the planning, where I've spent a lot of time, is actually enabling communities to plan to look at themselves, look at what their community is like, engage people - participatory planning - to engage people in the planning process that then draws them into an arena of organising and doing. So community organisations that engage in that widespread community planning every three or five years are more likely to be



robust and more likely to be sustainable 'cos they dip back into that community wellspring as part of the culture of an enterprising community.

They'll plan, they'll organise and so organisations look like or reflect what needs to be done in a community 'cos that's where they've got their mandate from. And they then make things happen accordingly but they then need to dip back into it because the reality - and it's very true of a community business - was that some of the most successful community businesses became the ones that were least attached to their communities because they ended up getting managers in to run specific businesses.

Heads were down in the doing of it and whether they lifted the heads back up to look at the wider community again was debatable and variable across communities. So sustainability I think requires that constant...not constant but regular every 3/5 years reflection and reengagement with communities so that you just don't end up with a business that's run by a few folk within a community which might be very different to a community run business.

***I think that's a really important point and I feel we're progressing in the chronology here a wee bit from those early days at LEAP onto the more mature community business movement.***

***From your days at LEAP what kind of work did you do following that, what was your work in the later '80s and 1990s? What did you find yourself doing?***

Well it's interesting to reflect at different stages. LEAP was very intense working in communities for me personally and setting up some of the first community businesses in these communities and exploring how that model worked. Strathclyde Community Business I think in 1984, then I had more of a managerial role with a team of community business development workers. So were working covering a larger geography and at that time there was also a desire to spread the word about community business as well throughout the rest of Scotland but also in other parts of the UK and abroad.

When I left Strathclyde Community Business in 1989, and I met my wife at Strathclyde Community Business as well, and we went to work in New Zealand. We were invited to work in New Zealand for six months to look at the opportunities for community enterprise in New Zealand and helped take that community enterprise, that charitable company limited by guarantee model, to New Zealand. It didn't exist there and we were in a contract with the Department of Internal Affairs in New Zealand and a foundation called the Rowan McKenzie Foundation and through them we actually met with charitable lawyers and were able to introduce the charitable company limited

by guarantee. And from there there's been a reflowering of community enterprise and community business in New Zealand.

So we were there for six months doing that, came back and then became the first consultants to work for Community Business Scotland. And at that time we were quite keen on childcare and its potential as community run or a social enterprise I guess or community businesses. We were actually involved for a few years specifically in encouraging communities to become involved in childcare, after school groups and so on, nurseries. There's a nursery that set up down in Port Glasgow at that time and a whole range of others and we actually did childcare strategies for a number of local authorities.

And from then on till today, so from the early 90s till now. I've been a freelance consultant working with communities, always on the ground, so all my life I've just spent working actually in communities on the ground. And a shift I guess was to go rural again so from the urban working of LEAP and Strathclyde Community Business and then since the 90s have mainly been working in rural and small town communities helping communities to plan, as we were just talking about, helping communities to prepare their own action plans for their own future.

We devised a programme called Community Futures for communities, to assist communities to prepare plans for their future and also to set up community organisations out of these plans, so since the 90s I've been involved in setting up about 70 community development trusts around rural Scotland with Alan Tuffs. So Alan Tuffs and I since about '95 have been working together to do rural and small town work which echoes very strongly the work we did in urban Scotland in the 80s.

I've also spent a couple of years in Canada working again in community enterprise in Canada, again taking some of that community enterprise model to Canada and working with Native Indian communities, Inuit communities and rural communities there.

***That's fascinating. There's a couple of points I'd like to just follow up on a wee bit there. One would be within this really vast range of experiences is there for you, obviously they'll be working in very different contexts, but is there an essence of continuity within your work? What are the similarities in these communities and your approach to working with them?***

Well yeah it's a total continuity if you like. It's all the same, so it's all the same work. And it is all about working in communities with local people to help them have a greater say over their own future to enable them to become partners in their own development, so that's a phrase or value that I've stuck with since the 70s, that notion

of communities. A belief in community as a thing in itself first of all and then a desire to work with communities to enable them to have a greater say over their own future, to be proactive and not just reactive to change. And to be able to make things happen in a way that suits them and tackles the things that they identify as problems but also enables them to grab hold of opportunities, so it's a constant strand.

And I guess it's been about the community as much as what comes out of it. It doesn't have to be a community business, a community owned business that creates jobs or generates income, it could be about a community developing a good youth programme or tackling drug and alcohol problems. It could be about environmental improvements. It could be about getting better play facilities or a community centre or whatever, or being able to work effectively with the Health Board or the Forestry Commission.

It's about that ability within communities to be able to shape their own future is the thing that's always interested me and that I've stuck with.

***Is there any one community that you've worked with that you feel has been particularly successful in taking on that message and changing their future?***

There's actually a lot of them. There's a lot of them and what's so interesting...I could give you examples of lots of different communities but what's interesting too - and we spent a bit of time on this - is trying to create a recognition of that as a possibility not just within communities but within local authorities, regeneration companies and other bodies.

One of the great things that we've been able to do is, for example, set up a programme of our Community Futures work at regional levels. For example, at the start of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park we were able to design a programme of community action planning for each of the 24 communities that were going to be in the park so that they could influence the shape of the National Park Plan, so bottom up planning influencing a strategic or top down plan.

So now if you go to the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park you'll find communities that every 5 years prepare their own plans for their own future. They all have development trusts, we've helped them set up development trusts, they're all undertaking programmes of work based on what the community have said is important over that 5 years and by and large a lot of them have success in delivering these programmes. And they deliver them not just on their own, there's a culture been created about them working in partnership with the Planning Agency, the housing body, the Health Board, the Police, the Roads Department so it's become a joint endeavour. It's never going to be perfect but at least there's a culture developing.

We've managed to do the same thing in East Ayrshire Council where East Ayrshire Council are committed to assisting every community in East Ayrshire to develop their own community action plan and they're working with each community to help deliver the things that are in these plans.

So success for us has been about stories in communities and success in communities but equally success in developing that culture of recognising that if you enable communities to plan their own future they become great partners to work with and they also need help to make these things happen. It's got to be a two way street.

So it's about changing that culture and we're doing that slowly here and also curiously in Ireland where we have a programme of Community Futures working in County Mayo with thirty communities currently. It's an ongoing programme. I've been assisted to prepare plans for their future and the communities then work to make them happen but with the support of a shifting culture at the Council/County level that sees people working alongside them.

***That's fascinating. If you could go back to the late 1980s is there anything you'd do differently in hindsight? So as well as acknowledging the successes, is there anything you'd change?***

Well I think it's very interesting how things shift just in general and certainly when we started working in communities in the early 80s it was a movement, it was a movement and a belief that this was possible. That was a movement and a belief not just by people like me who were working in the communities but within the communities themselves which was a very exciting time to be involved and great things came out of that, things that still exist like Workspace, Inverclyde Community Development Trust, Possil, Allander Security, a lot of them are still going.

But I think what's interesting, and is probably inevitable, is once you start to formulise that and draw in other monies into that. I was saying to you for example Scottish Development Agency weren't involved up till the mid 80s, once they start putting money into this there's a whole shift towards what you might now recognise as social enterprise which is about individuals creating businesses that might have a social value. But that's an entirely different thing, certainly in my mind, to a community business which is much more about the community as a whole and what it needs and what its assets are and what its opportunities are.

And so there's been a split and maybe it's a healthy thing. There's now essentially two things, there's social enterprises of a whole range of varieties and hues but there's still community enterprise, most commonly called now Community Development Trusts or done through a Community Development Trust and done through the type of

forward planning about communities taking ownership over their own future and their own organisation and making things happen.

There's a whole strand there of...I was personally in the 80s a wee bit sorry to see that being lost and then I suppose people like me and others had to reclaim it in what we've done and what we've gone on to do but at the same time there's a push to more a kind of social enterprise as a more hard to pin down concept that then evolved.

I wouldn't say it's necessarily a right or wrong thing, it's just interesting to see that shift in culture.

It's encouraging to think that there's still people wanting to work in whole communities and find out what whole communities need and want and to support that endeavour just as there is people who are interested in helping individuals set up social enterprise.

So there's been an evolution, it's not necessarily one things better than the other it's just there was a change towards the late 80s partly funding led. I think also partly led by the formalisation of this type of work. You got more Councils wanting to go into these areas, large scale partnerships happening, private/public sector partnerships with maybe the community tailed on.

There was a shift from communities creating a wellspring of endeavour within their own communities and not many people wanted to help them and so that left the field quite wide open for communities to take ownership of that.

And then at the end of the 80s you had a more formalised approach with public/private partnerships coming into Drumchapel and Castlemilk and so on and we need to do this and we need to do that. Communities maybe lost a wee bit of purchase at that point and maybe had to go on to reclaim it, or try to reclaim it, later on.

So that's a very interesting shift so if you like you go into a place like Raploch or Shortlees in Kilmarnock. They have absolutely wonderful public/private sector PPI, PPFIs, schools and community centres but if you ask people in Raploch what would you like? They'd say we'd like a community centre 'cos they don't see that huge edifice as theirs.

Sorry that was a bit of a ramble there. There's a number of wee strands in there [Laughter].

***Rambling is totally encouraged, absolutely.***

Just was well. You don't even need to encourage it [Laughter].

*I'm thinking that maybe a little bit more about this change between community business and the social enterprise and you'd mentioned a couple of factors that were important there. Do you think that the work that community businesses did have they been recognised in the shift to social enterprise? I suppose what I'm asking is are there elements of continuity and a recognition of the value of community business and has that process of learning been taken forward into social enterprise? Or do you see it as a break in that perhaps some of those lessons of the early work have been lost?*

I'm sure it's not been lost, I think it's just a rainbow field now isn't it of many different colours and shapes and sizes. If we're calling the whole thing social enterprise there's just so many shades of it. Some of its more enterprise, some of its more social and then some of it is still what you might call community enterprise or community business.

I'm personally sad that the terminology is maybe not clear. I'd like still to think that there was a clearer understanding of community enterprise, community business. Even if it's a subset of social enterprise it's still recognised as community business which is quite different to social enterprise, some of its similar but some of its quite different.

I think it goes back to this thing of community enterprise which stems from looking at a whole community, so it's geographically based or community of interest based and it starts from understanding what's in that community and what its needs and opportunities and assets are. And it goes from there and organises from there, whereas social enterprise might be just a few folk thinking of setting up a bakery might be a good thing. It's a great thing and it might have some social goals too but it's different from looking at a whole community.

*Do you think this idea of community it's something I'm interested in, do you think community exists in the same way now as it did back in the 1970s and 1980s?*

Yeah I would say absolutely. I would say absolutely. In many ways I work in rural communities, primarily in small town communities, but we've worked a lot in the last few years in coalmining communities. They fascinate me in the sense that...I worked in Moodiesburn for example which I always thought was just a bunch of houses between Glasgow and Cumbernauld. And the planners think it is too. They actually call that stretch from Glasgow to Cumbernauld the "northern corridor" which has got to be a dreadful thing to call real places. What's it the northern corridor of? Presumably it's the northern corridor of Glasgow but it contains real communities and

one of them is Moodiesburn. But it wasn't until I went in and worked there that I realised it's actually a proud ex-coalmining community.

The coalmining shut in the 50s or early 60s but it's still the ethos that helps define that community. The people are proud, there's a memorial to a mining disaster there, people gather round every year. The people who are on the community organisations all traced their families back to mining families. There's a pride that helps define that community that's way beyond what you see with your eye 'cos it just looks like a bunch of houses.

But when you actually tap into that it's amazing what comes out of that in terms of what the community thinks of itself, what it should be and how special the green belt around it is to them to retain that sense of identity that could be lost at a planner's whim with infill housing in the northern corridor.

So we constantly find that communities still exist, people still perceive themselves as communities very very strongly, whether it's urban or rural.

We're working down in Shortlees in Kilmarnock at the moment which is another neighbourhood. It again can be seen as south west Kilmarnock but south west Kilmarnock is actually a number of different communities all with their own distinct identity and Shortlees is a post-war community with every type of housing in it, some of them built in steel.

Steel houses that were built using redundant battleships from World War 2 so the houses were absolutely dreadful. It was a good use for the battleships, the steel for the battleships. The houses were absolutely freezing in winter and hot in summer and actually it's these things that give people a sense of community, in adversity in some cases like some of the terrible housing they had.

But people carry that. You talk to people in these communities and they know that story, they have that story, these stories to hand. Some of their long drives were built by prisoners of war during World War 2 before the houses were put up. And people have that sense of it.

If you're just driving past you just see a bunch of houses again, a scheme, another scheme but you go in and spend just...you don't have to spend very long and these things come bubbling to the surface. That's what people see themselves as and what helps to sustain them and if you can tap into that then it's amazing what can happen. If you ignore it then it's just a pile of houses.

***This back tracking a wee bit but you mentioned that you did a lot of work around childcare at a certain point and I was just wondering if I could expand on that a***

*wee bit. Why was this an important area for potential community enterprises in the 1990s?*

Yeah early 1990s. I think for a number of reasons. Obviously it had a direct relationship to creating opportunities for women to go back to work. I think a shift again took place in the 80s and all through the 80s, and obviously beyond, about the shift in the workforce, more women going back to work and there's a knock on effect of that. Looking at the barriers to that and training and access to childcare being two classic barriers but then also the finances of that and also the difficulty of that. If you have to pay too much for childcare and you're getting a low paid job then the difference is almost unsustainable. You're working to pay for the childcare or whatever and so on.

So it was always seen as a classic role for community business. It's a good question 'cos it taps into a classic role that was seen for community business. One of the things we always used to say was there's some things that communities can do better than either the private sector or the public sector and that was a key area for community businesses to look at. Childcare was a good example of that where public sector might provide childcare for the most in need, the most vulnerable families and so on free and then private sector might provide it at an expense for those who could afford it.

And there was a huge gap in the middle of looking at affordable childcare that was about helping women to get back to work, it was about creating good training places for people within that business and trying to deliver it in a way where the profit motive was subdued. So there's that sense of community businesses setting up businesses that wouldn't interest the private sector in terms of the profit motive but they could still wash their face, still wash their face, create jobs, create opportunities for women and provide a valuable social service. So childcare's a great example of that, as is carers in general, the care sector.

You asked me earlier about examples of communities that have done well. Killin would be a good example where we work to help Killin prepare a plan for its own future. One of the things that came up was the need to support the elderly in the community 'cos about a third of the population was over sixty five and just shortly after that prioritisation exercise within the community the only care home in the community was due to shut so we organised a community buyout for that care home and that was in 2003/04.

It's still going today as a social enterprise you might say. It's called Killin Care Trust but again it's a great example of a community taking on a business in the midst of that



community that was of no interest to the private sector 'cos it was a ten bed care home which might even be the only one left in Scotland, who knows, 'cos ten beds aren't economical for the private sector. There's virtually no profit margin but it provides a phenomenal service to the elderly in Killin. It creates about fifteen/sixteen jobs in Killin itself. It's right in the heart of the community across from the primary school.

It's a thing of great wonder and beauty. It wouldn't have been done by the public sector, it couldn't be done by the private sector but the community are running that. So childcare, care of the elderly, nursing homes, these are great subjects for community ownership.

***It's just struck me hearing that, you've obviously got such a wealth of experience in working with communities all over the world but are you still surprised sometimes by the things that communities want when you start to work with them? Or is it usually things like a care home or affordable childcare are there commonalities or is there little surprises every now and again too?***

A lot of them are things in common. There are lots of things in common about social things like care services, outlets for young people, sports and recreation, environmental things like community gardens and forests and paths, cultural things, celebrating their culture in one way or another through events and arts and heritage projects. These are the stuff that is the food of community endeavour.

It slightly shifts over time so you see in the last 10/15 years a lot more interest in sustainability in one form or another. Transport systems that are less reliant on fossil fuels or growing local produce, renewable energy, energy efficiency. So you're seeing a shift.

It's quite interesting because we've always tried to work with communities in an open holistic way, we've never said you can tell us anything about your community as long as it looks like this.

We've never sold the work of working with communities and helping communities make statements about their future and take control of it as having a lean in any way. It's not necessarily been a green thing but naturally it's become much more like that, much more about carbon reduction and adaptation and looking at renewable energy of one kind or another. So you're seeing a shift.

***OK so I've just got a couple of questions that I'd like to ask. Do you feel optimistic about the future of social enterprise?***

Well I suppose I feel not qualified to talk about social enterprise as a whole but community enterprise in one form or another I think is here to stay, is growing, the

whole Community Empowerment Act, the whole land reform in Scotland and so on all point towards that as a growing field. This community's role in their own future in creating jobs, in owning and managing assets and resources, it's growing like topsy.

What you've got to watch out for when these things become fashionable and of the moment is you have to watch out for things like tick box exercises in terms of the way people work with communities. They think oh we must be doing this with communities, we'll do this, this and that and then we can say we've done it, so as there's this huge push towards community ownership and communities having a greater say in their future there's also pitfalls.

So by and large it's good but there's also pitfalls, there's tick box exercises that go on, there's a desire to...there can't even be a desire to offload assets which are really liabilities on communities, there can be a confusion that says that what communities need to do is generate income through social enterprise whereas how do you know that? You actually need to take a step back and spend time walking with communities, find out what it is that communities need and then acting. So it might not be about assets, it might not be about income generation but it should be about communities having a say on their own future.

So there is a greater trend towards it but also that trend does come with, as ever, top down agendas that communities themselves have to be aware of.

***That's fascinating. I don't have any further questions but is there anything you think I've overlooked in this conversation or anything you'd like...just wee initiatives or anything that you'd like to highlight or think would a valuable addition to the recording?***

No, it's an endless topic of conversation but I think you've covered it. You've covered it very well.

***Great, well we can always come back to it. So if you're happy I'll stop the recording.***

Yeah, please do.