Interview recorded with Jim Bristow on 27th April 2016 at Inverclyde Community Development Trust

Jim worked evenings at an Inverclyde youth club in the 1970s before being drawn towards the community work full time. His first job in this area was as an adventure playground development worker for Greenock Corporation, later being promoted to Community Centre Manager. He trained as a social worker in the early 1980s and began to look at the community enterprise movement. In 1987 he took up a post as Employment Development Worker for Greenock Employment Action Group and has remained with that organisation, which became Inverclyde Community Development Trust in 1996.

So, Jim you mentioned that you started working in this area when you were 19. What was your first job doing?

Well, I think I joined a youth club in 1970 whilst I was working for the Royal Bank of Scotland. So my daytime job really facilitated my ability to do something in the community in the evenings. And it was the work in the youth club that eventually took me into working for the council, first for Greenock Corporation as an adventure playground development worker. And then promoted to Community Centre Manager, a post I held for five years, during which time I coordinated the council's summer play schemes. But it was during that time when we had just created the two tier system in Scotland where we had Strathclyde Regional Council and Inverclyde District Council. I was working for the district council, but working collaboratively with community development workers from Strathclyde region here in Port Glasgow, and in Greenock. And so my work in the community centre was around managing a fairly large facility with a lot of staff and developing programmes for the community in conjunction with the community. But it was a different form of community development from that of the community development workers who are working for the region, who were more about community action rather than community recreation and leisure.

But it was during those years that I came in contact with, first of all, Councillor Ronald Young who was the councillor for one of our areas here in Greenock, Gibshill and Strone which were our two biggest areas of deprivation, and Councillor Young had been a councillor for quite some time, but became the leader of Strathclyde Regional Council. And he served the social strategy for the 80s for Strathclyde, but also was instrumental in setting up Strathclyde Community Business. My first contact with the Community Business movement was when I was still a Community Centre Manager about 1979 when a guy, Alan Barr who later became Professor Barr at Glasgow University. Alan was fieldwork teacher for our community work staff here. And they were looking at the potential of some form of community enterprise, community business. And they hosted a meeting at the Strone community centre, and the guest speaker was John Pearce. And I was actually standing at the back of the room listening to this guy not realising that some years later I would be working inside the movement that he created. So for me, it did make sense, there was a lot of talk of community ownership, much broader kind of community representation than the council that I was working for at the time, had a very paternalistic approach to community, whereas what was being described was a real sense of community ownership, and so that was my first contact.

I left that job and worked for three years as a development worker with social work for independent living for young people coming out of residential care, helping them get into

employment. And while I'd been working for the district council, one of my other jobs was to develop employment initiatives under the Manpower Services Commission which was the then government's approach to helping unemployed people get into a job. And for me it's always been a relationship between what we were doing in the community centre in relation to activity and peoples' health, peoples' wellbeing. And the expression 'quality of life' was kind of coined in the mid 60s and then … sorry, mid 70s. And for me, managing the community centre was about cradle to the grave kind of activity. And that included trying help people look at employment and so on. By the time we got to the end of 1980, thereabouts, our shipyards were closing. We had a massive unemployment, we lost between 10,000 and 12000 jobs here in Inverclyde which is essentially three town and two villages. And so that level of impact on us was incredible. And we're still living with some of the legacy of that because a massive population move out from the area. And that's resulted in the modern day problems we have with social isolation, with no extended families, etc, etc.

So you know, the stuff that we were watching happening in the 1980s, living with us now here in 2016. So after I'd been in the project worker for kids in care, I went off to Glasgow university and trained as a social worker with Alan Barr and got some other experience there of looking at the Community Enterprise Movement. As that was happening, one of my classmates was posted, and one of his placements to this building here in Port Glasgow, which was being managed by Port Glasgow Associates and Attendance Groups, who became one of the leading lights in developing employment opportunities, using the community … using the Manpower Services Commission. But also were beginning to look at how things that could be done to Manpower Services could then be developed as a community enterprise community business. So I was aware of that from my classmate. Similarly in Greenock there was an initiative called Westburn Centre Community and Enterprises. And this was an initiative to buy a building and that building would be used to house a number of programmes that would try and help local people get into employment.

And we'd have some form of training suite etc, etc. So that programme, I was aware of that while I was training, came back '85, served as a social worker for two and a half years in one of our more deprived areas. Because of the model we were using it was community social work, so I was assigned to work with a community organisation which was made up of representatives from the four Greenock areas of priority treatment, so two in the southwest of Greenock which was Larkfield and Bow Farm and two in the east, which was Strone/Maukinhill and Gibbshill which were the areas of Councillor Young's involvement. This group put an application together for an employment development worker. And the organisation was called Greenock Employment Action Group, which was then shortened to GEAG – G-E-A-G. Halfway through the process I realised that this job was attractive and advised the group that I could no longer support them; I would get another colleague to do that, as I intended to apply for the job. And I duly did and in 1987 I was appointed as Employment Development Worker for Greenock Employment Action Group.

The group had a bit of support from a field worker from Strathclyde Community Business, who'd also previously been a fieldwork teacher in our Community Development Unit, a guy called Clive Lindsay. And because I was fairly new to the movement, he arranged for me to spend five or six weeks with a development team at Harmony Row in Glasgow, which was the headquarters of Strathclyde Community Business. And those six weeks probably gave me the best founding for this job that I'd ever had in terms of getting inside SCB who were essentially

a funding mechanism, understanding how they were bringing European funding in and whatever else, and how that could be utilised in conjunction with other packages of funding. So that was the start of my involvement with SCB. And at that time they were the only funder around for the embryonic Community Enterprise Movement. John Pearce was a very charismatic person, I think he was a very far seeing person, and a combination of him and Ronald Young who without a doubt, I've had clashes with the man over the years for different reasons in various guises. But thought he was the great visionary that Inverclyde's ever had because he could see what was needed to help people deal with the living conditions that they were in.

We needed good housing, we needed jobs, and people needed to be able to have a good quality of life. And he saw the Community Enterprise Movement as one way of helping people do that, if the existing macro systems had collapsed like shipyards and whatever else, then there had to be some form of alternative. And that alternative needed to be rooted in the community, and that community could be geographic or of interest, it really didn't matter. And I think those, the combination of those two, John's previous experience in India and other places worked very, very well. And that combination made the SCB a very powerful organisation, a very useful organisation. And it's without a doubt, on two occasions we've had injections of funding – had injections of funding from SCB. But without that organisation I don't think we would have achieved the momentum that we did. It's interesting to note that not many of the organisations from those days have survived. And there's been lots of discussion about why or whatever else. Our situation is that I was born here and I had a long term commitment before. I think our plus is longevity has been, you know, the 29 years that I've been here I've developed as the organisation has developed I hope. And so I think that's worked for us.

And I'm hopeful that whatever happens in the future, there'll be lessons taken from that because Inverclyde has a very rich history both in terms of community development, one of the first community development workers was brought here by Ronald Young in 1972 when he was on the Greenock Corporation Council. And we've had a long history of that, that's resulted in a very rich and up until recently, fairly vibrant third sector. But I think we should be ... we stand out in that third sector, because of the size of the organisation, but because of its consistency in terms of development and its ability to move with the times. And I think one of the issues for the third sector is sustainability sometimes to move with the times. I think the other thing is that third sectors, sometimes want to put themselves in a box, whether they're a community enterprise or social business, social enterprise, development trust, sometimes were fragmented our own sector, and sometimes to the detriment of what we're about, as opposed to being more unified. But that's for other people to comment I suppose. So that was my starting point I suppose, was in January 1987. And from there to now has been a rollercoaster of success and failures as well, and a lot of heartache, and a lot of lessons learned - hard lessons learned.

But early doors, the first project we carried out was the ... and this was funded by Strathclyde Community Business, taking anything of value out of Scott Lithgow's, which was the largest of our shipyards. And we managed to put together a 13 week programme that was around training people to do various skills, manual skills, but while they were doing that they were removing anything of community value from the shipyards. And we got additional funding for that from Scottish Enterprise, and that wasn't a predecessor, it was the Scottish Development Agency. And we embarrassed them into giving us money to strip out our shipyards. But it was the start of a number of programmes for me, where the European approach, the SCB had with

European funding was fairly flexible, unlike the modern approach. And we were able to do a number of initiatives, for example, we set up a one year programme in Gibbshill, which was a dry pub, which doubled as a dry pub for young people. But during the day was a lunch club for elderly people. And the young people who were working there were being trained in bar and catering management at the local collage. So, we achieved a number of objectives there, we got some people into training, into jobs and we delivered two very valuable community services within that area.

So that was a very interesting type programme, and that ran for two years, and was very, very successful. The Westburn Centre Community and Enterprises had a start/stop type history. And two years into programme we merged with the Westburn Centre Community and Enterprises. They were in the building, but they had a very little development capacity, whereas we had the development capacity, but they were renting an office. So we kind of put the two organisations together.

And so right away we had an asset base, SCB's raison d'être was about communities owning assets. So once we had that base then things began to move. I think the next involvement was through setting up our first … the first community run nursery in Scotland, a lot of publicity on television and the national press etc, Wonderland Nursery, first community owned nursery. It was funded by Strathclyde Community Business on the ground floor of the Westburn Centre in Greenock. We ran that for 12 years. During that period of time we opened a second nursery with support from SCB, Colin Roxburgh who worked for them, developed a business plan for a consultancy company. I did some interesting consultancy work as well setting up other nurseries. However, John, at the time, his view was that we should try and develop franchise models in the sector. And I think that was the one bit that nobody really got their head round, it would have worked. And if you look at how the private sector has utilised franchise, McDonalds, or you know, all of these places, I think we missed that boat. And I think it kind of shows sometimes how insular we can be in the third sector.

Our business plan which and our memorandums which were written by Stephen Phillips from … well, it's now Burness & Co, but it used to be Alexander Stone & Co. Stephen's been our lawyer since I started and I met him through SCB. Those were picked up by the guy who'd been my final tutor on my social work course, a guy called John Finlay. And John Finlay became the Development Manager for OnePlus. And they opened a whole series of nurseries. Sadly that whole thing crashed and burned some years ago, primarily around the difficulties around European funding and the payment cycle of European funding quite often leaves organisations waiting for 18 months to two years for cash payments and so on. But our nurseries I think gave us the opportunity to do a number of things, first create jobs, second, provide training that ties to the college. Thirdly, challenged stereotypes, we employed the first male nursery worker in Inverclyde, and that was interesting. I think it also allowed us then to provide care in a patchwork which worked for low earners, particularly women returners and so on.

And the whole purpose of Greenock Employment Action Group, I should have said that at the beginning, was to create local employment opportunities and training opportunities to those people furthest away from the labour market. To this day that remains the raison d'être for Inverclyde Community Development Trust. So we've kind of helped through to those basic objectives, and a load of demographics of Inverclyde have changed. And the social conditions

are perhaps a lot better now because of our Housing Associations and so on. We still have poverty. We still have people who are disadvantaged. We still have lots of people who come out of school with poor attainment records. And we still have … and now we have food banks which we never had before and so on. So you know, as I'm near the end of my tenure in this job I'm seeing things that I never thought I would see. So you know, and I think we still have a relevance and we still have a job. I think we have to redefine where we go in the future. But you know we're still the client group that we are there to serve out there needing help and support. So that's kind of where we started.

And as we move through the programme again, we set up the first ever home grocery delivery service called ACE Groceries. And I tried at the time to sell the concept to colleagues in social work about perhaps them using that to augment the work of home helps, that we would deliver the food to the client rather than home helps having to waste time doing that. It took a long time and nobody really got into that, 11 years ago I was asked to develop a home shopping project by social work and we now deliver 55 shops a week with home shoppers going to supermarkets, shopping on behalf of housebound and elderly and delivering that to their house, so interesting that, you know, we had bare bones in that 25 years ago, whatever. The second area that we got into very early was care services. And because of my background with social work and also the involvement of community workers and also we were very fortunate to have the district manager of social work sitting on the board, which gave us a bit of credibility I think.

Then care services were, at the very early stage of the community care concept, care in the community should be by the community for the community. And I was working with Barbara Billings who was senior community worker. She'd previously been the community worker here in Port Glasgow when I'd been managing the community centre. So we kind of had a good working relationship. And Alexis Jay, who's now Professor Alexis Jay at Glasgow Uni, was the Assistant District Manager here and she'd already bought into the concept of community enterprise and so on. So there was a willingness to create some opportunities. And so we wrote a number of small programmes. And from that currently we now deliver about £850,000 a year contracted care services to the local authority. And that's been for 27 years of our 29 years. So from, you know, a £30,000 programme for dementia care a year to … it moved to fairly substantial, I think we employ 20 odd staff in care services at the moment. And have developed a range of initiatives around social isolation, care, health and so on. And again are constantly changing those programmes to move as the agenda moves.

And we're now in a health and social care partnership which bears no resemblance at all to the social work department that we were used to working with in the past, very difficult, their agendas are difficult, are different, finance is different, there's more emphasis now on budget than there is on care. And that's a debate facing the whole of the country currently. We'll see how that turns out in the future. But it's an area that's fraught at the moment with difficulties for us. But we're still there and we're still negotiating around that. So again that one lies very much in the beginnings of our conversations. And was always one of the models that Strathclyde Community Business used as a kind of option for people, you know, that there should be the ability to do things because … and I'm not being sexist here, but the notion that local women had great caring abilities and had looked after relatives, looked after children, their route back into work was either childcare or elderly care. And in the early days those

fairly unsophisticated notions were what we based some of our programmes on and were successful with those programmes, so that's that bit there.

That's fascinating and really thanks for all the detail on those programmes. I'm kind of thinking about your work with the MSC bids and then later the care services bid and that relationship with kind of local authorities. Does it depend on, you know, do you feel that local authorities have supported your work wholeheartedly, or does it depend on convincing key individuals to work with you? And how has that relationship changed over time?

I think that's a very interesting question. And I think it is about relationships. I think our organisation has always been known for this, if we say we're going to do something, we do it; very much our word is our bond. And we developed that very early on because I realised that a lot of organisations talked a good game but actually didn't deliver. And what I could see was that, you know, when I'd worked for the district council managing the community centre, what made our department shine out of the council was the fact that we had a very good team of managers who managed sports centres, community centres and swimming pools, who were all bound by the notion of community recreation, it was good for health but it was good for community spirit, you know, it was good for getting kids involved in things, to put away the vandal and vandalism, all sorts of negative activities and so on. So the more we did to involve people in things the more folk did things better, so. But what we did was we did things.

So when we were setting this organisation up, I kind of set it up on the basis of can do. And it took a wee while, Scott Lithgow's was one example of trying to convince people that we had the ability. And I remember knocking on doors saying, "We have got some funding and we could do this you know." And Scottish Development Agency shutting their door and saying, "You're a small community organisation, go away and don't annoy me." And it took me two/two and a half years of picking up really very, very small pieces of work. No, we'll do that, nobody else wanted to do it. We'll do that. No, we'll do that. And we built a credibility there. And I suppose our relationships over the years, particularly with social work, depended on people I'd grown up with, people I'd worked with for years, a district management structure that was switched on to it, Strathclyde region, I think were incredibly supportive to community organisations. When we changed our unitary authority that wasn't quite the same understanding, Inverclyde District Council didn't have a particularly great grasp of the third sector. It's a lot better now, but it didn't have at that time. A lot did depend on officers and myself primarily, and other team managers having rapport or finding a relationship with people. That's changed dramatically over the years I think.

I now have one link person to the local authority who 12 years ago we started off very, very badly; his job was to cut the funding for the third sector. I was asked to represent the third sector in the Inverclyde Alliance which is essentially the Community Planning Partnership, and so I managed to upset lots of people, and by defending the sector, including the leader of the council on two occasions. And there was a lot of concern that that would endanger our organisation. It didn't and I think what it proved was that the leader of our council, who also is a visionary I think, understood debate, and might not have liked it but he understood it. The person from the council was given a really difficult job. And I suppose, you know, with hindsight it was a foregone conclusion what was going to happen. However, from that we have developed a very, very strong working partnership. But our relationship with the Health and Social Care Partnership for example, is nowhere near as strong as our relationship with social

work was. And I would be hard pushed now to find anybody that I know in there due to early retirements, people leaving.

You know, a guy I grew up with worked in the same youth club, ended up as the Corporate Director of the Health and Social Care Partnership, we came from the same end of town, went to school together. You know, he retired three years ago, there's somebody else from somewhere else and doesn't live here, doesn't know the area. So there's distance, also I think the Health and Social Care Partnership reflects more health than social at the moment, there's an imbalance I think in the structures. And that'll take a few years I think for people to work out how that affects things. But the issue for this organisation at the moment is that I'm intending to go and retire by March 2017. So that bit about personal relationships needs to be put to the side. And also, you know, we have to be clear that it's about the organisation, the number of employment opportunities that provides locally for people and also the services it delivers on a very broad spectrum. So I'm hoping that we can do that. But it is very much about individuals, it shouldn't be, but it is.

And where does community ownership fit in to that? Has your relationship with the community changed over that same period of time?

Yeah. I think big changes there, I think. I think 1996 we became … we became a Development Trust. And the idea was that prior to local government reorganisation, the second time, some of the folk in Strathclyde region, particularly social work and the Chief Exec's department, they were looking at the Urban Programme. Particularly Inverclyde had huge amounts of Urban Programme, again down to Ronald Young and the SCB and the kind of development infrastructure that we had locally. And so we had more in my first year across Strathclyde in terms of Urban Programme. A lot of the programmes are coming to the end; local government was going to be changing. So people were starting to look at the sustainability issue. And a number of people inside the council and also some folk who were doing some interesting stuff elsewhere, had began to look at Northern Ireland and the kind of Development Trust model that was already in place there, partly due to the troubles and trying to develop some sense of ownership.

And the Community Development Trust had become quite an acceptable vehicle, and to this day, I mean I visited Northern Ireland in February this year as part of a DTA Scotland fact finding tour. And you know Derry or Londonderry, depending on who you speak to, Development Trust owns £50 million of the city centre assets. Now, that's significant in terms of community ownership and whatever. So Paddy Doherty who was the leading light in Derry Development Trust was brought over to a conference in Inverclyde along with a guy called John McManus who later became a Director of Economic Development, but at that time was working in Drumchapel. And they gave us a community conference to form this new structure of a Development Trust. But what it would also do, would take four or five existing organisations and merge them into the one. And at that time it was Greenock Employment Action Group, an organisation called Inverclyde Resources which had been another child of Ronald Young's, about channelling funding into the area differently. Port Glasgow Association of Tenants Groups, which is the building you're currently sitting in, and I'd mentioned them earlier as being the first kind of social enterprise in Inverclyde.

And an organisation that had been kind of round the side of Strathclyde Community Business and I'd had a slight involvement in as a social worker which was in Bow Farm and it was called South West Greenock Local Enterprise Group. And they ran a community workshop which was around providing opportunities for men and women, but predominantly men who had lost their jobs or who had an addiction problem or whatever else, somewhere to go. And the modern version of that would be Men and Their Sheds. And you know, interestingly enough we are talking about that currently just now up here. So those were the key organisations that were going to be merged to form a new Development Trust. At the time, Greenock Employment Action Group was the biggest. We already had a very sophisticated legal structure. We had 30 odd staff and I was … I don't remember, my title then was General Manager or something. I've never been big on titles. And I opposed the creation of it because it was top down. And there was no real consultation with communities. And eventually what happened was the board of management that we had in each of the organisations were removed and a new structure was put in place. And there was a lot of debate about how the structure would move forward, and a lot of soul searching by a number of us.

However, I was convinced that I should apply for the key job in that. And I did. And since then we've been trying to rebuild an organisation that has some real relevance to the community, because we lost the grassroots at that moment in time. And we also created an organisation that was never really understandable, and also an organisation that most small organisations would be frightened of because we were also at the start of the contract culture. And so if you've got the economy of scale that this organisation had and looked to be the chosen one of the local authority, then the message you send to everybody else is there's no hope.

And you know, as I said at the start of this conversation, I came in the door in 1970 in a youth club that was a very small youth club, in a very disadvantaged part of town, the stuff I learned there we shared with youth clubs cross Inverclyde, many of the people who had been in key positions, social work, management inside the council, Leisure Trust, etc, etc, all started in the same youth club or all came from offshoots of that youth club. So for me, the job that I had was almost kicking over that off the park and saying it never mattered. And so for the last, you know, since 1996 we've been trying to redress that balance I think. And we were a development trust before the Development Trust Movement in Scotland kicked off. And for years we were members of the English Development Trust Movement because there wasn't one in Scotland. But for the last nine years I've been a member of DTAS and there are 200 and odd Development Trusts in Scotland, a great sense of community ownership and so on. But all of us struggle with the same issue which is in the attrition of local government over the years, the capacity for community development to take place has been completely removed. They rely on community learning and development which is not the same as community development.

And the past CLD workers were primarily youth workers, although now they have merged services. But the community development's about challenge and it's about challenging the existing systems. Not many local authorities are keen on paying somebody to challenge them. And I think that's fundamentally at the root of some of the difficulties we face now. We've got a Scottish government that say community empowerment's on the agenda, pass the bill to that. We're talking about community councils is if they still exist and still have any power, in some areas they do, but some areas they don't because they've not been supported, they're under-

resourced. So the future for that and the ability to harness that lies at the hands of local government. And it'll be interesting to see whether they grasp that or don't. And I think, you know, those are challenges for … certainly for my existing colleagues as to how we make ourselves more relevant. It's all very well doing something for the community and in most cases hopefully, with the community. But you're always one step away from being paternalistic. And even an organisation like us needs checks and balances to say that we're still relevant to our community.

Our community now is so diverse and there's not the same range of community activism around. There's not the same level of community anger, if it is, it's about different things now. Action now takes place through social media rather than through public meetings and so on. So it's a different world in terms of how you deal with that. Community activists are older and my board's mostly in their 70s. And we're having a strong conversation just now about how we deal with that. How do we make it more relevant and so on. So yeah, I think there are major difficulties in that whole area, so.

You mentioned that in the youth club is where I suppose you started to learn your trade as it were. Is there any kind of memorable experiences? Is there any experiences that you can recall that were particular to making the change in someone to be committed to the group?

Do you mean while I was working in the youth club? Well, I would say, I mean the guy I quoted earlier, I mean I was at his retirement two years ago and the Chief Exec of the council stood up to do 'this is your life'. And this is a Corporate Director of Social Work retiring. And he stood up and did a 'this is your life' and he said, "I'd just like to say that the person responsible for this man is Jim Bristow. And apparently he talked that much on the train when my friend Rab was training to be an accountant in a firm in Paisley. And we weren't friends at that time, he was just somebody I knew, we travelled on the train. I was already very much into the youth club, I was working for the Royal Bank of Scotland. And so I was travelling with three or four folk on a morning, just doing that. One of my friends had already joined the youth club, he was working for the Halifax Building Society, it was a very kind of posh train. And we were all working in Glasgow, and Rab joined the youth club and it changed his life, he became a social worker as a result of that and then he became a Corporate Director. But he was my team leader while I was a social worker. And you know, finally it was acknowledged it was my fault that I had inflicted him on Inverclyde. And so that was quite humorous.

But during that period of time, while we were working in the youth club, we were a bit … and we met a social worker who was looking to do something about … a lot of older folks houses were being rewired, new electric systems put in. So as I say, it's the beginning of the 70s, so we're moving away from old style wiring to new style. But that meant that big holes were drilled into walls and carpets were needing to be lifted and whatever else, and then put back down again and then papering and painting. So again, Ronald Young featured in that one as well. We set up a voluntary group in our youth club and for three years ran what was essentially the greatest voluntary group I've ever seen. In later years it formed the basis for my application for funding to set up a Volunteer Centre at Inverclyde. But we ran this with 60 young people from all over Inverclyde, redecorating peoples' houses and visiting the elderly and doing all sorts of wonderful stuff, going youth hostelling together, cooking meals in peoples' houses together, you know, doing amazing things with kids who were some of the worst kids you could have met.

People now who I meet in the street and tell me that changed their lives those three years, they would have ended up in jail, they would have ended up in different places. Some of them became social workers, some of them became community education workers, some just changed their life and became really nice respectable people and whatever else. A lot of us met our partners in there as well, you know, Rab did, I did, and you know, lots and lots of different things came out of that. That's a story of Inverclyde I think that's lost, but we thought there was something really interesting about that whole three years of dynamic. It caused great difficulty in the youth club because we seriously set something up inside the system, that was challenging the system. And instead of embracing that, we struggled with it. And at one point in time we toyed about how would we fund this. And we actually talked to a pub about doing some cleaning at night so that we could get some money. And I suppose when I look back on that, we were describing a social enterprise movement even then.

Ronald Young, he heard about our stuff and Greenock Corporation got us a shop unit and also gave us free access to cleaning materials to do up these houses that were essentially their houses. But we were going into houses where people were in psychiatric hospital and the house had become dreadful. I mean I remember one house, we had been working in it for nearly a week at night, and all this was done in the evenings. All of it was done courtesy of the Royal Bank of Scotland, and me phoning people at lunchtime and stuff like that. Rab and I would meet on the train in the morning, meet on the train coming back down at night, have the teams ready, we'd go to the youth club, collect the young people and go off and do stuff. And the youth club supported this by funds and whatever else. But we were contacted by a social worker to say, "You haven't come across Mrs Smith's cat by any chance, have you?" And we found Mrs Smith's cat in a loft where it had been for some time, very, very dead and very stiff as a board. And extremely unhealthy and minging and so that was probably one of my worst memories of that whole process. Although my wife reminded me the other day that it was the constant flea bites that she remembers and also the fact that we both got scabies while we were working in one house.

But I suppose those are just the kind of highlights. I remember people from Strone/Maukinhill carrying chairs down to my mum and dad's house for the first ever group meal where there were 16 of us when my mum and dad were in Italy. And we didn't have enough chairs, so people walked a mile with chairs on their heads. And we were peeling potatoes in the bath for 16 people. And tried to cook four chickens in an oven, you know. But it was something that 15 year olds had never done before, we sat down for a meal in somebody else's house. And for me that was the highlight of where I suppose, where your ethics lie. And I think, you know, Inverclyde Community Development Trust, I like to think it is the same kind of place, it's a family. I've got a position, and very fortunate to have it. And every day we address the issues of our community in Inverclyde, hopefully very positively, some days not. But most days I think we do. So I think those early formative years in the youth club gave me the notion. And the one that I totally believe in implicitly which is that everybody's got a capacity to change and our responsibility as people are to open up opportunities.

And when I managed the community centre along the road here, my current Chairman was my Deputy Director. So when I was 24 the Chairman was my Deputy Director and he's a very hard … he still is, he's 79, a very hard taskmaster, very focused, very deliberate about what we do. And what we did, his office was at the council, what I did as a manager of a community centre and then once I'd mastered the managing the community centre, he gave me the summer

play schemes to develop. And once I'd done that he gave me 300 staff to develop in Manpower Services and continued to put more on top till you couldn't cope any longer. And I never reached that capacity, so you know, that was positive in itself I suppose. But I think the things that I learned there was that symbolically we had big bunches of keys to open doors. And I remember saying to a friend of mine who now runs Craigend Resource Centre locally, he's 55 now, but he was 15 when I met him. And I think he's the best community centre manager we've got in Inverclyde. And I remember telling him, "You see these keys, these keys are for opening doors. They've had opportunities for people, so you let people in there and they go to judo, if you let people in there they go to badminton, if you let people in there, but it's a bit of opportunity, it's about their opportunity to change."

This organisation is about helping people find employment, training, whatever else. But it's about giving them second and third chances, you've got people here with criminal offices you really wouldn't want to know about. We've had folk on license, recovering alcoholics, recovering drug addicts. I've got full-time staff, if we disclosed the number of offences in this organisation I think we'd be at the top of the league globally. But as I described it the other day, sometimes it feels a wee bit like managing the Dirty Dozen in some places but they're a very effective bunch of people, they've all been given … not all, there's lots of people got no problems. But there are a number of key individuals who have had difficulties in their lives or have come to a crossroad in their life, and this place attracts them. And those folk are worth 10 sometimes of some of the other people because they're on a mission because they've had an opportunity and so it becomes tenfold then.

And I think the experience we had in our youth club, which very, very quickly moved. There was … the youth club was born at a time when youth work was very much in its infancy. And what happened very, very quickly in Inverclyde, we opened three new schools with youth wings attached and full-time youth workers. And they were desperately keen to recruit folk to work in these new youth wings. And so I moved very quickly over to ... because there was turmoil in our youth club and whatever else, I moved over to one of the youth wings and took a few folk with me. And we still kept our contact but we did have new processes in these places as well. And so again it was a ripple effect of meeting new people and whatever else, and some of the folk there are folk I still work with in different places and whatever else. So you know, I think for me my particular crossroad was joining that youth club and you know, the rest of it definitely is history, there's no doubt about it. And you know, then there was, you know, the kind of key points, listening to John Pearce I think, you know, back at the community centre, thinking this doesn't jar with anything I believe, I think it sounds okay to me.

Glasgow Uni doing social work, a friend, Tom working here in Port Glasgow was telling me what it was like and when I left uni I was offered a job here. And I didn't take it but I recommended somebody for it who took it forward. And then I ended up working with him for 10 years as we developed the organisations in Greenock and Port Glasgow concurrently with one another. So you know, there's been three or four points where things have been it could go that way or go this way. And, well, for example, the board, six months after I took this job, the government changed the rules about Manpower Services, and it became Benefits plus £10. Now, we'd just agreed to take on a programme and the board said, "No, we're not doing it." And I thought, what am I going to do? And so they said, "Right, well you need to think of other ways of creating jobs." So that was why we went down the community business route

because that was the only other source of funding open to us. Now, if we'd have gone down a different route, the story of this organisation may have been completely different. So you know, I think that's … for me, that's about you know, is it fate, is it? I don't know. It's worked for me.

And I think we are where we are now because of those interventions, particularly in the first few years, you know, 87 to about 90, I think we had three good years. John [Pearce] then moved out of the SCB, there was a lot of fighting and the person that took over after him I personally threw out of the Westburn Centre in Greenock told him he was never … he was not the man John Pearce was and get out. And we had no more to do with that organisation after that. And then they reinvented themselves as the CEIS [Community Enterprise in Scotland]. I'm not going to say anything about CEIS. But SCB is a development mechanism, is a visionary organisation, I don't think I've seen any top it since. I've seen attempts to do it, I think the Lottery does not too bad, we've done well out of that, I got 900,000 in the first tranche of Lottery awards, we were the third highest in Scotland. I don't think we'd ever do that again because the process then was very simplistic. It was a handwritten application, the Director phoned me at the time and had a conversation with me. And then somebody came to visit me and whatever. And then, you know, six weeks later a phone call saying, "Are you sitting down, because you've just been awarded £900,000." You know, I don't think I'll every top that in my career, although the current contract every year with the Council for Employability is 2.4 million.

And you know, our annual turnover's just short of 4 million a year. So you know, I remember, and then the SCB thing, they used to try and say, "If you can try and double the amount of money, you're getting grant funding every year, you know, and contracts or whatever, you know." And I remember the first year when I was doing … we were visiting my wife's sister in Crieff and I went out for a walk and I was doing a kind of quick calculation just before, the next week there was a board meeting and I was trying to think, what are we doing? And I remember thinking, God almighty, we have brought in a £100,000 just now. And now that last funding we got was for £106,000, that's one application. And it's the scale of things, so.

I'd like to go back to that point about, you know, crossroads and people being attracted towards your organisation here. What is it that's distinctive that attracts people in?

It's an interesting question there, I hadn't thought of that one. What attracts people? I think first, an interesting thing, what I'm doing just now is I'm interviewing every member of staff as my kind of farewell. So I started in October and I'm only doing it when I can get some quality time. Because what I'm trying to do is do it like an hour and a half with everybody. And for some folk that's too much, so we have coffee and biscuits and that and a chat. And it's been so enlightening, you know, it's been unbelievable. So I suppose to answer your question, some of the key factors, we're very flexible. We're a good employer and we're considered family. So at the moment we've got people with children where we've been flexible. But we've got at the other end of the spectrum, in senior staff, parents who are in care or who are needing additional care. And so for example, my PA has dropped her working week to three days to look after her mum. My number two who's been with me since the beginning, she's Head of our Finance, has gone down to a four day week because she's now a granny and she's having to facilitate her daughter going back to work. So you know, that came across very strongly. What came

across I suppose most interestingly was the notion of how everybody is respected no matter how far they might think they're down the totem pole.

And the fact that they're recognised by name, you know, so they're not a number, you're a name. So that I think. I think we're the only show in town in terms of regularly recruiting in terms of the third sector. I think we're the biggest vol org [voluntary organisation] in Inverclyde apart from Quarriers, sits inside Inverclyde and you cannot compete with the size of Quarriers. But I think apart from them we're the biggest vol org. We've got a strong track record in delivery. We've got a good record I think in terms of promotion. We're known for caring about our people, I think. And there's a diverse range of activities. We're also supportive of learning and development. So we ask people to stay with us two years if we fund them for universities and whatever. Currently I've got 4 folk at university at the moment. Based on the experience we had in the youth club about learning our trade, about 15 years ago we wrote a programme which was linked to Glasgow University. And we did a five year university programme for the adult basic Community Learning and Development programme.

And one of our staff is now working at Glasgow Uni or ex member of staff, who personally headed that programme up, went to work at Glasgow Uni. And that really facilitates 32 local people to get a degree in adult basic education and some of them are working in the community education, Community Learning and Development locally. Some of them moved out. A couple are in social work and so on. But that was my attempt to grow our own, because I think the lesson we learned in the youth club was about what we were good at was understanding local young people because most of us came from the area. We might have had a slightly better start in life. But that was the only difference, we all came from the east end of Greenock. And so we understood each other. And I think, you know, that attempt, I was supported by Alan Barr in doing that as well. He's been a big leading light in my life as well. Sadly he's retired now and living in England. But interestingly enough when I was running a project for kids coming out of care I shared an office for 3 years with his wife. Who was a foster and adoption worker, hence a continuing relationship with Alan and she forced me into going to Glasgow Uni to do social work, so that was that.

So I think there's a number of factors for us. I think we pay reasonably good wages and also people have to travel out of Inverclyde if they want to work in the third sector. I'd like to harness and develop that a bit more. And we're having a look at a number of things just now around that. Because I think there's a danger for us that we'll get too insular. We need to expose ourselves a wee bit more to external experiences and staff having external experiences. We're looking at that just now with Development Trust for Scotland to have again a knowledge exchange programme. So I'm trying to do something with that. Paul's involved, Paul Bristow, my son's involved at Glasgow Cale on an exchange programme with Europe. And we're hosting a couple of folk from different social enterprises across Europe, hoping that that will bring some new thinking to us. We're developing relationships with Northern Ireland Development Trust Movement and trying to get some stimulation there as well. So I think people like us, I think that's the nice thing. There's always a danger with that though that you're maybe seen as a soft option. And I think we've got to be conscious that all of our staff are paid one way or another out of the public purse. And we have to give good returns for that all the time. And so most times we are punching way above our weight I think in terms of delivery, for the size of us I think.

You mentioned briefly that the 90s could be quite a turbulent time in the sector, or so I believe from my research. And I kind of … I'm not sure, I associate that with kind of the rise of social enterprise as a kind of model. Did that affect your organisation?

I think there was a lot of confusion, you know, a lot of organisations were encouraged to become social enterprises by forming limited companies for example. And there was a lot of notion that if you called yourself a social enterprise you would get additional funding. So people started to segment the sector and to, you know, the third sector, the voluntary sector, social enterprise, social business, you know, people started to create new definitions of what a social business means, you've done some research on this, you must be confused. But a myriad of acronyms and, you know, whatever else we've got as well, whereas I think, you know, in the simplistic 80s it was the ethos that was important rather than, you know, what the definitions were about. But it did cause some difficulties because I think, you know, it changed the relationships with some people, you know, at the same time we were kind of … local authorities were developing the contract culture. And some local authorities were not particularly sophisticated about it. I mean, you know, we went over some stuff about 12 years ago and somebody said, "Where's your contracts?" And I said, "We sign contracts." "Where are they?" And so I produced them and they were saying, "God, we've never seen them, you know." And local authority had lost their contracts or whatever else, you know.

So I think there were difficulties and I think organisations like ours, we were suddenly being a development trust which was a new animal I think. And there was a lot of confusion about what our purpose was. I think in some way s we lost ground there as well. I think we lost a few years of our capacity for a variety of reasons. I think there was just such a mishmash and whatever else. And you know, this is Inverclyde, so we kind of look for, you know, what will we see. So you know, I've heard the organisation's got a new project on the stocks and we're rapidly putting it together, you know, we're riveting the sides on and whatever, so we use shipbuilding, you know. And so mine has always been much more about the sea. So mine's are always around about, you know, steady hand on the tiller, steering us through stormy seas, not hitting the rocks, you know, these kind of things. And I think, you know, during that particular time it was pretty rocky, pretty stormy seas. And there was a great danger for all of us, I think of us running aground. To some extent at the behest of our own movement because I think we were turning ourselves inside out, sort of what are we all about and, you know. There's a lot of good stuff.

I don't know if you … do you read Laurence Demarco's stuff? I mean, and he was, he was a social worker, I met him for the first time because my friend Rab was at Murray House with him. And so I stayed with him a couple of times in Edinburgh. And he's always been a great thinker and I think, you know, he's one of the movement's great thinkers. And he's been at a couple of our conferences at DTAS and you know, I've reengaged with him. And he sponsored a book a couple of years ago that he did... I like him. But I think sometimes he kind of unwittingly kind of does hares off in different directions. Or maybe it's not unwittingly, maybe it's quite deliberate, but I think, you know, people like that, being around a long time, and they are the conscience I think of the movement, you know, and Aiden Pia as well is a really good guy, you know, and Wade and Melvin, they're quite focused about the bits they want. Ian Cooke, who's the current Director of DTAS is very focused on Development Trust stuff. I'm much more on the broad church, you know, I think.

Somebody described me, she's a current candidate for the Labour party for the MSP, locally and I met her just socially at a farewell for a colleague from social work a couple of weeks ago. And she said, "I've always admired you from a distance because your organisation's almost chameleon like, it blends in but it also knows when to change. And it knows instinctively when things are about to change. You're ahead of the game, every time you're ahead of the game." And I kind of thought, I don't know about that, I always think, you know, I'd had two pints, so I wasn't sure. But I think that's probably a fairly accurate kind of description, you know, I think that's … I wouldn't be uncomfortable with that as an epitaph, you know, that's okay, I like that. I always thought mine would be, he tried, full stop, that would be enough. But I quite liked that chameleon kind of approach, because I think that's probably true. And I think, you know, the way that we have kind of never affiliated ourselves with any particular... I like DTAS because I think there's a lot of power there in terms of the movement. A lot of power behind it, a lot of community drive across the country. They've changed legislation, they've really been influential in pushing some really interesting bits forward.

But they've been knocking on the door of the government that's kind of saying it wants to do that, whereas philosophically most of us should be rooted in the Labour Party and should have been rooted in as John [Pearce] was in socialism and whatever else. But you know, I've never seen opportunities created for the third sector to be, Scottish Nationalists have done it, so although there's a confusion in my head about it, it's a reality for me. So that's the arena I work in. And party politics are something for other people, you know, we are apolitical and my job's to make the most of whatever agenda's in front of us and whoever's in front of us. And so I quite liked the notion of chameleon, I thought that was pretty positive, I think that denotes a survivor I think, so I'm accepting that one, yeah, it's quite good.

So in kind of thinking about that kind of chameleon like trajectory, you started out working with, I think you described it as those furthest from the labour market. So in the 1980s who were those people and are they the same people now?

No. I think in the 1980s the population of Inverclyde would have been something like just short of 100,000. The population of Inverclyde currently is about 76,000. So you know, a large percentage of a work able population have followed jobs south or north or east. And that's led, as I said earlier, to problems with elderly care and so on, because there are no extended families, and lots of elderly people with their sons and daughters in far England, and our care services quite often are liaising with people down south about the care of their parents and whatever. People now are … predominantly the way the council are pushing our agenda in terms of employability is towards young people. And again I think there's a bit of contradiction because I read all the stuff that says, from Skills Development Scotland that every young person's a positive destination. It's very quiet up here just now because we're in recruitment mode, and I'll speak about that in a minute. But normally we have about 30 young people between 18 and 25 on a six month paid employment programme by the council. And we have 140 of those places a year. And none of those young people are in a positive destination and haven't been since they left school. So there's a wee bit about statistical analysis being slightly awry there.

But I think the people we are dealing with now are folk who would have been considered to have been so far away from the labour market that we wouldn't have even had them on the radar, so. But now as I heard somebody once describe them, and please understand I'm

quoting somebody who's an absolute idiot, we're now at the bottom of the barrel and meant it. So the people we are now dealing with are those folk who have had multiple barriers, health, addictions, poverty, separation, criminal background, there'll be all of those and more and sometimes 10 or 12 of them in the one basket. And alongside that young people coming out of school who the system's failed them, and who need something. So for me, I find again I'm kinda looking back at, you know, 1970, working in a young youth club with 16 year olds, the bulk of them were going into apprenticeships in the shipyards, and the ones that weren't were going to jail pretty much. Now I look at young people who are desperately keen, I think I see in some respects in more articulate young people I think they're much more able to communicate in some respects, have greater difficulties and you have very little hope. I think that's the problem, that there's no aspirations, because we could be looking at tri generational unemployment in some cases and more.

You know, there'll be folk living in families where four generations haven't worked. And there's a huge social debate about why as well, but you know, I'm not going to have that debate. My job's to try and work with the people who want to try and get out of that situation. And for those who are caught in that, for example we have a contract just now called Working Matters, which is aimed at people who are on ESA. And it's really about helping folk to, if they want, to move out of that position into employment. And the systems that we have built here allow that. And so just now we've got one guy who's now taken a full-time job with us for six months, we got the funding to do that. And he's working in our community workshops here. And I'm hopeful that that is a start of a process because we have over 6,000 people on ESA in Inverclyde, we've only got a 1,000 people on Jobseekers Allowance, we've a population of 70 odd thousand. So you know, traditionally, people, when the yards closed went onto Incapacity Benefit, they went sick for 13 weeks and then you went straight onto Incapacity Benefit. And there are folk who never came off of that 30/40 years later.

Some of our board of management were in that category, you know. I'm not making judgements, I'm saying that's how people deal with unemployment. We're now reaping the benefit of that at this end. We've got young people on ESA because of drug addiction, or alcohol addiction. So we've got to try and offer something. My main my activity, my main driver just now is for our young people who want to get into jobs. And so for the last four years we've been working closely with the council. The previous Labour government had a thing called Future Job Programme, we ran Inverclyde Council and ourselves ran the second most effective one in the whole UK. We had 480 people through the door in 18 months, 6 months paid employment, £2.2 million went into the local economy, thanks very much, that was nice. But we set a precedent that our local authority had recognised and so we now have a 170 place a year programme. We also have a 15 place graduate programme which encourages young graduates to get a job for 6 months, we pay their wages. So some of them are with the council, some are with the private sector, some of them are in the third sector, I've got two working for me. I've had some really good successes with that.

And we also have a 30 place programme for over 30 year olds who are people who are returning, predominantly in that programme we are working with mainly women, social care model, SVQ level two. So they're placed in placement either with our own care services or with the private sector care homes. And a six month paid employment, SVQ2 as part of our process. All we ask from an employer is that they get a crack at a job. And we've got a 95% success rate there. So out of every group of 12 we have 11 get a job, so it works. So again

we've done a number of under 25 care courses to try and help. We've done men into care to kind of broaden their representation there as well. We've just recently had a few refugees come to Inverclyde, so we're looking at how we work with that, our Volunteer Centre's doing some work around that and then our employability programmes are linking into that as well. So we've got language difficulties, but we're working to overcome those as well, so yeah, it's interesting.

Yeah. And so do you feel optimistic at the moment about the future of the social economy in Scotland?

Well, I'm assuming that on the 5th of May [2016], the country will vote and we'll have the same government in place, they say they're changing that. And at the moment all the policy indicators are that they're moving in that direction. And so I think, you know, we've got reason to be optimistic. I think there are a number of factors, and Laurence Demarco has flagged up a few of these,[1] there is a dilution of the kind of notion of social enterprise coming from England particularly where, you know, it's the notion of private sector can be involved in social enterprise movement and make a profit from it. And we've got a legal model for that a community interest company, does just that. And I can think of a couple of things where that would work. But I think there's a danger there that we'd lose sight of things. I think there's a danger that we get taken advantage of by unscrupulous people. And we should always check our fingers when we shake hands with people just to make sure we've got the same number of fingers we had when we shook hands. So you know, I'm a bit kind of worried about that.

Inside our organisation which I consider to be a social enterprise, although loads of people say, you know, "What is the trust?" And you say, "It's a social enterprise." No. But social enterprise – social enterprise is about contract driven organisations. "Yeah, yeah, yeah." "You just get grant funded?" "Yeah, we do, we get a total of £250,000 grant, I get £3.2 million contracts, what does that tell you?" You know, but inside we have developed newer products and before you go I'll let you have a wee look. And part of the employment training, I was wanting to try and incorporate the broad church of people who are struggling to find employment, and that includes people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, etc. And traditionally we have always had a kind of reasonable relationship with people with learning disabilities.

And so we set out a few years ago, previously Paul [Bristow] worked for another organisation in the third sector. And he got some equipment which allowed him to make wooden craft items. And it was linked to a book that Paul, his brother and my manager here, Ross, a part of our heritage group we call Magic Tots. And it'd be quite good at bringing money into Inverclyde. And they've done a lot of books and a lot of comics and so on with schools and whatever. And so I saw that we also have inside our own organisation, a heritage and culture section. We own the oldest house and the second oldest house in Greenock, which are 1753 and 1755, sat on the street that James Watt was born on. And we've used that as a focal point for our heritage and culture. That creates jobs, we've got some university graduates who are doing heritage and culture, so they can get work placement experience there, equally we've got other people doing art, drama, music, song writing, we're doing lots of different things inside

[1] Here Jim is referring to the weekly Senscot bulletin. You can hear more about the bulletin in Laurence Demarco's interview in this collection.

that broad church of heritage and culture. And we've done some very interesting work with schools around that, particularly around ASDAN qualifications which are for those younger people who are not in a mainstream activity.

And again we get a sense of we're always looking for the people who are furthest away from where the mainstream is. So those are the folk that we would like to be with to try and help them readjust. So we were looking to try and develop some stuff up here as well. So the machine that Paul had years ago, it's been left lying, and four years ago, so it was called a CNC router, so it's essentially a huge piece of equipment that can cut and engrave onto wood and all sorts of things. Anyway we started developing some wooden products. And then we realised that some of the … we were asked to take a couple of placements, some people with learning disabilities. And we took them and we realised very, very quickly that they had great capacity for this type of work because it's repetitive. And both themselves and folk autistic spectrum react well to that. So we've got a group of people with shared difficulties working alongside, young people who are on a six month training programme. And we're producing wooden stuff that we're selling all over the country and we're now selling across the world, we're selling on the internet and Etsy and eBay and whatever else. There's just been a craft fair in Harrogate and we've loads of orders for that.

The guy next door exports clan shields all over the world. He buys his shields from us, we make them in the workshop for him and whatever else, so. We've got a graphic artist doing stuff, we can do engraving, we can do lasering. We've invested heavily in a lot of really state of the art equipment. And we're developing something that's quite unique. But we're developing it in a way that we've had a guy working here from … he was out on license from the prison. We've got folk who are … people with learning disabilities. We've got a couple of folk now who are coming off ESA, the mainstream young people are here. And we've now started taking some young people from school through the Curriculum for Excellence, which locally usually means that somebody from CLD phones us up and says, "Can you take wee, Mickey for four hours because the school can't handle him anymore?" And they pay us for that and we are quite happy to take the money and provide an opportunity. And you know, we've got a member of staff who facilitates this. So again, I suppose we're going back away and looking at the folk who are missing the boat elsewhere and try make sure that they catch the next one. And so that's beginning to move us in a different direction.

The HMI [report] that we did just recently gave us an opportunity to bring head teachers and whatever else, because for the first time ever we were able to use their language. So we were contacting people at schools who would normally not have bothered turning up for a meeting with us because, you know, they're busy people. But when we said that HMI was involved then they understood that, turned up, gave us glowing references and whatever else. But also began to connect the dots between what our Volunteer Centre does, what our care services do, what our culture and heritage services do, what our employability services do. And where all those bits … sometimes four bits of the organisation touching the one school, but they're not understanding that it's the same organisation. And it's about what you said earlier on, about relationships. So we've got a relationship with Kay who's my heritage coordinator. But, you know, who does Kay work for? I don't really know, but she's great because she does a good job for my schools. So that's all I'm interested in as opposed to she works for a trust, oh, right, aye, aye. You know, so does that other guy, Jim Bristow. So I think we've kind of captured those areas.

And so I suppose from our point of view, I've always been a chess player, and the role of chess is, if you capture the four squares in the middle you know you're going to win the game. And I set out very early on to make sure that we were at least in a strong position. And I think, you know, where we're at, at the moment, chameleon or otherwise, we're at the heart of a movement and we're doing things that the movement says you should be doing, work with people who are disadvatantaged, work with folk who are on the margins, work with folk with disabilities, work with folk with multiple problems, yeah, we do that. Why do we do that? Is it because we want to be in the Social Enterprise Movement? No, we don't. We do it because when we were granted money 28 years ago or 29 years ago, it says the mission is to create jobs for local people, remove barriers to local people getting into employment and create opportunities. You couldn't have a more succinct mission. And you know, I think that's how we are successful because there's, you know, there's a lot of other words and message statements and whatever else. And you know, I like the one about help people move on a continuum. I like, because I put it in there.

And I like bits about improve the quality of life because in the 70s, Vale of Leven had an experiment called the Quality of Life Experiment. And it was the first time that they ever actually looked at the linkage between employment, health and whatever else. And I was managing the community centre at the end of the road, and 1976 I got a young woman joined my management team as the assistant manager. And in the two years Margot worked with me, she'd worked in Vale of Leven, and we went over to have a look at some of the stuff that they'd done there and it was groundbreaking. And I got it, you know, and I thought, right, these are all crucial things. People need to feel respect, so you need a job or whatever else, but a job also impacts on your mental health clearly. But also, you know, it impacts on your physical health as well and positively and negatively.

Now, 2004 I was hospitalised and had to have a liver transplant, so for a year from 2003/2004 I was on the list waiting on a transplant. And this organisation was wobbly because my intermittent absence, because I was sick and a combination of things, a combination of hereditary, I was adopted and only recently have discovered that most of my family died of cirrhosis of the liver. But it was lifestyle, and it was work related lifestyle, it was stress. So although I would never have said I was an alcoholic, I drank heavily, and that's a west of Scotland male thing, you know, I live in a shipyard area where, you know, everybody talked about Friday nights and whatever else, you know, so I grew up in that culture, not with my parents, not at all. But around about me, that's the way we grew up. So I was ill and took a while to come back to work.

When I came back to work I came back with a different approach which was about understanding some of the issues facing colleagues and stress and whatever else. And we've tried to reduce some of those things by making policies about more friendly and whatever else. I think we had for two years a member of staff on secondment for the Health Board to an Employability Programme. But she helped us look at, and house programmes as well and stuff like that. But I think it also gave me an insight into how fragile everything is. And for me it gave me an insight into, our organisational structure was wrong because evidently so dependent on me. And so when I came back, the Chairman and I agreed that we would create a different structure, which is what we've been doing. And have a different focus on how we do things, so you know, there was a learning curve there for us as well, I think, that's kind of unique.

Thank you so much, Jim, that's been a really great opportunity for me to hear more about what you've been doing. I don't have any more questions but is there anything that you want to talk about that you feel we haven't covered?

Well, I just, I think that at least at Strathclyde Community Business I have a lot of fun memories of the six weeks I spent up in the … at Harmony Row and the people I worked with there. And over the years I've kept in touch with Colin Roxburgh in particularly. He's done some work for us in the past and he's been very good. I think there was a lot of learning for me even at that stage about seeing what was happening in the greater Glasgow area and so on. And looking at a lot of the work there was on physical regeneration. We couldn't get into that. And I suppose if we've done anything it's concentrate on people regeneration. And again I think that's the way forward. And we deliver a training programme here called PX2 which is an American programme for young people. And we put it in at the start of every six month programme. And I present certificates to most of these people when they start with us. And I think PX2 has been the greatest thing I've ever seen. If I'd had that as a social worker I might never have left social work.

One of my ex teammates works for me now and delivers PX2. And his wife works in a school which is for highly disturbed young people. As an experiment we put them through the PX2. They don't attend school, never mind turned up for anything else. They turned up for the whole PX2 course up here every day without fail and all passed. And you know, I've repeatedly said to folk in the Education Department, "You guys want to get this inside because it's a game changer." Because what it's about is about giving young people a very different perspective. And leaving out the sweary words I had a wee guy coming out of the class saying, "I wish my wee brother could go on that course, it would change his so and so mind about how he thinks, because that was magic in there, man." And that, you know that's really what we need. And I think, you know, knowing young people and seeing young people and having had a couple, I kind of think that's where we need to start in Inverclyde. And you know, there's a lot of work done about pre fives, been there, done that, got a t-shirt. We do a lot of work with nurseries now, we sell products to them, we make stuff for them and all the rest of it, great folk in pre fives and all the rest of it. But we're over professionalising nursery nursing.

My wife's a nursery nurse; she managed our nurseries for a while. But nurseries are about caring and developing, they're not necessarily about educating and I think that's where we're going wrong I think. I think school is where we teach a sense of social identity and care of our community. I see some brilliant examples in our primary schools now. I think unbelievable, I've got 5 grandchildren, 4 are at school, different levels, 1 is in secondary, four of them primaries dotted across Inverclyde. And I think some wonderful stuff has been done. Secondary schools, I think we're struggling. I think I'm pushing our Volunteer Centre to do more about work with schools. I think youth work as I knew it in the 70s, it's finished, it's gone, it's away. If you put a pool table down now and a dartboard and a table tennis table, you know, folk would be looking for where's the PlayStation 4 or the Xbox or whatever. And that's about isolation, that's whatever, you know. And I remember taking groups of kids to a restaurant in 1971. And you know, we knew the manager of our local Reo Stakis restaurant and we arranged for them to do a meal for the kids for our youth club. But they'd never been anywhere, you know, and the shock of sitting down somewhere and somebody serving them food, that was a bit of a game changer.

Youth hostelling, that kind of thing did with kids, 50 odd trips with kids, with different youth clubs and the biggest group I ever took was 50. But you know, those kinds of challenges and things with young people don't happen anymore. There's not the same place for them. Youth work now is very tidy, it's all very compartmentalised. And so for me there's got to be something new and different created for that, you know. I think we're going into a cycle now where I think we need to engage with young people differently. We need to stop them being isolated. I think we need to stop them being isolated. And where we do interface with young people, I've seen some brilliant stuff. We've got an anti-sectarian programme; I think it's brilliant, it's been funded the last three years, does great work. I've seen some new stuff that we're doing, IC Scotland, some training there; I think that's really impressive. But I think the stuff that we're doing here with PX2 is more fundamental. It's about saying to young people, "You've got the capacity to change, no matter what else goes on, it's up to you, you can choose to do that or you can choose to do this."

My concern is that once we've given them the option to do those two things, we need to then create the pathways and the support networks for them to continue down that way otherwise it's a pointless exercise. So we're back to the door opening bit, we might have opened the door but there might be a corridor with a brick wall at the end of it. So we need to make sure that when we're doing that, we've got a door at the other end of that that goes somewhere, not just it's a brick wall and you know, that's the end of the conversation for folk. So that, I suppose that's my kind of constant hump. I get bad press in-house because I'm constantly looking for something else. An example of that, the day that we were … the HMI report was being fed back my wife and I were going to Lindisfarne for a weekend. And so I wasn't going to be there for the feedback so I'd had feedback from the HMI team the night before, but my son, Paul, sent me an email the next day and said, you know, "We've had a great HMI feedback. We got investors in young people last week, had a gold award." We just secured £1.2 million of an extension to our contract and we got £30,000 for our Gie Us Peace Initiative.

Take a break and think positively about where we're at instead of thinking there's got to be something else that we're not doing right. And I get that, I do get that. But I think, you know, going back to the very basics, Community Enterprise Movement is based on the concept of people doing things for themselves and betterment in life and whatever else. Although I'm an officer of an organisation, I am first and foremost a local person that wants to improve a lot of my community, whether it's the community councils or whatever else. So when we talk about community sometimes we're inclined to absent ourselves or abstracts ourselves from that, whereas in real terms we're actually a real part of that as well. You know, 98% of my staff lives here. You know, we're involved in all sorts of things and all sorts of organisations. But sometimes we forget that we've also got a role outside of this one to change and to challenge what's ahead. And so yeah, I do constantly look for, okay, we've done really well, so what's next.

And the people who used to manage this building were the greatest in the country, they had an award from Prince Charles, they were absolute game changers, you know, set the whole thing. And I remember talking to their manager and I met him just recently and I remember talking to him about where they were and they were at the top of their game and whatever

else. And what he said to me, in my kind of head what he said was, "We were sitting on the top of the mountain and there was nowhere for us for to go." And my view was, aye, and then the clouds moved and you discovered there was another mountain behind you. And you weren't ready to climb it. And I think that's the difficulty and they crashed because they got so complacent, there was no challenge left for them. And the world that's ahead for us, I think there's lots of challenges. I don't think they're the same financial challenges, you know, Strathclyde Community Business, the maximum grant they could give you was £30,000. I think we got two at £30,000. And I was jumping up and down going, "Yahoo, yahoo." And at its time it was a game changer. And it should never ever be underestimated, that it wasn't.

And the work of John [Pearce] and Ronald Young and people like that, did, has completely shifted the agenda for Strathclyde and for other places. However, you know, there are loads and loads and loads of mechanism now, there's the Lottery, there's all sorts of different, Scot Gov itself, you know, there's programme after programme after programme. It's not shortage of cash; it's the imagination to do things that are different and groundbreaking. And the trick is to get the people who are the funders to understand that we don't always need to stay in a box. Now and again we have to just break out a wee bit, because what's happening more and more I think is that people understand you better if they can stick a label on you or stick you in a box. But the whole concept of the work that we try and do is to stop being labelled. And in doing that what they're doing is sticking a label on us. "You work with unemployed people." "No, we don't, we work with people who want to do something different with their lives." And that can be our job, but it can be improve the quality of life or it can be a volunteer or it can be a kid who wants to do something different, so it's not about that one thing. And I think for me, some of the funding agencies need to learn that.

And there was an old councillor here and he was provost twice in our history, called Jimmy Boyd, he's dead now. But Jimmy was a Liberal and we had an argument in our board with one of the Liberal councillors. Our board has three elected members on it currently from the local authority and at the time we had a Liberal, he was the leader of the Liberal group and we were having some difficulty over generating profit surplus. And he was quite anxious about it and I was on my way home and Jimmy lives not far from … lived, he's dead now sadly, lived not far from where I was. And he was standing at the front gate and he waved me down as I was passing, so I pulled up and he always called me Jamie and he said, "I hear you've been having problems with the councillor on your board." And I said, "Aye." I says, "Not very happy with this notion of profit you know." And he said, "Jamie, it's not the profit that's the problem, it's the stewardship of the profit that's the issue. And as long as the stewardship's correct and what you're trying to do with it is correct then everything else will follow down the road and people will understand that."

And I think, you know, that was a kind of lesson for me that, you know, to look at how DTAS are trying to say to folk, you know, they've got some development funds just now and we're trying to say, "We need to experiment a wee bit with this, we need to take a risk." And I suppose at the end of John Pearce's time SCB was criticised about for too much risk taking and money being wasted and whatever else. And I've seen some of that stuff and some of it's true, some of it's manufactured I think, politically there was a lot of angst and there was a lot of well, bullshit talked, pardon my French, but there was all sorts of politics

at play there and I never really fully understood it, it had a lot to do with greater Glasgow and all the other kind of things going on. But you have to be able to take a risk and I think Ronald Young just did that, John Pearce just did that, that, you know, John's experience in India was about risk capital and about stuff like that. And you have to be able to invest in ideas for things to happen.

And the Lottery were good at that in the early stages, but I sense now that you know, not specifically, I'm not highlighting the Lottery by any manner of means, but organisations are being asked to jump through more hoops now. And that makes it for more difficult for organisations to develop, to get off the stops in the first place or to even get onto the stops in the first place. And I think that's one of the lessons we've got to look at I think in terms of how do we continue that innovation? I mean I look at us and we're nearly 30 years old and you know, we can still hit a good 6 and get a good share of the market in terms of grant applications and whatever. I would have said the two best bid writers we had were myself and now Paul [Bristow]. I think nowadays we are probably, you know, not as good as some of the professional bid writers, we have used one recently and you know, that's a change in part of the agenda and you know, smaller groups can't afford 1400 or 1500 pounds for a bid on the off chance that they might get it. And even if you do get it you cannot recoup that £1500 in your bid. So you know there are lots of areas around.

And you know, I'm not sure what I'm going to do in my retirement but I wouldn't mind being around some of the conversations. And I'm hoping I'm going to be able to be around for a wee while because there's a lot of my history and whatever that's not relevant to the future. But there are few lessons I think that we that can learn from the last 30 years of managing an organisation like this and the fact that we're still here and we employ nearly 80 people and have an asset base of a million pounds says that we're doing something right. And I think I'll stop there.

Brilliant, thank you.