

Transcript of a recorded conversation between Alan Tuffs and Dr Gillian Murray (West Calder, West Lothian, February 2016)

Bio: Alan Tuffs trained as an architect. He moved from London to West Lothian with his family in the early 1980s. Inspired by a similar initiative in Govan (Glasgow), in 1983 he began work with John Pearce on what would become West Calder Workspace, which opened in 1985. By 1987 West Calder Community Holdings included a workspace, and Employment Opportunities Trust and West Calder Community Enterprises. Alan went on to work in community planning for Rural Forum and the Corrum Trust before starting Small Town and Rural Development Group with friend Colin Roxburgh in 1998, developing the Community Futures Project. Alan retired in 2013.

Right.

We don't have to do testing, testing?

No. I think we will be okay. [Laughter]I will trust the technology. Alan, can you tell me how and at what point in your life you became involved in social enterprise?

I moved to Scotland in the early 1980s and after about two years when I was sort of getting towards the end of building my house. I am friends with John Pearce and I had been in touch with community enterprises and community businesses in the west of Scotland, and we went to visit Govan Workspace and John and I put together the idea that we could, not replicate, but use some of the example of Govan Workspace to convert an old set of Co-op buildings in West Calder into managed workspace, which would be in many ways a hedge against the massive unemployment that was happening in the area at the time. West Lothian then had come to a point when the mines were all closing and by 1985 they had all closed. British Leyland factory was shutting down, Plessey was shutting down. In some communities around here there was up to 25% unemployment and a lot of social issues and problems related to that as you might imagine. West Calder was an old mining village, it is an old mining village and stood a little bit aside from the worst of it, but nonetheless, there was quite a lot of unemployment locally and some of these buildings, which were town centre at the time were looking in disrepair.

The Co-op had been an important, vital part of West Calder's history and they ran a department store, Transport Department, butchery and had an industrial bakery as well, which serviced a wide area of West Lothian. All these buildings were closed down by about 1983. John and I looked at the buildings, we managed to get the keys and so on and looked through the buildings. We put together the idea of a scheme for turning both the industrial bakery, which is from memory something like 13,500 square feet and what had been the old Co-op main street department store into a linked

community project that would create about three or four different aspects. In the old bakery, we wanted it to be more industrial, commercial. The old department store, we thought the future might lie in retail, perhaps small-scale retail with a market, with some flats and residential above. So we contacted various housing associations. I think Edinvar was the one we picked to work with us on that project and put together a scheme, which we took and presented at a public meeting in, I think March 1983 at the Community Council in West Calder, but we deliberately invited the four or five other Community Council representatives from around the area which had all previously had some, allegiance is not the right word, but some sense of West Calder being their centre, because West Calder was the retail centre.

It was a very well-attended public meeting when we presented the idea and got a kind of nod and approval from the Community Councils that they would support the notion of setting up a project which would be employment generating and which would honour some of the heritage of the village by using some of the buildings. I think the key factor that brought people out was the fact that the big shop window had been broken by kids and people saw that as the symbol of decline. So that is how I got involved. My background was in building and architecture. So I had the ability to be able to sketch out the ideas on to paper and draw them up in such a way that we could present them as an option, as a possibility.

You mentioned that you had visited Govan Workspace in preparation for the work in West Calder. At that time, what did you find inspirational or what did you think that Govan was doing that you thought would work in West Calder?

Well, two things really. From a kind of architectural building standpoint they had used an old redundant primary school, St Anthony's I think it was called, in the lovely named Harmony Row, and the other was the fact that they spoke passionately about the role a project like that could have in an area suffering even worse than we were suffering in West Lothian, in the old shipyard area of Glasgow. So it was something about their enthusiasm and their passion that struck me as the critical heart of the project. Yeah.

Was there any differences in what you had to consider in transplanting this idea into what it is?

Yes. Quite a few really. One is the social context. This is, well we call it a village, it's a town of about 3000 people and the greater area is probably 5000 or 6000 people, so completely different to West of Scotland inner city projects, so the context was different. The building, we hoped we would be able to own the building and I will come back to that later on, because there is a story around ownership of a property that is quite critical. We had no money. We had only enthusiasm and the ability to organise, or John's ability to organise. I remember at the public meeting I was so

nervous talking to the assembled company, that the sweat was dripping from my forehead onto the acetates that I prepared dissolving the drawings that I had done. [Laughter] So this was being projecting onto the wall as a disappearing project. I don't know where they are now. I think they are with the council archive, the ones I took. So yeah, there was that enthusiasm and that sense of purpose really.

So you mentioned that the Community Council were initially very supportive. Did you feel that the community as a whole was supportive? Did they get the idea? Where did you draw support from?

That was quite problematic at first because people regretted the closure of these buildings, but some of the traders used to mutter about us because a market had been part of the proposal. I remember walking along the street and the Iron Monger walking behind me saying, "Bandits. Bandits. Bandits." Because he thought I was going to be stealing his trade, whereas what we were really trying to do was to bring some trade and life and business back into the village and to run it for community benefit. We made quite a lot of presentations, apart from that initial presentation in order to build up knowledge and skills. We ran events. Eventually we ran events that brought people to it. Supported the brass bands. Supported the local football team, but that was all after the project was established. At that early time, I think it was a mystery. One other key element was that the Community Education Worker, a woman at that time called Sheila Gardner, I think she changed her name later was enormously supportive and very helpful. We were able to use the community centre facilities, spaces, photocopying, all those things that you don't have access to unless somebody is going to help you do it. So that was really of critical importance.

Two other main actors in this were the local authorities, both the region and the district and we will come back to them, and also what was called BASE, Bathgate Area Support for Enterprise. It was a local employment generation, it had a special name [Enterprise Trust], but I have forgotten it now. That they were set up at Enterprise Centre, so they were seen as the gateway through which you would access support and advice really. But they all came in really later. It was really around John's ability to help organise this as an idea and present it and of course we did, sort of broad-brush business plan. Let me see, what happened next? Well it took us about a year to move from the presentation and the initial idea to persuading the local authority to buy the buildings, but in fact we only were able to buy one of the buildings, not two. So we bought the old Co-op bakery. When I said we bought, the council bought for £20,000. The council bought this old Co-op bakery and we concomitant with that was the idea that we needed public support of some kind or another, and so the council had some support through Urban Aid. They were able to borrow the money outside their borrowing limits, which allowed them to borrow that money to create the money that would be used to convert the building from an old bakery into 40 small workshops. So the local authority, the West Lothian District

Council was a partner from the beginning, but they used perhaps different criteria to the ones that we used for judging both the potential and the eventual success or not of the project.

I am assuming that became perhaps a bit of a stumbling block somewhere?

Hugely problematic.

A bit down the line. So could you tell me a bit more about how things developed, maybe before we get onto those later things? How did you start to fill these 40 spaces?

Well, once we knew that the council was going to raise the money to convert the building and lease it to us and that we had some Urban Aid revenue support for seven years, we felt confident that we would move forward. So on an organisational level we set up a company, just a single company West Calder Workspace Limited, which was a company limited by guarantee. I can't remember if at the outset it had charitable status. I don't think it did. It may have done. We had help from Steven Phillips from Glasgow who had experience of Memorandum and Articles of Association from the community business movement and Steven came and helped up set the company up. So once we had the company, we had to recruit board members. So our board members were recruited from the memberships and we did a membership drive, but they also had representation from the five community councils that centred on West Calder. So as of right, each of those community councils could represent or could nominate somebody to be on the board. So we felt that that gave us a firmer footing in local governance issues. I think there was one community council that practically never sent anybody, but the other three or four did and were permanent staunch members of the board. I think we had a board of about 12 or 13 people and armed with that board and the idea that the building was going to be converted, we ran a marketing campaign and let the first four units quite early on. They were, I have got a picture of them somewhere here, and they were just like sheds really in what was called the old despatch block. I will look for the picture later.

The first few tenants included a woman who made wedding dresses, somebody who provided a saw sharpening service, a local person who ran a gas fitting company and the third one I can't remember and then that marketing campaign was extended once the rest of the building had been open piece by piece came on stream and that took over about six months. I suppose we worked towards fulfilling the space. We had, I think in the end it was about 35 workshops built in the first phase. Some of them were in the big bakery building, some of them were in the stable block, yard around. At the end of which was a house and that house was our centre, management centre. So we recruited staff to run the workspace. A manager who was all we had. I think a manager and a secretary was all we started with, yeah.

For the marketing campaign, was that done through local newspapers, radio? Did you have to go out and do different events, generate a bit of a sweat?

I can't remember. Certainly we ran something in the local newspapers. Certainly we spoke at lots of venues and through BASE, through Bathgate Area Support for Enterprise people, they sort of considered the workspace as part of their portfolio of property that was available for rent. So the time when self-employment was ticking over locally in West Lothian, just beginning to be thought about. So people were recommended towards this space. After about a year or so, we decided that what we needed was as well as the kind of physical spaces that people could rent, what we needed was something more which would engender tenants. So we set up a subsidiary charity called at that time The Employment Opportunities Trust which was specifically about trying to move long-term unemployed people through the process of thinking through an idea into maybe trying out an idea.

We considered the workspace was a good place to try an idea because we had leases that only ran for a month either way. So you weren't tied in with a long lease. It was a good place to fail if you like, as well as a place to succeed. So the Employment Opportunities Trust had two arms to it. One of which was a community workshop where we taught classes in all sorts of ranges of skills and crafts. Joinery, knitting, fly tying, dress making. We got machinery and equipment from here, there and everywhere to run the classes and it was also an enterprise support element to it, so leading people through the idea of becoming self-employed. We were successful in getting money from something called Voluntary Projects Programme, which was a subset of the Manpower Services Commission, which at that time ran the Community Programme and then was beginning to think beyond the Community Programme to other aspects of self-employment. So we had enough money to employ three or four people and in fact I became employed by them as well, part-time, previously I had been a volunteer, to run the Employment Opportunities Trust. To run classes and to provide the advice and support. I remember that the target, we had £30,000 a year, which in 1985 sounded like quite a lot of money and our target, the target that we were set by Manpower Services Commission was that we should get six people into full-time employment, either self-employed or whatever in a year, because at that time they recognised or they reckoned that it cost £5,000 a year to keep somebody on the dole, therefore if we got six people off the dole and into employment we were paying for ourselves. The lesson of course is that targets diminished, diminished, and diminished, so that over the years, by the fourth year of that funding we still had £30,000, but we had to get 30 people into employment rather than six. So meeting those targets became even more and more onerous and difficult. So that gave us two branches. It gave us the idea of engendering enterprising attitudes, but alongside that we recognised that only a small proportion of people could really face the challenges

or wanted to face the challenges of becoming self-employed, running their own business.

So we began to think that we should be setting up something which is more about direct employment ourselves. We had the work space which was property management. We had the Employment Opportunities Trust which was providing advice and support and what we needed was something that would employ people. So in about a year and a half later, we set up something called West Calder Community Enterprises which was a building and joinery company and was specifically aimed to employing long-term unemployed people and to create jobs for unemployed people in building and joinery, previously long-term unemployed people. We used that company initially. There was something called the Community Programme which you have probably heard about, which was enormously helpful because it allowed you to employ people for, I think it was 20 hours a week and they would through subsidy would pay their wages and so gradually we were able to move, it was for 6 months or 12 months, I can't remember now. We were able to move people from that 20 hours a week to 35 hours a week paying the rest out of the income that we generated. So it was a tremendous project, Community Programme. What was it overtaken by? ET, Employment Training. Yeah, it was overtaken by Employment Training. This whole push that government had to have, which was about being innovative and changing structure and also paying less for what it was getting, undermined that usefulness of the Community Programme. So after about four years, I think the Community Programme disappeared. We were no longer able to use that as a really powerful route to get people through and eased into employment and then on to fuller employment self-generated income, through the Community Enterprise Project. So that gave us three legs. The property management company, the employment advice and training and the building and joinery direct employment company. So we began to look at how these were tied together and it seemed a good idea to have an overarching structure, legal structure and we set up West Calder Community Holdings which is a holding company for all the other endeavours that the project wanted to engage in.

Who was that governed by? Was that the same boards?

Well it was represented. There were three boards. One for each of these companies and it was representatives from each of those companies that were on the West Calder Community Holdings. I think that the council was there as well. I can't remember what relationship of the community councils is to that, but I seem to remember that BASE and the District Council were represented on the West Calder Community Holdings Board as well. So we had a structure in place that we hoped would be a very firm footing for future expansion and endeavours.

Okay. So what year are we up to now? How many years did it take you to get all those things in place?

We had the initial presentation of the idea in 1983. We had the building construction, conversion phase in maybe 1984 when the workspace company was set up. 1985, the Employment Opportunities Trust was set up. In 1987 maybe, something like that, the West Calder Community Enterprises was set up and then, maybe the same year West Calder Community Holdings. So about three or four years. A piece at a time putting the pieces in place.

I am quite interested in what you were saying about the Community Programme and the different layers of the workspace through the new people who were already able to set up a business themselves and then people that perhaps needed some support and then also trying to join people who were long-term unemployed from the area. Was it ex-miners that were the people coming into that stream?

Yeah, indeed. There was a really good report by Scottish Education Action for Development which was done in the early '80s called *Bathgate on the Edge*. If you haven't got a copy, you need to get a copy of it. They were a good left-wing think tank based in Scotland, based in Edinburgh and *Bathgate on the Edge* showed how at that time, even, international capital and the movement of capital had affected West Lothian. 1850 it is a rural area. 1860-1870 get started with the world's oil industry in West Lothian and it grows to be a huge endeavour locally. 1961 it is all over. All the shale mining is closed down. Coal mining is becoming more difficult. All the small mines have closed down. Polkemmet still existed. And in terms of *Bathgate on the Edge*, two or three things. Leyland was closing down. Leyland had been set up by the Wilson Government, I think, along with, there were four projects that were set up in Scotland. British Leyland in Bathgate. Linwood Factory making the Hillman Imp in Ferguslie Park, next to Ferguslie Park. Invergordon Smelter near Dingwall and Corpach paper mill near Fort William. All four of those projects died. They were set up as brave ventures really about bringing working time back. So that cycle of investment and then removal is a familiar story for West Lothian. It is happening again now. Motorola which was here, has gone and that has all happened in the last 30 years. I think West Lothian has turned a corner now at last, but that's a wider discussion.

So the people that we were working with may well have been miners but already made redundant from the mines and quite a number of them, four or five had worked for British Leyland and they were made redundant there, years on from being closed down as miners. So their skills, their skill-sets were very different and their way of organising themselves was very different. They were about working for a big company and it's a very different, particularly then, very different mental set that they were engaged with, as it were. So yeah, they had all sorts of chequered histories. I remember four or five people who had been miners and then had gone, Andy, Davie, Alex, mainly blokes, they had all gone, they had all been miners and had gone to

Leyland. So we tried to create new opportunities around the skill-sets that they had and new skills that they might be able to employ as well. When the Voluntary Projects Programme disappeared from the Employment Opportunities Trust and ET came in, aptly named, the Employment Opportunities Trust changed its name to Trust Training and expanded greatly and used government contracts to run employment advice projects. Previously we had been quite small with three or four members of staff paid through the Voluntary Projects Programme. We ran Enterprise Allowance classes. Enterprise Allowance was a brilliant thing. They gave you £20 a week for half a year and allowed you to earn money while you were still on the dole. It was very useful. Other tricks and tools were through the Voluntary Projects Programme. People were allowed to earn money, to try out their business, but without the loss of benefits. Can you imagine that now? *[Laughter]* We had to hold that money for them, but it was there. They were allowed to earn it and then utilise it once they had formally set up their business. An amazing support coupled with Enterprise Allowance that allowed people to experiment in all different kind of ways. We ran classes for The Prince's Trust on youth employment ventures. So we became a little local hub for those sorts of endeavours. The Trust Training became very large and eventually moved away from the workspace premises to Bathgate, where it ran itself almost as a separate entity and I will tell you what happened to the workspace alongside that in a moment.

So what kind of futures were these guys that you were working with, who had been made redundant twice in different industries, what kind of futures were they envisaging for themselves? Where were you trying to get them to when they walked through the doors?

I think the phrase that was most often used was 'dodging away', a bit of this and a bit of that. People had different ambitions. There is no general set there. But, I think what they wanted to do was to earn a living and not having to hunt and dodge and dive as they had been led into by the disappointment of work disappearing on so many occasions for them. So some people really wanted to change their skill-set. Some people wanted to just get by, so we had quite a few jannies and handymen. Some people were looking to create opportunities for themselves and their families. Yeah, a whole variety of things. But really, I think it was that basic thing of pride in bringing home a bit of money. It is so simple. It is so straightforward. They wanted to make a living. Yeah. That's the main thing I remember, including me.

In 1987 were you fairly optimistic about the future of the workplace?

Hugely optimistic. I can't remember the dates exactly, probably about 1988 or 1989 with the building and joinery company that we had, we converted the top floor of the bakery, which was a big space, 3500 square feet, we converted that into small workshops and we used our own building and joinery company. So we created employment by directly investing in the property and that was a big project for us. We

used mainly our own labour for doing that. These were guys who had either been part of British Leyland or some of them were younger unemployed people, but they were all recruited through West Calder Community Enterprises and the starting point for many of them was the Community Programme. Not all of them, but many. And then, a year after that, we converted another part of the building, tricky two upper floors in a very high space and we had several managers by then, and the manager at the time helped us shape up submission to the Times RIBA Community Enterprise Awards and we won an award and I remember the manager, myself, two or three board members ALL went down to London and picked up the Times RIBA Award, which felt really like we were going somewhere, like it was important. We had the brass band, which used to practice in the big room upstairs. We had exhibitions up there. It thrived. It was busy. That is at the end of the '80s, beginning of the '90s. So I felt very optimistic. You felt really like it was going somewhere.

Did you feel like you had overcome that initial stage of scepticism that you faced from the community initially?

Oh very much so. I said earlier on we recruited members. I think at our most we had 150 local people signed up as members. One of the issues probably is that we never considered enough of, that people might like a return in some kind or other. I don't mean money. I don't mean a dividend. But some kind of return on their investment, as a member. Maybe we should have considered some other kinds of benefits like an annual outing or whatever. But yeah, we had about 150 members I seem to remember. You have read Westcaldwind in the Learning from Failure story. That's our story.
[Laughter]

Yeah

In the learning from failure series. So here we are, early 1990s. I must have been there about seven years of involvement by then. Seven or eight years of involvement of wondering whether I should be staying or I should go or whatever. Of course there were problems and issues that came up and you get this thing where the same problem comes up. It will be three years later and you think I have done this. I have thought this through and there was a sort of perfect storm that came in about early 1990s. I can't remember exactly when. Three things happened to us. There was yet another recession. So people just worked and were fearing the consequences of setting up your business. The Urban Aid came to an end. It hadn't been much, but we had £30,000 a year, I think it was £30,000 which was enough to support some of the admin staff and part of the management team and the council decided to increase the rent which had been never a peppercorn, but shall we say a pot of chilli and increased the rent to a commercial rent. One of the things that really, really annoyed us was that all the improvements that we had made, we had funded, we had raised the money for, we had borrowed money and invested in the building were then reflected in an increased rent,

commercial rent for the building. So with those three things coming together it became more and more difficult to sustain the project, which we had on very tight margins from the beginning, because we had tried to buy the building and the council would have sold us the building but at a proper commercial price.

Their Estates Department insisted that they did it as a proper commercial venture, which it completely ignored the fact that unless we had been involved and got the Urban Aid which came to us and allowed the council to borrow, they wouldn't have had an asset in the first place. So it was enormously aggravating. A couple of years before that, we had looked at one of the big houses in the area called Limefield House, an old Georgian house which was considered to be owned by the community. It had been owned by Paraffin Young and then his niece Miss Thom lived there and in the '50s I think, had left it to the community as the phrase was, 'Eventide Home' so it was a retirement home run by the local authority. In this case the Lothian Regional Council [the successor local authority to Midlothian Council] and they were closing it down and moving to another place and we looked and put together an idea of turning it into a dementia care centre.

So this would be 1991, 1992. We invested a lot of time and energy and we raised a bit of money here and there. Invested a lot of time and energy and John did the business plan for it, in seeing how we might do that, how we might fund it and we had big partners involved, a big housing association, Edinvar again I think came on. Alzheimer's Scotland, The Kings Fund and it looked on paper, the way these things often do, it looked like a goer. It looked like a possibility, but what we needed was the council who then considered it was theirs rather than the communities to sell it to us, make it over to us in some way or another and they wouldn't. They wouldn't do it. Again, so we ran up against that with the council. I had already run up against that with the council, so we were pretty well at loggerheads with the council. The council owned the building that we were working from, the old Co-op bakery, West Calder Workspace. They owned Limefield House and we couldn't move into that new position of control over the assets in order to be able to borrow some money to invest, to reinvest for community benefit.

I think the spirit began to go out a little bit of the project and then when the income from rents dropped away, that left us with even tighter margins and we began to lay people off as we thought we needed to do, both in building and joinery company and in the workspace company. The part that survived most strongly was the employment advice because it was running on government contracts and eventually we had to call it a day. We didn't have enough money to run it. We had bought one property from the Co-op, the old cobblers workshop, which was next to the workspace and so this was our sole piece of ownership. We bought that from Scottish Midland Co-op, but we had to sell that, or in fact that was taken as part of the debt that we owed the council for the rent that we hadn't paid. We had to sell that. We had to give up the

workspace, give up the joinery company and the Employment Opportunities Trust, as I said, had become much more self-reliant and self-standing and less linked to the whole initial project and located elsewhere. That went on for another two or three years, that project and then it ran fowl of various things. Changes in government contract, a slight misrepresentation of the figures. You had to prove that people were still in employment six months after they had stopped with you, because you were paid respectively for the work that you had done and then that too folded. So the whole project lasted 12 years, something like 12 years.

I am interested in the changing relationship with the council who had been initially supportive.

Reluctant, but supportive.

[Laughter] Reluctant. And then kind of became a major stumbling block in taking the project to the next level.

Yeah.

Do you think that that was because the council changed their mind about the community business and what you were trying to do, or do you think they had had different values and ambitions from the outset and eventually they clashed? Was there a change or was it an eventual clash?

It is hard for me to give anything other than the subjective response to that. I would say that the council didn't speak as one voice from the beginning. They were always doubters, detractors, and people trying to put smoke in our wheels, as well as supporters there. The council like to be hands-off in a curious kind of way. I think that as soon as the financial issues became more difficult for us, I gave the council the opportunity for those voices to gain a bit of ground, after all they felt they owned the property and they weren't flexible enough. They weren't receptive to the ethos of the place, eventually they were. But perhaps there had been earlier, although they were always, in my view, they were always slightly difficult.

What did they not get about the project or what were they constrained by do you think?

Money was the first thing. I think they weren't getting much money for it. They were getting the rent. I can't remember what we paid initially. They saw also since they owned the property, they had an ongoing responsibility towards the building in some way or another. What they didn't get was the whole idea that you needed this multi, I say you needed, one approach was to have this multifaceted endeavour which has a bit of straight property management, but then within that is the idea of, yeah it's only a

month either way, so it is still a good place to rent somewhere. People stayed for a long time or stayed for a short time, it was just dependent on their business. Excuse me.

[Pause]

Yes, I mean the simple way to describe it is they didn't get it [laughter]; they didn't get the idea. They saw it... I mean the estates department saw it as property. The economic development... there was always Planning that were the economic development bits in the Council at that time, so the planners, the economic development people saw it as maybe worth trying but maybe it wasn't really the full endeavour. I'm sure their view of it would be quite different, but our sense of it was that we were always slightly at loggerheads with the Council. There was never... or very little enthusiasm for what we were doing, and you need enthusiasm [laughter], because without it... it helps you, it values... it's like when... we've won a number of awards and whenever you win an award that's like saying, "Somebody recognises what you're doing is of value," and that's enormously helpful, and we never had the sense that we were getting that from the Council. We were always battling with the Council.

You mentioned also with the transition from the Community Programme to...

Employment Training, yes.

...Employment Training, there were different targets set for the numbers of people that were...

Well, that was even within the Community Programme, yes.

OK, gaining full time employment. How... so were they only evaluating your work on a numerical basis, and did that contrast how you were [laughter]...?

Well, when you say 'they', that presupposes that there were [Laughter] Community Programme people around that you could talk with, and that's very rarely the opportunity. We did go down to Sheffield where the Manpower Services commission were based in, I think, probably 1986 at the end of our first year of running the Voluntary Projects Programme within the Community Programme, and we got...

actually that's right, because the VPP, Voluntary Projects Programme, was about volunteering. The Community Programme always had this element of paid employment but the Voluntary Projects Programme was about volunteering, and it was a special enterprise development sub-set within the VPP that was looking towards pushing self-employment and enterprise development, so we did meet people at that point, and then people came up. We were forever showing people from all over the world the different departments. There was something called the SDA, the Scottish Development Agency, which pre-dates the enterprise companies, and they were always coming to us. We had good support. We had very good support from somebody in the urban aid department. I wish I could remember her name; I'm pretty sure it was Isabel* something. She was really very supportive and, for example, used to bring people along and even bought some furniture that we'd made, and so on. So there were supporters, but a bit further-flung. The people we were in contact with, there was always this... a frisson of, "It's a struggle," [*Laughter*] and it was a struggle.

And do you think the problems you encountered with your local authorities and the timing that, you know, of the early 1990s, was this something unique to West Calder or were the problems you were facing part of a wider, kind of, discrediting or questioning of the community business movement across Scotland?

I need to go back three steps.

OK.

Soon after we established the Workspace, sort of, early eighties really, I and others became involved in something called Community Business Lothian which was a voluntary group that came together and met in Edinburgh once a month. It included somebody called Graham Robertson, who was the community development person from Livingston Development Corporation nearby, John Hoy from Craigsfarm, which is a project you need to know about, and various other people who were involved, and people from Craigmillar, and so on. So you used to come together to talk about how we were going to promote community enterprise, community business, in the Lothians. And we set up... it was a small voluntary group called Community Business Lothian, so here we are. It's part of the zeitgeist of the time... of that time, that people were receptive to the idea of communities getting together to tackle some of the issues raised by large-scale unemployment and disadvantage. We eventually managed with a rolling-out of the idea of community business and community enterprise across Scotland.

By about 1986 or 1987 we were able to move from being a voluntary organisation, Community Business Lothian, and it became Community Enterprise Lothian Limited, CELL, an interesting word, which was set up with staff and members and grants from the councils. I say 'councils' because it was region... a four region... sorry, the region and the four [three] districts each provided a bit of money towards that and we set up in Edinburgh as an organisation to help promote and support the growth of community enterprise and community endeavour, so it was in the air at that time. I think by about... although it was never fully espoused by people... I think by about the beginning of the nineties the voices against were becoming dominant. People moved on within their local authorities so there were new people coming in, had their own mark to make, so the support gradually began to fritter away.

CEL, however, carried on into the future, but I think there was a whole shift of emphasis, early nineties, which looked away from the community options towards... well, towards a variety of things. One was municipal enterprise, seen as kind of 'arms length' things from the council. One was we must attract more big business to create employment, all of which are part of the picture but somehow it seemed to be at the expense of the small-scale starts, and in that work that I was involved in then and in later work that I'd been involved in, unless you are making... planting those seeds at local level, then you don't have the... you can't grow it from nothing. So the social enterprise movement now is very... is resurgent, but it's quite different from the community business, community enterprise movement of the eighties and into the nineties. It's qualitatively quite different; its emphasis is different. It's not so much, in my view, about collective endeavour; much more about endeavour which has a social purpose. I'll leave it at that; things move on.

Indeed.

So Community Enterprise Lothian still exists but not called... it's now called Community Enterprise Limited. It's based in Oatridge in West Lothian and it's a direct descendent of that Community Business Lothian, Community Enterprise Lothian, and there's a direct line that runs to Community Enterprise Limited, which is now a commercial development agency, and with a lot of the right values, but it's self-supporting, earns its living, so it has to do a lot of work [*Laughter*].

I'd like to maybe talk a little bit about how do you understand or evaluate the value of a project like West Calder Workspace the workplace, because for me that's quite a complex thing, and especially when you're involved with numerous agencies that

are asking you to prove that you've got 'x' amount of people into employment for 'x' amount of time in order to release funds.

Yes.

What was that like at the time? Was there a pressure to do that at the time?

Well, you always had... we were a company; you always had to do your annual accounts, so there's a hard line there. So, we had to present three sets of annual accounts because we had three companies. We may have well amalgamated them and shown cross-support and so on here and there, but nevertheless it's... that's the money. We always felt we had a value beyond the money, or value that could be counted in a different way, and so we used to do an annual report which... I wonder if I've... I think I've probably sent them to you in the past, or if not they will be with all that material that's parked at West Lothian archive. And they were quite simple things, but they did report on aspirations; they reported on just the straight numbers of people employed; community projects supported; other kinds of community benefit that came out of it; ambitions for the future. There's our three companies. The number of seagulls is significant [laughter]. One seagull was the Workspace, two seagulls was the Employment Opportunities Trust and three seagulls was the Community Enterprise Company. So... and those reports went to our members; that was our first line of responsibility, and then beyond the members they went to the councils and their local authorities and the funders and so on. I should have mentioned Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, who were a huge support for some of the work that we did.

Around this time, measuring social wealth was beginning to be thought about. I say around this time: towards the end of my period of time we were West Calder Workspace and... because I should say, I left in 1993. After ten years I thought I needed to move in a different kind of way. So we did the annual reports. We made presentations but we didn't have a methodology. We didn't have a clear methodology for reporting on what we were doing. We had to do reports as part of... if ever we got any funding we had to report on how it was spent. If ever we were supported by government programmes we had to report against their parameters, which were usually about money and numbers, but we were not... I wouldn't say we were desperate for... perhaps we didn't realise that we needed, but we could have done with social audit accounting as a way of demonstrating our worth in fields other than the money, which we had to do for Companies House, but also in ways which showed our environmental worth; our... the recycling that we did, or... so it was all done but not perhaps celebrated enough, and certainly not reported on in any way that anybody

would recognise, these days, as an efficient report. So, yes, it's a missing piece of the jigsaw, probably.

Essentially, I think, we reported to satisfy the needs of others rather than to satisfy our own needs. I've never put it that way before but that's what it seemed to me, in retrospect, to be like, yes. So monitoring and evaluation was really only just being pushed as part of the whole world in which we lived at that time. It wasn't part of the general thread that ran through things in the way that it is now, yes.

And if you were to go back to that time, a lot of the imperative for the West Calder Workspace and other community businesses was to address unemployment. Was unemployment what you ended up addressing, or were there other things in that mix? If you could go back and write that report that was for you and not for anyone else, what would be in it?

Yes. Well, that was a dominant of the time. In personal terms it was a dominant as well, I mean, it was what you felt was the most worthwhile about what we did, but there are heritage issues about what we did that could well be amplified by proper reporting. There were a lot of social issues that we engaged with: Alzheimer's Scotland, the idea of a dementia care home; housing, we looked at trying to provide housing. But the problem with just looking at unemployment is that it does focus your mind there, and perhaps there's only so much energy that a group has, and the ability to kind of unpick that a bit. So I would have liked more reflective time; that's what I would have liked. But somebody did a... I was... my fiftieth birthday was towards the end of this period: the nineties, 93, and somebody did a card of me. It was five decades and the last one was the decade of the Workspace and I think I had a phone in one hand, a broom up my arse, a notebook there [*Laughter*], a saw in the other hand. I'll find that card and send it to you [*Laughter*]. We were a victim of our own rhetoric, to a certain extent. We claimed a lot, and were able to do a lot, but perhaps a bit more reflective time would have been useful, yes; in personal terms it certainly would have.

So you felt like you were constantly multi-tasking?

Fire-fighting.

Money; employment; stock; property; keys; travel, because we had to work outwith the community, when we had the building and joinery company, a multitude of things

that face every employer and every employee of a voluntary organisation. I started part time job sharing and I moved on to be full time within a couple of years of that. It occupied ten years of my life, sixty, seventy, eighty hours a week for most of it. I think that's... you get burned out, well, I did; you get burned out. You're just trying to work on so many fronts, because although I was in the employment opportunities work... what's it called? I can't remember now, something like that... employment opportunities worker initially, and then I became manager of the building and joinery company because of my background. I was also involved with the other bits of the company. I was involved with promoting the company. I was involved with researching projects for development. I was involved in showing people around the premises. I was well informed; I took it on, and willingly, but I think I got burned out really. I was a member of Community Business Scotland, which had its office in the building, by the way, in the Workspace, and so I allowed myself to be pulled in quite a number of different directions and didn't perhaps focus quite enough on the need for solidity at local level in the local project.

And do you think others within the community business movement... do you think that's a common experience of people in your role?

Well, I mean, I think if you... to go back to Govan [Workspace], for example, I've always admired Pat [Cassidy] and Rosie [Rosemary Swords] as being very single-minded about their endeavour, and although we've managed to get Pat to speak at the Scottish Parliament, for example, they do focus on property management, and Govan, and their main task of developing and supporting their community-based enterprise in an area of high need, so they have an exemplary approach in that sense. As for others, I can't say, I can't say. I mean many of people that I know work too hard within it; there isn't enough time for reflection, leisure.

And do you think it was something about the nature of community business, trying to reconcile the community output with... on an enterprise output, was that part of the...?

Is there a paradox in the title of community and business? I don't know, there might be, but a paradox is worth fighting for. I think... so did you say, 'is it in the nature of community enterprise?

Yes, is trying to reconcile those two directions of work... to me that seems like a very challenging thing to do.

I think it is challenging, but I think what I want to say is that it's exciting, and what makes it exciting is the sense that it's a movement, but this is a movement for change. So you take it on, but maybe it makes it... well, I know it makes it more difficult to have very wide ranging ambitions, both social, environmental, enterprising. It's a difficult challenge, but it still seems to me to be ultimately, hugely worthwhile.

And so after 1993, what did you go on to do after West Calder?

I shifted away from... I say I shifted away from the front line, that's not quite right really, I went and worked for an organisation called Rural Forum for a couple of years, which was a national charity based in Perth, and I had an office. I worked from an office in Sanquhar, and I covered the south west of Scotland in terms of we were trying to see whether something, which was called 'Community Appraisals', which grew out of Parish Appraisals which was an approach developed through the rural community councils in England, and developed as a methodology by Gloucester College... somebody in Gloucester College, Malcolm someone... [Moseley] and it was essentially a way of communities coming together to look at what their local needs were. It was a bit over-emphasised on being largely questionnaire-based. I remember thousands and thousands of keystrokes on early Amstrad computers. I won't go into it; it was very, very mechanical. So I worked with ex mining communities in what was then called South Lanarkshire, and Ayrshire, which is now part of... no, it was then called Clydesdale; it's now South Lanarkshire, in the Douglas Valley. And I worked in Newton Stewart and down in the Machars in Dumfries and Galloway, with a range of communities, working with them through community projects and helping them put together their own plans, or their own wish lists for the future. I use that, and I ought to qualify that [*Laughter*] because they were wish lists based on a questionnaire that was devised and agreed at local level, but nonetheless which was very much questionnaire-based and not stretching out enough.

After a couple of years, I worked for a new charitable trust called The Corrum Trust, which was, in many ways, a very good period of employment. I worked a lot in the Isle of Mull and the Isle of Iona and various other places up the west coast [and in Berwickshire], helping communities put forward their future plans. Then with my colleague, Colin [Roxburgh], who had been at Corrum as well, we set up the Small Town and Rural Development Group and worked on our Community Futures Project, which we developed, and that was a very fruitful fifteen years of work from about '98, '99 onwards. And I stopped work... I thought when I got to seventy -I ought to stop work, so I stopped work when I was seventy.

[Laughter] And so the Community Futures work, was that around 2000 that you were...?

Community... we developed Community Futures first of all in Stirling where there was a pilot. Stirling was one of the pathfinder councils for community planning under Keith Yates, who was the chief exec, and we put forward the proposal to him and to various members of his staff: Helen Munro, in particular, who was head of community development, that if you're going to have community planning what you needed was communities putting into that, otherwise community planning was just a name *[Laughter]*. So we ran a pilot programme with four communities in Stirlingshire, all around... well, one was Doune, one was Balfron, one was... where was it? Heavens, anyway... four communities, we ran them in, and that won a Royal Town Planning Institute award for good planning. Again, that sense of somebody sees what you are doing and appreciates it, is very useful. So from that Community Futures work in those four communities... let me see, Doune & Deanston, Gargunnoch was another, Balfron, Brig o' Turk, they were four communities where we had four pilots. It was a challenge project that we put out to community councils and four responded... no, many responded, and four were picked by the local authority and we worked in those areas. We got some money from the Council, we got some money from Europe. So we worked in those four communities helping them put forward their own Community Futures proposals, and out of that grew the work in the National Park, Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. Did Colin give you a copy of the book?

No.

Oh, I've brought you one. That's the book we were funded to write after the work. We worked in twenty-three communities around the National Park, and in each of those communities, as the National Park was coming into being, were able to put forward their own future vision for their own community and their own list of priorities. All worked through an iterative process that looked at where they were now, where they wanted to be, what they needed to do, what their ambitions were, and what their history was, and to publish together as a series of local Community Futures plans, or community action plans. It had three elements. It really had this planning element, which is what this book is about, so that's the community coming together to put forward its own plan. It had an organisational development level where if you're going to do something you probably need to set up an organisational... at least be organised in a way that might mean setting up a charitable trust, it might mean setting a local forum for different community organisations to come and work together to

work on joint endeavours. The third is around projects and project development. So there's three elements of planning, organisational development, and project development, and Colin is still doing this work and we stopped a couple of years ago. That was a terrific period of work, and built very much on the experience of the West Calder Workspace work, or involvement, and my friendship with John [Pearce], who was always able to set it into the context of the broader picture: 'what this is for'. Yes, so that's what I did, and enjoyed it immensely. I enjoyed all of it, really, but it was time to stop, otherwise I thought I'd just die while I'm out there one day [Laughter].

[Laughter] you mentioned how the Community Futures work built on your experience at West Calder. When you were meeting communities in this later period, were communities more amenable to the kind of work that you and Colin were trying to do, or were they more hostile? Was it more difficult to bring people together, or was it easier?

There have been some changes in the last thirty years; I mean, there is a recognition, I think, by local authorities that they have to. There is also a duty and a responsibility within all departments of local authorities that they need to consult. Now, as we know, consultation can be a very wide spectrum. At one end of it can be of the, "Yes, we're consulting you and we're telling you this is what's going to happen." The other end of it you can... it can be the process of engaging communities and building up their strength and their ability to understand what the wider context is, and having them engaged in that process. So, yes, I think it's in the air much more now, this idea of consultation in... as a community development... an element of community development. Having said that, there's quite a lot of hostility as well [laughter]; you run into hostility. I would say vested interests is the biggest hostility that one runs into, and that could be a small group of things: it's 'doing it anyway'; it could be a clique; it could be the community council... a mixed bunch in my view, community councils. Somebody missed a trick in 1975 when community councils came in: they didn't give them any money, so they can't do anything. Yes. Some communities, however, have been much more proactive in being able to be engaged in the future than others. There are communities where you have the same chairperson thirty years on; perhaps not the best method of local democracy.

So the most exciting thing that came out of Community Futures was the idea of new... well, two things, really: the role of women, how women are being very much at the forefront in the community about them, that's happening across Scotland now. And new community leaders coming forward, not necessarily as women, but new community leaders coming forward; that sense that business can be done a different

way. I use 'business' in that, perhaps, old-fashioned sense of the word as 'busyness' [Laughter]. Curiously, my last piece of work within Community Futures was in West Calder and Harburn, and I'll give you a copy of the community action plan that came out of that, so it, sort of, rounded it off in a curious way. And latterly, in the last two or three years we worked in association with the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, who have government money to do some of this work, and we were commissioned by them to run our Community Futures under the banner of Coalfields Regeneration Trust. That's come to an end since then. West Calder, having been a mining community was eligible for Coalfields Regeneration Trust money funding, so that paid for the development work, and provided a bit of seed corn funding for some of the projects that were prioritised in the work. So it's an interesting package that we were able to bring; it's kind of rounded it off: West Calder to West Calder.

Yes [laughter].

1983 to 2013.

I was interested, actually, in picking up on something you mentioned there about the role of women. So far, most of the people I've talked to for my project have been men, but I'm aware that that's maybe just because of the people I've been talking to, rather than that being representative of the community business movement as a whole. Was there a distinction in the kinds of things men and women were doing in the movement, or do I just need to find the women who were doing work just like you [laughter]?

Well, there are quite a lot of women engaged in community development, but I think that you need to be... come at it from a slightly different angle to meet those women, although there are some very high-powered and dedicated people working in the field. I think the most interesting take on it that you could get would be to meet some of the women who are running the local community projects. Some of the women who have put themselves out, time and time again, to make things happen for their area; for their family; for their community hall, those are people at grassroots level who really are the foundation for a lot of really fantastic work, fantastic work.

Colin and I worked in a place called Barmulloch on the edge of Glasgow, and we worked there twice. I can't remember the dates now: early 2003, 2004, and then maybe 2012, 2010. Their community... the big thing for them was they had a Tenants' and Residents' hall which was falling to pieces, an absolutely [laughter] disgraceful building, really, but it was the place where everything happened, in

Barmulloch. And I can tell you now... where are we, 2016... that the lottery project has been funded, various huge amounts of funding coming together, and they are building that new community hall on the site of the old one twelve years after our first engagement with them, and Lord knows when they first started thinking about trying to get a hall because that was already a project that they had going. And I'm out of touch with them, of course, you know, these things slip by, but there was a woman there called Evelyn, who was absolutely brilliant and just held it together throughout that time, and the reality of that contact that they have is completely stunning, completely enlightening, and I think that's a kind of world picture, as well. OK, we don't wear suits but we're blokes and that has a different flavour to it, and I think that there are a lot of people within the community development movement now, at both activist and community level but also at the community development level, that would be well worth talking to. As I said, right at the very beginning, Sheila Gardener who was the community... what they call 'com ed' worker, yes... community education worker in West Calder, was an enormous support to what we were doing and I don't think I recognised that at the time because she was just the worker, but actually she didn't have to, she chose to, and she helped make it happen in the first place. But I think for your next study [laughter] you should also speak to Kay Caldwell, of course.

Sorry, I'm aware that I'm using up lots of your time.

Oh, you've got to be somewhere? I must stop.

No, no, no, I'm aware that I'm using up lots of your time [laughter]; it's fascinating for me, but one thing I'd maybe just like to finish up with is, some of the differences between what we now call 'social enterprise' and what was, at the time of West Calder Workspace called 'community business', where do you think things started to diverge?

I thought you were going to say, 'go wrong' [laughter].

[Laughter].

Do you want some water?

No thank you.

Oh God, I don't know. John [Pearce] was made redundant in 1990, I think, from Strathclyde Community Business, and that was hugely disappointing for him but it was also, I think, symbolic for the movement, as a whole. Excuse me, I need to put a log on the fire. I was wondering why it was getting cold. And there were a number of complex reasons why John was made redundant, or wasn't really made redundant, he was asked to leave, effectively, but some of it was this whole emphasis on 'business' and business-like approaches. I think we all recognise that enterprises need to 'wash themselves', or 'wash their faces', or whatever the phrase is, but that's such a narrow part of the picture, it seems to me. So, if I'm talking about the 1990s, we're really talking about the time of the poll tax; Thatcher's gone but John Major's in power, remarkably [laughter]. There's a different emphasis right through the country; it seems to me that there was a different sense of the way that things ought to be put together and that money was the ruling factor, and people wanted to see... well, Colin would have told you about Barrowfield when it was closed down and stuff like that: people wanted to see returns. They weren't able to take a long term view. Well, we all know that a local authority cycle is four years, or whatever it is, the government is five years, and so that cuts out the ability for people to take a longer term. Look at the way that 'short termism' became espoused and is still ruling the world now, I mean, the whole debate about Europe seems to me to be absolutely fascinating. I'm now... I'm a huge supporter of us being in Europe, that's my view: war baby. I know what it was like [laughter] as it were, but nobody is saying it's actually the corporations that are running the world now [laughter], it's the power. There's been a huge shift of power, but that's just not part of the debate, so you've got little Englanders, and so on, rabbiting away about sovereignty, it's disappearing. The world is run by the industrial military complex more and more and more, and some of it has a wee benign face here and there, but not very much.

So I think there was a shift away from the idea that collectivism, and I use the word quite specifically: people working together for the greater good and common good, wasn't what we should be looking at, wasn't the way with which things should be judged and looked at; that the bottom line was the important thing. 'Loads-a-Money', do you remember 'Loads-a-Money'? So I think there was a moment that perhaps started in the early sixties and moved through the seventies and into the eighties, and then by the nineties that had gone down, and what has emerged now, under the social enterprise banner is a different thing. Hugely wide-ranging and no problem in that, I have absolutely no problem in that, but that sense that communities doing things for themselves, getting organised to change the life of the people who are the most disadvantaged, that's not where the world is at the moment. I can't really add to that without...

What I think is interesting is, within that, we have in Scotland this new kind of community ownership powers that are coming into play. How do you think that fits with these bigger general trends, perhaps towards individuals, and whatever that... you were talking about?

Like everything else, it's a mixed blessing. I mean what underwrites that is the fact that the whole idea of municipal-ness of the power of local authorities, to be used for the good, is being undermined. The squeeze on local authorities is so much now that front line services are disappearing. Their room for manoeuvre, their wriggle-room for supporting projects like I was involved in, is almost zero now and they... so community empowerment, while I'm fully supportive of it and the community ownership of assets, is seen as an alternative to the state, through its various arms, taking on development. Now, there are good things and bad things about that, but there's also there a kind of unspoken agenda that, "It ain't going to be done for you anymore and you're out there on your own. OK, you're going to have ownership of this building, this project, this woodland, and that brings the ability for you to develop it and to look after it and to exploit it, but it also brings the responsibility of looking after it, and are you really in a position to do that?" Are our communities really in a position to do that? What happened to the whole idea of subsidiarity, you know, where if communities are not in a position to do that then the community comes together through its local authority, as an example, to do things. And that seems to be a bit of a missing link now, that, "There you are, do it," [Laughter]. OK, it's scary; it is really scary, it's not the answer to everything. It seems, to me, to be a result of a political approach rather than for its own sake... for its best sake, for its best sake.

And do you feel optimistic about the future of social enterprise and its role in society?

I'm not directly involved in social enterprise any more, as I was. I would like it to sharpen its philosophy. I would like it to look at the world... I would like it to look about... the way I look at the world, but it's not going to do that [laughter], and why should it? But I would like it to take on some of those values that we were looking at that we were engaged with twenty, thirty years ago, and in particular I think it's because almost... although there is a set of core values that social enterprises take on for the greater... the common good and the greater benefit, in some ways or other, they seem to me to be so wide now that almost anything can be a social enterprise. Almost anything can be led by that strange being 'social entrepreneur'. The translation of social entrepreneur is it means undertaker, but that's another matter [Laughter].

I don't have any more questions, Alan, but is there anything further you'd like to mention, anything you feel I missed out or that we said, "Oh, we'll go back to that," and we didn't or...?

Nothing I can think of at the moment. I can't think of anything, no.

Brilliant, OK, if it's alright with you I'll stop that there.