

1978 Local Economic Advisory Project begins in Strathclyde

Intro (Gill Murray): *This is an extract of an oral history interview recorded with Glen Buchanan at the Yunus Centre for Social Business and Health in May 2019. Glen joined the Local Government Unit at Paisley College in 1981. The Unit sponsored the Local Enterprise Advisory Project, known as LEAP. LEAP investigated ways of using a community development approach to create jobs in areas of high unemployment. Between 1981 and 1984, Glen was commissioned by LEAP to carry out research on community business. He went on to work for LEAP's successor organisation, Strathclyde Community Business, from 1984-91. In this clip he recalls some of the reasons for high unemployment in the 1980s and why LEAP started to work with local people to create new opportunities. During the recording Glen talks about 'the papers downstairs' referring to the [Social Enterprise Collection \(Scotland\)](#) held by the [Archive Centre at Glasgow Caledonian University](#). Glen kindly donated a collection of his papers to the Archive Centre in 2019. You can find a link to the online catalogue in the transcript that accompanies this recording, or visit the Scottish Social Enterprise subject page on the GCU Archive Centre website: [Glen Buchanan papers](#). Thanks for listening, hope you enjoy the clip.*

Glen Buchanan: The miner's strike went on for a year [1984-1985], it was desperate, it was on the news every day it was. What I do remember -it is hard now to remember 35 years ago- and the Thatcher government came in in '79 and they immediately took on the steel workers and they broke that strike and the steel workers basically had to go back with nothing really. Then of course the miner's strike started in '84 and it wasn't a strike about pay or anything, it was a strike about pit closures, and it went on for a year and it was heart breaking to see what was happening. So we had this collapse of traditional industries going on, particularly in Scotland, which was manufacturing-industry orientated at that time. I can't remember the exact figure, but I would be surprised if a third to 40% of the population didn't work in manufacturing and think we are down to about 16% now, and so the collapse of the manufacturing industry was felt all the more in Scotland. You had iron and steel collapsing, you had ship building collapsing, mine working just getting finished everywhere. So huge numbers of unemployed, Scotland had an unemployment number in Scotland, in 1984 was something like 360,000. It was running at, whatever, 15/20%, it was unbelievable, so people like us were working, trying to work in communities that had been ravaged by it all.

It was just awful, because, I am trying not to paint too desperate a picture, but, I mean, you were working in areas, places that had been built after the war, or post-war council schemes that were now 30 years on, or 25/ 30 years on, were beginning to feel the effects. The housing stock hadn't been modernised, it was left the way it was built and, you know, whole communities were falling apart. Work, which had been, you know, they weren't ever in the

schemes, so people had to go out of the schemes to work, so then they couldn't get out of the schemes to work, so everything came a bit more insular and that's why you had local reaction and folks saying, 'what can we do to create some sort of opportunities?' And the whole community business side of things, in Strathclyde certainly, was targeted at what were called 'Areas for Priority Treatment'. Generally speaking, places which had higher than average unemployment and all the various and myriad of social and economic problems that went along with that. So that is how community business was attempting to come up with some new solutions but it is quite interesting reading the paperwork downstairs. I am saying 360,000 people were unemployed in Scotland. We are working in 20, 30, 40, 50 areas of Strathclyde with 10, 12, 14 staff, whatever. I mean there is only so much you can do, you know, to try and get things moving. It was always the spirit of local folk that kept you going, you know, it was amazing how some people -we weren't living in these areas- they were living in them and it was incredible the guts and determination people were showing to fight back.