

Enterprise and Business Committee

Inquiry into Town Centre Regeneration

Evidence from Rockwool Ltd

Introduction

Rockwool Ltd welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation on the subject of town centre regeneration.

Rockwool Ltd has been involved with many community regeneration schemes across Wales as part of the Arbed project, not solely as suppliers of the products that deliver energy efficient homes but actively engaging with the local communities, sourcing funding streams, providing Green skills training and creating local Green jobs. We feel the experiences and lessons from these schemes could be successfully applied to town centre regeneration to deliver the broader social benefits such regeneration could bring.

Inquiry Response

The role of the Welsh Government and Local Authorities should be to work collaboratively to deliver a funding mechanism and provide a management structure to deliver the regeneration in a way that delivers benefits on multiple extra levels such as improving the energy efficiency and fire performance of buildings to create a sustainable built environment, renewing building facades for aesthetic improvement, creating sustainable local jobs using Green skills training and supporting local businesses by making the town centre environment a pleasant place to visit.

Community engagement with public sector led regeneration projects can be strengthened by having good communication streams through such means as open days and exhibitions where businesses and Local Authorities can work together to explain the proposals, what it means to the area and what benefits it will deliver. It should also be honest about the disruption that may be caused while work is ongoing so local people and businesses know what to expect and can plan accordingly.

Along with the usual funding streams for these projects, mixed use buildings which have both commercial and residential units can attract CERT funding (and/or CESP funding if the area qualifies) from utility companies to improve the energy efficiency performance of the residential units which could lower heating costs, deliver carbon savings and, depending on the measures used, could also improve the aesthetics of the building facade, improve acoustic comfort and reduce the likelihood of damp caused by condensation. Engaging business owners and landlords of these buildings early in the process could encourage them to supplement this funding to carry through these improvements to the rest of the building.

There is a huge opportunity to improve employment opportunities with regeneration schemes. These schemes need a skilled, local workforce. Colleges and other training providers such as product suppliers can work together to develop training courses

based on new Green skills, e.g. installing solid wall insulation. Training and employment opportunities could be attracting new entrants into the industry, upskilling existing workers to protect existing skills and jobs and Apprenticeship programmes to provide a bridge for school leavers into skilled work. Engaging with welfare to work organisations such as Working Links can help bring socially excluded individuals into such a training and employment programme. While recognising the need for fair procurement procedures, encouraging local businesses to tender for work and supporting them through the process could create growth opportunities in the local area for these businesses which will create employment opportunities as local businesses provide local jobs.