



## Creating a Vision - Record of Discussion – 25<sup>th</sup> April @ the CCA

**Record compiled by Anna Ross**

**Chair/facilitators: Anna Ross and Mike McCarron**

The session was held at the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow in the University of the West of Scotland's Room. There were 20 people in attendance and this suited the room which is not a large space.

The event was structured into 3 sections: taking stock and updating by Anna, discussion on the vision statement, and identifying core questions for drug policy in Scotland.

Main Outcomes/Actions

1. **Anna, Mike and Aileen** to work on the draft vision statement and send to the group for comments and feedback. Profile and purpose to be **finalised by the 19<sup>th</sup> May**. Once the vision statement has been clarified people are encouraged to start spreading the word of SDPC
2. **Anna** to compile the questions and send to the group for feedback. Feedback to be received no later than the **19<sup>th</sup> May**. Once the questions have been finalised **Steve O'Rawe and Kenny Simpson** will utilise their networks in order to explore the possibility of putting these questions to MSP's.
3. **Mike McCarron and Fraser Shaw** to work on drawing up a manifesto on what an ideal drug policy would look like. Other members are welcome to join them and they will bring their outcome to the conversations for discussion by the **end of July 2017**.
4. **Anne-Marie Ward** to send round the document on how to set up charities.
5. **Participants to see whether they can find any money to help fund the construction of a private members area to the website where we can share and edit draft documents online. We need about £500.**

### Introduction

We went round the room introducing ourselves, who we were and why we were in attendance. Unlike previous sessions participants sat in 4 groups of five.

### The Academy of Government

Anna then updated the group on her discussions with the Academy of Government. Following her meeting with James Mitchell it has been agreed (yet to be formalised in writing) that SDPC will sit within the institutional base of the AoG. What this means in practice is that the AoG will continue to fund refreshments and provide a base in Edinburgh when the meetings are held there. Furthermore it will help to create links and networks with other institutions and parties if and when this should be needed. Looking to the future the AoG will provide the grounding for applying for funding to support larger deliberative projects such as Citizen Juries or mini publics. This is the direction SDPC is going in as evidenced by previous conversations, and one which the AoG is keen to collaborate on.

In the meantime Anna will submit a budget for 2017-18 based on meetings every 6 months with an average of £130 per session for food and drinks. She will also write a short blog for the AoG's

newsletter after each session, and encourage broader engagement through the use of the website ([www.sdpc.org.uk](http://www.sdpc.org.uk)) and social media.

There were no concerns from those present in regards situating SDPC within the AoG setting, however it was suggested that it looked like SDPC was working towards becoming a think tank, and if that was the direction we are going in we needed to embed better structures and processes into our work so that we can carry out ethically and methodologically sound research. This was not reflected by everyone and as it stands we are more of a policy network, as opposed to a policy think tank. However, this needs to be kept in mind as we progress.

It was also suggested that we look into incorporating as a legal entity such as a charity. There was not widespread agreement on this. Pro's are we can then apply for funding in our own right, however it involves a fair amount of work by unpaid individuals, and begins to restricts us to our vision statement and charitable aims, as opposed to being flexible and open. In any case being part of the AoG means we can apply for funding as a branch of them. Anne-Marie agreed to send round a document on how to incorporate as a charity, and we all agreed to keep as part of the discussion, although no action to be taken right now.

### Taking Stock

Anna then went through the 8 points that John Sturrock identified in the Taking Stock session as pertinent to the process of SDPC. The 8 point are:

1. Purpose – need to identify what our purpose is
2. Profile – what is our identity?
3. Public and political engagement
4. Openness
5. Funding
6. Platform – creating platforms for engagement
7. Process
8. Practical Solutions

Anna suggested that the focus of SDPC 10 was to agree on the purpose and profile by discussing the draft vision statement, and to then look at public and political engagement by firstly identifying 5-10 critical questions for Scottish drug policy (as per agreement from conversation 10) and then looking at who has the infrastructure already in place to tackle these questions.

### Vision Statement

Everyone had a copy of the original purpose and a suggested one liner. People were asked to read through it and then discuss in their groups whether this reflected the current vision of the group. The original vision statement and one liner were as follows:

#### One line response:

SDPC is an open space for discussing the best drug policy future for Scotland.

#### Longer version:

SDPC offers a space for people with varied views to discuss drug policy in Scotland, an exchange involving fresh ideas and questions, research findings, developments in policy and practice in other

countries and the changing picture of drug use and harms. The concept of SDPC resulted from discussions amongst policy stakeholders which identified three underlying factors:

- (i) the need for continued discussion about appropriateness and effectiveness of Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, partly prompted by international organisations' / declarations and by initiatives in other countries;
- (ii) the context of debate about devolution, constitutional change and the uncertain scope and extent of policy autonomy in respect of drugs in Scotland;
- (iii) a new politics centred on deliberative discussion and engagement with wide range of stakeholders from all parts of civic society

Our aim is to articulate the above by reflecting on options for change in drugs policy in Scotland and *test the viability* of a civic-led, multi-agency policy network. In hosting the conversations, the Academy of Government based at The University of Edinburgh provides an ideal setting and ethos for such enquiry.

Feedback from the 4 groups on this vision statement highlighted several issues.

1. Firstly, 2 of the groups spent more time discussing who SDPC were trying to reach, as opposed to who and what SDPC currently is.
2. One discussion was to produce a clean-sheet vision of how an 'ideal' drug/alcohol policy might look, unconstrained by history or political dogma, but nevertheless real-world realistic. The further idea was to formulate this in the form of a manifesto ie. to express the key principles in broad-brush form, with the detail to be elaborated later.
3. There were problems with words such as 'best', or what do we mean exactly when we say 'policy'.
4. There was also discussion on whether the term alcohol and drugs would be more representative. However, there appeared to be a larger amount of people who felt that alcohol already existed within a regulatory framework and had a lot of focus on it. As one participant put it: [links to Alcohol and Other drugs is valid, but its place is in our advocacy messages, in our demonstration that illicit drugs should not be treated differently, in normalising public perceptions and ensuring a humane response to the issue.](#)
5. Finally, it was agreed that Anna would take on board some of the comments and circulate another draft vision statement. Participants have until the Friday 19<sup>th</sup> May to respond with comments and suggestions.

A suggestion as a slightly wieldy oneliner was: SDPC is a civic led multi-stakeholder policy network with the aim of influencing options for change in Scottish drug policy". There was not general agreement but we shall see a final agreed draft by the middle of May.

Final comments – this group exercise highlighted the challenges of creating consensus among expert communities. Everyone has a unique knowledge on the impact certain phrasings, word structures and content, and the challenge is to somehow reflect this variety and create consensus, while at the same time maximising the time we have.

### **Mapping Critical Questions for Scottish Drug Policy**

the second group exercise which took us through to the end was a mapping exercise. Each participant was asked to reflect on 4 questions which they thought were critical for creating reflection and broader discussion on drugs policy in Scotland. Participants then stuck these onto a sticky wall and collectively moved the questions around to form overarching themes.

Unsurprisingly the two themes which dominated the questions were the role of experiential knowledge (what impact does drug policy have on you, what do you know about drug use etc) and exploring legislative options for change. See Annex 1 for all the questions.

It was agreed that, as a result of time constraints Anna would collate the questions, creating 5-10 questions from them and send out for approval from the group.

The next discussion focussed on how we would use these questions to encourage wider debate. Suggestions from the group and follow up were:

1. Approach MSP's with a set of questions which they could answer.
2. Utilise current sources of networks such as Faces and Voices of Recovery, TDPF, Students for Sensible Drugs Policy.

However, the larger discussion was that until we had an agreed vision statement and a clear set of questions which could be used for different communities, how we access those communities should hold off.

#### Next Meeting

It was agreed that by next meeting we would have an agreed profile and purpose stemming from the vision statement. We would therefore focus on process (how we develop ways on engaging with communities) and platform in the next session.

Next meeting is set for June 6<sup>th</sup> 2017 at the CCA depending on numbers.



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ANNEX A: list of questions in draft overarching themes. The aim is to take these questions and condense them into 5-10 questions depending on audience and context. All feedback and suggestions welcomed.

Experiential Knowledge	Open questions	Regulation and legislation	Cannabis	Harm
How does personal and societal dislocation (as per Bruce Alexander) relate to drugs policy?	Who won the drug war?	Should drug policy be fully devolved to Holyrood?	What would be the best way to regulate cannabis in Scotland	What do you think causes more harm: psychoactive substances or how we try to manage them?
“Not why the addiction but why the pain”	Does public opinion have to support drug policy reform?	How can drug policy reform reduce the public costs of drug use	Where does regulation of medical cannabis use leave recreational users?	What makes you think that drug policy reform will reduce harms from drugs
What do you fear most about changes to the way drugs are managed by society?	Do you think a different approach to controlling access to psychoactive substances is needed?	How should drugs, other than cannabis (eg cocaine, heroin, ecstasy etc) be dealt with.		How could making drugs legal help drug deaths reduction?
Do you perceive drug policy to be an important social issue?	Should drug use be a criminal offence	How can we decriminalise all illegal drugs in Scotland		Do we have a full range of treatment options to meet individual needs flexibly
How does drug use and policy affect you?	Why do we treat drugs differently to alcohol? Why is alcohol thought of as different to drugs by the public?	Why no decriminalise personal use via the police asap?		Should we build more prisons or treatment centres?
Why does the does the chances of developing drug and alcohol problems depend on where you were born?	Why are some drugs legal and others legal?	How should the prohibition/regulation continuum be applied to drugs policy?		How effective are current drug services in your area?

Are people who use drugs morally weaker than those who don't?	Can we arrest our way out of drug problems?	What is wrong with existing legislation?		How does drug policy contribute to drug related harm?
Should we continue to talk about drugs as one entity – as increasingly is happening in the media?/	Should alcohol be more strictly controlled?	What do you think are the major successes of prohibition?		Do you know examples in your community of recovery from addiction?
Would you use drugs for recreation if they were legal?		Why not tax all drugs?		
Would you like to use drugs without fear of punishment?				
What is your experience of drug use?				
What concerns you about drugs				
How do drugs impact your life?				
What did you last hear from drugs users?				
What are the differences in perceptions on different illegal drugs, and why?				