

Scottish Education Buildings Conference (Wednesday 21 November 2018) **Key Note Address – Peter Reekie, SFT Chief Executive**

Ladies and Gentlemen what a fantastic day. In all of the Venn diagrams of our various worlds and professional interests, I hope you will all agree that it is a privilege to be a part of this diverse community of committed and talented people seeking to give our young people inspirational places in which to pursue their learning journeys and – increasingly - communities with vibrant and well used assets at their heart.

I would like to follow up on the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education, John Swinney's announcement at the Education Buildings Conference of the £1bn of Scottish Government funding in the school estate.

The Cabinet Secretary's announcement was fantastic news. I know many across the public and private sectors are waiting for details on timing, funding proportions, revenue or capital and all of these essential details on which a sound investment pipeline is based. As Mr Swinney said all of that is to come, and will be the subject of co-design and further development with partners including most importantly local authorities, but also all of those in the various elements of the marketplace with an interest in project delivery.

Suffice to say, we know that it is critically important – but I'm also aware that if a fully formed investment pipeline and parameters had been produced many would have asked for the opportunity to help shape it, and that opportunity is now in front of us up to 2020.

John answered his final question this morning from a young person in the audience about how a child should feel in their learning environment by saying that he would want young people to feel safe and happy.

So, what do we want more broadly from these very significant investments? I'd add a short and long-term contribution to inclusive economic growth, and sustainable communities. Prior the Cabinet Secretary making his announcement, Lucy from the Scottish Youth Parliament gave us three themes which I agree are firmly part of the arc of development which SFT has been working with partners on to help deliver these outcomes:

- Digitally enabled learning places with functional wifi. If I swap hats for a moment - as a Parent Councillor, I am part of the voice for enabling student access to wifi in schools but am also aware of some of the challenges. Are those challenges too great for us to overcome given that young people put it at the top of their list of needs? I know we have heard more broadly about technology transforming learning today and for me the arc from computer rooms to fully digital learning is probably still fairly near its beginning.
- Lucy's second point was to design spaces around how students want to learn, and make them colourful and vibrant so that young people want to be there. I interpret that as part of the move from desks and chairs to squashy spaces and group working environments. This is massively a part of the Scotland's Schools for the Future programme, and we at SFT are absolutely clear that we must allow space standards and budgets to incorporate these spaces. We are now well beyond corridors and classrooms design and that is a part of the arc I think we are further progressed on.

- I'd link that by the way to the fundamental form of school buildings, in particular secondary schools, where the predominant form has moved from an E shape to a block. I recognise the engineering challenge associated with that, but it has been a great enabler of different spaces and a change in which I hope SFT has played a role co-ordinating and sharing learning between local authorities and across the design community.
- Lucy's third point was on outdoor learning. SFT has been working with colleagues on driving forward approaches to providing, registering and using outdoor space in early years settings, and I'd say there is now a clear momentum in that sector. I take Lucy's point however that this needs to continue through the stages of learning. I'm no expert, but I suspect there is some thinking to be done by education leaders and teachers on this – but if we are not providing outdoor learning settings in buildings now, the three and four-year olds of today who are growing up with outdoor learning will be even more disappointed in 2030 when a not-very-old school at that time, doesn't support their expectation for outdoor learning to be a part of their lives.
- Having stolen unashamedly from Lucy, the theme I have to add for myself is the expansion of what a school is for – there are distinct parallels with nurseries, colleges and universities – but I'll focus on schools. A school was a building in which primary or secondary aged children were taught from 9am until 3:30pm ish on weekdays during term time. Across the sessions today we have heard that many school buildings are now about much more than that – and I would argue that these very significant investments of public funds need to work harder still at their job of contributing to inclusive economic growth and sustainable communities:
 - Bringing communities in – to use the facilities of the buildings both out of hours and increasingly during school hours
 - Acting as a roof over an increasing range of services – a journey which started for us at the Lasswade Centre, one of our early pilots for the programme, which brought seven services into one building and now extends to buildings like the Wade in. The power of this is so much more than saving space and releasing land – though that can have significant value – it is in using investment in a building to drive the transformation of services for a community
 - Linking to industry – something which our universities are increasingly active in, and at the heart of some ambitious projects in both Glasgow and Edinburgh supported through City Deal funding amongst many other sources. There must however be more of a role for these links in colleges and schools
 - Finally – buildings which work across the ages – from 3-18 campuses through bringing college and school facilities together to truly intergenerational learning places which will support the ever-increasing need for re-skilling thorough life, and keeping mentally active into older age
- This is when things start to get really exciting, and we have to think about whether we are really building schools at all. Schools won't be the same everywhere and will respond to what different communities need.

If we are simply replacing an old building with a new one which is designed to modern standards but to meet fundamentally the same purpose as the old building, we are probably getting it wrong. These new buildings must be fit for the future and ok for now, not just “a lot better than the old one”

On low carbon – and perhaps most importantly for a building, energy efficiency is an area where we have not had as much success as we would have liked. There are some new school buildings using more energy than the buildings they replaced.

Some of that is because the building is used more intensively and for more things – which is to be celebrated, and some of it is because the building contains more digital kit – which is progress..... but I have a nagging concern that the fundamental energy performance of these buildings and the behaviours their users and operators, and the interaction of all of those things with the comfort and wellness promoted by the internal environment need more work. It is not something we will ever have cracked fully, but the time for a good extra twist on the cracker is certainly upon us and I'd value any thoughts anyone has on that theme.

On quality – I do believe there is a need for a transformation of the way buildings are bought and produced to improve the quality of the product, the productivity of the industry and the fairness of the work of the many thousands of people involved in the construction supply chains.

And finally cost – many know SFT for the metrics of space and cost which we introduced at the start of the Scotland's Schools for the Future programme – I can't tell you the number of times we have sat around over the last nine years or so and discussed whether we should be tightening these metrics. I'm not about to announce a change in the metrics to go with John Swinney's £1bn pounds – but I can say that discussions I am part of are now a lot more around the need to procure for industry as well as from industry, to produce a high-quality and sustainable product which works for communities and to focus on all of the themes which I have reflected on today to put investment in education buildings at the heart of delivering inclusive economic growth and sustainable communities.

So it is with those themes in mind which SFT will be looking forward to the next phase of investment in Scotland's learning estate – early learning, the buildings formally known as schools, colleges and universities and I look forward to working with you all on in creating some lasting contributions to the safe and happy fabric of Scotland.