



**Reflections by Alan Budge from  
from [PB Network Unconference](#) 2015  
26<sup>th</sup> October 2015, Birmingham**

### **Participatory Budgeting in Scotland**

Having been present at a range of PB events over the last ten to fifteen years, I was particularly struck by the atmosphere in the room at the Birmingham event – perhaps best described as ‘relaxed positivity’. There was no sense at all that anyone had been ‘press-ganged’ to attend; people were there out of genuine interest and enthusiasm.

I facilitated the workshop on PB in Scotland, attended by practitioners of PB in Scotland, as well as Kathleen Glazik, representing the Scottish Government, who have been instrumental in sponsoring support to the PB process there, and other interested parties. There were brief presentations on some of the work in Scotland: particular interest was shown in the Western Isles programme of devolving a £550k bus service programme to resident decision making (residents will be scoring the tenders of those bidding to provide services)

There was then a general, and very engaged conversation about PB in Scotland in more general terms: whilst the take-up so far has exceeded expectations, with 20 of 32 Local Authorities applying for support to develop PB, there were questions raised about sustainability. There’s always the danger that a programme of mainly ‘small grants’ initiatives, however wide-ranging geographically, will peter out over time.

The sense of shared learning apparent in the workshop was one way that ‘embedding PB’ might be extended; a learning network would provide shared information, support and practical advice. More strategically, ideas around resident scrutiny of government proposals, local or national, was discussed. (This process is already underway in parts of Europe).

The workshop closed with a sense of plenty of food for thought, but moreover, recognition of the genuine potential for PB to become an established way of working in Scotland.

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