

Cross Party Group on Architecture and the Built Environment
5th June 2018, 6pm; Committee Room 1, The Scottish Parliament

Facilitated Debate on the theme of ‘Landscape for Scotland’
Working together to help shape quality in landscape and place

Meeting Report

This special meeting of the Cross Party Group (CPG) on Architecture and the Built Environment was presented by Landscape Institute Scotland, a member of the CPG, in the form of a debate on the theme of ‘Landscape for Scotland : *Working together to help shape quality in landscape and place*”.

Welcome: Chair

Linda Fabiani MSP (Chair of the CPG) introduced the theme of the discussion, and offered the chair to Lesley Riddoch, journalist, writer and broadcaster, to facilitate the debate.

Introduction: Facilitator

Lesley Riddoch introduced the aim of the evening to engage everyone present in what Scotland’s landscapes mean and provide to us, the opportunities they present, and to propose actions to be taken forward to the Scottish Government. This is currently a poignant subject with social and economic resonance – from depopulated rural landscapes to the urban ‘landscape of people’, ardent debates on the landscapes of wind energy and the impact of car automation on places and parking in our cities. Scotland’s landscapes can have a strong role in contributing to Scotland’s health, prosperity, communities and beauty.

Diarmaid Lawlor, Head of Place, Architecture and Design Scotland
Scotland in 2050 – the opportunity and challenge to us

Diarmaid Lawlor drew attention to the Scottish Government’s recent “Scotland is Now” promotional campaign which presents the idea of a ‘hope that will grow the nation’. He challenged the room to consider that Scotland’s landscapes could grow the hope that supports the nation. By 2050, the targets are to lower child poverty to below 5%, to drive an 80% reduction in carbon emissions, reduce waste by 11million tonnes per year. But what should our ambitions be, as people involved in the national landscapes? What is the experience we create for most people in Scotland? How do we get landscape embedded into every policy? How should we invest in what we already have, and build for the future and for resilience? We must engage people, using the landscapes they know and achieve ambitious delivery; a make-do-and-mend approach will not do.

He suggested that landscape needs to be present in all policy portfolios across government as it knows no boundaries; that we need to invest in stewardship of landscape; that the evolution of our national landscape must be deliberate and purposeful, rather than left to chance; and to enable a framework for scenario planning for the future. With the concerted effort of a broad community of specialists, the opportunity for transformation can be realised.

Professor Brian Mark Evans, Professor of Urbanism and Landscape, Glasgow School of Art
Landscape and natural capital as a pillar in times of change

Brian Evans recognised that there are inherent tensions between the *genius loci* (spirit of the place) and the *zeitgeist* (spirit of the time) and resolving these are vital for our landscapes and places. Recent work with the UN identified 6 key trends that are impacting on all countries in the developed north - ageing, low fertility, migration, climate change, automation and artificial intelligence. These trends interact and are unstoppable as they are a manifestation of globalisation.

Our approach to these challenges can be either a 'quick fix' or a strategic *designed* response; whether each of these trends results in toxic or benign impacts on humanity will depend upon how we tackle them at all levels. This is the job of government – national or local – and it is the job of society at large and all of us as professionals. Without careful design of our places and landscape, a process of incremental loss will leave us less resilient in the face of changes which we may be powerless to affect. Our responses must be appropriate to Scotland but also at an international level and with explicit consensus about what is important. Opportunities are there for us, which we must not lose through inattention.

Landscape for Scotland

A brief presentation was made of Landscape for Scotland, Landscape Institute Scotland's vision is to promote, create and manage great places – places that are beautiful, multi-functional, sustainable and embedded in Scotland's communities. Achieving this vision will only be possible through collective endeavour, harnessing the energy and expertise of people and organisations that engage with our external environment.

Landscape for Scotland promotes a vision that gives a role to all of our landscapes. It argues that landscape must not be forgotten, sidelined or squeezed out, because it can provide effective solutions to our problems and needs. Good design and management of landscape can maximise the benefits of investment and building in resilience. *Landscape for Scotland* is relevant to the ambitions of *Scotland is Now* and the delivery of aspects of the *Programme for Scotland*.

<http://scotland.landscapeinstitute.org/landscape-for-scotland-working-together-to-help-shape-quality-in-landscape-and-place/>

Debate

The debate covered the following subjects:

How can our landscapes address child poverty and climate change?

Scotland's future depends on our ability to attract entrepreneurial in-migration. Ensuring a good quality of life is essential to this success and as quality of life is related to quality of place, investment is crucial. Progressive policies on climate change and waste reduction will also drive entrepreneurial growth and investment in new ideas that will be marketable globally

Design is also key, linked to intelligent stewardship of our landscapes and places to ensure they do grow the hope that supports the nation. Children who have good experiences of the landscape at an early age will grow to have a better appreciation of the landscape which will have long term benefits. This starts with education to help foster a sense of community and place.

What is a Good Landscape?

Work on the Place Standard relates health and wellbeing to the doorstep environment. Equally Well demonstrates how health inequalities are driven by environmental inequality – children's life chances are better when they live in better landscapes. So, a Good Landscape might look like that evolving in the Clyde Gateway and east end of Glasgow – where engagement with people, involvement and collaboration is establishing new citywide green infrastructure for multiple benefits.

Good is hard to define, but *Healthy* is not contested. Landscape shapes our experience and our choices; an attractive landscape/place can nudge us towards greener travel choices and better health choices. It is therefore important to ask the right questions – driving innovation and good design; unfortunately, we often ask poor questions! Involving people in decision-making helps us to get the question right.

Good landscape needs a holistic approach to place. It needs investment, deliberate intent and purposeful resourcing. Leadership is required; a strong vision and persistence to overcome hurdles, and a long-term commitment requiring emotional engagement, resourcing and good planning.

Derelict land is often also a problem of poverty and it has challenges not present on greenfield land. The CSGNT, made the decision not to ask what they could do for vacant and derelict land (V&D), but to instead ask what V&D land can do for people, habitats and the economy.

Some sites grow their own value as greenspace, whilst others offer development opportunity; others are intensely problematic. The Emscher Park of the Ruhr steel belt demonstrates a retained, repurposed industrial site to which Scotland's track record compares very unfavourably – we don't look after things and demolish the past too readily. The question of tax relief on derelict land, which encourages land-banking and inaction, is now being investigated.

Yet there are also great successes with 90% of new housing in the past 20 years built on brownfield land such as in the Glasgow Clyde Valley area. There are also emerging masterplans for Bishopton and Queens Quay that put green infrastructure to the fore, and the CSGNT has a track record of success. These are positive examples that we should be celebrating!

To work out what is good and bad, we need data and evidence. Learning Through Landscapes have done this in promoting early years benefits, and the Scottish film industry are doing it with Visit Scotland. Other research has been carried out looking at the financial benefits and savings to public funding in healthcare by investing in greenways. This data will allow professionals to discuss with each other and other people (educationalists, healthcare, politicians and the community) in a language that they understand and so will help progress these causes.

Co-operation on the Isle of Eigg has shown the potential to grow vibrant, sustaining communities in 'remote' places, forging re-engagement with their landscape and releasing latent entrepreneurship.

What of our infrastructure that impact on landscape, place and people?

Our infrastructure is fundamental to Scotland connecting rural and urban areas but if considered only in a 'silo' mentality, focussing on narrow design objectives, positive impacts are limited. However, working collaboratively and respectively by increasing community engagement and broadening the brief to include community and tourism benefits from infrastructure renewal is key. Careful design can bring unique opportunities and benefits such as the work along Scottish Canals, the Helix and the Norwegian National Tourist Routes.

Multi-functionality is the key. Landscape is everywhere, and there is the opportunity to obtain more benefits from the same piece of land through progressive thinking and design. Streets can be places for people not only roads for cars by simply re-allocating space to encourage use by people.

Infrastructure may also be needed to respond to tourism success in sensitive areas, such as Skye. Otherwise such growth will be unsustainable and destructive. We should not simply wait for the big idea, little ideas that grow can make a big change – such as central Scotland woodlands project through incremental planting of sites.

What holds us back from achieving great places?

Capital funding is important but equally looking after things is essential. Expedient cost-cutting of maintenance kills the benefits of good landscape. Proper maintenance can be more impactful than big capital spends, and better distributes money across the wider economy enabling inclusive growth. This can be seen as 'value retention' as it reflects the initial level of spend and moves it from remediation to prevention in terms of value loss to investment. Too often there is no proper emphasis on active stewardship; to succeed, capital and revenue should be balanced. Funding programmes need to acknowledge and promote this long term emphasis, which is unique to landscape.

Understanding that the landscape of Scotland is also linked to its unique geology both natural and manmade. Achieving a sense of place is made through reference to geology, vernacular materials and history. Use of foreign materials, driven by economics, can dilute this sense of place.

Realising that Scotland's landscapes are about people as much as the urban as well as rural and remote landscapes and places. Ensuring that communities are engaged in decision making about where they live is essential to achieving great and sustainable places. Co-operation on the Isle of Eigg has shown the potential to grow vibrant, sustaining communities in 'remote' places, forging re-engagement with their landscape and releasing latent entrepreneurship.

How do we achieve ambitious change?

Our landscape resource is vast, unique and world standard. It is of huge natural capital value to the nation, and a major driver of our tourism sector. How can we help the Scottish Government meet its objectives? Perhaps start with early years and education – making the experience of nature within high quality landscape a transformative experience for children.

We need brave new design and implementation, clarity of strategic decisions, and clarity on where the localism agenda can work. We must demonstrate different answers to questions – planning differing scenarios, deciding on the best one, and then implementing with conviction; it can't be left to piecemeal decision-making. Some decisions must be taken at a national level – a National Advisor on areas of landscape, place and environment able to make brave decisions.

Forging an ongoing collaborative partnership is critical; creating an overarching policy for landscape and place, bringing visionaries and entrepreneurs on board and putting visionaries into government, who believe in the potential of landscape to deliver what government needs. We need data/evidence to inform decisions, and the government need to recognise this.

The Scottish Landscape Charter needs to be rejuvenated and adopted into policy.

Summary of Outcomes

A number of summary outcomes came from the debate and from comments subsequently received:

1. There is a broad spectrum of organisations who have common cause to promote better landscapes. We need to work together to present a strong and informative voice. The setting up of a landscape coalition of willing organisations would help sustain what was started at the debate on Landscape for Scotland.
2. Scotland's landscapes are a national asset, with world renown and help to define our nation on an international stage, attracting visitors and investment, contributing positively to our economy, yet vulnerable to sustained neglect and short-termism. The contribution of landscape is much more than aesthetic; we need to think in terms of land use, land assets and natural capital value. Our landscapes can help us to meet emissions targets, gain resilience and deliver ecosystem services. They can help educate our children and improve our health and wellbeing.
3. Inequality is present in our landscapes as in other areas of life. Environmental poverty is significant and environmental justice is a goal of government towards which those present are fully committed. Engaging with communities about the landscapes in which they live is key to unlocking potential.
4. Investment in stewardship is 'value retention', not just maintenance. A long term view is vital to successful landscape and placemaking.
5. We need to assemble and share robust data and evidence to guide future investment, management decisions and conservation measures.
6. Years of economising have left local government in Scotland very short of the expertise and judgement in landscape, necessary to drive successful landscapes at a local level. This should be addressed at Government level.
7. A new version of the Scottish Landscape Charter should be created, supporting the Government in implementing its international commitments through the European Landscape Convention, whilst also supporting practical delivery of the sustainability goals of the National Performance Framework, the Environment Strategy as well as the Programme for Scotland.
8. The Scottish Government would benefit from the appointment of champion or impartial policy adviser in landscape, place and environment to achieve their objectives.

Next Steps

Landscape is a topic that crosses over and could bind together many areas of policy and government, and often falling between stalls as a result as it is not understood that landscape is the holistic setting for the policy areas that the Scottish Government wishes to promote. Yet with a joined-up approach and sharing of expertise across government, the potential of landscape to contribute to every aspect of policy and delivery can be realised. The Landscape Institute Scotland LIS will continue to engage in order to carry a constituency of interest forward from this event, with greater collaboration and a desire to provide skills and guidance to help Government.

The Landscape Institute Scotland have developed a series of action points from these shared outcomes and have requested the support of the Convenor of the Cross Party Group on Architecture and the Built Environment to help us engage with Ministers to assist the Scottish Government with these actions . Our recommendation is to set up a working group with MSP's on Scotland's landscapes (rural and urban).