
**LIS RESPONSE TO A POLICY ON ARCHITECTURE AND PLACE-MAKING FOR SCOTLAND
SUBMITTED TO THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT – 03.09.2012**

Consultation Q1: How could the policy promote higher quality design in order to contribute to Scotland's economic growth?

LIS Response

Scotland is known for her natural beauty and built heritage. This is also an important part of her economy. Therefore, protecting these while promoting new places should be central to the policy. Degradation of existing assets through inappropriate change and poor design could harm the economic health of the country. Emphasis should be put on the landscape; understanding it and in turn ensuring that our natural, as well our more urban places on which the policy may focus, are given equal attention.

Good design should be seen as valuable and providing continuum to our heritage. The policy should underline this with reference to landscape.

Consultation Q2: How could the policy better embed the benefits of good design in economic, social and environmental terms within procurement processes?

LIS Response

Landscape is a vital element of placemaking, even in a predominantly urban environment. Design can be based on the manipulation of existing forms and elements as well as the application of new ones. Seeking designs which are a balance between natural and built elements should be underlined in the policy. It must be remembered that landscape is a resource and managing it carefully is at the heart of sustainability.

In creating new places where there is a combination building and landscape space the hard building elements will generally use energy. New landscape will use some energy in construction but will become part of the natural resource.

The policy should emphasize the value of landscape not only as a visual component of place but as a natural asset and vital component of habitat to ensure its appropriate inclusion in emerging proposals

Consultation Q3: How could the policy ensure that the aim of achieving a low carbon economy is at the heart of development processes?

LIS Response

Scotland has regionally diverse and locally distinctive natural and built forms. As seen through regional character, patterns of urbanization and settlement density, countryside and natural forms. In local perspective it can be seen in building groupings, space structure, materials and techniques. Continuing to express these variations is important if character is to be built on rather than lost.

Local provenance and character is important to the success new places and landscapes. This spans a full spectrum from analysis of the composition of the existing structure and typography, to the detail of local materials, expertise and aftercare.

In addition to architectural design and detail, sustainable design includes location, topography and ground conditions, engineering and the landscape element of a proposal or development.

The policy should refer clearly to the importance of existing and new landscape to underline local character and thus identity

Consultation Q4: How could the policy contribute to the delivery of environmentally sustainable places?

LIS Response

People are end users of places. Briefing is a vital part of the design process, but clearly it is not always possible to access the opinion of users who remain partly or wholly unknown.

The policy should set out ways of monitoring opinion of new settlement and place.

Natural systems are an important aspect of 'environmentally sustainable places'. These are expressed through existing and new landscapes as a living component of design solutions and this should be recognized in policy.

Landscape can provide a focus in a placemaking event. The Glasgow Garden Festival of 1988 was built on a brownfield city centre site; was a national event, created a significant space, caused huge public awareness and designed settings for after use. The creation of new space from vacant areas underlines the value of landscape in transition and be emphasized in placemaking policy.

Consultation Q5: How could the policy encourage design processes that better meet the needs of individuals and communities?

LIS Response

Stewardship of the landscape is important to the quality of place at a range of scales. There are already interests in the natural environment within public sector agencies however appreciation of the value of landscape should inform the formulation of a policy which has placemaking as a central concern.

Some places are civic, often cared for and managed by the public sector. Public realm space is generally positive and its value understood and appreciated. The Scottish Government should encourage the public commission of new civic places, and this could become general policy.

Enhancing understanding of the value of design and place through education could increase public interest and appreciation.

Consultation Q6: What should the short term, medium and long term priorities of policy now be? Possible issues for consideration could include:

LIS Response

	Short	Medium	Long
Supporting innovation and emerging practice	X	X	X
Accessibility	X	X	X
Affordability	X	X	X
Sustainability	X	X	X
Housing Hotspots		X	
Street Design	X	X	X
High Streets	X	X	X
Mixed-use neighbourhoods		X	X
Brownfield sites	X	X	X
International Promotion			X
Other: Please describe below	X	X	X

There is validity in all of these topics. However, BIODIVERSITY should be added and be given “short”, “medium” and “long” priorities in order that natural systems are appreciated in placemaking. In answering these questions, “Short” is being interpreted as an immediate priority.

Any comments you wish to make about your choice above:

Please see our Summary included below

This should not to be read as overly protectionist, but as means of enriching the environment through the management of existing place and the creation of new ones

Consultation Q7: How could the policy help generate better partnership working and wider buy-in from the private and public sectors and communities to the importance of good design?

LIS Response

Public sector investment is important to architecture and placemaking, as potentially, it can commission a wide range of building types and public realm places. Clearly, civic buildings and spaces are important to the physical structure of settlements.

Having a policy for architecture and placemaking is well intentioned, but it needs to consider the whole design and implementation process. There is focus on design, but the consenting process and aftercare are equally important. This latter particularly affects landscape.

A policy for design intended for implementation needs a well- informed and impartial system of consenting which allows good design and intelligent placemaking to emerge. Local authorities must understand that land allocations are a stage in the design process, and their decisions may inform the physical character and quality of the subsequent proposal. Similarly, when they produce development briefs, they must be rigorous as they will inform and indeed may be a part of a design proposal as well as being a step in the planning process. Policy should consider this.

Consultation Q8: How could the policy help to ensure that public sector investment results in well-designed schools, hospitals and other public buildings and places?

LIS Response

Good design can be informed and helped by clear intent, aspiration and good briefing, which have understanding of practical use and aftercare. The public sector is able to brief and commission a wide range of building. As civic places they are often key or focal buildings or areas. This underlines their importance. A policy which encourages this could stimulate new work.

Perhaps policy for public realm commissions could ensure that procurement procedures are informed by experienced advisors with relevant experience.

‘High quality greenspace’ is identified in the Public Consultation 2012 document. This should not be allowed to become superficial. Landscape is living space and performs natural functions. The value of landscape extends beyond human activity and visual pleasure into habitat enrichment and biodiversity. This should be reflected in policy and extended beyond design and into management of aftercare.

Consultation Q9: How could the policy help build successful, resilient communities?

LIS Response

Providing well designed, useful and well managed and looked after landscape space at the heart of a community is a positive action. It can provide focus and is space for activity and interaction. Landscape space can form the foundation of a settlement and be central to giving character and identity. Simply compare a village or small town which is built around a green or civic space with one which is not.

The policy should also recognize the impact of change on the wider landscape and insist that a positive relationship between existing and new landscapes is sought.

Landscape space is good for the health of a community; it is a living space and environmental asset providing a range of functions.

It would be useful to monitor existing spaces and understand their popularity, use and management, to establish their policy status as useful assets rather than simply “greenspace”.

Consultation Q10: How could the policy better promote and celebrate achievement of excellent design?

LIS Response

It is positive to celebrate the success of a project as this can promote wider interest. This can also be achieved at inception stage. Well managed competitions could spark a range of responses and solutions. The examples quoted appear to be largely building projects, although some are closely related to their townscape or landscape setting, from which they benefit.

As mentioned earlier, new landscapes, like The Glasgow Garden Festival can also spark interest and perhaps be confidence building. Although the appreciation of Scotland’s landscape is often a tranquil one, there may be tracts of brownfield land which could be harnessed into landscape space as a transitional use. Policy could encourage the public sponsoring of suitable sites.

Consultation Q11: How could the policy help capitalise upon links between the quality of design of our best new cultural buildings and public interest in their exhibits?

LIS Response

The physical form of Scotland is the sum of its diverse natural features and its rich built heritage. Clearly, this has evolved over a long period, whereas new development is realized in a relatively short time. New initiatives should be well located and not detract from our heritage. This, however, should not restrict contemporary expression. Within the long gestation period of our cities some significant physical change happened relatively quickly. The celebrated Edinburgh New Town, which was a change in direction for the city, was positive; beautiful architecture and a coherent space structure. In contrast some mass post-war housing estates, also large-scale initiatives, are not so successful.

The policy should consider scale of change and its effects on the historic fabric. These historic examples underline the need for clear vision and thought. Briefing, design, procurement and management based on sound principles, analysis and consideration for the aspirations of users. This applies to building and to landscape.

Reference is made to securing the future of “Scotland’s historic environment”. Should this not simply be Scotland’s environment, which after all is the sum of all its parts, and as today’s activity will be tomorrow’s history?

The policy should also take in account the natural environment and landscape and its relationship with the “built environment”.

Consultation Q12: How could the policy help encourage better public interest in the future of our historic environments?

LIS Response

Wishing to ‘raise awareness’ is one thing, achieving it is another. Many people are already interested in “our historic environments”. Indeed, should this not be expanded to our environment generally, which is affected by both our historic and current activities?

Clearly our environment is the consequence of human activity on a natural base; whether this be building settlements, planting or clearing forests, changes in agricultural practice, major engineering or extraction works etc.

The environment is always changing. New development, including energy sourcing and distribution will cause extra pressure and “historic environments” can be affected.

The policy can promote excellence and help to mitigate damage, and its scope could widen to incorporate the natural aspects of our “historic environments”. Contemporary building activity can stimulate public interest in our heritage. The Falkirk Wheel is a good example, where a modern engineering structure has provided focus for an historic canal system and its buildings and landscape.

Summary

The Landscape Institute Scotland is including a general summary of abbreviated points raised within their response. Our main point is that landscape is a key part of placemaking and the policy must stress this. The policy must embrace the design of the environment as a whole. As a result, it must recognize that the functions of planning, urban design, architecture, landscape architecture and engineering all contribute to the design of inspiring places. The policy should recognize the particular contributions of each discipline and promote a framework of collaboration.

Place should be considered in the context of the whole landscape or settlement.

Heritage and continuum; heritage and contemporary design should run hand in hand, as the activity of today is the history of tomorrow.

The importance of location; the design process for architecture and place starts at the point of area allocation. Design should not be compromised by poor or inappropriate location.

That the planning process is part of the design process; that policy, strategy, allocations, development briefing and consenting procedures can all impact on the quality of design.

That the environment is constantly changing and a design policy should acknowledge this.

That new placemaking is a balance of building and landscape or underlying or contextual form.

That new landscape is environmental asset and not simply visual “greenspace”. It has value for human activity, biodiversity and sustainability. That landscape can provide focus and value for temporary, transitional and permanent uses.

That new placemaking needs public sector patronage, investment and stewardship.

The importance of clear intent and briefing in improving the quality of solutions.

Methods for assessing and monitoring success and satisfaction for new design and place are needed.

The important role of education in improving understanding the importance and value of architecture and place.

Initiatives and design should not compromise existing social, economic and physical fabric.

The importance of landscape as a natural asset and placemaking component.

That the quality of our built and natural heritage and its direction of change are important to the social and economic health of Scotland.

That temporary landscape has an important role in placemaking on brownfield or derelict sites.

That the physical heritage of Scotland is the sum of all its parts, its natural and landscape base and the modifications of human activity.