

## **Defra Third Sector Strategy consultation – response of the Landscape Institute**

February 2008

### **1. Introduction**

Under its Royal Charter, the Landscape Institute has a responsibility to protect, conserve and enhance the natural and built environment for the benefit of people and communities by promoting the arts and sciences of landscape architecture. Landscape architecture encompasses all aspects of the science, planning, design, implementation and management of landscapes and the environment in both urban and rural areas. Landscape architects are involved in the assessment, conservation, development and creation of landscapes that are environmentally robust, socially inclusive, aesthetically pleasing and functional as well as being ecologically and biologically healthy.

There has never been a more important time to highlight the role of landscape architecture because of growing social, political, environmental and economic concern over the use of our natural resources and development of sustainable communities. Landscape architects are broad thinkers, combining social, economic, environmental and cultural perspectives and we believe that landscape architecture is the profession best able to provide a holistic approach to creating places where people want to live and work both now and in the future. The Landscape Institute promotes landscape architecture as the environment and design profession, one that works with communities to create places that respect their environmental context and contribute to a high quality of life.

As a third sector organisation, the Landscape Institute welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Third Sector Strategy. The Institute fully supports the priorities of the two cross-government Public Service Agreements being led by the Department, securing a healthy natural environment and tackling the causes and consequences of climate change. Many of the Institute's own aims are similar to those articulated via Defra's Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSOs). In responding to this consultation, we would like to express our interest in developing our relationship with Defra in order to achieve these common aims and assisting the Department in achieving its overall mission of enabling all of us to live within our environmental means.

### **2. Defra's Priorities – shared aims of the Landscape Institute**

We recognise that many of the DSOs are broadly in line with the aims of the Landscape Institute. The Intermediate Outcomes which Defra has developed to support the achievement of the DSOs are of particular interest to the Institute as many of our members are actively working in ways which would help to achieve such outcomes. Section 4 of this document outlines in further detail the work of the Institute and its members in relation to the DSOs.

### **3. Defra's vision and objectives for a third sector strategy**

#### Question – page 7

*Do you agree with Defra's initial thoughts about the vision and objectives for our third sector strategy? If not, what alternative would you propose and why?*

#### Response of the Landscape Institute

The Landscape Institute strongly agrees with Defra's vision and objectives to maximise the contribution that can be made by third sector organisations to enable our society to live within its environmental means. As highlighted in section 2, the Landscape Institute and its members are heavily involved in a number of the 'intermediate outcomes' as expressed under the eight DSOs and we would welcome the development of a framework to assist the Institute to further build on the work it is already undertaking in respect of these common aims.

#### **4. Working in partnership**

##### Question – page 8

*In what ways could both Defra and its delivery bodies work more effectively with third sector stakeholders?*

##### Response of the Landscape Institute

Comprehensive contact details for those officials within Defra and its delivery bodies with whom we should deal with and on what basis would be useful, as well as key contacts for the various strategic partnering arrangements that are established. The department could also lead on developing networks and forums to improve the understanding between Defra, its delivery bodies and third sector organisations on where common goals exist (perhaps based upon the content of the DSOs) and promoting opportunities for joint working and knowledge sharing to achieve these.

##### Question – page 11

*We are keen to hear ideas and views from third sector organisations about the areas where you consider there to be most potential to deliver our outcomes through strategic planning.*

##### Response of the Landscape Institute

Using the DSOs as a basis, there are a number of objectives shared by the Landscape Institute and Defra which have the potential to be delivered with greater success by adopting a strategic partnering approach. The Landscape Institute would be extremely interested in exploring the possibility of a strategic partnering arrangement on these themes (in addition to the cross-cutting theme of greener living, as detailed on page 5) by informing policy development and in particular via the contribution of advice, information and evidence at the earliest possible stages of policy development. Additionally, we would see our role as strategic partner also involving the development of understanding and commitment to the shared objectives by disseminating relevant information within our organisation, to our wider membership both within the UK and overseas and other networks with which we are involved.

#### **DSO1 – Tackling climate change**

##### (i) Intermediate Outcome – Reduce GHG emissions from key sectors

The Institute recognises the significant proportion of greenhouse gas emissions contributed via the construction and built environment sectors. As such, we recognise the importance of reducing this impact wherever possible, something to be addressed in our new climate change policy due for publication this Spring. However, recent research conducted by the Institute has indicated that many of our members are already actively encouraging clients in both private and public sectors to consider climate change mitigation, as well as adaptation, in their development proposals. For example, 73% of respondents said they have successfully influenced clients or employers to consider climate change issues, with 47% believing that they will consider funding extra costs if this was required.

The Landscape Institute is also a member of the Construction Industry Council and plays an active role in its Sustainable Development Committee whose aim is to add value for all stakeholders in the built environment through the provision of information, advice and encouragement on Sustainable Development.

##### (ii) Intermediate Outcome – International effort to adapt to climate change

Climate change adaptation approaches to the planning, design and management of landscapes is central to the work of the landscape architect, as will be expressed through our climate change policy due for publication this Spring. This policy is aimed at informing members, stakeholders and the wider

public, both within the UK and further afield, about the role that landscape-scale approaches to design, planning and management can play in climate change adaptation. At our annual conference in November 2007, which was dedicated to the theme of climate change, Environment Secretary Hilary Benn acknowledged the vital contributions that landscape architecture can make to climate change adaptation and mitigation and in recent research conducted by the Landscape Institute into the activities of its members.

## **DSO2 – A healthy, resilient and productive natural environment**

### (i) Intermediate Outcome – Air with minimum practicable harmful levels of pollutants

The Landscape Institute advocates a green infrastructure approach to the planning, design and management of our public spaces. Promoting green infrastructure, the network of green spaces and natural elements which intersperse and connect our cities, towns and villages, as a key component of spatial planning is a core activity of the Institute and a greater uptake can assist in improving air quality in both our rural and urban environments. This is particularly pertinent in the face of a changing climate where forecast higher temperatures (particularly in the summer months) could potentially have a negative impact in air quality.

### (ii) Intermediate Outcome – Biodiversity valued, safeguarded and enhanced

### (iii) Intermediate Outcome – Sustainable management of land and soil

In accordance with our Royal Charter, landscape architecture involves the assessment, conservation, development and creation of landscapes that are environmentally robust, socially inclusive, aesthetically pleasing and functional as well as being ecologically and biologically healthy.

### (iv) Intermediate Outcome – Sustainable water use

The appropriate implementation of sustainable drainage systems (SUDs) is advocated by the Landscape Institute as just one way of ensuring sustainable water usage.

### (v) Intermediate Outcome – Promoting enjoyment, understanding and care for the natural environment

Under its Royal Charter, the Institute has a responsibility to protect, conserve and enhance the natural and built environment for the benefit of people and communities via the promotion of the arts and sciences of landscape architecture. Amongst other activities, the Landscape Institute is currently in the early stages of a campaign aimed at raising awareness of the profession among children aged between 11 and 18 with the intention of increasing the number of qualified professionals who are able to approach our environments in a holistic and sustainable way. The Institute strongly believes that the centrality of the environment in UK life now means that many public policy objectives (for example, regeneration, housing supply, climate change adaptation and mitigation, public health, environmental sustainability) will not be met successfully without the involvement of landscape professionals.

In addition to this, via our monthly publications, *Landscape* and *Vista*, we promote the enjoyment, understanding and care for the natural environment. Furthermore, through our general public relations activities we aim to promote the landscape architecture profession and its values.

### (vi) Intermediate Outcome – Improving local environmental quality

Improving local environmental quality is central to the work of the landscape architect. Through our accreditation of university courses we strive to continuously improve standards in this regard by ensuring a source of well-trained landscape architects.

(vii) Intermediate Outcome – Sustainable, living landscapes with best features conserved

We believe that landscape is sustainable infrastructure. Decision makers need to understand the significance of the skills and knowledge that our members already possess to ensure delivery of future landscapes that are sustainable, with best features conserved or enhanced.

**DSO3 – Sustainable consumption and production**

(i) Intermediate Outcome – Reducing the environmental impacts of products and services while improving prosperity and competitiveness

The work of the Landscape Institute and its members in this regard has been highlighted under DSO1 and also under DSO5. However, it should also be noted that our recent climate change survey of our members revealed that many landscape architects also behave in ways which reduce their own personal environmental impacts. For example, more than half have adopted energy saving and waste minimisation measures and almost 50% have made efforts to reduce CO2 outputs.

**DSO4 – Addressing environmental risk and emergencies**

(i) Intermediate Outcome – Sustainable management of risk of flooding and coastal erosion

The Landscape Institute recognises and promotes the use of sustainable flood risk management, particularly via the employment of green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems (SUDs)

(ii) Intermediate Outcome – Adapting all areas of society to climate change

Climate change adaptation approaches to the planning, design and management of landscapes is central to the work of the landscape. The Institute believes that appropriate adaptation is crucial if we are to ensure the resilience and flexibility of our public realm, in environmental, social and economic terms, in the face of a changing climate and actively promotes its significance to members, stakeholders and the wider public.

(iii) Intermediate Outcome – Protection of the economy, human health and environmental risks and emergencies

A report released on the February 2008 by the Health Protection Agency has detailed the linkages between a changing climate and its potential impacts on human health. The Landscape Institute believes that the role of landscape-scale approaches to land use are crucial in this regard, with multifunctional, well-designed public space being an integral part of improving participation in sports, promoting cycling and walking and providing relief when faced potentially hotter, drier summers via evapo-transpiration and provision of shade.

**DSO5 – A thriving farming and food sector**

(i) Intermediate Outcome – Reduced global impact of food production and consumption

A workshop at our 2007 annual conference focussed on urban agriculture and its role not only in the provision of a locally sourced, sustainable food supply, but the value that this approach can have afford in terms of engaging local people and adapting our urban landscape to productive use. The success of this 'edible landscape' concept has been successfully demonstrated on the ground in a project in Middlesbrough led by Middlesbrough Council and David Barrie, senior producer of Design of the Time 2007 (DOTT07), in collaboration with Groundwork South Tees, Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust, local schools, many local community and voluntary sector organisations, and existing allotment growers in the town.

### **Strategic partnering for greener living**

The cross-cutting theme detailed in the consultation, following on from previous stakeholder engagement and the Climate Change Community study relates to the role that third sector organisations can play in citizen and public engagement on climate change and the environment.

The Landscape Institute believes that climate change will have profound effects upon every area of our society; environmentally, socially and economically. In particular, climate change will impact on environmental conditions, plant and animal species and human activities, all of which are related to the landscape in its broadest sense. However it is our view that, because of their established, long-held skills, expertise and holistic approach to place shaping, landscape architects are ideally placed to respond appropriately to the challenges posed by a changing climate. Through informed and sensitive planning, design and management of the landscape, landscape architects can contribute significantly to the delivery of adaptation measures and assist in alleviating some of the anthropogenic causes of climate change.

### **5. Further questions posed in the consultation document**

#### Question – Page 12

*What model or approach to strategic partnering do you feel is most effective and appropriate for Defra?*

The diverse nature of third sector organisations within the UK means that Defra should not simply apply one single approach to strategic partnering. A flexible approach to such arrangements would ensure that partnerships with third sector organisations, or groups of such organisations, are able to accommodate the different ways (governance, funding, resources, scale, aims and objectives) in which strategic partners operate.

#### Question – Page 12

*What roles do you feel strategic partners should perform?*

In the case of the Landscape Institute, we would welcome the opportunity to be identified as a strategic partner, performing functions such as:

- Critical friend;
- Defra policy development (at the earliest possible stages);
- Promotion of the objectives to a wider audience, with partners being enabled, via financial support or otherwise, to realise this;
- Education; for a truly sustainable, future adequate investment in education is required to inform and enable young people to take an interest and play an active role in the development of sustainable communities.

#### Question – Page 12

*What should Defra offer in return to support strategic partners?*

Defra could support such activities, as identified above, via funding for the dissemination of information via technical guidance, policy documents, seminars and educational visits by landscape professionals to schools and local communities.

Broad endorsement from Defra for Landscape Institute activities which assist in delivering common objectives has the potential to give greater weight to such activities.

Question – Page 14

*How best could national strategic partners on the theme of greener living deploy any grant funding in a way that helps local third sector groups and projects contribute to achieving the overall outcomes? Are there successful models which could be adopted from other funding schemes?*

Potential grant funding to assist in achieving our common outcomes could be deployed via research projects, joint conferences and knowledge communities via our respective websites.

Question – Page 21

*In what ways could Defra further support an enhanced role for third sector organisations in delivering services which help tackle climate change, protect the environment and address rural needs?*

Support could take the form of:

- Training courses
- Local advice centres – landscape architects are extremely well placed to assist in tackling climate change, protecting the environment and addressing rural needs however assistance in terms of sharing this knowledge and disseminating to wider groups would enable such skills to be put to even better use in the future.

*The Landscape Institute would like to thank Defra for being given the opportunity to contribute to these proposals. For any queries relating to this response, or for future consultations, please contact:*

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