

Consultation on Local Flood Authorities Contribution to Sustainable Development: response of the Landscape Institute

The Landscape Institute

The Landscape Institute is an educational charity and chartered body responsible for protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural and built environment for the benefit of the public. It champions well-design and well-managed urban and rural landscape. The Institute's accreditation and professional procedures ensure that the designers, managers and scientists who make up the landscape architecture profession work to the highest standards. Its advocacy and education programmes promote the landscape architecture profession as one which focuses on design, environment and community in order to inspire great places where people want to live, work and visit.

1. Do you agree with the definitions of sustainable development used in this guidance? Would you add anything further to the definition provided?

The Landscape Institute supports the UK Governments use of five guiding principles for sustainable development, and the full integration of environmental, social and economic factors into decision making.

The Institute believes that the application of the principles of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) through the processes of landscape planning, design and management is one of the most effective ways of delivering sustainable development.

In the ELC Landscape is defined as "An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors." (Council of Europe 2000).

We understand that DEFRA leads on this Convention which has been ratified by the UK. The ELC "*highlights the importance of developing landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and creation of landscapes, and establishing procedures for the general public and other stakeholders to participate in policy creation and implementation*".

The Institute requests that the ELC is referred to in this guidance as we believe that landscape scale working and an appreciation of the role of human factors in policy and project development and implementation are an essential element of sustainable development.

2. How do you think local flood authorities currently contribute to sustainable development? Are there other aspects of sustainable development or local flood authority activity that should be referred to or given more prominence in this guidance?

The Landscape Institute perceives that significant endeavours are being made by Local Authorities in regard to delivery of sustainable development. These efforts could be more effective if land use and economic planning and development were better co-ordinated with environmental planning, especially the planning and use of greenspace, river corridors and floodplains. Better design of sustainable drainage networks is also vital and involves the need for a strategic overview at Local Authority level and above. The experience of the Institute is that environmental planning including water management cannot be dealt with in isolation of other development planning and land uses.

At present flood risk management is dealt with too often as a problem with utilitarian solutions related to the control of water using engineering infrastructure such as drainage systems and flood walls and other expensive systems. Our view is that there is scope to integrate measures to reduce flood risk in other ways especially through effective restoration of floodplains and river systems, and by designing multiple use systems that incorporate flood risk measures within the context of other uses, as is envisaged through sustainable drainage systems and green infrastructure.

We also believe that a multi-functional and co-ordinated approach to flood risk requires a good balance of the professional skills related to land use, green infrastructure, landscape planning and design as well as traditional water management skills such as water engineering. We request that the guidance be amended to reflect the need for the use of a balanced range of professional skills in Local Flood Authorities. Our view is that a different approach to flood risk would ultimately be more efficient in regard to the costs of related asset management.

3. Can you suggest other sources of information that we should include in the guidance?

We suggest that reference could be made to the Landscape Institutes Position Statement on Green Infrastructure which gives examples of the kind of approach the Landscape Institute advocates.

The position statement is entitled “Green infrastructure: connected multi functional landscapes” and can found at this web link:

<http://www.landscapeinstitute.org/PDF/Contribute/GreenInfrastructurepositionstatement13May09.pdf>

The Institute is also currently working on a document which will address green infrastructure in the context of local communities which we would like to be referenced should the timing of production of these two documents facilitate this.

4. Does this guidance provide the level of information that you require, if not what changes would you make?

With the amendments suggested by the Institute we think that the guidance has a good balance between dealing with the major issues that provide the context to flood risk management and the level of detail required to explain them issues.

5. This guidance is for local flood authorities. Should the Environment Agency be required to have regard to this guidance in addition to their existing duties towards sustainable development?

The Landscape Institute advises that there should be a consistent and well co-ordinated approach towards flood risk and that these duties should therefore be taken into account when the Environment Agency is involved in related flood risk work. This would be best done by placing a requirement on the Environment Agency as suggested.

6. Do you agree with our assessment of the likely costs and benefits (outlined in the Impact Assessment)? Do you have examples of tangible costs or benefits resulting from adopting sustainable development approaches?

The Landscape Institute takes the view that there can be significant savings by integrating flood risk measures into existing assets.. Ideally capital expenditure to reduce flood risk could be reduced by more sustainable land use and landscape planning and management for example by the incorporation of Sustainable Drainage Systems based solutions and techniques at site level, downstream impacts can be reduced. A sustainable approach may also lead to cost avoidance at the time of capital investment, for instance by designing

landforms to create new assets that utilise locally available materials for flood embankments. This necessitates the use of the relevant planning and design skills and good co-operation between organisations and groups at all levels.

7. Do you agree with our preferred option (option 3 in the Impact Assessment)?

We fully support the proposal in option 3 to enact the duty with the accompanying guidance on sustainable development as amended to take account of our comments and suggestions.

For any queries relating to this consultation response, please contact:

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