A Summer Conversation on the Future of the Landscape Profession in Scotland

“If you look at the challenges that are facing all of us, as mankind, the big decisions are going to be about the land.”

(Alan Cameron, LIS Committee Member)

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Introduction

In a climate of considerable change across economic, social and environmental challenges, the report seeks to engage with what issues or opportunities these challenges may present for the landscape profession in Scotland. The overall aim is to use the document as a starting point in having constructive debate in setting out a roadmap for the future of the profession in Scotland. The report sections describe the context in which landscape architecture is practiced, and attempts to identify the various challenges and opportunities that currently face the profession both professionally and practically. A review of the policy currently under consultation, in guidance or being formulated is also highlighted. A summary of the LIS activities during the past year is also provided. A conversation about the future of the landscape profession from the view of participants in events held in two Scottish cities is also documented. The Report draws from a range of sources including policy documents, academic literature, published interviews, and research studies. A bibliography is provided at the end of the report. The report was written for the Landscape Institute Scotland (LIS) by Dr Carol McKenzie. Carol has key interests across the urban planning, design, architecture and the natural and built environment arenas.¹

This report has FOUR key aims:

1. To describe the contemporary context and background in which landscape architecture in a devolved Scotland operates.

2. To provide a summary of the relevant policy context in which landscape architects in Scotland currently operate.

3. To highlight some of the activities the Landscape Institute Scotland (LIS) has and will be involved in during 2013.

4. To report back findings from the ‘Summer Conversation’ events held in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

¹ Carol currently works at the University of Stirling within the Institute for Retail Studies.
SECTION I: Background

Introduction

This background section highlights the context in which landscape architecture operates in a devolved Scotland with an independence referendum due in 2014. It summarises a number of key economic, social, political and environmental issues which are important for both the practice of landscape architecture, but also for how the profession develops now and into the future. The aim of this section therefore is to acknowledge the broader challenges and opportunities that these issues may present. The geographical scope of these challenges is global, national and local.

Landscape architecture does not operate in isolation from external events, particularly those related to the economy. At a global level, Scotland wrestles with an uncertain future despite being a wealthy nation. The country’s global economic connectedness can be seen from the ongoing 2008 recession. The UK economic recession continues in a slow growth and no growth mode. The graph below shows the Scottish and UK annual GDP growth rates between the final quarters of 2001 to the second quarter of 2011. What is immediately apparent is the dip in the line graph showing global economic recession from 2008 onwards.

Figure 1: Scotland and UK Annual GDP Growth Rates, 2001Q4 to 2011Q2

![Graph showing Scotland and UK Annual GDP Growth Rates, 2001Q4 to 2011Q2](Source: ONS, Scotland Performs, Scottish Government, 2013)

In tackling the UK’s budget deficit, the UK Government has proposed cuts whereby 80% of the cuts will come from reductions in government spending with the remaining 20% from tax increases. By
2014-15, a total of £18 billion in cuts will have been made to welfare spending alone. In Scotland, substantial fiscal and public policy constraints involve a £39 billion funding gap over the time-span of three Scottish parliaments meaning reform and revisions to Scottish public finances and a gloomy outlook for public spending in Scotland (Scottish Government, July, 2011a). This suggests long term cuts and savings will need to be made within local authorities, as well as government departments. Unlike the UK Westminster Government however, the Scottish Government have adopted a slightly different approach. They have decided to bring forward £11 billion in investment in programmes for capital infrastructure projects. This has also been accompanied by an announced investment of £175 million for the Scottish Regeneration Fund. To view the latest GDP figures (July, 2013) for Scotland for the first quarter of 2013, see below.\(^2\)

Environmentally, Scotland continues to combat, and mitigate, the effects of climate change with ambitious targets to reduce carbon emissions. The Scottish Government’s second report on proposals and policies (RPP2) for meeting its climate change targets has just been published (June 2013). This sets out how Scotland can deliver its statutory annual targets for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions for the period 2013–2027 as set through the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. \(^3\) Socially, there are challenges posed by increasing migration, a growing aging population, and rising social inequality. There is also a wider understanding and knowledge about the ways in which development activity (planning, design, management etc.) interacts with and works to improve and sustain the natural and built environment. It is now more important than ever to promote the positive impacts it can have on society, how it can support the economy and how it can minimise harm to the environment. Reflecting this, across the planning, design and development professions, a growing recognition of the importance of ‘place’ has emerged as a key focus for development activity to help towards the achievement of the Scottish government’s national outcomes (see below). This has been a learning process largely achieved through a better understanding of what factors makes for great places to improve quality of life for all. In addition to the Scottish government’s support for changes to the planning system (see policy section below) and to an extent, regulatory systems which enable, as well as govern, development activity, there has been a paradigm shift in how we think about development, regeneration, design and building. Excellent design which places people at the heart of any development allows places to be created where people want to live, work and invest.

*The built environment plays a central role in determining the quality of life for Scotland’s communities*, (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.59).

Within the context of local governance and development, many places have experienced the ‘loss’ of local governance, being subjected to what some refer to as ‘planning from a distance’. This is as much about the structure and politics of local authorities as it is about how accessible the planning apparatus is for ordinary people and communities to navigate and challenge. But it is also about the need for better consultation methods, and being inclusive and listening to communities rather than

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a process which often appears as ‘top down’ or where consultation is ‘done to communities’ rather than with them. This is one of the key reasons why charrettes, a condensed consultation method, have been adopted by the Scottish Government where development is proposed. Charrettes are an intensive process which brings everyone with a stake in a place together. Charette methods allow ordinary people to discuss with input from the key professionals over a period of several days or more where new designs and spatial development are planned for communities. The current focus on towns by government for instance, promises the potential of a new spatial framework for all manner of activity (masterplans, local economic development, renaissance and heritage). Reflecting this, there have been calls for a new model of governance complemented by a new policy emphasis specifically addressing towns in light of contemporary events and challenges, as well as new thinking on why towns matter more than ever in the new political and economic context.

Long-term challenges currently being addressed by the Scottish government include achieving sustainable economic growth; lowering the carbon footprint, and improving the efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness of public services. As part of the Scottish Government plans for the economy, it has published its Sustainable Economic Growth Strategy for growth (Scottish Government, Sept, 2011a). Sustainable economic growth means ‘building a dynamic and growing economy but, at the same time, safeguarding our environment for future generations and ensuring our communities can enjoy a better quality of life’, (Delivering Planning Reform, Oct, 2008). Central to the Scottish Government’s approach is a renewed focus on cities and their regions, ‘...recognising the critical contribution they make as the drivers of economic growth, and the need to work collaboratively to optimise growth for the benefit of the whole of Scotland’, and, ‘Investment in infrastructure – whether through new capital investment projects or through the maintenance of the existing asset base – is a key driver of both short term and long-term economic growth and performance’, (Scottish Government, Sept, 2011, p.6). In Figure 2 below, each of these represent the broad policy levers that shape the drivers of growth.

**Figure 2: Policy Levers that Shape the Drivers of Economic Growth**

(Source: Scottish Government, Sept 2011a).

The design and built environment professions are reliant on private market and public sector investment activity in the construction and development industries. As the 2008 global recession continues, it is often these sectors which are used as indicators of economic productive output.
According to recent data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), although the construction sector makes up less than 7% of total UK output, its relative weakness has meant it has acted as a drag on GDP growth and was down 2.4% in the first three months of 2013. Taken from a survey of more than 8000 respondents, the ONS has found there was a 0.3% rise in new work but a 0.5% dip in repair and maintenance. The figures suggest May 2013 was a trickier month for construction firms with a 0.5% dip in private new housing work, although it remained 2.7% higher than a year earlier. During 2013, the construction sector had shown an increase of 4.6% in April following on from a 2.7% decline in March and a 1.4% drop in February. The latest data showed output in the three months to May was also flat when compared with the three months to February (The Herald Newspaper, July 2013).

The placemaking agenda in Scotland has been underway for almost a decade and the increasing importance attached to the quality of places is reflected by its inclusion in the Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework. In progressing towards the achievement of a number of national outcomes (Scottish Government, 2007a), the framework aims to make Scotland wealthier and fairer, healthier, safer and stronger, smarter and greener (Scottish Government). According to the Scottish Government for instance,

The quality of the place we are born into is the ‘earliest intervention’ in our lives and over our lifetime, has an important effect on our health, our education, social cohesion and our economic prospects’, (Scottish Government, June, 2011, p.1).

The quality of places and the role of good design are considered to have a strategically important part within many aspects of Scottish public policy. One of the sixteen National Outcomes identified as having particular relevance to place is, ‘We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need’. In line with this, the Scottish Government acknowledges that it has a role to play in creating the right environment in the development of well-designed, sustainable places and that this will only happen through effective partnerships – between central and local government, and between the public, private and third sectors and crucially, with the individuals who live in those places (Adams et al, 2010, p.11).

Gaining a better understanding of how to deliver better places, placemaking and good design are increasingly embedded across a raft of policy arenas including planning and architecture as well as addressing the issue of public sector budgets. This is about targeting resources better to achieve preventative spending and more sustainable outcomes, over ‘failure demand’. This latter concept comes from systems thinker, John Seddon, who describes it as “unnecessary burden on the system.” By looking at removing failure demand on a system, you free up more capacity to focus on value added work. Key is to identify what is working from what is not working and to target resources more effectively in achieving the desired outcomes. Recent published literature on the future delivery of public services by the Christie Commission (June, 2011), states that our public services are facing their most serious challenge since the inception of the welfare state. In reference to the

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5 Learning Point 93: Designing for Outcomes, Scottish Centre for Regeneration (Scottish Government, June, 2011).

existence of growing inequalities, the report makes repeated references throughout to what it refers to as ‘failure demand’ in places implying that places which fail to prosper are also the same places where we should assume a solution. In other research by the Improvement Service (Mair et al, 2011) repeated references are again made to ‘failure demand’ in which evidence is presented on inequalities in geographic distributional outcomes where both positive and negative outcomes are inter-correlated at the neighbourhood level. This same report also emphasises that an integrated approach to local place and placemaking is critical in reducing geographic inequalities in distributional outcomes.

Place has received attention, albeit in various guises, both within the Scottish Government’s Sustainable Economic Growth Strategy and through the establishment of the Scottish Regeneration programme. Place for instance, has been embedded in the Scottish Government’s fiscal decision making with ‘Infrastructure, Development and Place’ one of the central themes of this strategy. The Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiatives (SSCIs) were set up in 2008 and we are currently waiting for Phase II to begin. Interestingly, underpinning the relationship between place and outcomes are concerns about both the equality of place and people. Both are viewed as central to Scotland’s economic strategy and related priorities. From a policy perspective, Scotland’s existing economic, planning and regeneration activity and policy contexts show the growing attachment to the importance of place and good design. These interdependent domains of placemaking therefore, show the need for a more holistic policy and indeed, skills, approach to continue the momentum of placemaking policy.

As Adams et al (2010) acknowledge, there has been a determined effort in the last decade, to improve place quality through various policies emphasising for instance, mixed communities, urban regeneration and the low carbon economy.7 There has also been new design guidance linked to streets, housing and places as well as specific design guidance proposals pertaining to several of the largest cities in Scotland. However, the economic crisis has meant that many traditional models of regeneration are now fractured. Development activity fuelled by rising land and property prices, funded via debt finance has been shown to be unsustainable. In addition, reduced public sector funding and capital grant means new financial models and different ways of funding development will be needed, and the relationship between the public and private sector will need to adapt accordingly.

Place is also featuring in the ‘early’ intervention focus within Scotland’s burgeoning health agenda. As one commentator has argued, ‘The emphasis on early-intervention in Scottish policy seems to be another driver of this turn to place. It seems we presume that all children brought up in certain neighbourhoods will be neglected so we must concentrate our efforts at those neighbourhoods’, (Mathews, 2012). For example, the ‘Growing Up in Scotland’ survey demonstrated that around 40% of Scottish children will experience poverty at some point in their lives; and, living in one of the 15% most deprived neighbourhoods in Scotland did increase the chances of living in poverty, but growing up in these neighbourhoods, as many analysts would agree, certainly does not cause poverty (Mathews, 2012).

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7 Although in the first of those, evidence of success is rather mixed whilst evidence of success in the second remains partial in terms of economic and social regeneration; see Building a Sustainable Future: Regeneration Discussion Paper, (Scottish Government, Feb, 2011)
The Scottish Government’s *National Review of Town Centres* was formally announced on the 9th September 2012. The announcement builds on a growing body of research and debate about Scotland’s town centres, how they are changing and the need to ensure our towns are equipped well in the future to support the economic and social aspirations of communities. This involves addressing the problems that some town centres face, alongside encouraging individuality and diversity – embracing the opportunities that can exist. The aims of the review is to scope out potential solutions to the issues faced by Scotland’s town centres and to enable a measured, long-term approach to town centre regeneration by targeting these issues. The review was undertaken in five phases and is developed and implemented in partnership with local authorities, communities and other key sectors and will be action and solution focussed. To shape and drive the review forward, an External Advisory Group (EAG) was formed to move the debate on to the next level and to spearhead action on the future for Scotland’s town centres. The EAG pulls together a range of people from diverse backgrounds with differing views on what town centres should look like and what solutions need to be put in place to manage change. An update of the Towns Review is available in Section 3 below.

A ‘pincer movement’ between cities on the one hand and the countryside on the other have not made it easy for a specifically towns agenda to develop, or transform. This apparent loss of focus on towns, their role, purpose and potential is further compounded, some feel, by local government re-organisation, where there is little actual decision-making, or trust in the views of the place populations. Decisions are made at a distance, strategically, and with little connection to the place. In addition to the focus on place, and the potential of towns in this context, there is the issue of place and community. The focus here is less on place as a framework to deliver public policy, and more on place as a framework to represent the interests of a variety of local people. The empowerment, participation and land reform agendas in Scotland have been building steadily in this context. In some cases though, these agendas form around specific issues within a place, as opposed to setting a framework for the whole place.

Finally, a core aspect of the ongoing UK Renaissance Programme (established by the UK’s Urban Taskforce in 2001 and applicable to Scotland) is a commitment to achieving quality design in the public realm, within private development and, overall, across the built environment. In so doing, it takes forward the recommendation of the *Urban Task Force*, which urged all institutions tasked with delivering regeneration/renaissance to “place the quality of the built environment at the heart of their mission”, (Urban Taskforce, 2005). The pursuit of design excellence is not solely about appearance; it is about economics and people’s attachment to place. Given that competition between cities is intense, the design and the management of the public realm becomes an important criterion for attracting capital and labour. Fostering a sense of place and civic pride can, in part, only take place through well-designed and maintained public spaces since they comprise the foundation for public interaction and social integration. In the Scottish context, two main policy statements were introduced by the Scottish Government at this time and included *Designing Places* (Scottish Government, 2001) and the later *Designing Streets* (Scottish Government, 2010). These are discussed further in Section 3 below.

Finally, the Scottish pilot of the Renaissance Towns process took place in Neilston in East Renfrewshire. This was a collaborative initiative between Neilston Development Trust [NDT],
Barrhead Housing Association, East Renfrewshire Council, Glasgow Urban Lab, Architecture and Design Scotland and Urban Design Skills. The aim of the pilot was to contextualise the Renaissance Towns model for the Scottish condition, and in particular, a local set of political and policy contexts which are increasingly diverging from the English/UK contexts. The Renaissance Towns model remains ongoing and is supported by a Scottish Renaissance Towns Partnership.

Conclusion

In light of socio-economic, environmental and political challenges, the future of the landscape profession in a devolved Scotland rests beside what could be described as a paradigm shift in how we view our natural and built environment. As the scientific basis of the ecological-link to sustainable development has become more convincing, it is perhaps now more than ever, that the skills and expertise of those who contribute to the design of the natural and built environments are in high demand. This can make the landscape architecture profession not only financially attractive via commissioning of more projects, but allows demand for their associated skills to come forward. The capacity of educational institutions to train and equip the next generation of landscape architects with the skills required will need to increase as new knowledge and ways of working to design places develops. Where up-skilling or professional development skills are not offered or nurtured via educational or professional institutes, (or even if they are, but are not ‘taken up’), this undermines the ability and capacity of the profession to adapt to these new realities and, the extent to which they are able to adopt a leading role.

Given the imperative upon national governments to deal with the interdependent and complex nature of socio-eco and environmental problems, landscape architects are uniquely positioned to provide solutions. The landscape architect has both the design knowledge and technical skills combined with an environmental awareness all of which is important for the natural and built environment to complement each other. In other words, landscape architects are well placed to not only lead, but also deliver much of what is currently demanded by policymakers: a renewed focus on the link between nature, the well-being of society and the design of built environment.

“From parks and fields to quarries and public spaces landscape architects straddle the boundary between man and nature like no other profession”, (Urban Realm, July 2013).

What all this suggests is that taken as a whole, the profession in Scotland must be seen to continue to forge stronger relationships and partnerships with other distinct and related professions where opportunities are presented. It also necessitates a greater awareness of, and involvement and engagement with the wider political and community apparatus that governs, regulates and supports the natural and built environments. These include the planning and public procurement systems, climate change and environmental legislation as well as social and public policy more generally.
SECTION II: Policy Context

Introduction

This section has two aims. Firstly, it is important to describe the wider policy agendas relevant to the practice of landscape architecture in Scotland. In recent years for instance, there has been significant reform of various Scottish Government policies many of which arguably affect the landscape and thus the landscape profession architecture. At the time of writing (July 2013), many of these policy arenas are still undergoing the public consultation process indicating that policy is yet to be formulated and therefore legislated for by the Scottish Parliament. For example, there have been considerable policy consultations issued by the Scottish Government in relation to land reform as well as the planning and public procurement and regulatory systems in which landscape architects have been closely involved (see Section III). These arguably, have provided much of the impetus into national debates about how the development industry and other related activities contribute, enact, support and deliver the Scottish Government’s national economic goals. A second aim is to highlight in greater detail the most recent policy announcements that are of direct relevance to landscape architecture. For instance, the recent Policy Statement on Architecture and Place ‘Creating Places’, (Scottish Government, July, 2013) is perhaps the most influential statement arising from government for a number of years. Furthermore, there has also been a corresponding interest and focus on the current position of Scottish towns within the context of the decline of the high street (e.g. retail offer). The establishment of a National Towns Review in 2012-2013 for example, indicates the possibility for a spatially-focussed policy framework in recognising the contribution and importance town centres make to the longer term economic resilience and social sustainability of places. This is discussed further below. These all pose challenges as well as opportunities for landscape architecture. It is perhaps then no coincidence that this report sets out to address what this policy landscape is and why it matters to the future of the landscape profession more broadly.

Wider Policy Agendas

Planning and the planning system is important to landscape architecture as planning helps to identify where and how development should happen...and where it should not. The fundamental purpose of the planning system is to secure through democratic means development and change that is consistent with the long term public and community interest. Furthermore, the planning system is critical to the creation of drivers of growth: productivity, participation and population. These are all indicators of a country’s wealth and prospects for prosperity. The planning system is set against a background of insecure, uncertain and unpredictable conditions. In recent years, the

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8 The LIS has responded to this consultation. See Procurement Reform Bill Consultation Response, (Dec, 2012) at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0040/00409711.pdf
Scottish planning system has undergone significant modernisation and reform to reflect the new environmental, social and economic realities of sustainable development.

In 2012, the Scottish government set out its vision and approach for modernising the planning system. Key aspects have involved simplifying the regulatory burden, rolling out the charettes programme and the introduction of performance reports to help assess standards. Key challenges for the modern planning system are the moves towards a plan-led system, delivering improved performance; simplifying and streamlining the process and the delivery of development. In 2010, Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) (a statement of Scottish government policy on nationally important land use matters) consolidated a series of specific policy statements into a concise statement followed up with the announcement of a review in September 2012. Currently, SPP sets out the desired outcomes from the planning system including the creation of high quality sustainable places and sustainable economic growth; good design; looking at connections between different policy topics for better integration; and, to deliver more efficiency, to be more inclusive, fit for purpose and sustainable. What is clear from this is that there was shift from focusing on processes in planning to an outcomes focus. In other words both policy and the culture of planning was being directly challenged to be more positive and pro-active. A key emphasis throughout the review has been how planning can enable and support the wider economic aims of the Scottish government. Key aspects therefore are sustainable economic growth, placemaking and the quality of outcomes.

Planning and landscape architecture is an important and an integral part of any development. Landscape architects must comply with planning legislation and laws as it is planning that regulates the process as well as acting as a ‘broker’ in planning, management and enforcement between developers, investors and other market-state actors (Adams & Tiesdell, 2013). Various planning reforms have been underway including the NPF 2, development plan system as well as SPP. Significantly the Scottish government is undertaking a strategic environmental assessment of the forthcoming NPF3 and SPP as required by the Environmental Assessment Act (2005). Extensive consultations have been undertaken of both the SPP and the Main Issues Report, (NPF3). To read submissions from the Royal Town Planning Institute (Scotland branch) on these key reforms, please see the link below.⁹

Other relevant agendas are those funds linked to the Climate Challenge Fund (CCF from hereon in), the impending Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill, Scottish Regeneration Strategy and

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⁹ NPF (3) [http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/578887/npf3_response_final_16_july_2013.pdf](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/578887/npf3_response_final_16_july_2013.pdf)
the Land Reform Act. In the first of those, the CCF helps communities reduce their carbon footprints and contribute to Scotland reaching its ambitious climate change target of reducing carbon emissions by 80 per cent by 2050. The Climate Challenge Fund (CCF) was introduced by the Scottish Government in 2008. Since its launch, the Scottish Government has made £37.7 million available to community groups through the CCF. The fund is administered by ‘Keep Scotland Beautiful’ and provides assistance to groups and community organisations in their efforts to lower their carbon emissions. The projects which the CCF has funded can be split into four main categories: energy (efficiency and renewables); food; transport; and waste (Burgess, 2012).

In June 2011, the Scottish Government published its review of the CCF’s work so far. The report evaluates the impact of the CCF, looks at the projects it has supported in its first three years and considers how the CCF can improve its work going forward. Carbon savings were made across the selected projects but were much clearer where ‘hard measures’ had been used which involve intervention (e.g. roof insulation projects) rather than the projects designed to change behaviour and attitudes (where it is more difficult to objectively assess success). Some ancillary benefits in the areas of general well-being and a strengthening of community identity were also evident. Some of the external obstacles to the effective operation of the CCF projects were found to be: difficulties in obtaining planning permission or having onerous planning conditions imposed upon the developments; and a lack of financial assistance for change (e.g. costs of hardware, such as solar PV panels) (Burgess, 2012). In March 2012, the most recent of rounds, confirmation of a further £30.9 million made available to communities by the CCF for 2012-15. This sees over 500 awards made across 365 communities.

In the SNP’s manifesto, a summary of the most important promises that are significant for communities and development are:

- A Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill, which will make it easier for communities to take over underused or unused public sector assets, and include measures to enable communities to deal more effectively with derelict or unused property in their area. This will act as a catalyst for a wide range of community activities and enterprises.
- Take forward a pilot project to allow communities to submit proposals for local transformation that encompass a range of potential funders and work with funders to develop mechanisms for more effective multi-agency response to regeneration issues
- Give Community Councils greater relevance and more opportunities to make a difference for the areas they represent
- Develop the use of Community Benefit Clauses across the wider public sector and introduce a Sustainable Procurement Bill to support the greater use of social and environmental benefit clauses
- Continue to support the expansion of community renewables and look to move to a self-financing scheme.

(Scottish National Party Manifesto, 2011)

As the Scottish Community Empowerment Bill has been touched upon above, an outline of some of the concerns are briefly highlighted here. As noted earlier, the Bill sees the transfer of some of the delivery of services to local areas allowing communities to take greater control over local assets as well as greater decisions over the running of local services within communities. How design
generally, can play a key role in developing and enhancing a communities assets, will be important. In their response to both the recent Christie Commission Report (June, 2011) on the future delivery of public services and the Community Empowerment Bill, the Community Learning and Development Managers organisation (CLDM Scotland) have stated that all of the “key objectives” of the “reform programme” have clear implications for their work. The Christie proposals for instance see reform built around a process aligned to a set of key principles to inform this process wherein:

- Reforms must aim to empower individuals and communities receiving public services by involving them in the design and delivery of these services they use
- Public service providers must be required to work much more closely in partnership, to integrate service provision and thus improve the outcomes they achieve
- We must prioritise expenditure on public services which prevent negative outcomes from arising
- And out whole system of public services – public, third and private sectors – must be become more efficient by reducing duplication and sharing services wherever possible.

(Christie Commission Report, 2011, p.vi)

What is in evidence here is the focus on better involvement with communities, improving outcomes and a focus on partnership. In other words, a systems approach to the design, delivery and use of services adopting a ‘whole place’ context, is increasingly recognised as the future for public services in Scotland. The Landscape Institute has responded to this consultation. Similarly, the **Scottish Regeneration Strategy** (Dec, 2011b), states how the, ‘strategy does not seek to radically change viable development models, but instead looks to build on previous success and encourage innovative ways of working where this can support progress’, (Scottish Government, Dec, 2011b, p.1). Key to its success will be:

- A focus on reforming the way in which mainstream resources are used to support vulnerable communities
- A stronger focus on community-led regeneration
- Realising the economic potential of Scotland’s communities through focussed funding and other support mechanisms.

**The Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiatives** (SSCs) were set up in 2008 and is currently awaiting Phase II to begin. The SSC Phase I was launched in June 2008 to encourage the creation of places, designed and built to last, where a high quality of life can be achieved. Local authorities, landowners, the development industry and others were invited to submit proposals which demonstrated ambition in addressing a number of principles, leading to the design and delivery of sustainable communities, bringing about real change. The Initiative is about creating places which go beyond single tenure housing estates, which are ambitious and inspiring. It is also about raising standards and developing skills in design, architecture and sustainable construction. It is about taking a long-term view and ultimately it is concerned with outcomes and delivering new development. The Urban Regeneration Companies such as Clyde Gateway and Clydebank have been established to oversee development in large parts of Glasgow, for instance.
Part 2 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides opportunities for communities in rural Scotland to apply to register an interest in land and property. Once such an interest is approved by Scottish Ministers, it is entered on the Register of Community Interests in Land held by the Registers of Scotland. The effect of the registration is to provide the community with a right to buy the registered land if and when the owner decides to sell it (or more accurately a right to try and buy the registered land since the landowner may subsequently withdraw it from sale). In a paper assessing the progress and success of the Community Right To Buy (CRTB), this was first proposed by the Land Reform Policy Group (LRPG) set up in October 1997 with the remit:

“to identify and assess proposals for land reform in rural Scotland, taking account of their cost, legislative and administrative implications and their likely impact on the social and economic development of rural communities and on the natural heritage”, (Wightman, 2007).10

The legislation began to be used quite soon after June 2004 and led to 31 applications for registration of which 17 out of 31 (55%) have succeeded in either securing an extant registration or a right to buy and the remainder have been deleted for the reasons outlined above. According to Wightman (2007), whether this rate of uptake and success represents a success story is unclear and the answer depends on how one measures success.

In the Scottish Government’s National Towns Review set up in 2012 and reported in 2013, three assertions are made as to why town centres are important and why they have configured onto the policy scene. Firstly, while Scotland’s seven city regions have been supported by four new Strategic Development Plans 11, it has often been difficult to articulate a specific ‘towns’ policy given the weight of evidence which supports cities as the powerhouses of economic prosperity, wealth creation and innovation. Towns are requiring intervention precisely because they offer the network of activities and supply chains that support the cities. Towns have increasingly lost this function in driving the supporting infrastructure that cities rely upon. Secondly, the wealth and breadth of what the built environment offers should be available to all communities – not just city dwellers. This is an equity issue in as much as this is a democratic right. Town centres allow us to share resources and services, but out-of-town housing developments imply inaccessible transport options to reach these services where car availability is required. Towns, as well as cities, can also offer the density required to create the diversity communities desire and a commercially viability that brings investment and profits for businesses and other investors. Towns are considered our true ‘eco-towns’ whereby resources and assets such as buildings and town centre activity need to be conserved and sustained. Reckless use of resources, like that alluded to in climate change debates, means we need to make the best use of what we currently have, rather than discarding and starting anew. Overall, towns require a broad mix of facilities to ensure sustainability, social equity and economic resilience. That these issues have been negated due to a lack of any tangible spatial framework for towns is now a possibility.

The towns agenda is significant for landscape architecture as the quality and experience of the spaces which people move around in within towns, are important to quality of life. Good connections and permeability in the design of space, the function and purpose of buildings and the enjoyment of that space, whether this is between road traffic, pavements and streets and places to sit and enjoy, is fundamental to the long term sustainability of a town. Towns need people on the high street to visit and/or consume and no matter the purpose, the quality of that experience is crucial to whether people and investors alike, will return or stay. The prevalence of high quality greenspaces, availability and accessibility of places to sit, good quality street design and furniture amongst others, all contribute to a town’s image, commercial attractiveness and enjoyment. The towns agenda therefore, underpins and identifies very clearly, the importance that landscape architecture can have for quality of life and a town’s long term trajectory. The External Advisory Groups’ Towns Review has just been published (July, 2013) and can be viewed by following the link below.\textsuperscript{12}

**Place and Placemaking**

As mentioned above, the idea of ‘place’ is dominating policy debates. The environment and design journalist Andrew Guest for example, has stated that in Scotland, ‘the word ‘place’ has a particular attraction as it recalls the phrase Geddes used to describe his holistic approach to regeneration and planning – ‘Folk, Work, Place’, (Geddes, 1915; Guest, 2011). This is true at UK level, in terms of the localism agenda, and the process of government in Scotland through the concordats where national outcomes are interpreted and implemented locally, to fit local contexts. As part of a broader UK Urban Renaissance agenda culminating in the Urban Taskforce established by the UK government in 2000, a key development in Scotland involved the publication of *Designing Places*. This was one of the first policy statements in the development of Scotland’s placemaking agenda. It set out the government’s aspirations for design and the role of the planning system in delivering it. It sat alongside another report on a policy statement for architecture launched in October 2001 which has recently been updated (Scottish Government, July 2013). *Designing Streets* was also the first policy statement by the Scottish Government on street design and marked a change in the emphasis of guidance on street design towards placemaking and away from a system focused upon the dominance of cars. Importantly, the principles set out in Designing Places are now being embedded into the revised SPP (2013 forthcoming). Designing Streets will therefore remain the Scottish government’s national planning, architecture and transport policy for street design.

These were significant policy statements as they recognised the links between the value of good design and improvements in quality of life. Moreover, they are an acknowledgement of the growing evidence-base on the link between negative impacts on the environment’s natural resources from urban sprawl and the growing movement towards the need for more compact forms of development and sustainable urban forms in particular.\textsuperscript{13}


\textsuperscript{13}See for instance, McKenzie, C., (2011), which addresses urban forms and social aspects of sustainability at the neighbourhood level: “Equity in Access to Local Services: Exploring the Impact of Urban Form and the Role of Preferences”, (Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, PhD Thesis)
Building on these earlier statements, the Scottish Government then published *Green Infrastructure: Design and Placemaking*, (Scottish Government, July, 2011b) and is perhaps the most distinctive and relevant guidance affecting the landscape profession and practice. The definition of green infrastructure is taken from The European Commission as ‘the use of ecosystems, green spaces and water in strategic land use planning to deliver environmental and quality of life benefits. It includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, wetlands, road verges, allotments and private gardens. Green infrastructure can contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, natural disaster risk mitigation, protection against flooding and erosion as well as biodiversity conservation’, (p.1). The document then sets out why green infrastructure is important to design and placemaking and the spatial context in which it will arise. For instance, the report states that, ‘Considering green spaces or connections as infrastructure arises because simple things like trees, greenspaces and watercourses can provide valuable services in an ecological way. Green infrastructure can deliver functions and services such as shelter, access and travel, sustainable urban drainage, pollution mitigation and food production – as part of a wider ecosystem. Moreover this approach has the added benefit of enhancing habitats and creating attractive places. This multifunctional nature of green infrastructure is one of its intrinsic benefits and can operate at differing levels’, (p.1). The document provides an overview of green infrastructure, as well as setting out some key design issues and techniques, which can help to incorporate green infrastructure into placemaking at all scales, including masterplans. The latest policy statement on the role of architecture and place entitled ‘Creating Places: A Policy Statement on Architecture and Place’, (Scottish Government, July 2013) sets out the Scottish Government’s thinking about why place matters and the relationship between place, architecture and quality of life improvements and a whole raft of other policy areas (e.g. planning, economic growth, landscape, and the natural environment). The value and contribution that landscape architecture and design make to an overall ‘green infrastructure’ approach are also set out. Furthermore, and as discussed above, landscape is seen as integral, not only to placemaking, but to other key areas where development involves the transformational change and management of an existing or newly-created place. A whole range of benefits of green infrastructure are described and are reproduced in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Benefits of Green Infrastructure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placemaking</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• making places more beautiful, interesting and distinctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reinforcing the local landscape character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• giving places character and a strong identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• improving the image of a place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• boosting property values including house prices due to proximity to greenspace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• helping developers get the most out of the site by combining uses, eg open space+ SUDS, helping development viability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• attracting businesses and inward investors by creating attractive settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• making it cheaper and easier to deal with surface water by keeping it on the surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• saving energy and money for residents and end users</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Climate change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• reducing CO² emissions by providing non-vehicular travel routes encouraging walking and cycling</td>
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<tr>
<td>• providing carbon storage and sequestration in vegetation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• providing shelter and protection from extreme weather</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• managing flood risk: living roofs, large trees and soft landscape areas absorb heavy rainfall</td>
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<tr>
<td>• providing for storage of surface water in times of peak flow in SUDS and other water features</td>
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<tr>
<td>• cleaning and cooling the air, water and soil, countering the ‘heat island’ effect of urban areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>• saving energy: through using natural rather than engineered solutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• saving energy: living roofs insulate buildings, and large trees provide shade, reducing the need for air conditioning in the summer and raising ambient temperatures in the winter, reduction in heating costs in the winter due to slowing of wind speeds in urban areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>• supplying locally sourced timber, biomass or other bio-fuels to replace fossil fuels</td>
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<tr>
<th>Environmental</th>
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<tr>
<td>• reducing pollution through use of SUDS and buffer strips</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• providing new and linking existing habitats or natural features, to allow species movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• protecting aquatic species through appropriate management of waterside habitats</td>
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<tr>
<td>• preventing fragmentation of habitats</td>
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<tr>
<td>• allowing diverse habitats to be created which are rich in flora and fauna</td>
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<tr>
<th>Community and Social</th>
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<tr>
<td>• creating green spaces for socialising, interaction and events</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• more opportunities and places for children to play</td>
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<tr>
<td>• providing improved physical connections through green networks to get between places; and to communities services, friends and family and wider green spaces</td>
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<tr>
<td>• providing spaces for practising and promoting horticultural skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>• creating opportunities for community participation and volunteering</td>
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<tr>
<th>Health and Well-being</th>
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<tr>
<td>• encouraging exercise and physical activity by providing quality green spaces for walking, cycling, sports and play</td>
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<tr>
<td>• providing better opportunities for active travel and physical activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• improving mental well-being by providing access to nature and attractive green spaces and breathing spaces</td>
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<tr>
<td>• providing opportunities for growing food locally and healthy eating</td>
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Clearly this represents opportunities for landscape architects. Placemaking, for instance, is clearly distinctive in that it represents the connections between place as having potential for spatial quality and place as the organising principle for a whole host of activity and action. It would suggest that scale matters and that creating different places of quality can be achieved at any scale.

The policy has three key drivers. These are to:

• Create successful, thriving and sustainable places and communities.

• Deliver well-designed public buildings which are greener - and which represent good value for money.
• Tackle the barriers to good quality development, through education, skills and advocacy.

The ministerial foreword, from Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, and Derek Mackay, Minister for Local Government and Planning, says: ‘Place should not be considered merely a backdrop to our lives, but as an agent of change. Good buildings and places can enrich our lives as individuals and as a society in many different ways. Whether it is by supporting active, healthy lifestyles, or reducing our carbon footprint, or being the critical factor which attracts visitors and inward investment, the value of place cannot be underestimated or ignored’ (p.4-5). Good design it argues, ‘can guarantee that we get it right first time, avoiding scenarios where we are left with problem buildings or places which fail our communities’, (p.4).

On landscape, the report also states how, ‘Landscape design is an integral component of placemaking. Well-designed landscapes can provide many benefits: safe, creative spaces for children to play and people to gather in; public space that promotes access to the outdoors; biodiversity and water management; the reduction of airborne particles; and improved micro-climate and space for local food production. In endorsing landscape design, the report goes on by concluding that, ‘These are all important issues that can be combined and delivered effectively through good landscape design’, (p.4).

Within the policy statement, a section is devoted to landscape and highlights that ‘Landscape shapes our impressions and experience of place and, if fully understood, managed and developed, provides numerous benefits including wellbeing, stimulation of our senses, biodiversity, and opportunities for economic development’, (p.34). It also describes how the UK signed up to the European Landscape Convention in 2006, an initiative that highlights the importance of all landscapes and encourages more attention to their care and planning. What is evident here are the links between placemaking and the need to ensure that the landscape is fully understood and appreciated, forming an integral part of any decisions and actions about a particular development and the management of that landscape. Importantly, another crucial point is the capacity of landscapes to accommodate new land uses and development and how these will differ from place to place. In other words, landscape character and the capacity of landscape should be recognised in ‘strategic land use planning and in considered approaches to siting and design of development’, (Scottish Government, July, 2011, p.34).

In commending the policy statement for instance, Sue Evans, of the Central Scotland Green Network Unit, states that, ‘It recognises the vital role of greenspace in sustaining healthy, vibrant communities and the role of landscape in providing the setting for and creating memorable places which are beautiful, multi-functional and life-enhancing. Two thirds of Scotland’s population live in the Central Scotland Green Network area. We are tasked with effecting a step change in environmental quality to make this part of Scotland a more attractive place in which to live and work. This policy, supported by the existing Government guidance “Green Infrastructure – Design and Placemaking”, provides an excellent platform to inform the delivery of the CSGN Vision.’

A key question is how will landscape architecture fare in a post-recession climate; and what are the key challenges facing the profession in light of placemaking as the vehicle for change and focus of
activity? It is clear that traditionally, landscape architects are not only well attuned to the ingredients of what makes for great places and the benefits of green infrastructure they are also uniquely positioned professionally to help deliver them. Insofar as the spectrum of activity they cover and the variety of skills the profession holds, it would be disingenuous to assume the existence of a better qualified discipline to take up the mantle. For instance, as one landscape architect has argued recently:-

‘The essence of a place is the people occupying and using the space and its connection to the landscape... As landscape architects we are the best placed professionals to deliver unique places with meaning, sentiment, and intelligence; spaces embedded into their communities. A special place evolves through a great deal of nurturing, sensitivity and collaboration’ (Mike Harrison, quoted from Urban Realm, July 2013).

This statement certainly reflects and captures the essence and principles underpinning the key guiding policy that is currently being formulated in Scotland – across all key agendas.

**Delivering Better Places: The Challenges**

‘The real impediment to achieving better places in Scotland is no longer a dispute about their value or ignorance about their qualities, but rather concern about the practicalities of their delivery’, (Adams et al, 2010, p.12).

Given the current economic climate, the policy context for placemaking has been experiencing renewed challenges, particularly for the planning system. As a key agent enabling development activity (and opportunities), the Scottish Government aims to stimulate economic growth and sees planners and the planning system as a means to achieve this. However, in supporting the Scottish Government’s sustainable economic growth strategy, debates within the planning profession have concentrated on how well the Scottish planning system can support the strategy’s objectives. Although extensive reforms of the planning system via the National Planning Framework (NPF) include less adherence to prescriptive policies, (i.e. development plans and supplementary guidance) which tended to ignore the distinctiveness and significance of place in dictating local circumstances, the unfolding policy framework now focuses on local outcomes: who benefits from planning and what has planning delivered? The NPF2 (2009) focuses much more on community engagement and an acknowledgement that planning debates now need to focus on the planning and development system outcomes – planning should not be about process. Planning’s relevance to the placemaking agenda is that there is now a strong focus on improving outcomes in relation to sustainable land use, good design and the protection and enhancement of the built and natural environment (Adams et al, 2010). The consultation responses on both the NPF and SPP are now publicly available. See below.  

Linked to these themes, the outcomes which planning and planners are trying to achieve include delivering enterprising places, resilient places and sustainable places. Planners have engaged in public debate to address the opportunities and challenges that these present (Royal Town Planning

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15 [National Planning Framework 3 Consultation Responses](http://www.planningscotland.com) and [Scottish Planning Policy Consultation Responses](http://www.planningscotland.com) (published online 11th September 2013)
Institute, Scotland: RTPI, Aug, 2011). How well the planning system - seen by the profession as fundamental to the drivers of economic growth and which underpins regeneration efforts – is equipped in enabling delivery of these outcomes in a renewed policy climate, including placemaking is, however, less clear. According to recent statements by the RTPI (RTPI, Nov, 2011), it is not yet known what kind of resources or even if new forms of investment will be made available so that the planning apparatus can take forward, deliver and lead on placemaking.

As the placemaking agenda has developed, it is clear there is a much greater and shared understanding of why places matters at a time when economic, social and environmental sustainability is seen as increasingly central to public debate (Adams, et al, 2010; Woodcraft et al, 2011). Added to this, there is also a far greater knowledge and evidence base of the kind of features or attractive factors that make for quality towns and cities that people want to be in. Published research findings commissioned by the Scottish Centre for Regeneration on the theme of creating and delivering better places in Scotland (Adams et al, 2010)17 sought to understand the practical interventions and related issues involved in creating successful places. The report, ‘Delivering Better Places in Scotland’, (Adams et al, 2010) aimed to understand better how different public bodies elsewhere had gone about the task of making places – and markets – work better; what kind of relationships they had developed with private sector interests and how they had engaged those living in or who would come to live in the places being developed or regenerated (p.2). The report findings revealed that there were a number of key issues requiring further research to identify how successful places can be realised and delivered across Scotland and, the potential challenges these issues raise for the process and delivery of better places. In summary, the guide suggests that the main ingredients of delivering successful places are:

- Good leadership;
- Co-ordinated delivery;
- Controlling the spatial development framework;
- Achieving fast and co-ordinated regulatory approvals;
- Exercising ownership power;
- Attracting funding for advance infrastructure provision;
- Securing design quality through procurement strategies;
- Thereafter: continuing to invest and provide stewardship over time.

Stewardship and sustainability over time are regarded as important to place. The Delivering Better

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17 The Delivering Better Places in Scotland guide is a partnership between the Scottish Centre for Regeneration (SCR) in the Scottish Government, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Scotland and Architecture + Design Scotland (A+DS) who worked with the University of Glasgow.
Places research, for instance, argues that proactive management and general care is essential to place as it ensures it is nurtured and enhanced over time. This results in the establishment of a positive reputation that is transmitted through increasing confidence and activity in a place. These factors are considered important ingredients to a place’s economy allowing it to grow along with its property values (Adams et al, 2010, p.15).

Evidence is needed which better supports our understanding of the processes, which can shape and deliver better places in Scotland and therefore, achieve the desired outcomes. These outcomes can be achieved through improving the quality of place and quality of life for individuals who live or wish to live in places. By examining the nature of stewardship of a place for instance, it is clear that landscape architecture could have a pivotal role in addressing who, how, what, where and why stewardship produces the appropriate conditions for enacting the processes to shape, deliver and achieve better places and the impact of outcomes it produced.

Reflecting for example the importance of maintaining a place, in a recent article in Urban Realm, Mike Harrison, a landscape architect based in Edinburgh has reported that, “Many of the projects we have recently visited were let down by poor maintenance. (There were) weeds, unruly grass, dying trees, paving poorly re-laid or replaced with a different product. All these have a detrimental effect on the quality of the place and our experience of it.” (Urban Realm, July, 2013). Consideration of how places are to be maintained and their longer term management should be a fundamental part of the process built into the beginning of any design and development, and not - as is often the case, simply an add-on or after-thought. This was also a finding echoed in Adams’ et al report (2010) outlined above.

Placemaking clearly represents an opportunity for landscape architects but also represents a number of challenges for the profession. For instance, Urban Realm recently stated that:-

‘Landscape Architecture has long suffered from poor professional standing, barriers in procurement and a sometimes fraught relationship with the more dominant discipline of architecture’, (Urban Realm, 2013).

Part of this is linked to their (landscape architects’) roles, perceptions, identity, skills, visibility and influence within the process and delivery of the development context (perhaps policy advocacy too) and, partly this is about the broader issue of identifying the amount and range of professional competencies. Policy guidance and wider changes seem to confirm that we know what good high quality places are but where does the profession fit as part of the range of disciplines that work across the place framework in the natural and built environment? And how can the profession map out, identify and establish its contribution to the placemaking agenda? These are interesting, if not important questions for landscape architects and related professionals.

Given the background and evolving policy contexts, a brief summary highlighting some of the main activities undertaken and/or programmed by LIS over the year is provided. It is intended only as a snapshot of some of the recent activity and is set out in the table below. The current efforts of the LIS are to focus on working to our strengths whilst addressing our weaknesses both now and, into the future.
The Scottish Branch of the LI works to represent the interests of members and the environment to the Scottish Government, agencies, and the voluntary sector. This is increasingly recognised to be a series of major tasks, which realistically require a greater level of resources. In recent years a number of responses to Government policy consultations have been submitted. The Branch is also well represented on bodies such as the Urban Design Panels in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Fife. In addition, the LIS is represented on SEPA’s Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems Working Group. These are just some of the activities undertaken.

**Scottish Forum for Planning**

Landscape Institute Scotland is now represented on the Scottish Forum for Planning (SFFP). This is an initiative managed by the Royal Town Planning Institute in Scotland at the request of the Scottish Government. The Forum meets quarterly and consists of representatives from Scottish Government and key agencies concerned with planning the built and natural environment. The SFFP aims to bring together key interests and expertise in planning to:

- Provide an ongoing vision and direction for planning in Scotland through identifying, constructively responding to, and exploring new ways of tackling emerging issues in planning.
- Support the delivery of planning reform and performance improvement.
- Share information and activity to maximise joint working and minimise duplication.

It is intended that LIS will be in a position to comment on Landscape Issues in an ever more effective way and contribute to the debate on Planning issues from the Landscape perspective.

LIS has a wide range of activities to promote landscape and the profession for the period 2013. Priority will be given to advocacy, professional relationships and partnerships, members’ involvement with design panels and other organisations and events. This has required an active and inclusive committee and the support of an Administrator, and requires a Policy and Development Officer (still to be appointed).

The activities include following up a number of the recommendations from the “Managing Change in Scotland’s Landscape” Conference in November 2012. These recommendations include the re-establishment of the Scottish Landscape Forum, convincing the Scottish Government of the need for a national landscape advisor/champion, and for landscape to be recognised more widely in policy.

In addressing the wider context of recession and the renewed focus on place, the next section introduces a number of observations that have recently been made by some professional landscape architects. Here issues such as the economy, the profession’s identity and standing, as well as the focus on place for delivery of activity are discussed. It is useful to reproduce these here as there are number of questions related to some of the contextual and policy challenges as well as wider issues about the profession.

**Conclusion**

Delivering better places is not easily resolved in a climate of financial and fiscal austerity and when the bulk of both Westminster and the devolved administrations’ budgets will be invested in large capital intensive infrastructure projects. However, as has been discussed above, there is now much
more concerted effort on making progress towards better solutions to the challenges and complexities posed by the natural and built environment. Specifically, policy is now moving towards a better understanding of development activity within the natural and built environment and how this activity can promote, integrate and support a range of national outcomes including improvements in the quality of life, health, economic prospects and experience of living in Scotland in the 21st century.

The future of landscape architecture in Scotland is presented with significant opportunities to help support the aims and achieve the outcomes set out in a national agenda that is committed to place. In this context place is significant in terms of an organising activity for focusing resources and investment as it provides not only a new spatial and design framework, but it allows for more targeted and collaborative market and public sector activity in development and other policy areas. The LI’s strap line “Inspiring great places” is appropriate in the context of the placemaking agenda in Scotland and is used by LIS.

In addressing the wider context of recession and the renewed focus on place, the next section introduces a number of observations that have recently been made by some professional landscape architects. Here issues such as the economy, the profession’s identity and standing, as well as the focus on place for delivery of activity are discussed. It is useful to reproduce these here as there are number of questions related to some of the contextual and policy challenges as well as wider issues about the profession.
Landscape Institute Scotland
Inspiring great places
## LANDSCAPE INSTITUTE SCOTLAND

### ACTIVITIES 2013

9-06-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADMIN SUPPORT</th>
<th>ADVOCACY</th>
<th>PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS</th>
<th>CONSULTATIONS</th>
<th>EVENTS/CPD</th>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>AWARDS</th>
<th>RESEARCH</th>
<th>MEMBERS INVOLVEMENT WITH DESIGN PANELS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS</th>
<th>MEMBERS INVOLVEMENT WITH LI</th>
<th>PROPOSED LIS YEAR BOOK</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIS administrator</td>
<td>National Conference</td>
<td>Continuation of relationship with National Trust for Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage regarding NTS’s Year of the Landscape and Scottish Governments year of Natural Scotland through SNH and John Muir Trust celebrating 100 years</td>
<td>National Planning Framework 3</td>
<td>David Skinner Memorial Lecture with ECA/EU with possibility for other events</td>
<td>LIS Interactive DVD distributed to 200 Secondary Schools and other professions. Put on LIS website</td>
<td>LIS Lifetime Achievement Award 2012, Journal articles and possible aural history from Peter Daniel</td>
<td>Discussion with SNH on joint initiatives in Landscape Research</td>
<td>Members sit on Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, Fife, and Aberdeen Design Panels</td>
<td>Technical Committee</td>
<td>Consider proposal to produce an LIS Year Book for wide circulation (15-20 pages including list of registered practices)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agreement for support from Architecture+Design Scotland</td>
<td>Promotion of the need for the Scottish Government to recognise the Scottish Landscape Charter and to re-establish the Scottish Landscape Forum including Motion in Scottish Parliament</td>
<td>BALI</td>
<td>Scottish Planning Policy Consultation</td>
<td>Professional Place Making Competition</td>
<td>Student Place Making Competition</td>
<td>LIS Lifetime Achievement Award 2013</td>
<td>RTPI Planning Forum</td>
<td>Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy and Development (Advocacy/Communications/Practice) Officer Job Spec and Advertising</td>
<td>Promotion of the need to include landscape in all relevant policies, to have a separate policy on landscape and to suggest a National Landscape Advisor for the Scottish Government</td>
<td>RTPI/RIAS/RICS Urban Design Group</td>
<td>Land Use Strategy Consultation</td>
<td>Planning for contribution to Commonwealth Games in Glasgow 2014</td>
<td>Support for Post Cards and Degree Show</td>
<td>Student Prizes at ECA/EU (2 annual prizes, one linked to ESALA academic syllabus and other general)</td>
<td>Cross Party Group on Architecture and the Built Environment</td>
<td>GLVIA Advisor Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promotional paper on Opportunities for Committee Roles post 2013 AGM and benefits including skills learned</td>
<td>Policy on Architecture and Placemaking follow on</td>
<td>Possible joint event with BALI</td>
<td>Promotion of landscape Architecture as a profession to Careers Officers possibly using the DVD</td>
<td>Architecture+Design Scotland Review Panels</td>
<td>Heritage Assets Working Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal Services to</td>
<td>SNH Review of</td>
<td>GI Workshops in partnership with</td>
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<td>Garden History</td>
<td>Policy</td>
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<td>Members</td>
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<td>Architecture + Design Scotland</td>
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| Legal advice on Party Wall implications in Scotland | SNH Landscapes of Scotland Maps | Social Events (3)  
- Design Panels Forum  
-Members Forum  
-Practice Principals Round Table  
-Study Day | Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust | College of Fellows |
| Revised Strategic Locational Guidance for Onshore Windfarms – Decision not to respond | Educational/CPD Events (3)  
-SNH Habiats network  
- After the Conference  
-GLVIA3 Application to Scotland | Home Group Design Advisory Panel | |
| Proposed changes to EIA Directive | AGM and Study Tour | SUDS Working Group | |
| | Peter Wilson on the use of timber and the idea of a rolling programme of design and improvement for | ECA/EU Accreditation Panel | |
| Scotland's tourist routes. | Murray Shaw and seminar on Legal Issues for Landscape Architects | SNH Visual Assessment of Windfarms Review Steering Group |
SECTION III: Findings from the ‘Conversations’

Introduction

During 2013, the Landscape Institute’s Policy Committee wanted to find out what members, students and affiliates think about the current state of the landscape profession and its future direction, and try to develop ideas that allow the Institute to look to the future needs of the profession. To get Scottish members involved, members had three options in choosing to participate: they could either participate in a discussion event (‘A Conversation’); they could respond personally to the call from the LI Policy Committee via an email address (futurevision@landscapeinstitute.org) provided to members; or, they could organise a discussion amongst colleagues at their place of work. The purpose of these events was to provide an opportunity for the membership to provide their own input, thoughts, suggestions and ideas, based on the above key themes the LI Policy Committee were keen to explore. In inviting members in Scotland to take part, a personal invitation email from Sue Illman, the LI President, was sent to all LIS members asking members to join ‘the conversation’ and to describe how they anticipated how the career path of landscape professionals might change in the coming ten, fifteen or twenty years. To frame the discussion, the LI had directed all of the LI branches to consider three questions, irrespective of which option members preferred to respond to. The three questions were:

1. How do you think the landscape profession could or should change in the future, perhaps to meet the challenges of a low-carbon economy, a changing climate, demographic change, new technologies, or changes in the global economy?

2. What work topics or projects are you or your employer engaged in, or interested in, that lie beyond the traditional scope of the landscape professional?

3. Where do you see new opportunities emerging for landscape professionals in the public or private sectors in future?

In addition, the LI Policy Committee was also keen to emphasise that they ‘welcomed ambitious and radical ideas for the long-term future of the profession’, and that members were also to, ‘feel free to send views on any theme you choose’.

Based on the level of responses received from LIS members, two ‘Conversation’ events were organised in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The LIS invited two individuals to facilitate the discussions: John Nevett (in Glasgow) and Lisa MacKenzie (in Edinburgh). The Glasgow event was held on 12\textsuperscript{th} June at Sloans Bar in Glasgow, and the Edinburgh event was held on the 26\textsuperscript{th} June 2013 at the offices of Architecture + Design Scotland. Both events lasted for approximately 2 hours between 6-8pm and tea/coffee refreshments were provided to participants. A summary of the Glasgow and Edinburgh ‘Conversations’ is set out below. From analysis of the data however, most of the discussions tend to concentrate only on Question 1. It may well be the case that individual responses via the email address explore Questions 2 and 3 more in-depth than has been the case here.
These responses should be seen in the evolving policy context and background and set out in sections I and II in which landscape architecture in a devolved Scotland operates.

1. Could and Should the Profession Change in the Future?

Identity, Roles and Influence

“Let people know who we are, what we do, and what value we can add to projects.”

When considering where the landscape profession in Scotland is now, three key themes emerged from the discussion. These themes broadly relate to the identity of the profession, the kind of roles landscape architects undertake, and perceptions of where they have/do not have influence. Together, these themes encompass an array of issues that further link to the professions’ perceived status, identity in both a public and professional sense and the terms of reference in relation to activities and skills. How the wide-ranging nature of landscape architecture practice ‘fits’ with other professions, including the scientific disciplines, were also discussed as an issue. The profession’s perceived level of influence in both a public/layman sense, as well as politically via policy, and how the profession is gauged by professional colleagues within the context of development projects for example, were also highlighted. In general there is a strong sense that there is a lack of awareness of the profession and what it does. It is not clear if this is linked to the need for a branding of what the profession does and stands for. Is it subtly confused with other distinct fields and disciplines, resulting in confusion?

Identity

There is an appreciation and a perception that the landscape profession in Scotland is experiencing something akin to an ‘identity crisis’. Reference to this was given in a number of comments in considering a priori where and how we see the profession developing in the future. For instance, is it time for the LI to adopt a more radical approach to help define and/or redefine our identity?

“What we were banded as then, it is not where are we are now...I think it’s come much further than that.”

In considering then what the future of the profession might hold, there was a lot of discussion about the need to understand how we got here in the first place; where we stand relative to external events, developments in and of other professional disciplines. For instance, it was recognised that historically, the profession engaged and is consistent with the field and principles of ecology. The significance of an ecological scientific basis (given the environmental movement) and its growing popularity of its study has been important for the profession. The phenomenal rise in its status since the 1970s highlights this positive identity issue. It offers a more definitive identity for landscape architects whether they are designers, managers, scientists or all three. Our Royal Charter states
that we have different divisions. However, this still leaves the question of what our true identity relates to; the profession has yet to articulate this given the past, present and future. Currently, certain legislation empowers other professions, like ecologists, to take the lead.

“How we were founded as is not what we are now; we’re so much further than that but we’re still haunted by our original identity.”

“But I think we are very weak in the science, we don’t have the strength there; so if we can’t get that clear in our own heads then we won’t be able to influence and others will take the lead.”

“How do we deal with that identity issue, if we cannot move on from that, then we can never improve our status as other professions do. We’ll never move on from that; our identity is still a fundamental issue. Some people for example, prefer to call themselves a landscape designer instead of a landscape architect.”

A suggestion to resolve this issue was a branding exercise: should we change the name of the institute: “Why not use the “Royal” in the Charter? Why not the Royal Institute of Landscape Architects? It says what our status is, what we are (the great majority of us) and what we do. Everyone knows what RTPI, RIBA and the RIAS are. Why not have the RILA?” For instance, if we were called the Institute of Landscape Architects (as we used to be), would this be more readily understood by other professions and the general public? Could we have, instead of increasing awareness of landscape architects and architecture, perhaps diluted our identity? It has done a lot for bringing us together, but it has not done a lot for improving who we are: our identity.

Roles

A key question suggested was how we define our role as a profession given the new science-based environmental professions?

Reference was made to the Landscape Institute Royal Charter. The LI, it was argued, is formed and structured under the Royal Charter, but it is perhaps worth considering whether this does limit our scope. What we think we can do under the banner of this as landscape architects; we could also ask what are we not doing?

“The Royal Charter is very encompassing; I don’t think there is anything in the Charter that restricts our roles and activities or thinking or in fact looking at Charter, there’s a lot in there that maybe we are not doing for example as in 2:5 of the Royal Charter.”

It is useful to quote Paragraph 5, Section 2 here:

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In this Our Charter words and expressions shall have the meanings set out in clause 1 of the By-laws save where the context otherwise requires and “Landscape Architecture” shall mean all aspects of the science, planning, design, implementation and management of landscapes and their environment in urban and rural areas and the assessment, conservation, development, creation and sustainability of landscapes with a view to promoting landscapes which are aesthetically pleasing, functional and ecologically and biologically healthy and which when required are able to accommodate the built environment in all its forms, and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing shall include:

a. the application of intellectual and analytical skills to the assessment and evaluation of the landscape and its character and the resolution of existing and potential conflicts through the organisation of landscape elements, space and activities based on sound principles of ecology, horticulture, design, planning, construction and management;

b. The planning and design of all types of outdoor and enclosed spaces;

c. The determination of policies and planning for existing and future landscapes;

d. The appraisal and harmonious integration of development and the built environment into landscapes;

e. The conservation, modification and continuing management of the landscapes of town and countryside and sustaining their characteristic features and habitats;

f. The promotion of a greater knowledge and understanding of materials and technology to enhance the appreciation of and resolution of practical landscape issues and problems; and

g. The promotion of a better understanding of the principles and purposes of natural, biological and physical systems affecting or relating to the landscape.

“If we consider the Charter, there is an assertion that ‘we almost do everything, and when you try to do almost everything, you end up not doing anything...or anything that will or is ever be taken seriously’. The Charter and its fundamental structure appears almost limitless, but it almost has limits at the same time. In one sense it is its strength, but it is also a weakness. If we consider where we are strong, then the LI (and others) has issued guidelines, particularly in landscape and visual assessment and that has set a kind of framework or code that people refer to. Landscape architects are considered the main custodians of this. It was also recognised that the UK does in fact do landscape very well and that it is really only the ‘true art’ of how we as human beings come to understand, interpret, adapt and manage the landscapes in which we live.

“Landscape architects had a really strong role; they were Heads of Division like forestry, like the new settlements in the Tennessee Dust Bowl settlement projects in the USA, and they had an enormously influential and social role. While we had the New Towns, it never really took off here.”

“Does the role of the landscape architect need to go back to basics? Design should be the key skill because we are designers of change and it is this that combines all the other threads. This is true no matter what scale the landscape project is, even design in LVIA mitigation. Is the profession trying to
do too much, a ‘Jack of all trades, master of none’ and are we too diverse? What are we – designers or LVIA people? It is not clear therefore if this demonstrates one of the strengths of our profession.”

“Has the profession’s struggle with its identity necessitated a requirement for us to be much more acquainted with the market for our skills? This would also require us to be much more aware of the ‘market.’”

Reference was made here to Strathclyde University’s Urban Design course. In one example given by a participant, he could not tell the difference between this course and ECA/EU’s final year course in examining them. In the latter, this was more broad-brushed, nothing of detail.

“Everyone can say if they like something or not but everyone then disappears when it comes to the technical aspects. So do we not have to take some time to reflect what the other professions are doing? There was general consensus that current perception of the profession is that this is the easiest of the jobs, but in fact it is the most difficult.”

“Engineers can defy the architects...but the most lucid job is the landscape architect.”

“One area where we are ‘out to win the argument is in the environmental impact’: major clients are and have been frustrated. “

“In the past, we used to ensure that landscape assessment had been carried out and that this would be approved by a chartered landscape architect. I don’t think there is enough of that going on at the moment.”

“At the larger scales, or the bigger projects we are a strong profession. But why is it the case that we are where we are?”

“Is our role encompassing ‘necessary hurdles’ which have been strongly empowered where you don’t get to anywhere unless you’ve got this, this and this?”

“Ecology is more at the international level: it’s more black and white”

How is the relationship between landscape and architecture evolving?

“Professionally and institutionally change is slow. The infrastructure surrounding and supporting the design of the physical environment in Scotland is essentially a couple of generations out of date. The role of the landscape architect/urban designer is often either ignored or misinterpreted. However, wider cultural changes are taking place at a faster rate. Landscape architecture is a profession for the 21st Century. I believe that the current constraints of poor professional standing and barriers in procurement processes will actually change quite rapidly in Scotland before much longer”.

“Carefully considered landscapes, which make great architecture really sing, should not be underestimated. When developing the brief, clients have the opportunity to put placemaking at the heart of their scheme, where site planning and the quality of the environment within which buildings are set, are recognised as key priorities from the outset.”
“We seem to be seeing two opposing trends – one where landscape is openly embraced within a holistic project design approach, and the other where landscape is confined to the periphery and tail end of the design process. We will see an increase in integrated, landscape-led projects, where the landscape professional brings long-term vision and pragmatism to achieve solutions. Underlying these trends will remain the fundamental difference between architecture and landscape – that architecture can be static, whilst the landscape evolves, is long-term and only improves in character over time.”

*Should boundaries between art / landscape and architecture be torn down?* “In some respects no. They are distinct disciplines. A lifetime can be spent getting good at one of those things. The change needed is in commissioning and procurement to remove barriers and to allow the best fit of a particular discipline to a particular situation and importantly to encourage multi-disciplinary working where it is relevant.”

“As a practice, we don’t believe in such boundaries, although we accept that artists, landscape architects and architects tend to operate within different spheres of approach. Our approach is to encourage a collaborative dialogue which fuses the artist’s conceptual idea with our contextual response to a site and the architect’s response to design brief, to ensure the full potential of a project is realised. The ‘boundaries’ only exist in an individual’s egotistical mind or blinkered territorial approach to collaboration.”

*How has recession impacted our landscapes?* “Much of the work for the upgrading of public spaces as part of the regeneration of town and city centres has been cut back dramatically over the last few years. Those few projects that are proceeding through the design and implementation stages are seriously hard fought tenders with additional competition coming from hard pushed architectural practices. The consequence has been a serious reduction in the levels of fees being submitted to win tenders which must be having a knock on effect on standards and quality of the finished product.”

“Throughout difficult economic times, we have recognised the need to adapt and in key development sectors, we have focused on what we term “creative delivery”. In this we combine our master-planning, planning, design and environmental consultancy skills to focus on assisting our clients’ in unlocking the potential in land.”

*Is the profession still held back by examples of ‘green toothpaste’ around car parks?* “No. Only the unenlightened still believe that ‘green toothpaste’ is the mainstay of the landscape architects portfolio. Any client worth his salt – local authority, private developer and dare I say it – architects and engineers, must have learned by now that the qualities of any project can be significantly enhanced by the inclusion of a landscape architect as an integral member of the team. This is not to say however, that car parks don’t still need some green toothpaste!”

“Unfortunately, we have to say yes. We still see so many examples of poor site planning, where the ability of the landscape architect to achieve a coherent and structured sequence of green spaces has been compromised through lack of involvement at the initial design stage, or through the relegation of landscape issues to the bottom of the design process ‘food chain’.”

*Influence*
The professions influence concerns both the UK level and worldwide. In Scotland, there is a sense that it’s not our ability to influence at the government level that is an issue, for instance, landscape issues are to an extent already in policies. It is perhaps our profession’s influence in the initiation of policies? There is general agreement that we have good policy with acceptance of the importance of green and blue infrastructure, but how policy is actually implemented on the ground needs addressed. The landscape profession has been doing this for many years. For instance, Ian McHarg’s, ‘Design with Nature’ was concerned with and has been successful in getting ecology and science on our side. People like him and Alan Rough have been great to get landscape architects to take ecology into our designs and the aesthetic side of this, the design bit sometimes is very uncomfortable with the science side. Is this something the LI needs to look at to take the profession forward? Analogy was also made with architects and architecture practice in that often the lead is taken by the consultant leaving the cost control aspects to the architect so even architects do not enjoy the same status. However it was also pointed out that this is less about status, and more about the landscape profession being ‘a cause and consequence of activity’. The profession is perceived as the people who actually spend money. Quality is the first most important thing about it or is it the purse strings that are the most important? There is always a shift in influence depending on whatever project it is. However, an issue seems to be the extent of the profession’s role dilution which appears to have had consequences for the profession’s ability to influence beyond its own professional divisions.

But it was also reiterated that landscape architects are not confined to just project-based work.

“Landscape architects should be able to have an influence in other areas.”

“Whilst private practice will have a brief etc, we need landscape architects who are out there at government level, and asking how the profession is fairing. Many years ago, within Scottish Enterprise, there were 4 or 5 landscape architects working as clients. Currently, we only have one landscape architect at this level in Scotland (maybe one in Transport Scotland, but this organisation is merely a delivery agency in that it has no real policy role).”

“In a recent announcement of the Norwegian-style Tourist Route Project in Scotland, this project announcement centered on architects! If you go to local authorities now, the client is Head of Planning or even it is engineering! Previously under the old Scottish Development Agency, we were at one time spending up to £90 million per year on environmental improvements.”

“**We don’t have landscape architects as clients anymore, which I think causes an issue.**”

“**Compared to planners and architects – they are enmeshed in high level politics, but we are not on the political radar!**”

Reference was made to the London Olympics and the Park. This has received plaudits from every level and it is thought this will continue when the Park reopens to the general public. Landscape architecture was effectively ‘the client’. There is a general feeling however, that this recognition of the professions role here has been missed to some degree. The opportunity for landscape architects to have a principal role was something the Liverpool Garden Festival had, as well as the seniority of roles enjoyed by the profession in the development of the New Towns in the UK.

“We have really been affected by this and it seems no one has sat down and asked how the new forms of clients and procurement systems have impacted the profession more generally.
Approximately 25% of a landscape architects time is dealing with the administrative tasks involved for example whereas 40-60% in spent in the design aspects. If we consider 40 years ago, this probably would have been different. We are not going to stop this happening but we need perhaps to realise that it is happening.”

“1980! What a great future for landscape architects, but this has been whittled down to purely landscape and visual. How did that happen? With Environmental Impact Assessments for example, we were best placed to be dealing and leading on this development”.

“Has there been a time when the profession has had greater influence”, was a question raised by one participant. In considering this, reference was made to the historic developments in public health and the post-war reconstruction era. Landscape architecture then disappeared off the radar until the second or third phase of the New Towns programme (which ran over several decades).

“Has the profession missed the social agenda in that what it has tended to concentrate on is the lobbying side and do we need to address this as an issue? Whilst the latter is not bad per se, maybe there is a level below that which relates to how landscape design is featured in the process of development implementation. This may have to do with education and career structure. Should we be pushing for greater changes in training, for example, apprenticeships? Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, now Scotland’s only landscape department, is bucking the trend with an increase in student intake, especially in overseas masters students (although some of this may be more about being part of Edinburgh University and living in Edinburgh than the image of the college itself).”

There are also concerns about the length of training for landscape architecture. It was noted for example, that architects and other schools are looking to shorten their courses due to competition with other professions (i.e. fees are less for shorter courses). However, it was agreed that the focus on design was imperative and lies at the heart of the college training and that of the profession. What is generally agreed is that we should not dilute college time with extra learning about the planning system and so on, because these can remain in the Pathway syllabus.

“The focus must be on design skills. Furthermore, landscape architects need to develop business acumen which would promote our own skill set despite the general assumption that designers might not be the best at their own self-promotion. The LI would need to hire external professional advertising PR to boost this particular skill set.”

There was also some suggestion that landscape architects should become involved with existing organisations’ conferences by showing them what we can do; for instance, as speakers at the Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI) conference or a housebuilders conference.

“We need to show how good landscape can add value for example, via improved housing layout with more houses on site but better green space. This should be an easy way for us to get in and be listened to. But we must talk in layman’s terms, for example by asking simply: how can we help the client?”

“Landscape is the Trojan Horse – everyone thinks they know about landscape – they have a natural empathy for landscape.”
“How and/or who are clients going to be in the future and how are they going to procure things? It is not clear whether our influencing problems emerged from changes in the procurement process, that is, from traditional to Design and Build.”

“There is a need to address how we can increase our influence behind the scenes too. What we could we hope to realistically achieve using the LIS £8000 Policy and Development Officer salary – what about using it to enhance someone else’s role? Could LI funds be developed to hold a Design Conference in Scotland, for example? The Design Skills conference last year, delivered by Architecture and Design Scotland was a great success and we could do this again.”

“As land will be one of the major factors in the future sustainability of our planet, this is where the profession can be influential by asking ‘How can land be used intelligently?’ While there was agreement here, it was also recognised that this is what the profession has in fact been debating for a long time and ‘it’s still not happening’. Where is it going wrong for landscape architects and what can we do about it? At the moment, it seems ‘we are speaking to ourselves.”

Reference was then made to the ‘European Landscape Convention’, which is meant to be influential at all levels, and also to the RTPI’s strapline, ‘the mediation of space’. Further reference was made to the London Branch planners, where there is a recognition that planners education has, over the past 20 years, diminished. That is, they do not have design awareness. Is this impacting on the landscape profession? Does the LI need to engage with media and be more media savvy to take us forward both in our identity and our ability and capacity as a profession so as to have much more influence? Significantly, the LI’s current strapline is highly appropriate to the overall context for a place agenda in Scotland, ‘Inspiring Great Places’ and arguably the profession in Scotland is well placed to live up to this. Reference was also made to Aberdeen’s Design Panel wherein a participant read out one of the feedback responses. This suggested that ‘...while architects views can be heard, the landscape architect’s view seems ‘to get lost in the discussion’. Architects in the team cannot always answer landscape queries’. Is it because we are few in number, this reduces our influence and therefore explains why our voice is struggling to be heard?

There was also a view that we need to be bold and that this could be achieved through high profile public relations and/or via advertising campaigns by experts (not in-house).

“We should look at potential interventions and get involved. In other words, the profession needs to shout and be heard. If we want the MSPs to promote landscape architecture/architects, then we need to show them what we can deliver... no more “policy” nonsense: “Let’s just get out there and do it.”

“We need to make MSPs look good for the photo opportunity!? Then they will support our way of thinking/ working/ goals as a profession.”

Reference was also made to the George Square in Glasgow and the Union Street Gardens in Aberdeen ‘fiascos’.

“There is a growing sense that there is something wrong with the way public authorities commission open space projects: were landscape architects involved?”
However, there does appear to be an issue about confidence albeit, this is generic across the development and design practices across in Scotland, so is the landscape profession any different? What this means is that it is not clear whether this is an issue about process or an issue linked to the roles and identity, which has then impacted on the profession’s ability to influence more widely when it matters most (i.e. high profile public projects).

“The profession in Germany for instance is highly respected and developed, what do they differently and what can we learn from this? We should also look abroad to Holland, and France, for example, and see how it is done there. There was a general sense that people are disappointed with the LI. For instance, where is the urgency? The magazine needs to have more of an impact. The broader practice is not interested in construction details.

“We’re too timid. We need to think big. Talk big and act big.”

“Even if LAs are not on the boards; one of stakeholders or on a judging panel or organising committee, we, whether as individuals, a profession, a practice or the institute should be proactive and just speak up whether or not we’re invited.”

2 Where Do We See New Opportunities Emerging?

While there are many opportunities and activities the profession is involved with, and actively engaged in, as Sue Illman’s presentation well demonstrated at the recent LIS AGM, there is a strong sense that we need a realistic understanding of the current situation.

“We need to get a foothold. We need ‘celebrity’.

There was certainly agreement that this would help. People don’t know the practices’ names. There was analogy made with the architecture profession whereby what we lack is celebrity status which would raise the profession’s profile: ‘We need a celebrity’. References were made to the Grand Designs TV success which is universally watched by different viewing audiences. This has been tremendously effective in changing perceptions about houses.

“It’s done more than anything to promote design and how it is implemented”. There is no equivalent in our profession. Perhaps Tom Stuart-Smith could do it, but the public relate to him as a landscape garden designer. It appeals to the masses because that’s what the masses can afford: gardens.”

There is a perception that currently, our profession’s public relations practice is lame.

“‘I want to be a Landscape Architect’ is accompanied with ‘crap videos’.”

Furthermore, the 40 page Client Handbook is thought by some to be a waste of money, for instance, “What client is going to read 40 pages and why would a practice hand out promotional material that includes competitors’ work?” was a view expressed.

Opportunities for the profession are not only confined to science-based or environmental activities but also include opportunities for developing in real communities and places; in other words, the places and spaces that comprise landscape and design. An example of the opportunities for
landscape architects is the Town Centres agenda in Scotland. One participant recalled a recent conference that was attended by both architects and real estate professionals (e.g. Grimley) where one speaker said that what is needed to make town centres the creative hub of places is good landscape design.

“Landscape has thrived on big social changes that have happened over the previous century”

**Conclusion**

When we considered where the landscape profession in Scotland is now, three key themes emerged from the discussion. These themes broadly relate to:

- The identity of the profession, raising the question, “have we lost sight of the fact that we are the designers of change to the landscape in its widest sense (i.e. landscape, seascape and townscape);
- The kind of roles landscape architects perform raising the need to show what we do;
- Perceptions on where we have or do not have influence.

When considering opportunities these related to,

- The need for a celebrity, a recognised champion;
- The important role we could and should play in the design of places and spaces.
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