

This note is being issued because a number of practices are being told that if they wish to work on a BIM project it is a requirement that they purchase a particular software package.

BIM projects require the exchange of data in standard formats, not the use of particular software. All landscape practices are able to deliver information into a BIM model in the format required by the client, without necessarily owning copies of the software which will run the model. Most landscape architects are operating at BIM Level 2 as defined by the government BIM Working party Strategy paper. Thus they are able to

- Use 2D CAD
- Work with managed 3D (not necessarily within the same application)
- Export data in standard formats (e.g. Excel/CSV) for inclusion in COBie spreadsheets, plus documents that support the future management of the landscape

The advice from the Landscape Institute is as follows

1. A BIM Execution Plan should be formulated by all parties involved in a project. This Plan should define data and model exchange protocols for each discipline and information flows for the overall project. The BIM Execution Plan would most usefully be part of an overall project control plan so that BIM is integrated into all aspects of the project delivery.
2. A landscape practice which will be working on a BIM project should contribute to the BIM Execution Plan where possible, and confirm its ability to deliver data which meet the requirements of the Plan. This will generally be in a commonly-used format (e.g. Excel, CSV) which can be used to populate a COBie spreadsheet.
3. If a practice has not yet bought software for running BIM models, the Institute's general advice is that it should not yet do so. Most of the market leader software packages have developed in response to the needs of architects, engineers and facilities managers, and most are not yet capable of handling landscape design to a degree that makes them a worthwhile investment for a landscape practice. We expect this situation to change in due course, but for the moment buying particular software does not enable a landscape architect to work more effectively than they can do without that software. The use of a particular software package is not, as noted above, necessary for the exchange of information to feed into the BIM model.
4. If a practice has already invested in one software package, it is not necessary to invest in a different one in order to collaborate on a new BIM project. The landscape practice can work using its existing software and transfer its output data into the BIM model through a file converter if necessary.
5. The Landscape Institute will be issuing an exposure draft of a standard COBie spreadsheet for landscape in 2013.
6. The Landscape Institute will update this advice in the light of developments in software technology.