

Scotland's Future Infrastructure Priorities

Contribution from the Landscape Institute

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1 Who are we?

The Landscape Institute (LI) is the royal chartered body for the landscape profession. We represent over 5000 landscape architects, planners, designers, managers and scientists.

As a professional organisation and educational charity, we provide training, accreditation, technical advice, and standards to maintain the high quality of the landscape profession in the UK. We protect and enhance the built and natural environment for the public benefit.

2 Contribution to call for evidence

The Landscape Institute welcomes the opportunity to respond to this initial engagement by the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland to outline what we consider to be the future infrastructure priorities for the country over the next three decades. Although the Commission has supplied a number of detailed questions, we have chosen to provide a high-level response which covers the broad areas of enquiry. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Commission or to provide more detailed evidence should you find this helpful to support your data gathering and analysis.

We note and support the inclusion of place-making as a strategic driver, but suggest this would benefit from a more detailed definition or explanation of what the Commission understands this to mean in this context in terms of outcomes. There are numerous other strategic drivers which are not explicitly expressed here, but which are connected to the broad theme of 'place-making' e.g. equality of access to housing and services, **public health outcomes** and poverty alleviation. The consultation document refers to infrastructure that supports societal needs as well as economic growth and prosperity, yet these aspects are largely underrepresented in the strategic drivers and objectives as currently articulated. We believe that infrastructure is central to issues of equity and there is a critical need to ensure that new investment does not contribute to further disadvantage or inequalities. You may consider, for example, including **population demographics** as a strategic driver, which would require us to consider how infrastructure meets the needs of an ageing population including housing and service provision, health and, critically, greenspace and landscape design to ensure that places are designed and accessible for everyone.

As well as the social drivers connected to place, there is also an omission of reference to our natural capital or the importance of ecosystems and the need to protect natural assets from decline. This, and the specific objective of **environmental net gain**, is integral to delivering against the UN's Sustainable Development Goals which, despite their alignment with Scotland's national performance framework, are not currently mentioned in the Commission's guiding principles. At present, the drivers and objectives are heavily focused on markets and growth, but do not appear to take account of natural systems and environmental drivers. The need for **resilience** both in terms of adapting to a changing climate and the need for human resilience to challenges is also pertinent and something that infrastructure can play an important role in facilitating. In this context moves towards a **circular economy** are also relevant. As part of any future infrastructure plan, there needs to be consideration of how the construction industry can make better use of resources and contribute to the reuse, repurposing and recycling of materials.

In terms of the definition provided, this doesn't include explicit reference to **green infrastructure**. Although the intention may be that this is implicit in the reference to 'public infrastructure', we suggest that green infrastructure in the form of parks, woodlands, rivers, landscapes and greenspaces should be explicitly included within the definition to ensure that the importance of natural infrastructure is not overlooked when thinking about Scotland's future priorities. In particular, we would wish for the Commission to consider how investing in green infrastructure could help to alleviate or complement the need for other forms of infrastructure such as drainage or flood management systems thus reducing public spending. For example, investment in **green active travel** through combining green infrastructure with off-road or segregated transport corridors can promote more and better-connected walking and cycling provision in and between settlements contributing to climate change targets and public health outcomes.

Regarding evidence, we are aware of a wide range of studies that demonstrate the contribution that green infrastructure makes to inclusive growth and low carbon objectives. If the Commission are interested in exploring this further, we would be happy to discuss with them and provide additional information. For the meantime we would direct you to the Landscape Institute's Position Statements on [Public Health](#), [Green Infrastructure](#) and [Climate Change](#) and to the [PERFECT Factsheet 3](#) produced recently by the Town and Country Planning Association which makes the links between Green Infrastructure and Climate Change with a number of current examples of how this is being delivered elsewhere as well as links to other relevant documents. The Central Scotland Green Network has also compiled a number of green active travel [case studies](#).

Recent qualitative research carried out in Scotland by the Landscape Institute Scotland has indicated that there is a perception that current state of the country's green infrastructure is declining and that there is a need for urgent investment in managing and maintaining landscapes and greenspaces across urban and rural areas. As our policy document [Landscape for Scotland](#) highlights, this change has not happened quickly, but is the cumulative result of decades of decision-making. As the pressure on our land increases, even in the next 5 years, this could decline further if action is not taken to invest and protect these natural assets. Landscapes are capable of absorbing and adapting to change, but every place has its own carrying capacity and infrastructure development must be

sensitive to that. There is a need for bespoke solutions that are genuinely place-based and approached at landscape-scale.

As a priority, we need to invest in the management and enhancement of landscapes and greenspaces to ensure that our natural capital stocks are not depleted and to recognise the important role that they play in delivering a number of strategic, national objectives and outcomes. Additionally, investment in landscape services, including the expertise of landscape professionals, in other areas of infrastructure development is also critical to ensure that infrastructure is designed and delivered in a way which is effective and does not damage natural assets. Landscape professionals have wide-ranging expertise in masterplanning and design of large-scale development including transport infrastructure, utilities and energy systems and incorporating green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems into new housing and other development.

Current approaches to infrastructure assessment and prioritisation tend to be driven by the market or short-term political priorities. We support the creation of the Commission to take a more strategic approach to prioritisation and investment and stress the importance of not overlooking the role of natural infrastructure when gathering and analysing the evidence. If we do not ensure that these aspects are prioritised and integrated into plans now, we will be creating problems that will need to be addressed in the future, likely at further, and greater, public expense.