Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland

Landscape Planning for Sustainable Development

Emily Smyth
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Ulster University
Belfast School of Architecture
Our Landscape Relationship

Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment in Northern Ireland (MAG) to advise the Minister on matters relating to the Architecture and Built Environment policy (DCAL 2006)

MAG work areas during first two terms of the MAG 2007 – 2013

- Design Review
- Heritage
- Sustainability
- Planning
- Procurement
- Landscape
- Civil stewardship

Carried out through:

- Interaction / discussion / debate with NI Government
- Symposia
- Consultation response
- Position Paper

“Our landscapes are vitally important and I would welcome your views on how they can be protected. I would ask you to consider preparing me a Position Paper covering the issues and the recommendations you may wish to make.”

Minister for Arts and Leisure, Caral ni Chuilin, Nov 2011
Our Landscape Relationship

Landscape is our environment, lifestyle and wealth

Landscape is valuable

Landscape is changing

It is beneficial to us to enhance landscape value

All landscapes matter

We are all responsible

A landscape approach to planning

Landscape Planning for Sustainable Development
Emily Smyth, Ulster University
Our Landscape Relationship

All places / all people

European Landscape Convention
binding in UK 2007
and at each administration level

- Recognise all landscapes
- Evaluate change
- Define objectives
- Implement these in all sectors

Practice and mechanisms for landscape value in Northern Ireland

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Our Landscape Relationship

All places

Landscape Character Assessment (NIEA 1999)
130 LCAs = 100% of NI area

Regional LCA (NIEA 2015)
Local LCA (local authorities 2015 ...)

Practice and mechanisms for landscape value in Northern Ireland

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Our Landscape Relationship

All places

Seascape Character Assessment (2014)
- 24 Seascape areas
- = 100% of NI coastal zone

Practice and mechanisms for landscape value in Northern Ireland

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Our Landscape Relationship

All people

Landscape Charter (2014)

• Landscape is essential
• Landscape contributes to wellbeing
• Landscape is part of identity
• Landscape reflects culture
• Landscapes matter and each of us has a right to landscape benefit
• Landscapes are shared and each of us is responsible
• Landscape is a networked asset whose whole is more than the sum of its parts
• Landscape change is inevitable but can be managed to enhance value
• Transparency engenders awareness and confidence

Practice and mechanisms for landscape value in Northern Ireland
Our Landscape Relationship

Integrated stewardship
policy / implementation / management

8 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (1965, 1985)
   6 with implementation / management partnerships

Integrated Coastal Zone Management areas (2006) - none designated

Rathlin Island (2010) (within AONB)
   Interdepartmental partnership

T:BUC (2014) - 5 Urban Villages
   Interdepartmental partnership

= less than 12% of NI area total

Practice and mechanisms for landscape value in Northern Ireland

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Our Landscape Relationship

Natural Heritage
policy / implementation / management

471 Areas of Special Scientific Interest
49 National Nature Reserves
21 Ramsar Sites (wetlands)
57 Special Areas of Conservation (habitat)
15 Special Protection Areas (birds)
1 Marine Nature Reserve
1 World Heritage Site
1 GeoPark
Locally designated sites

= less than 16% of NI area total
(75% within AONBs)

Practice and mechanisms for landscape value in Northern Ireland
Our Landscape Relationship

Built Heritage

policy / implementation / management

60 Conservation Areas

= less than 0.5% of NI area
(50% within AONBs)

Practice and mechanisms for landscape value in Northern Ireland

Landscape Planning for Sustainable Development

Emily Smyth, Ulster University

Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)
More than 85% of Northern Ireland is governed by sectoral decision-making and delivery.

NI government (and the people of Northern Ireland) need to:

• Understand **why landscape value is strong** in some places and weak in others
• Recognise the **benefit of landscape quality** to all development
• Ensure that **all development** increases the strength of landscape value in all cases

**Recommendations for Northern Ireland government action**
Engage with European Landscape Convention:
• Regular meetings of national public sector landscape bodies
• Consult with RECEP-ENELC

Adopt a Landscape Planning System:
• Planning must serve the quality of all living surroundings rather than focus on ‘special’ features.
• Nurture landscape stewardship through (rather than in spite of) economic development.

Recommendations for Northern Ireland government action
**Adopt a Landscape Planning System:**

Fully update NI **Landscape character assessment**
- all areas, types, aspects and scales of landscape, and their connections (including cross-border)
- regularly evaluate and monitor change
- dynamic forward-planning multifunctional objectives for optimising landscape value – to guide spatial Green Infrastructure approach and Local Development Plan

**Establish a Landscape strategy**
- binding for all government action and processes (not just those with land or landscape remit)
- explicitly recognising landscape as valuable and dynamic resource that is dependent on integrated multidimensional action

**Establish a Landscape steering group**
- Involving and coordinating all government departments and all key and interested parties, to champion landscape issues, understanding and value

**Recommendations for Northern Ireland government action**
Promote and develop landscape expertise

Nurture culture of appreciation of the relationship between landscape quality and a durable successful Northern Ireland

Require and support establishment of programmes delivering landscape professional expertise and coordinating research

Deliver specific landscape training for professionals working in all sectors, relating a multifunctional dynamic landscape approach as the means to sustainable development

Recommendations for Northern Ireland government action
Be an exemplar Landscape Steward

Determine a **definition of landscape in NI legislation**
Common to all NI policy and processes

‘**Landscape proof**’ all existing and new governance policies, programmes and activities in all sectors

Embed and respect **landscape skill and expertise throughout government**
Our Landscape Relationship

... no strategy exists which directs systematic multifunctionally-considered use of land for long term sustainability of Northern Ireland.
Recent related progress

**Northern Ireland Land Matters Task Force** (2013)
- Proposed Land Strategy for Northern Ireland


Updated **National Character Assessment**, England (2014)

Northern Ireland **Planning Reform** (2015)
- Two-tier planning system
- Strategic Planning Policy Statement
- Regional Landscape Character Assessment (2015...)

Northern Ireland Executive **Departmental Restructure** (2016)
Strategic Landscape Approach

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Landscape Charter

Regional Development strategy

Regional landscape character assessment

Sectoral policies

Local landscape character assessment

supplementary planning guidance

Landscape Strategy

Sustainable Development Strategy

Strategic planning policy statement

Regional Development strategy

Together: Building a United Community strategy

Local development plan

Landscape & green infrastructure spatial plan

Local development plan

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