Landscape Institute
People, place and nature

Consultation on Scotland's Draft Infrastructure Strategy

Landscape Institute Response

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Questions & Responses

Introduction

The Landscape Institute (LI) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's Draft Infrastructure Strategy. This response is submitted from the perspective of the landscape profession in Scotland, with a focus on how infrastructure planning, investment and delivery can support resilient, healthy and well-designed places.

The Strategy's recognition of economic, social and natural infrastructure is welcome. For the Strategy to deliver its intended outcomes, natural infrastructure and landscape need to be treated as part of Scotland's core infrastructure system. Decisions about infrastructure are also decisions about land, water, public space, climate resilience, biodiversity, access and long-term management. Early landscape input can help ensure that investment is well located, responds to the needs and qualities of places, and delivers lasting public value.

Our response therefore focuses on the importance of landscape-led planning, whole-life value, natural infrastructure, public sector capacity, community involvement and long-term stewardship.

Section 1: Scope and role of the infrastructure strategy

Question 1

1. Do you agree with the scope and role of the Infrastructure Strategy?

Response - Partly

The Strategy's recognition of economic, social and natural infrastructure is welcome, as is the intention to provide a clearer framework for planning, investment and delivery across Scotland.

The inclusion of natural infrastructure is particularly important. Scotland's land, water, coast, greenspace, parks, habitats, soils and wider landscapes are part of the infrastructure system that enables places to function well. These assets support climate adaptation, biodiversity recovery, flood resilience, health and wellbeing, active travel, place quality and economic resilience. This understanding should be carried more consistently through the Strategy, so that natural infrastructure is treated as a core part of infrastructure planning rather than as an environmental consideration to be addressed separately.

The Strategy is also right to recognise the connections between Scottish public infrastructure, UK-level infrastructure, regulated assets and private sector investment. These interdependencies matter in areas such as energy, water, transport, housing and natural capital, where outcomes depend on decisions across different ownership models and governance structures. However, the Strategy could be clearer about how these relationships will be managed in practice, particularly where public bodies are expected to secure place, climate and nature outcomes through investment that is privately owned, regulated or delivered in partnership.

A stronger emphasis on early landscape expertise would also improve the Strategy. Infrastructure decisions are also decisions about land, place and stewardship. A landscape-led approach[1] can help ensure that investment responds to the character, capacity and needs of places, and that it delivers wider benefits over the life of an asset. This is especially important where land is under pressure to accommodate housing, renewable energy, transport, water management, nature recovery and community infrastructure.

It is understood that the Strategy does not include a project pipeline, and that this will be developed separately through Spending Review and budget processes. Even so, the Strategy should set clearer expectations for how future pipelines will be assessed against public value, whole-life cost, climate resilience, biodiversity, landscape quality, maintenance and future management. Without this, there is a risk that natural infrastructure and place-based outcomes are recognised at strategic level but not carried through into project selection and delivery.

[1] A landscape-led approach to development – The Landscape Institute

The test for the Strategy will be whether this broader understanding of infrastructure shapes how future projects are identified, prioritised, funded and managed. A clearer route from strategic intent to project selection, delivery and stewardship would help ensure that landscape is not lost between policy ambition and investment decisions.

Question 2

2. Do you think the proposed framework, linking the 30-year Needs Assessment, 10-year Infrastructure Strategy, Spending Reviews and annual Budgets will support improved strategic planning and delivery?

Response - Agree

The proposed framework should support improved strategic planning and delivery, provided the 30-year Needs Assessment, 10-year Strategy, Spending Reviews and annual Budgets are clearly connected in practice.

A longer-term framework is welcome because infrastructure decisions shape places for decades. It should help Scotland move away from short-term, project-by-project decisions and towards investment that responds to climate adaptation, demographic change, economic transition, public service reform and the condition of existing assets. From a landscape perspective, this matters because decisions about land use, location, design, maintenance and long-term management are often made early, and can determine whether infrastructure supports resilient, well-functioning places.

The framework will only improve delivery if the long-term evidence base influences prioritisation, appraisal, procurement and monitoring. The Needs Assessment and Strategy should be used to test whether investment will support resilient places, adapt to a changing climate, restore nature, make better use of existing assets and deliver long-term public value. This should then be visible in Spending Reviews and annual Budgets, so that funding decisions reflect the outcomes the Strategy is seeking to achieve.

There are several ways the framework could be strengthened:

- Investment decisions should give proper weight to the full cost of designing, establishing and maintaining infrastructure over its life. This is especially important for blue-green and natural infrastructure, where benefits for climate resilience, biodiversity, water management, public access and place quality depend on long-term care. Without this, projects with lower upfront costs may be favoured even where they are less able to deliver lasting value for communities, landscapes and public services.

- Capital appraisal should recognise natural infrastructure as part of core infrastructure provision, not only as an environmental add-on. Projects should be assessed for the contribution they make to water management, climate resilience, biodiversity, access, health, landscape quality and public realm, alongside more conventional built infrastructure outcomes.

- The framework will also depend on public bodies having the right skills to apply it. Investment in landscape skills should be treated as part of infrastructure delivery, particularly at local authority level where landscape architecture capacity is often limited. Without access to qualified landscape professionals, decisions about land, place, natural infrastructure, climate resilience and long-term management can be made too late or given insufficient weight in appraisal and delivery. Strengthening landscape expertise within, or available to, local authorities and public bodies would help ensure that strategic priorities are translated into projects that are well located, well designed, deliverable and capable of providing lasting value.

- Annual Budgets should show how funded projects contribute to the Strategy's long-term outcomes, including climate resilience, nature recovery, place quality and the long-term management of assets. This would help ensure that short-term funding decisions do not weaken the landscape, natural infrastructure and public value outcomes that the Strategy is seeking to achieve

Section 2: Infrastructure governance principles

Question 3

Do any elements of the infrastructure lifecycle need to be strengthened to promote more effective infrastructure planning and delivery?

Response: Yes

The infrastructure lifecycle should be strengthened at the points where decisions about land, place, design and management are made. These choices are often made early, but they determine whether infrastructure will work well for communities, respond to climate risk, support nature and deliver value over time.

A recurring weakness in infrastructure planning is that landscape considerations can be brought in too late, after decisions about location, land use, design and funding have already been made. This limits the ability of projects to respond to landscape character, make best use of existing assets, manage water well, support biodiversity, improve access and create places that people want to use and care for. The stage of identifying need should therefore be strengthened, with proper consideration of whether existing assets can be adapted, shared or better managed before new infrastructure is pursued. Landscape-led[2] and nature-based solutions should also be considered at this stage, particularly for flood resilience, active travel, public realm, green networks, habitat creation and the adaptation of existing places.

Business cases should give more weight to whole-life value. Capital cost should not be the main measure of whether a project represents good investment. Appraisal should include climate resilience, landscape quality, biodiversity, access, public health, maintenance and management. For blue-green infrastructure, these are not additional benefits but are central to how the asset performs. Lifecycle planning also needs to reflect this. Parks, streets, civic spaces, drainage landscapes, active travel routes and habitat networks require proper establishment, maintenance and adaptation over time. Without this, the value of infrastructure can decline quickly, even where the original project was well designed.

Evaluation and learning should also be improved. Completed projects should be assessed against the outcomes they were meant to deliver, including resilience, place quality, public access, biodiversity, health and community benefit. These lessons should then inform future investment decisions, rather than being treated as separate project review exercises.

This will require investment in landscape skills. Many local authorities have limited access to landscape architecture expertise, which makes it harder to consider land, place, climate resilience and long-term management at the right stage. Strengthening access to qualified landscape professionals would help public bodies make better decisions about public realm, blue-green infrastructure, active travel, flood resilience, habitat networks and the reuse or adaptation of existing assets.

A stronger lifecycle approach would help ensure that infrastructure is not judged only by whether it is delivered, but by whether it continues to support resilient, healthy and well-designed places over time.

Question 4

In what areas could changes to governance or planning processes across the public sector improve the impact of the investment hierarchy?

Response - Strategic Alignment; Collaboration; Business Case Development; Funding and Deliverability; Procurement and Oversight; Evaluation and Learning; Lifecycle Planning; Other (Public sector skills and professional capacity).

The investment hierarchy is a useful tool, but it needs to shape decisions much earlier in the process. It should guide how public bodies assess land, existing assets, landscape character, climate risk and community need before deciding whether new infrastructure is required. This would help ensure that opportunities to adapt existing places, use blue-green infrastructure, improve public realm or manage land differently are considered before a preferred project is chosen.

Governance processes should require infrastructure proposals to show how they support national outcomes and local place priorities. This should include climate adaptation, biodiversity recovery, health and wellbeing, public realm quality, access, inclusion and future management. Alignment with the National Planning

[2] A landscape-led approach to development – The Landscape Institute

Framework, local development plans, regional spatial strategies and local place plans will be important, but decisions should also be informed by the landscape character, capacity and needs of each place.

The hierarchy also depends on better collaboration between public bodies, infrastructure providers and relevant professional expertise, including landscape architects. No single organisation can make the best use of existing assets, adapt places well or identify shared opportunities in isolation. Earlier collaboration between local authorities, health boards, transport bodies, housing providers, utilities, regional partnerships and landscape professionals would help identify opportunities for co-location, retrofit, green networks, active travel, shared maintenance and multifunctional public assets.

Business cases and funding processes should make it easier to invest in adaptation, reuse and long-term management, not only new construction. Proposals should show how existing assets, repurposing, nature-based solutions and demand management have been considered before replacement or new infrastructure is pursued. Funding criteria should also give proper weight to whole-life value, resilience, retrofit, maintenance and the performance of blue-green and natural infrastructure. Otherwise, projects with lower upfront costs may be favoured even where they are less able to deliver lasting value.

This aligns with points raised by the Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS) on the importance of repair, maintenance and bringing vacant and derelict land and buildings back into use as part of the investment hierarchy. From the LI's perspective, this principle should apply across the built and natural environment, including buildings, streets, parks, public spaces, drainage landscapes, green networks and underused land.

Procurement, oversight and evaluation should focus on the outcomes infrastructure is expected to deliver, not only on programme and capital cost. For landscape-related elements of infrastructure, procurement should support early landscape design input, collaboration with ecology, planning, engineering and community engagement specialists, and clear requirements for nature-based solutions, establishment, maintenance and long-term management. Once projects are delivered, public bodies should assess whether they have achieved their intended benefits for climate resilience, biodiversity, access, public realm quality, community wellbeing and place. Those findings should then inform future asset strategies, business cases and investment decisions.

Public sector skills and landscape capacity should be recognised as part of effective governance. Applying the investment hierarchy well requires informed judgement about land, assets, place, climate risk, design quality and long-term management. Public bodies should be expected to ask, at the outset, what need is being addressed, what assets already exist, what can be adapted, what outcomes are required, and who will manage the asset over its life. Without access to landscape expertise, opportunities to use existing assets better, integrate natural infrastructure, improve public realm and create more resilient places can be missed.

Section 3: Infrastructure themes and enablers

Question 5

Do you agree that enabling net zero and environmental sustainability, driving economic growth, and building resilient places continue to be the right outcomes to guide infrastructure investment over the next decade?

Response - Agree

These remain the right broad outcomes to guide infrastructure investment over the next decade. Net zero and environmental sustainability, economic growth, and resilient places are closely connected, and the Strategy should make that relationship clearer. Infrastructure investment should not treat these outcomes as separate tests to be considered at the end of a project. The value of the outcomes is that they can guide better choices from the outset: where infrastructure is located, how it responds to climate risk, how it supports nature and public health, and how it contributes to the quality and resilience of places. This is particularly important where investment decisions affect land use, water management, movement, public space and the character of communities.

The outcome on net zero and environmental sustainability should give greater weight to climate adaptation, as well as emissions reduction. Infrastructure planned over the next decade will need to perform in a changing climate, including increased flood risk, heat, coastal change, pressure on water systems and

impacts on habitats and soils. Blue-green and natural infrastructure should be treated as part of this response, not as a secondary measure.

Economic growth should also be understood in terms of long-term public value. Investment in housing, renewables, transport, town centres, public realm, digital infrastructure and regional development will be most effective when it is planned around the needs and character of places. Poorly integrated infrastructure can create future costs, while good landscape planning and public realm can support confidence, access, health, biodiversity and local economic activity. Resilient and sustainable places should be used as a practical test for infrastructure decisions. Investment should help places function better for the people who live and work there, including through access to green and blue spaces, active travel, climate-resilient streets and public spaces, habitat networks, local services, and assets that are designed and managed to perform over time.

To have practical effect, these outcomes need to shape appraisal, funding, procurement and monitoring. They should guide decisions about where investment goes, how projects are designed, and how infrastructure will continue to support people, nature and place after it is delivered.

Question 6

Are the three proposed enablers, public assets, place-making and private investment, sufficient to deliver the Strategy's outcomes?

Response - No

The three proposed enablers are all relevant, but they are not sufficient on their own. Public assets, place-making and private investment provide a useful structure, but the Strategy should also recognise natural infrastructure, stewardship and public sector landscape capacity as enabling conditions for delivery.

The focus on public assets is welcome, particularly given the need to make better use of what already exists. However, public assets should be understood more broadly than buildings and operational estates. Parks, streets, civic spaces, drainage landscapes, green networks, vacant and derelict land, active travel routes, coastal assets and habitat networks are also part of the public asset base. They need asset strategies, investment, maintenance and adaptation in the same way as built infrastructure.

Place-making is also important, but it needs a more practical role in the Strategy. It should not be treated as a general aspiration for good design or local benefit. It should shape how infrastructure need is identified, how options are tested, how communities are involved, and how projects are assessed after delivery. A landscape-led[3] approach can support this by considering land, water, movement, nature, public realm and management together from the outset.

Private investment will be needed, particularly for renewables, housing, EV charging, and natural capital, however, it should be enabled in a way that supports public outcomes and responds to the places in which it is delivered. Many of these sectors have significant implications for land use, landscape character, biodiversity, access, public realm and community benefit. Governance, planning and partnership working should therefore ensure that private investment contributes to resilient places, landscape quality and long-term management, rather than only delivering commercial objectives.

Natural infrastructure should be identified as an additional enabler, but it should be linked directly to stewardship. Parks, streets, green networks, drainage landscapes, trees, soils, wetlands, habitats and public realm all depend on proper establishment, management and maintenance to perform well. These are landscape assets as well as infrastructure assets, and their value can be lost quickly if long-term care is not planned and funded from the start. Treating natural infrastructure and stewardship together would help ensure that investment delivers lasting benefits for climate resilience, biodiversity, access, health, place quality and community wellbeing.

Landscape skills and capacity should also be recognised as a delivery enabler. The Strategy relies on public bodies being able to plan, procure and manage infrastructure in ways that respond to land, place, climate risk, biodiversity and community need. Where landscape expertise is limited, these outcomes are harder to secure. Building access to qualified landscape professionals should therefore be treated as part of the

[3] A landscape-led approach to development – The Landscape Institute

enabling framework for delivery.

Question 7

What mechanisms or approaches should the Infrastructure Strategy adopt to ensure that cross-cutting priorities, such as housing delivery, regional economic development, and natural infrastructure are systematically embedded in investment planning and decision making?

The Strategy should embed cross-cutting priorities through the systems that already shape infrastructure decisions, including spatial planning, business cases, funding criteria, procurement, monitoring and asset management. Housing delivery, regional economic development and natural infrastructure will not be delivered consistently if they rely only on broad policy commitments or are considered late in the process.

Investment appraisal should require projects to show how they contribute to place, climate and nature outcomes, not only their primary function. This is particularly important for housing, transport, energy, water, public buildings, town centres and regeneration, where decisions can affect land use, landscape character, water management, biodiversity, access and public realm. Natural infrastructure should be assessed as part of core infrastructure provision, rather than only within projects labelled as environmental.

This should be supported by stronger alignment between infrastructure investment and spatial planning. The infrastructure-first approach in National Planning Framework 4 provides a strong basis for this, but it needs to be reflected in funding and delivery decisions. Investment should support well-located housing, connected communities, active travel, public transport, blue-green networks and access to local services. Regional priorities should also be informed by landscape, land use and climate evidence, as well as economic and demographic data. This is especially important for rural, coastal and island communities, where infrastructure choices can have a significant effect on livelihoods, resilience, local identity and community confidence.

Funding and procurement should then support projects that deliver more than one outcome. Housing, economic development and natural infrastructure should not be treated as competing priorities where they can be planned together. Procurement should support early input from landscape, ecology, planning, engineering and community engagement specialists, with clear responsibilities for maintenance and stewardship.

Monitoring should test whether these priorities are being delivered in practice, including climate resilience, biodiversity, access to green and blue space, public realm quality, active travel, community benefit and the performance of natural infrastructure. The results should inform future Spending Reviews, annual Budgets and project pipelines.

The Strategy should require infrastructure proposals to show how they contribute to place, climate, nature and public value before funding decisions are made. This would give cross-cutting priorities a practical role in shaping investment, rather than leaving them as ambitions to be addressed after the main decisions have been taken.

Question 8

Are there any findings from the Scottish Futures Trust Needs Assessment (perhaps from drivers of change, cross-cutting themes, or enablers) that we should more fully integrate into this 10-year Infrastructure Strategy?

The Scottish Futures Trust 'Long term infrastructure for Scotland: supporting a sustainable and thriving future' provides a 30-year infrastructure needs assessment for Scotland.

Response - Yes

The Scottish Futures Trust Needs Assessment provides a useful longer-term evidence base, and several of its findings should be more clearly reflected in the 10-year Strategy. From the perspective of the landscape profession, the most relevant are the themes of nature positive, prioritising place, asset and climate resilience, and the emphasis on management and maintenance.

The nature positive theme should be more fully integrated into the way infrastructure need is defined and investment is prioritised. This would help ensure that infrastructure planning supports biodiversity recovery, water management, healthy soils, habitat connectivity and the wider environmental systems that places

depend on. It would also help move natural infrastructure from being a supporting consideration to being part of the core response to Scotland's future needs.

The Needs Assessment's focus on prioritising place is also important. Infrastructure investment should respond to the character, capacity and needs of places, rather than applying standard solutions across very different contexts. This is particularly relevant in Scotland, where urban, rural, coastal and island communities face different pressures and where infrastructure decisions can have lasting effects on landscape, access, identity and local resilience.

The Strategy should also reflect the Needs Assessment's emphasis on asset and climate resilience. Given the age and condition of parts of Scotland's public infrastructure estate, adaptation, retrofit, reuse and better management should have a stronger role alongside new investment. For the landscape sector, this includes recognising how parks, streets, green networks, drainage landscapes, public spaces and habitats can help existing places respond to flooding, heat, coastal change and other climate impacts.

The Needs Assessment's emphasis on management and maintenance should be carried more clearly into the Strategy's delivery framework. This is particularly relevant to landscape and natural assets, where performance depends on what happens after capital delivery, including establishment, monitoring, care and adaptation. The 10-year Strategy should give more attention to how these assets will be funded, managed and measured over time.

The Strategy would be stronger if these Needs Assessment findings were used more directly to guide decisions about what is funded, where investment is targeted and how success is measured. This would help connect the 30-year assessment of future need to the choices that will shape Scotland's landscapes over the next decade, including how land is used, how places adapt to climate change, and how infrastructure supports communities, nature and long-term resilience.

Section 4 - A place-based approach to infrastructure investment

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Question 9

Do you support the proposal that infrastructure investment is more directly driven by the priorities of places across Scotland?

Response: Yes

Infrastructure investment should be shaped by the priorities, needs and qualities of places across Scotland.

A place-based approach is important because infrastructure decisions affect how land is used, how public spaces function, how places adapt to climate change, and how communities experience change. National priorities remain important, but they need to be applied in ways that respond to different local contexts, including urban, rural, coastal and island places.

Investment should be informed by local evidence, community priorities, spatial planning and long-term management needs, so that infrastructure supports well-designed, resilient and liveable places.

Question 10

Are the proposed principles, national spatial priorities and place partnerships the right ones to guide a place-based approach? Are there other principles we should consider?

Response: Yes

Aligning infrastructure investment with national spatial priorities, and using place partnerships to support collective working, is the right direction. This should help move infrastructure planning away from isolated sector decisions and towards investment that responds to the needs, qualities and constraints of different areas.

The link with National Planning Framework 4 is important as its focus on local living, infrastructure-first planning, compact growth, rural revitalisation, reuse of assets and blue-green infrastructure provides a strong basis for connecting investment decisions with spatial planning. These priorities will need to be applied

carefully in different contexts, so that national policy supports the distinct needs of Scotland's urban, rural, coastal and island communities rather than leading to standardised solutions.

Place partnerships could help bring together the organisations and expertise needed to shape infrastructure well, including local authorities, public bodies, infrastructure providers, communities and relevant professional disciplines. This should include early input from landscape architects, so that decisions about land, public realm, green networks, water management, climate resilience and long-term management are considered from the start.

The approach would be strengthened by a clearer expectation that investment is informed by local landscape, environmental and community evidence, not only economic or service-based assessments. This would help ensure that decisions reflect the capacity and needs of different places. Long-term stewardship should also be built into place priorities, so that management, maintenance and adaptation are considered before projects are funded. Place partnerships should also have transparent decision-making, with clear routes for communities to understand and influence how priorities are set.

Question 11

Do you agree with the Scottish Government's proposal to empower communities to play a more active role in infrastructure decision making?

Response: Yes

Yes. Communities should have a more active role in infrastructure decision-making, particularly where investment will affect local places, public spaces, access to nature, climate resilience and the long-term quality of the built and natural environment.

Meaningful involvement needs to happen early, before major decisions about location, design, funding and delivery are fixed. Community engagement is less effective when it is used only to comment on proposals that have already been substantially shaped. Local knowledge can help identify how places are used, where existing infrastructure is under pressure, where public realm or green space is lacking, and what would make investment more useful to the people who live and work there.

The most useful mechanisms would include early place-based engagement, clear links with Local Place Plans and community planning processes, and accessible information about the options being considered. Engagement should be inclusive and properly resourced, with particular attention to people who are less likely to take part in formal consultation processes.

Community involvement should also be connected to delivery and long-term management. Where infrastructure includes public realm, parks, green networks, active travel routes or natural infrastructure, communities should be able to understand how these assets will be cared for over time and how local benefits will be monitored. This would help ensure that social value is not treated as a short-term consultation outcome, but as part of how infrastructure is planned, delivered and managed.

Question 12

Do you believe the current landscape of local and regional partnerships provides an effective framework for delivering place-based infrastructure investment?

Response: Yes

The existing local and regional partnership framework provides a useful basis for delivering place-based infrastructure investment, but it will need to be better aligned and more consistently supported if it is to deliver the Strategy's ambitions.

Community Planning Partnerships, Regional Economic Partnerships and Regional Adaptation Partnerships all have relevant roles, but they can approach infrastructure from different starting points. Place-based investment will work best where these structures are connected around shared evidence, agreed spatial priorities and a clear understanding of local need. This should include evidence about land use, climate risk, natural infrastructure, public realm, access to services and the condition of existing assets.

BEFS has also highlighted that the current policy and partnership landscape can be cluttered, making it harder to deliver priorities such as reuse of vacant and derelict land and buildings, better town centres,

improved public spaces and retrofit. This reflects a wider issue for place-based infrastructure: the challenge is not necessarily a lack of partnerships, but the need for clearer roles, responsibilities and decision-making routes.

The framework would also be improved by clearer routes for professional and community input. Landscape architects and related disciplines can help partnerships understand how infrastructure choices will affect land, public spaces, environmental resilience and the quality of places over time. Communities should also be able to see how their priorities are reflected in regional and local investment decisions.

The main improvement needed is not necessarily the creation of new structures, but better coordination between those that already exist. Clearer responsibilities, shared data, earlier collaboration and stronger links with spatial planning would help local and regional partnerships move from strategy to delivery.

Section 5 - Private infrastructure investment

Question 13

Are there additional sectors or opportunities that should be considered for strategic investment to support economic growth and maximise opportunities for longer-term growth?

Response - Yes

The Strategy should give greater attention to natural infrastructure and landscape-scale adaptation as opportunities for long-term economic resilience. This includes blue-green infrastructure, flood and water management, urban greening, habitat networks, public realm, parks, coastal adaptation and the reuse of vacant or underused land.

Investment in these areas can support healthier places, help avoid higher future costs from climate impacts, improve confidence in town centres and neighbourhoods, and create better conditions for sustainable growth.

Renewable energy, housing, heat networks and EV infrastructure will also be important, but they need to be planned in ways that respond to land, place and community benefit. Early landscape input can help ensure that investment is well located, reduces adverse impacts and delivers wider benefits for climate resilience, biodiversity, access and long-term stewardship.

Question 14

To make the most of the strategic opportunities in renewables, housing, and natural capital, what will the economy need from our infrastructure to grow and thrive up to 2037?

Scotland will need infrastructure that is planned in advance, coordinated across sectors and shaped by the places where development will happen. These opportunities all depend on land, water, communities and long-term management, so they cannot be delivered well through separate sector plans.

Renewable energy will need grid, port, transport and supply chain infrastructure, but it will also need careful spatial planning. Renewable infrastructure can have significant implications for landscapes, seascapes, habitats and communities. Early landscape input can help identify where development can be accommodated well, where cumulative effects may arise, and how projects can deliver wider benefits such as habitat creation, access, local skills and community investment.

Housing growth will need infrastructure that supports liveable places from the outset. The Landscape Institute’s landscape-led briefing makes the case that development should start with the landscape, rather than treating it as the space left over after buildings, roads and utilities have been planned. The spaces between buildings are central to whether new homes become healthy, resilient and attractive places to live. This includes green and blue spaces, SuDS, trees, biodiverse planting, habitat connections, public realm, play, active travel, access to nature and places for communities to meet. Landscape architects have an important role in bringing these elements together so that housing delivery supports climate resilience, biodiversity, health, social value and long-term stewardship, rather than simply meeting housing numbers.

The LI also supports BEFS' emphasis on retrofit, repair, maintenance and the reuse of vacant and derelict buildings. These priorities should be considered alongside investment in public realm, green-blue infrastructure, SuDS, habitat networks and the reuse of underused land, so that existing places can adapt to climate change and support sustainable growth

Natural capital should be treated carefully. It has an important role in supporting nature recovery, climate adaptation and land management, but it should not be separated from wider public value or local priorities. The economy will need clear spatial priorities, robust environmental evidence, transparent governance and long-term management arrangements, so that this work supports biodiversity, water management, soil health, access and community benefit.

Across these areas, Scotland will need places that can adapt to climate change. Flooding, heat, coastal change and pressure on water systems will affect economic resilience as well as environmental quality. Landscape architecture has a direct role in planning and designing blue-green infrastructure, SuDS, urban greening, public realm, habitat networks and landscape-scale adaptation, so that places can manage climate risks while also supporting biodiversity, health and community wellbeing. Investment in these approaches, and in the reuse and adaptation of existing assets, should sit alongside new infrastructure

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Conclusion

The Draft Infrastructure Strategy provides an important opportunity to strengthen how Scotland plans, funds and manages infrastructure over the next decade. Its success will depend on whether the broad outcomes it identifies are carried through into appraisal, funding, procurement, delivery and maintenance.

A stronger role for natural infrastructure, landscape evidence and landscape architecture expertise would help the Strategy support climate adaptation, nature recovery, housing delivery, economic resilience and better places for communities. Investment should not only deliver assets but should improve how places function and how they are cared for over time.

The Landscape Institute would welcome continued engagement as the Strategy develops, particularly on how landscape-led approaches can support place-based investment, infrastructure delivery and long-term stewardship across Scotland.

References

- Landscape Institute (2023) Landscape-led Development: How landscape can shape better outcomes: A landscape-led approach to development – The Landscape Institute

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About the Landscape Institute

The Landscape Institute (LI) is the chartered body for the landscape profession. We are an educational charity that promotes the art and science of landscape practice. The LI's aim, through the work of our members, is to protect, conserve, and enhance the natural and built environment for the public benefit.

The LI provides a professional home for all landscape practitioners including landscape architects, landscape managers, landscape planners, landscape scientists, and urban designers.

About LI policy and research

The LI undertakes research, builds networks, and provides policy advice to local and national policymakers, regulators, and stakeholders. We seek to demonstrate how landscape and green infrastructure can deliver maximum benefits for society, the environment, and the economy.

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