

## Outcomes Note

'Wednesday Webinar 1' - 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020

### DESIGNING QUALITY PLACES

**CHAIR:** Cllr Stevie Corr, NILGA Place-shaping & Infrastructure Network

#### OBJECTIVES

- To develop elected member understanding of the importance of quality environments and their role in promoting high quality development.
- To explore the wider policy context and how this will drive future planning practice
- To develop an understanding of urban and rural considerations, natural capital and what good quality sustainable development looks like.

#### SPEAKERS:

**Arron Wright, DAERA**

**Future proofing Northern Ireland:** How the Green Growth Strategy will change decision-making for government and councils

**Prof Alister Scott, Northumbria University**

**Valuing our natural environment:** What is natural capital and how can planners embed the value of nature more effectively into policy and decision making – particularly for rural areas?

**Mura Quigley, Urban Scale Interventions**

**People-centred planning:** Creating sustainable urban places that people love – theory and practice

**All Presentations available on the NILGA website at**

<https://www.nilga.org/nilga-networks/place-shaping-and-infrastructure>

**GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE:**

<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/planningandbuildingcontrol/plymouthplan>

## KEY ISSUES

### DISCUSSION POINTS:

How do we get from where we are to where we need to be?

**Delays to LDPs and pace of change an issue. So much will change during the plan development process.** How do we ensure they remain relevant?

Members feel powerless in the face of developers at times – how do we lead and foster place-shaping principles, looking at what is going on around developments as well as the development itself – ‘think outside red lines’

We have a plan led system and its vital to get this right up front. The missing link is often the lack of public engagement in the plan process. Budgetary limitations to this, and difficult to capture the public imagination, but we should not be hearing e.g. about large housing developments for the first time when the planning application is lodged. Co-design needs to come to the fore – with council and developers and community, with investment of proper community engagement.

Need strongly worded policies – get away from ticking the ‘acceptable’ box, which leads to homogeneity of places.

How do we change the tickboxes to ensure we deal properly with challenges like climate change, as standards change?

Need to look at how to develop innovative ways of public engagement without raising public expectations too high. Managing expectations is vital to deter the development of wish lists.

Importance of central-local and cross-departmental approaches e.g. on decarbonisation, with better linkage to SPPS and LDPs ensuring all the right levers are in place, ensuring the long-term strategic objectives are not obscured by short term issues. Joined up government essential

Concern that long-term plans end up ‘on the shelf’ – particularly when overarching. How do we change the dynamic to meet long term goals?

People want to see government address climate change, air quality, water quality – they want to feel proud of Northern Ireland as a leader in this. We are in a time of flux and change and need to float new ideas during times such as this, rather than wait until things settle.

Importance of a large number of small positive actions highlighted – e.g. replacing paved parking spaces in front of houses with soft planted front gardens will have a massive cumulative impact e.g. on tackling flooding. Programmes of activity on the ground will let people see that progress is being made and give them confidence as they see the benefits.

Gathering evidence – knowing where issues are (e.g. poor air quality – need good monitoring systems in place. Test out what works and start now.

## NEXT STEPS

Local government to be materially involved with DAERA on the Green Growth work

Need to explore:

- Where local government stands on lobbying for policy improvement – need to ensure we ‘change the tickboxes’ but acknowledging the context of nervousness within local government of too much change at the current stage of development plan production. Close working needed with planning officers on this.
- Benchmarking on quality and how to work better with developers – getting away from receiving the ‘acceptable’ to achieving the desirable in terms of development.
- How to embed new ideas into the system, and how to engage communities better within the current and ongoing financial limitations
- There seems to be a change to living and working more locally instead of having massive commutes, and we need to look at how to embrace this in our planning and service delivery processes, and development of e.g. rural broadband infrastructure

The idea of a cumulative impact of small positive actions is key. This is an important civic leadership role, for elected members, as we move away from a car-based society.

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