

Communities and Local Government: Policy Statement on Regional Strategies and Guidance on the establishment of leaders' boards

Landscape Institute consultation response
October 2009

Introduction

The Landscape Institute (LI) is an educational charity and chartered body responsible for protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural and built environment for the benefit of the public. It champions well-designed and well-managed urban and rural landscape. The Institute's accreditation and professional procedures ensure that the designers, managers and scientists who make up the landscape architecture profession work to the highest standards. Its advocacy and education programmes promote the landscape architecture profession as one which focuses on design, environment and community in order to inspire great places where people want to live, work and visit.

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Questions on which we would particularly like your views: Please state whether you agree to your response being made public.

Yes

1. DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT ON REGIONAL STRATEGIES

1.1 Do you consider that the scope of the Policy Statement enables regional flexibility while providing sufficient certainty and consistency about how new Regional Strategies should be prepared? Do you wish to suggest any improvements?

Yes

1.2 Do you agree with the scope of Regional Strategies set out at Paragraph 3.4? Do you have any suggestions as to how this can be improved further?

Yes, though it could be improved by an additional reference to the need to be mindful of adjacent regions and/or nations. Landscape character, landscape designations and landscape as defined under the European Landscape Convention do not fit local and/or regional planning authority boundaries.

1.3 Do you agree with the sub-regional approach at Paragraph 3.6. If not, what do you think needs to be improved?

Yes, though we believe that green infrastructure strategies should be added to point 3.6.3. The Landscape Institute defines green infrastructure as the network of green spaces and other natural elements such as rivers and lakes that are interspersed between and connect villages, towns and cities. Further information can be found on our [website](#). In point 3.7, even where sub-regional boundaries do not cross regions, there should be an assumption to work with neighbouring authorities and see 1.2 above.

1.4 Is the policy framework at Paragraphs 4.8 and 4.9 on the content of Regional Strategies appropriate to ensure Regional Strategies focus on the key priorities for the region?

There needs to be a clear definition of infrastructure in 4.8.2 and 4.9.1. Elsewhere 4.9. (6) states that "including environmental infrastructure". LI considers that all references to infrastructure should include green/environmental infrastructure and if this is not the case it must be clear.

1.5 Is there a need for more detail in the policy on how responsible regional authorities should decide on the priorities for their Regional Strategy? If yes, what should this detail comprise?

No, Appendix A is clear.

1.6 Is the policy on the project planning and the preparation of a Project Plan appropriate? If not, how can it be improved?

Yes

1.7 Is the policy on Statements of Policies on Community Involvement at Paragraph 5.17 appropriate? If not, how can it be improved?

Yes, however the Landscape Institute considers it is not just 'consultation'. Some of the stakeholders should be used to support/provide the evidence collection and to provide the intellectual evidence. For example, Community Forests such as the Mersey Forest and Teesdale have become regional experts/think tanks for green infrastructure. Also, some regional parks have supported this role and can provide useful project-led mechanisms for engagement.

1.8 Is the policy framework on the role of Sustainability Appraisals and the appraisal of issues and options in relation to the Regional Strategy process appropriate?

Yes, however the Landscape Institute considers that reference should also be made to climate change strategies.

1.9 Is the policy framework to guide the Examination in Public process appropriate?

Yes

1.10 Appendix A describes the broad stages of the Regional Strategy revision process. Does this provide the appropriate level of detail to guide responsible regional authorities in preparing their Strategies? If not, how can it be improved?

Yes

1.11 Paragraph 5.49 sets out the key expectations of Implementation Plans. Are these appropriate and do they provide sufficient clarity?

The Landscape Institute considers that reference should be made to the need for spatial definition on the Implementation Plans. There should also be a requirement to include phasing, where necessary. Finally, Paragraph 5.49 should reference local development documents and sub-regional documents that relate to infrastructure provision, particularly where there are proposals to be funded by the new Community Infrastructure Levy. The Landscape Institute is especially keen to ensure that green infrastructure proposals/provision are incorporated.

1.12 Paragraph 5.60 sets out the broad policy for the preparation of annual monitoring reports. Is this appropriate and does it provide sufficient clarity?

Yes, however it would be helpful to include the need to update the risk to delivery and any charges to that risk as part of the annual return.

1.13 Paragraph 6.1 set out the approach to the preparation of documents to support the Regional Strategy. Does this make it clear how documents should relate to the Regional Strategy?

No, we consider that a box-out example would be helpful.

2. DRAFT REGULATIONS

2.1 Do you have any comments on the proposed scope and detail of the proposed regulations set out at Annex 2?

The Landscape Institute considers that general consultation bodies should include:

- Third Sector, such as Community Forests and Groundwork
- Sub-regional bodies
- Regional (and sub-regional, where relevant) Design Review Panels. These have a key role to play in areas such as the north west, where image improvement has been a key regional economic objective
- Public/private partnerships, such as regional parks and market town initiatives
- Forestry Commission
- CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment)
- Local Strategic Partnerships
- Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders

3. ESTABLISHMENT OF LEADERS' BOARDS: DRAFT GUIDANCE ON THE PREPARATION OF SCHEMES

3.1 Do you agree with the range of considerations under each of the three broad criteria that the Secretary of State will take into account when considering schemes for the establishment and operation of a Leaders' Board, as set out in the guidance at Annex 3?

Yes

4. SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF REGIONAL STRATEGIES: DRAFT SUPPLEMENT TO 'A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DIRECTIVE'

4.1 Do you support the approach proposed for the new guidance at Annex 4, taking the Practical Guide as the main document with a supplement on Sustainability Appraisal?

Yes, however the Landscape Institute suggests that under the second bullet point in A4.13 the following should be added:

- Landscape character
- Local distinctiveness, place-making and design

Under A4.18, green infrastructure should be included for consideration at a sub-regional scale.

4.2 Do you think that the Practical Guide and the supplement together provide enough guidance to undertake Sustainability Appraisal that are compliant with legislation and meet the Regional Strategy's objective of promoting sustainable development?

Yes