

Architecture & Design Scotland

Ailtearachd is Dealbhadh na h-Alba

ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN SCOTLAND

BOARD MEETING (106)

In Person at Edinburgh Futures Institute (Room 0.10)

11.00 am Wednesday 17 September 2025

Present: Kirsty Macari (KM)(Chair), Alistair Scott (AS), Angela Bonney (AB), Bruce Ross (BR) & Caroline Parkinson (CP)

Staff: Jim MacDonald, (CEO), Sue Reynolds (SRe), Lynne Lineen (LL), Anja Ekelof (AE), Steve Malone (SM), Clare Rennie (CR), Lesley Riddell-Robertson (LRR)(Item 4) & Andrea Hepburn (AH - Minutes)

Guests: Sandy Robinson (SRo), Planning, Architecture & Regeneration Directorate, Scottish Government

Apologies: Ann Allen, Daisy Narayanan, Lynn Wilson, Sam McCabe & Georgiana Varna

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. CR introduced herself as Project Manager and round table introductions were made.

2. APOLOGIES & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Ann Allen, Daisy Narayanan, Lynn Wilson, Sam McCabe & Georgiana Varna.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS AND MATTERS ARISING

The previous Minutes were AGREED.

Matters Arising

Jan 25 No 4: LL to check completion of the Board Skills Matrix and notify members accordingly by 30/09/25.

June 25 No 1: JMacD to action by 30/09/25.

June 23 No 3: LL to contact LW for clarification by 30/09/25.

4. INCLUSIVE LEARNING

LRR presented an overview of the work undertaken to create a web resource on inclusive and accessible design. The project involved collaboration with various stakeholders and aimed to develop a framework for inclusive learning environments. We collaborated with the Craighalbert Centre to create an inclusive learning environment for children with motor impairments. The project included a feasibility study and consultations with various experts. LRR outlined key principles for inclusive and accessible learning environments, emphasising the importance of stakeholder engagement, defining inclusivity, and future-proofing spaces and discussed the barriers and opportunities in creating inclusive learning environments, highlighting the importance of meaningful engagement and understanding the needs of the community. The aim is to launch this guidance at the Learning Places Scotland Conference in November 2025.

The presentation was well received and Board discussed the importance of governance in ensuring the success of inclusive design and emphasised that good design must be supported by effective management and ownership to prevent issues from arising over time and highlighted the value of the current resources and tools available on the website.

The Board thanked LRR for her informative presentation.

5. A&DS RESPONSE TO REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

The response to the review recommendations was tabled, outlining the programme development and the need for further work to understand our capacity to deliver on the proposed activities. JMacD and CR updated the Board on project management improvements, including the development of a robust project plan, identification of key focus areas, and plans for ongoing workshops and regular reporting. SM provided an update highlighting the team's collaborative efforts to define problems, identify solutions, and align activities with desired outcomes. He emphasised the importance of ensuring the right activities are prioritised based on the team's skills and resources.

The Board discussed the next steps and the importance of aligning the programme with the review recommendations. The Board addressed the recommendation to explore the opportunity for a Scottish Design Centre. The concept is to create a network and strategy for design in Scotland, rather than a physical building, and to maximise investment in the design sector. The definition of the sector for development, which includes architecture, urban design, and landscape was clarified. The focus is on the physical environment and how to support its development through the programme.

Board also inquired about the use of digital mapping to anticipate future needs in the public sector. The discussion highlighted that digital mapping and data techniques are recognised as important for supporting the healthcare and learning estates, but the ability to continue this work depends on available resources and personnel.

SRo provided insight into the government's perspective on the programme development, emphasising the need for rigorous thought and activity to align with ministerial priorities. The team will continue to develop the work and seek ministerial approval for the final programme.

The team will continue refining the project plan, hold further workshops, and provide regular updates to the Board. There is an emphasis on adapting to changes and ensuring the plan remains agile and responsive to ongoing developments.

The Board **AGREED** to the outline programme as the basis for of our future focus.

6. CORPORATE FUNCTIONS HEALTHCHECK

LL presented a health check of corporate functions, covering finance, HR, IT, and governance. She noted that while the small team covers a wide range of responsibilities, most functions are working effectively, with some areas identified for improvement. Actions already taken include updating the framework document, improving internal audit follow-up, ensuring the business plan is published on the website and formalising the policy for signing off website publications.

Plans are in place to address outstanding issues, such as ensuring the workforce is agile and skilled, improving cross-working between advice and outreach, developing a more robust evaluation system, and enhancing stakeholder engagement tracking. Public sector reform and potential changes from the review may impact corporate functions and the team will monitor and adapt as needed.

Scottish Government recently confirmed that the organisation will not be onboarded to shared services for IT and HR due to its small size, but options for efficiencies are still being considered. Ongoing monitoring and annual audits will continue to ensure effectiveness.

The Board **APPROVED** the proposed action plan.

7. FUTURE BOARD AND AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETINGS CYCLE

JMacD presented a proposal to move to quarterly Board meetings, with Audit Committee meetings scheduled about a month before each Board meeting, aiming to improve efficiency and allow more time for written reports and preparation. The rationale was that the current meeting frequency is higher than comparable public bodies and that the change would free up time for more purposeful activities, such as stakeholder engagement and event attendance. The proposal detailed the standing items for both Board and Audit Committee meetings, clarifying what business would be covered and ensuring governance requirements are met.

The Board **AGREED** to the proposed changes.

8. BOARD SUCCESSION PLANNING

JMacD tabled a proposal to reduce the Board size from ten to eight members. He also sought members' views on the skills needed for new Board members and the timing of the recruitment process. Discussion took place on the core skills needed for new Board members, emphasising the importance of considering the upcoming period of multiple retirements and the need for a broad skill set.

Board considered the timing of recruitment, with a preference for a single recruitment exercise to fill all upcoming vacancies, ideally concluding in early spring 2026 to allow for a smooth handover, especially for the Chair position. It was highlighted that four additional Board members will retire in early 2027, so skills planning should anticipate future needs in two phases.

It was noted that the Chair would be involved in the recruitment process, and the public appointments team would be consulted on practicalities and our role is to finalise person specifications for recruitment, with the public appointments team ensuring the process follows required protocols.

The Board **AGREED** to all the recommendations.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Audit Committee Update

AB provided an Audit update, noting all Board members have completed their online training and there has been a drop in short-term sickness, which is positive for the small organisation. A new risk was added to the risk register regarding the capacity to deliver on new review recommendations, and this will be monitored closely.

Communications Manager

AE was welcomed back after her year's sabbatical in Paris.

Date of next meeting Wednesday 10 December 2025.

The meeting closed at 2.00 pm.



Signed:
Kirsty Macari, Chair

Date: 10 December 2025