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# Delivering Better Places

Design Skills Symposium 2011

Hosted by Architecture and Design Scotland, Stirling Council and Historic Scotland with support from Scottish Government Architecture and Place Division, Improvement Services, The Academy of Urbanism, and the Key Agencies Group

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The first day of the Design Skills Symposium focused on the issues of economy, investment, asset management and green networks. The presentations emphasised the need to 'start with place', the need for effective working relationships and better ways of communicating with each other. There was a challenge of assumptions around growth; there were challenges around making more of resources we already have and there were challenges around the quality and integration of place assets.

## “Place policy = economic policy”

### Delivering Better Places: why this, why now?

The purpose of Day 1 was to reflect on our own experiences, identify barriers and review opportunities to collaborate on delivering better places. Throughout the day, speakers made reference to the 'Delivering Better Places. Research and the Development process model. In summary, this model consists of 5 stages:

- **Anticipation:** the aspirations championed by effective leadership
- **Initiation:** the collaborative projects necessary to get the place project moving
- **Design:** infrastructure, funding and spatial design
- **Implementation:** the process of getting better places on the ground, who is involved and how
- **Stewardship:** the asset management of place and the entities within it to grow value over time

### Six views: overview of speaker presentations

**Professor Kevin Murray** opened up the proceedings with a discussion about the need to address the constant change in organisations involved in placemaking. There is an urgent need for us to take a collective responsibility to share knowledge, build skills and capacities. 'Teams are important: we are the team'

**Jim MacDonald** reflected on the policy landscape to support better places in Scotland. Arguably, at national level, the policy is there. Results on the ground often disappoint. 'The challenge now is about people getting together, agreeing what they need, and doing it'.

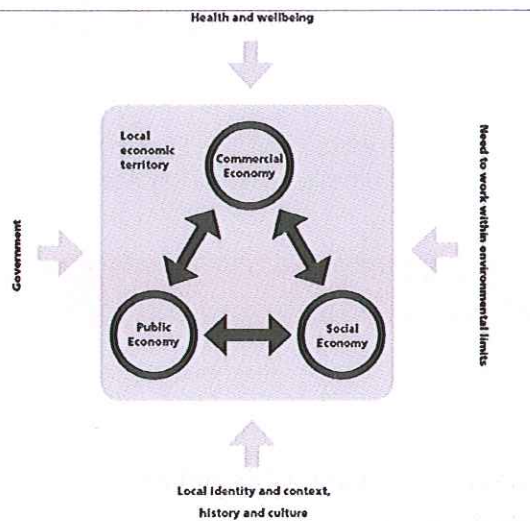
**Peter Morgan** discussed the Stirling context, the history and the contradictions. He emphasised the need for a new way to deliver the new type of Local Development Plan, a place led approach. A key challenge in this is to help others visualise the possibilities for places: how do you communicate to a politician the future possibilities of a currently brownfield, vacant and decayed set of contexts?

**Sarah Longlands** set out the arguments for the need for a new story for place based economic development. This need is threefold: [a] growth is not enough. Many places will not grow. Inequality continues to grow in growth locations. [b] processes of placemaking and economic development are often poorly aligned [c] the legacy of regeneration means we need to question who benefits from 'placemaking'.

A framework to address these issues is the CLES Resilience model. It considers the relationships between the



elements of the economy in a place context. These relationships are about both enabling participation and different forms of self organised place dynamics and structures which favour place prosperity.



**Steven Tolson** focused on the idea of market making, and the different roles of citizens, the state and developers. He outlined a model for multi participation in the creation and management of place based on Ibjurg and argued the case for a proactive role for the state as 'place promoter'. A key element of Steven's presentation related to motivations: he described the dominance of comfort, convenience and familiarity as principles in consumer choice and valuer assessments. Better design is about doing the basics better and building value over time.

**Tom Steele** laid out an approach to Strategic Asset Management which considered the critical relationship between the form and location of facilities for public services, and the quality of the services being delivered. He looked at the hierarchies of service provision in health, and challenged ideas about how single assets are managed. There is a need for better use of what we have to get the places we want. This is driven by the need for better citizen choices in a community planning context consistent with the Christie Commission recommendations.

**Max Hislop** described the concept and opportunities of green networks in a Scottish context. He described five key design elements which enable green networks to work with place contexts, 'joining up' other community assets [eg health facilities]. The five design elements are habitat networks, access networks, green space networks, water networks and stewardship over time. Max argued that the 'whole water journey' should be a first point of departure for designing better networks. Sustainable ways of dealing with this issue unlock other potentials.

## Big issues: views from the delegates

The first workshop focused on barriers to delivering better places, and the opportunities to overcome barriers through collaborative working. The key barriers are summarised as follows:

### Aspiration and implementation

- Lack of vision and emphasis on targets over outcomes
- Visioning process and people divorced from implementation

### Values

- The value of place is not well articulated
- Cultural emphasis: 'My home is my castle'

### Culture

- Silo working: lack of collaboration, prejudices, mistrust
- The language of what we do: understanding the work of others, what they are trying to do and why

### Tensions

- Financial challenges to manage public budgets and be accountable, and take risks
- Work practices, time and need for more creativity:

### Policy

- Too much policy/not the right policy: need for principles over policy
- Policy contradictions eg planning and procurement

### Scales, intensities and quality

- challenges of constant individual applications for individual sites, not always masterplan scale
- Low horizons of ambition and the quality of proposals

### Decisionmaking building blocks

- Economic growth and placemaking poorly considered in decisionmaking
- 'Rear view mirror' approach to land valuation

### Engagement

- Engagement not effective: listen to what people say
- Emphasis on regulated space: challenges in enabling self organised community action

### Influence

- Opportunism: poor at tactical exploitation of opportunities more effectively
- Need more alliances: distance from users

In broad terms, the key action areas can be summarised in terms of:

- Start with the place
- Effective leadership
- Collaborative working, more effective engagement
- Long term view to value creation and management
- Principles over policies