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# Education Buildings Scotland Conference 2019

Reflections by Architecture & Design Scotland

# Overview

## Summary

The focus of the 2019 Education Buildings Scotland conference was the Learning Estate Strategy, and the ambition to **'connect people, place and learning'**. This summary note was drawn together by Architecture & Design Scotland as a reflection of themes discussed in sessions across the two days.

A global 21st century challenge that keynote speaker [Lene Jensby Lange](#) observes is *“we have too many young people leaving school not knowing what they're good at. They have learned that they're not good learners. This is a tragedy”*. We need new ecosystems of learning and spaces where everyone can be the best they can be.

*“You can't empower people”* advised [John Loughton](#) in his powerful closing keynote. *“You build the conditions for people to empower themselves”*. His message was simple: be clear on the 'why' of your decision making, the purpose of your action, and how this really supports and includes the voice and needs of all young people in shaping future spaces.

Inclusion formed a key focus of Cabinet Secretary John Swinney's speech. He emphasised the defining mission of the Scottish Government to enable children living in poverty in Scotland achieve their potential, by working with the teaching profession to close the poverty-related attainment gap.

*“Just as we design learning that will help all pupils to fulfil their potential, we want to design and provide spaces which provide for a wider variety of learning contexts and experiences.”*

This variety includes physical and virtual spaces. Dominic Liechti of Apple, suggests we are moving from the 'information age' to the 'people age'. We should use technologies in the service of people and humanity. Technology amplifies learning, but we still need to support people skills, human creativity and relationships as the foundation of learning.

## Learning Strategy showcase

The showcase of projects funded under phase 1 of the Learning Estate Investment Plan [LEIP]<sup>1</sup> drew out a series of themes around the ambitions to **'connect people, place and learning'**:

### More connected spaces

- nurture relationships
- include everyone
- foster a sense of ownership and
- adapt to changing needs

These **connected spaces can be achieved** with;

- the totality of resources and assets in our places (one public sector approach)
- places that are technology enabled, and
- are supported by place plans

At national level, **priorities for collaboration** around these issues include:

- prototyping new approaches to shared challenges
- agreeing shared standards
- prioritising space and design for inclusion
- share innovations so everyone benefits

1: Peterhead in Aberdeenshire, Beattie in West Lothian & Castlebrae in Western Isles

# Learning Estate Strategy thematic sessions

## 1. Suitable

*“The measure of whether a school is fit for the purpose of delivering the education curriculum.”*

*[Core Fact]*

Designing for inclusion and support should consider all five of our senses. The [ILETC research](#) on innovative learning environments and teacher change provide a framework for 14 themes to design for changing 21st Century learning needs. The intention and purpose of change is key to successful evaluation and improvement. This is about collaborative briefing, linking learning, wellbeing and space.

Corsehill Primary adopted a school led, incremental, low cost high impact approach to adapting spaces for STEM, creating play, learning, discovery and outdoor experiences. The results include sustained improvements in literacy and numeracy, and changed self perception of learners. Marr College and University of Strathclyde illustrate the potential of targeted interventions in existing buildings, increasing opportunities for collaborative learning whilst maintaining what already works.



## 2. Sustainable

*“The learning estate should be well-managed and maintained, making the best of existing resources, maximising occupancy and representing and delivering best value”*  
*[Learning Estate Strategy, Principle 3]*

The South Australian Government experience suggests three spatial concepts of investing in 'school as community hub': buildings, clusters of buildings/campus or whole neighbourhoods/placemaking. Wellbeing sits at the heart of their hub concept, supported by a Results Based Accountability framework, measuring impact on the local population and service performance.

Better design is at the heart of better quality construction. The cost of poor design is 21% of construction cost lost through defects. Better outcomes in future construction will be achieved through more collaboration, and platforms for collaboration linking the right skills at the right time, with benchmarks and collective responsibilities.

Outdoor spaces offer high impact, value for money learning spaces which support incremental design around observation of children's use of space, practitioner support and ongoing consultation. Good design, and creative use of natural settings support better wellbeing, diverse learning experiences and resilience.



## 5. Inclusive Growth

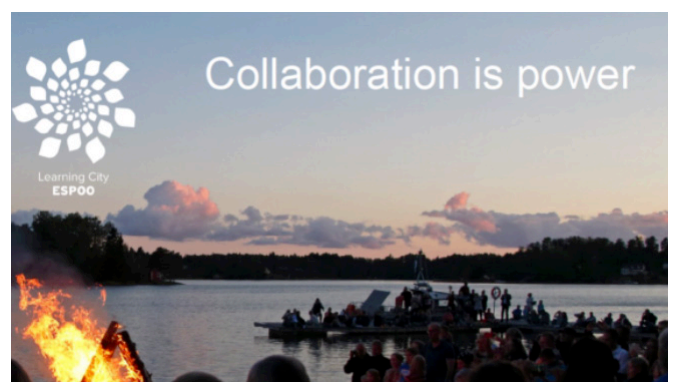
***“Investment in Scotland’s learning estate should contribute towards improving learning outcomes and support sustainable and inclusive economic growth.”***  
***[Learning Estate Strategy, Principle 10]***

Dr Eddie Edgerton of University of West of Scotland spoke of ‘intentionality’ around investment; designing for outcomes from the outset of a process. Inclusive growth needs to be an intentional, core benefit of investment, not a side benefit of single investment. This invites multi partner negotiation, shared visions and collaborative platforms for implementation.

The City of Espoo in Finland has built a culture of innovation supporting city and national industry by linking learning and city investment. The ‘School as Service’ model with Aalto University distributes senior phase learning across the city, supported by mentoring, digital and real world learning experiences. Learners are innovators, collaborating on industry problems. The City Plan connects civic investment, industrial and learning investment as a single plan.

Changing places requires negotiation, both with existing communities and with the project promoter, to ensure the final project integrates successfully. New users of new facilities need to feel part of an existing place, contribute and benefit from inherited investment. The experience of the Innovation District in Glasgow highlights the need to learn from place based examples, globally, and invest in negotiation locally. Leveraging investment to maximise local benefit should influence all partner behaviour. Stakeholder experience of Morrison Construction’s Pre-Apprenticeship Course highlight curriculum benefits, reduced drop out rates and increased participation.

Place planning is critical to balancing the spatial priorities of different users, identifying opportunities for co-location, better use of assets and better experiences for users. The experience of Wallyford and Eyemouth show the importance of a joined up approach to managing multiple developments



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