



Report of the Policy Working Group to the AGM May 2011

Establishment of the Policy Working Group

The Policy Working Group was formed in late 2009 when new Government policy was emerging and there was potential for the ILI to have a role in informing it. The collapse of the construction sector and the political will for new approaches in spatial planning and the built environment have resulted in the drafting of much needed new legislation and policy. At this crucial phase, the ILI Council agreed that resources would be needed to ensure the ILI was available to meet with Government departments and agencies and to provide a timely and clear response representing our Members' interests. The Policy Working Group is convened by the Vice President.

We have also been proactive in seeking a role for the ILI as a key stakeholder in a number of instances where the Government has not initially considered the relevance of landscape professionals. Generally, we have encountered a favourable response to ILI requests for stakeholder involvement, reflecting a more progressive approach to landscape policy in Ireland. We have succeeded in gaining representation for the profession and in having the views of the ILI included in policy documentation.

Although the ILI had been involved in making representations for a number of years, notably on the National Landscape Strategy, the development of a formal structure assists the Policy Working Group in concentrating ILI resources and ensuring that we address matters of landscape policy at national and regional level. The work of the policy working group has been an important aspect of ensuring awareness within government bodies and NGOs (DOEHLG, EPA, Heritage Council, Transport, and Compare) and other professional bodies that the ILI is active in developing landscape policy, this being evident through our exchanges and submissions. Thus we have strengthened our professional identity as the body having expertise on matters of relevance to landscape policy. We have sent representatives of the ILI to official government stakeholder seminars and workshops at the request of the relevant department or Minister to ensure representation and a voice for the profession. These have included topics such as green infrastructure, infrastructure in general, biodiversity, planning, valuing environmental services, flood risk management.

The Group meets on a regular, informal basis every 6-8 weeks, depending on necessity, with more frequent communication via email. Membership comprises Full Corporate Members who practice at an experienced level from both private and public sectors, as well as including the current ILI representatives to the Urban Forum. This ensures that there is good communication to and from the Urban Forum and that ILI tasks within the UF are advancing key landscape policy issues.



Activities of the Policy Working Group 2010-2011

Submission Papers

The ILI has in the past year prepared a number of policy submission papers to government bodies with responsibility for key strategies impinging on landscape planning, design and management. These papers have been prepared primarily by the Convenor in draft form for review and revision by the Policy Working Group. The Group meets to discuss which policies are relevant to pursue further. In addition to preparation of formal submission documents, the Group has advised Council of the need to write to various government bodies to comment on legislation, seek information or clarification or to indicate support or concern for policy decisions. This has been done primarily by the Secretary. This ensures that the ILI keeps pressure on policy-makers to recognise the interests and concerns of Members. An example of this is our pursuit of a legal definition of 'landscape' since 2008, which is now in the current Planning and Development Act 2010. We will be making these papers available through our website when it is updated in due course. Submission papers completed during the past year include:

- Government Policy on Unfinished Housing Estates
- All-Island Spatial Strategy
- Environmental Liability Regulations
- NAMA

Government Policy on Architecture

One of the key tasks for the Group has been ensuring the role of the landscape profession in the implementation of the Government Policy on Architecture. The need for this was highlighted by the ILI President at the 2010 AGM and this continues to be the case. Having prepared submission paper for DOEHLG, the ILI was then invited to and attended stakeholder meetings. Following on-going communication with the Department, the ILI successfully tendered for the provision of services for the Implementation phase of the Policy, and was selected as one of the 5 bodies for the Education category in the Built Environment. We are awaiting further details from the DOEHLG on this, but it is likely to be a good opportunity for research for ILI members and also to ensure a key role for the profession in training in the Built Environment. ILI have also received a seat on the implementation group of the Government Policy on Architecture. ILI will continue to develop our involvement in this.

Urban Forum (UF)

The ILI has been one of the key 5 professional institutes of the Urban Forum since its inception. The UF has been providing a response to Government on some of the same policy issues of concern to ILI, and we occasionally have an opportunity to prepare both an independent response and a joint response through UF. This has been particularly true in the Government Policy on Architecture. The members of the Group who are on the UF have ensured attendance by the ILI at all monthly meetings. In the past year, activities included:

- Preparation for Colloquium on National Landscape Strategy



- Preparation and publication of Green Infrastructure guide with Irish Planning Institute
- Preparation and publication of Urban Forum Manifesto prior to general election

The Manifesto has been a key achievement of the UF, and it took great effort to arrive at a commonly-agreed strategy prior to the General Election. The Manifesto was updated to represent the drastic changes in the economy and the construction sector. It includes several key policies for the landscape profession, and Members are urged to be aware fully of its contents and to advocate for their implementation where possible. We will continue to notify Members of UF events and publications through our website.

National Landscape Strategy (NLS)

The ILI has been continuously trying to progress the publication of the NLS (now through three changes of Government) by working with DOEHLG National Landscape Strategy Steering Group. We have requested that the draft NLS be progressed. The Policy Working Group, notably Past-President Deirdre Black and Terry O Regan of the Landscape Alliance on the Steering Group, have been involved in the drafting of the NLS. We hope to regain momentum for this in 2011 by holding an UF Colloquium in June. The UF Manifesto includes a call for the NLS, specifically sought by the ILI. We have also supported the All-Island Spatial Strategy's call for the NLS. Of note also is the involvement of Conor Skehan in the NLS who will address a planned colloquium of the Urban Forum dealing specifically with the NLS and landscape issues generally.

Eirgrid.

ILI were invited to and accepted a seat on the steering group in EIRGRID tasked with developing an evidence based assessment of the impact of the infrastructure of the national grid. This group meets as required to discuss the development of the guidelines for the development of the methodology. Documentation is reviewed by the Policy Working Group as and when required.

Other activities

The Policy Working Group members have been pursuing additional initiatives:

- Working with Heritage Council on continued training in Landscape Character Assessment
- Working with Parks Professional Network (PPN) on new revised standards for parks and open spaces with Government and on training opportunities
- Response to Government on Local Government Efficiency Review Group in relation to Parks Superintendents positions
- Briefing of Government on ILI aims and numbers in public sector
- Progressing CPD recognition of ILI members as equivalent to other professional officers
- Attendance at Official policy seminars and workshops at the request of Government departments or NGOs.

Challenges

The decline in membership has reduced our ability to advocate on behalf of the profession. Government will take the lead from bodies which represent significant numbers of professionals.



In lobbying for our profession, it is important that the ILI is seen as the representative body in Ireland, with strong support from the profession. Therefore, it is vital to have a high percentage of practitioners maintaining their membership actively, especially as we have a smaller cohort and therefore necessary to ensure we have a presence alongside other allied professions. We are finding an increasing number of requests for our participation, and this requires active support of members who can attend on our behalf. Timing can be crucial, and our small numbers of active Members can limit our ability to influence policy when we are not present for discussion and decisions being taken.

The Policy Working Group is still developing, and would welcome additional support from experienced and retired Members. If Members are aware of policy matters which may be of relevance to the ILI, please contact us through the Secretary at the ili email so that we may be sure to address them. Many thanks on behalf of Council to all Policy Working Group members for volunteering their time. The participation of the members is all the more welcome as we have sometimes to develop and submit policy to conform to tight deadlines.

Members: Maryann Harris (Convenor), Deirdre Black (Past-President), Dan Egan, Michael Hannon (PPN), Dave Kirkwood (President), Declan O'Leary (UF), Daibhi MacDohmnaill (UF), Bernadette O'Connell, Tony Williams (Secretary)

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April 2011**

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