

Advisory Council

Minutes of meeting 28 October 2024

Advisory Council Members Present:

Chair Carolin Göhler (CG) Chair / President	Steve Mann (SM) BrRep Wales	John Turner (JT) BrRep NE
Mark Smeeden (MS) Hon Secretary	Mark Ross (MR) BrRep Scotland	Akash Wadhawan (AkW) Elected Chartered Member
John Clay (JC) BrRep Mids	Vanessa Ross (VR) EMC Rep	Marko Yau (MY) Student Rep
John-Paul Friend (JPF) BrRep SW	Jennifer Smith (JS) BrRep EMids	Annabelle Silver-Setchfield (AS) BrRep London
Ruth Holmes (RLWH) Elected Chartered Member		

Apologies:

Mat Haslam (MH) Hon Treasurer	John Ingham (JI) BrRep Yorkshire+Humber	Nicola Phillips (NP) Elected Chartered Member
Debbie Bartlett (DB) BrRep SE	Anastasia Nikologianni (AN) PCC Rep	Allison Walters (AIW) Elected Chartered Member
Daisy Parsons (DP) BrRep EofE	Noel Farrer (NF) Vice President	Will Sandy (WS) Elected Chartered Member
Ben Gurney (BG) Elected Chartered Member		

Staff In Attendance:

Rob Hughes (RH) CEO	Rowena Lovell (RL) Board Secretary	Yvonne Matthews (YM) Executive Assistant
Jonthan Ellis (JE) Director of Membership & Professional Standards	Neelam Sheemar (NS) Head of MarComms & Events	Emma Wood (EW) Governance & Regulation Manager
Belinda Gordon (BGo) Director of Policy & Public Affairs		

1. Opening business

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The meeting being quorate, Carolin Göhler, Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those detailed above.

The Council noted welcome to the two new LI Directors: Jonthan Ellis (JE), Director of Membership & Professional Standards, and Belinda Gordon (BGo), Director of Policy & Public Affairs.

1.2 Declarations of interest

The meeting noted no potential conflicts of interest declared in relation to the items on the agenda for discussion.

1.3 Minutes of meeting held 04 July 2024

The Advisory Council unanimously agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2024 as an accurate record of discussions and noted no matters arising.

2. Business

2.1 President update

The Council noted the update from the last Board meeting that has been circulated to members and an update on recent President's activity including:

- The recent visit to Northern Ireland was a positive opportunity to start to re-build relationships and engagement. Whilst the reinitiation of a Northern Ireland Branch is still being reviewed, the LI is still delivering a range of policy work and activities for members in Northern Ireland and those relationships are important.
- Attendance at the 2024 UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiF) which was attended by over 12K delegates. The plan is to attend again next year and to deliver a panel discussion to showcase landscape led approach to projects. Any suggestions from Council on how to access client groups can be forwarded to regulations@landscapeinstitute.org
- Recent meetings with RTPI and other groups on concerns regarding new government planning approach.
- Working with the Policy & Public Affairs team around the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and guidance.
- Attendance at the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) conference and we are currently considering our role with IFLA and how best to engage.
- A reminder that The LI 2024 AGM will be held 7 November and everyone is encouraged to vote and attend if possible.
- The sold out Jellicoe Lecture 2024: Making Places Fit for Living will be taking place on 26 November.
- A College of Fellows event is being planned.
- The impact of work in relation to governance improvements and embedding the New Ways of Working approach are starting to be seen.

2.2 Elections 2025

The Council noted an update from Rowena Lovell (RL) Board Secretary on planning for the 2025 Elections including:

- The updated election policy for 2025

- A reminder of the key roles and responsibilities within this process being:
 - The Advisory Council that oversees the elections and delegates authority to the Appointments and Selection Committee for key elements. This includes ensuring the due diligence is undertaken and all candidates meet the eligibility criteria, and all information supplied has been received and is correct. This process is particularly important where there is only one candidate for a role.
 - The overall accountability of the Board for the delivery of well-run elections and approves changes to any governance processes and documentation.
- A new General Meeting Policy has been published which aims to give clarity and consistency of approach and process for General Meetings
- That the Board has recently approved the following revisions to the Regulations in relation to the elections:
 - All candidates for any role – officer and ordinary members – are to be nominated by at least 3 other Fellow or Chartered Members (Regulation 12).
 - The details of anyone nominating a candidate are to remain confidential and will not to be published (Regulation 13.5.5 (b)).

The aim is to give greater equality and accessibility for anyone putting themselves forward for any role. The revised Regulations and update on Board considerations around these have been shared with the members and are available on the website:

- That the roles and responsibilities of key Officer positions – President, Vice President, Hon Secretary and Hon Treasurer, are to be reviewed, and any proposed revisions will be brought back to the Advisory Council.

2.3 CEO update and discussion

The Council noted an update from CEO, Rob Hughes (RH) and an introduction to the two new Directors Jonathan Ellis and Belinda Gordon including that:

- There is cautious optimism that the difficulties with the P2C platform will be resolved. The service provider has delivered a patch which is currently being tested. There will then be further actions to ensure resilience and stability with the system but continuation with this platform is a short-term solution until the new digital platform is in place.
- A series of regional conferences and meetings are planned over the next year and branch committees will be engaged when the activity is planned within their region.
- The Sector Wide Green Skills Survey report was published in 2022 and we committed to regularly updating this. We are not planning a repeat of the survey will be looking at what evidence we need to support our external influencing and to inform the development of a wider programme to address workforce issues. We are identifying where and how we can collect this evidence in a cost-effective way.

3. Discussion: Strengthening the role of Advisory Council

The Council noted that this session focuses on key pieces of work that are aimed at strengthening the role and relationship with AdCo. The Advisory Council.

3.1 Standing Committees – Next steps

The Council noted a presentation on plans for next steps including that:

- An extensive review was undertaken in 2023 by the Standing Committee Review group and the Education and Membership Committee which proposed splitting the Education & Membership Committee into two separate committees and moving the focus of the current Policy & Communications Committee to one of Policy & Public Affairs.
- The previous review phase was focused on looking at how to ensure consistency of approach to operations, decision making, recruitment and reporting across all committees whilst strengthening relationships. Placing members at the heart of decision making and increasing two- way engagement and ensuring flexibility to respond to changing needs.
- The next steps will be to consult on the final role and responsibilities of the committee and how to implement those changes including:
 - Determining the skills and expertise requirements as the baseline for recruitment of new members
 - The retention of existing membership and their knowledge and expertise
 - Implementing a new ways of working approach to ensure a diversity of views and expertise.
- This work will run in parallel to the ongoing business as usual programme of work and The goal is to have the reframed and quorate Standing Committees in place by end of March 2025.
- The timeline of work for this next step includes the following key points:
 1. Communication to existing committee members
 2. Consultation with all members – via branches and directly
 3. Proposal to the Governance Committee and Board for approval
 4. Recruitment of new members.

Council discussions around these plans focused on two main questions: how do we make participation in these committees attractive to new members and how to encourage a diversity of views and experience. Views from the Council in relation to these key questions outlined below:

Q1 How can we make participation on the committees attractive to recruit new members?

- Committees is an old-fashioned term and modernising that language would help to make engagement more attractive
- Consider how to encourage employers, particularly practice heads, to release employees to undertake the roles or become involved in LI activity. Why should they – what’s in it for them and their employee.
- Once CPD is better recorded/monitored, involvement with LI activity/groups could contribute towards CPD with the added incentive of free access to CPD activity if involved with LI groups.
- Look to directly link LI activity and recordable CPD activity with clear benefits such as access to develop more skills beyond landscape, business, leadership etc
- Welcome people and provide training would encourage participation as would this counting towards CPD. A professional approach to getting people on board – *a one stop shop would be good and could support those that enter at various times throughout the year not just on election etc*
- It’s common for someone to be required to take annual leave in order to attend Council meetings and participate in other LI activity. Lack of engagement of Practice partners makes it difficult to convince them of the benefits and value of involvement. Making them aware of the benefits of staff being involved when communicating to Registered Practices would be really helpful.
- The LI value proposition should be clear that there is direct benefit to the member, practices/employers as well as the LI and even for ‘volunteering’ to be a part of chartership.

- If someone doesn't understand the purpose and value of a group then they can't engage or advocate for doing so. Therefore need to be clear of the purpose and activity of the different groups with details on the website along with details of time and level of commitment required.
- Encouraging more members to interact with branch committees could act as a route towards greater involvement throughout the LI.

Q2 How can we ensure a diversity of views and expertise on the committees in future?

- The work of the EDI forum has been picked up by Jonathan Ellis, but clarification regarding this work would be helpful.
- Local Authority involvement on the GLVIA panel would be really helpful and to be open to some positions may be occupied by non-landscape professionals.
- It has always been a struggle to engage the younger/junior members with the work of the LI and should target students, new graduates, early career professionals specifically.
- As well as formal Standing Committees small, focussed short-term working group would have a clear advantage/benefit and build that engagement by being more attractive to both members and employers.
- Smaller working groups which are very focussed could answer some of the quite complicated questions that the LI is trying to address with much less time required.
- Expert panels, special interest groups could be a positive way forward.
- Some practices utilise their staff involvement with the various LI as a marketing benefit.
- Past groups have fallen down due to lack of staff support but not all groups/meetings require staff support.

Members of the Council are encouraged to forward any further comments to regulations@landscapeinstitute.org

3.2 Branch Review

The Council noted a presentation from Jonathan Ellis on the findings of the recent branch review work and planned next steps including how to strengthen relationships within LI and the Advisory Council.

It was also noted that the branch review is part of the broader conversation about how we can become a truly member centric organisation. We are examining how to promote two-way engagement with branches and how they link to Advisory Council to ensure members views and priorities are at the heart of decision-making processes and advocacy on their behalf

Highlights from the presentation include:

- Examine how to promote two-way engagement with branches and how they link to Advisory Council to ensure members views and priorities are at the heart of decision-making processes and advocacy on their behalf
- The process considered a review of current documentation and the branch handbook; extensive consultation and engagement with branch chairs and a survey as well as face to face meetings in Northern Ireland
- The final report makes 25 recommendations around how to improve branch operations and engagement.

The recommendations focus around four key themes:

- Purpose and function – enhancing events and communications; role in influencing; student representation, ambassadors and careers

- Governance and structure – review of the constitution and terms of reference and strengthening the branch voice
- Operational framework – how to maximise tech to bridge gaps geographical challenges; more flexibility and encourage volunteers
- Communication – development of communication channels; simplify access to data and website presence.

As the background context to next steps, there is a perception that branch committees are rigid and old-fashioned structure and also it is recognised that there are some real challenges for branches around geography and size of their region and a dispersed membership. As a result:

- There needs to be more flexibility in branch structures with simplified and streamlined administrative processes and encourage and recognise member contribution
- Need to consider how to support branch chairs in feeding back to members
- Build on successful networking event in Northern Ireland and in the first instance to establish a working group to bring members together.
- Develop a cross team plan for implementation in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Council discussions highlighted that:

- The branch structure needs clarification - *some branches face more geographical challenges than others and how to address this needs to be considered*
- Over 50% of members never attend events, mainly due to geography, timing and access
- Rather than basing branches on economic regions perhaps look at member clusters, hubs, satellite areas etc
- Retired members may have the time to offer more involvement with LI activity and how to ensure impactful and relevant engagement and incentivize that should be explored
- The next steps should look at the role of Advisory Council representative alongside the branch representative and particularly in respect of representing the views of branch committees.
- Scotland has a very dispersed membership and is a devolved nation so slightly different to other branches. Simplify and streamline the administration would be appreciated. However, it is not just the devolved nations as we are now moving towards more devolved centres within England too which will need to be considered and addressed

3.3 Role of Chair/President

The Council considered current position of a combined Chair and President role and that:

- The ex-officio Trustee positions of the President, Immediate Past President/President Elect, Vice President, Hon Treasurer and Hon Secretary are set out in the By-Laws. This cannot be easily changed and would require a members vote.
- The Regulations set out that the President should chair meetings of the Board which could be amended by the Board.
- The President plays a pivotal role as an external spokesperson, representing the LI and the landscape sector externally.
- The President is also Chair of the Board of Trustees and Chair of the Advisory Council. All of which are voluntary roles and therefore unpaid. The current estimate of time commitment needed in the role description is a minimum of 2 days a week but realistically it can amount to 3 days a week at peak times.
- The payment of a President Stipend is not automatic.

There are challenges with this current arrangement in that:

- As highlighted at the recent joint meeting between the Board and Advisory Council separating the combined role of President/Chair would enable the independence of members voice and representation within LI and the Board as:
 - The skills and focus of the Chair and President are different – the Chair is more inwards focusing and the President outwards.
 - A considerable time commitment is needed to undertake the role which is not realistic for anyone in full time employment.
 - The Council should be the voice of the members and feed into Board decision making but it doesn't currently have an independent voice / representation.
- Current arrangements deter many candidates, act as a barrier and restrict who can put themselves forward. Denying the opportunity for many people.
- Change will not come without risks and there is no easily achievable solution that will solve all the challenges.

Council discussions around this issue highlighted that:

- One option could be for the Advisory Council to elect a Chair from amongst its members or for the Vice President to chair the Board. However, it was noted that the Advisory Council is the members representative, and a strong view that it is the role of the President to chair that.
- The chair of the Board has a governance focus and separating the two roles would align with that of the RTPi and others.
- Previously the Council were not supportive of a change, but this was mainly due to the way it was presented. Presidents give up huge amounts of their time to support and represent the membership and it's important that they are supported to deliver that. The review of the previous programme of LI Ambassadors might be a way to support the President and offer that external representation by harnessing the skills and expertise from within the membership.
- Both roles should ideally be corporate members of the LI.
- Having a different and longer term of office for the Chair could offer more stability to the Board
- If the roles are separated it would need to be clear who represents the LI along with any skills requirements.
- It would be very helpful to clarify the roles and to understand the time commitment for all the roles. It is important that the time commitment doesn't act as a barrier to members standing
- Need to ensure we follow Charity Commission guidance.
- Need to make better use of the expertise of the wider Board and active members rather than relying just on the President

4. Discussion: Corporate Strategy Development

The Council noted a presentation from Belinda Gordon and Neelam Sheemar on current thinking around the LI's new Corporate Strategy and that:

- The aim of this process is to create a flexible strategy that can then be reviewed and refreshed every 2 years to ensure it is fit for purpose in a changing environment and aligns with Business Plans (short to mid-term goals and objectives).
- The plan is to launch a refreshed corporate strategy by the end of June 2025 that will focus on key areas of member retention/growth, education, commercial growth, addressing skills gap, attracting the next generation, climate change and biodiversity, and enhancing the status of the landscape profession.

- The process will also be reviewing and refreshing our brand and include a process of stakeholder mapping to ensure collaborative approach.
- Consultation and evidence gathering to inform the Strategy has been carried out with members and staff, trustees, Advisory Council and branch chairs.

Member Survey results discussion

The Council noted that:

- The final strategy will include a refreshed and updated Vision, Mission and Values to reflect our ambition and plans.
- Climate and Biodiversity will remain a theme running throughout.
- The consultation feedback highlights shows that there is a need to refresh the current vision to be more concise and more ambitious about the world we want to see rather than focussing on the LI.
- The current mission has broader support from the membership and therefore not proposing radical change. However, will be looking to make it shorter and snappier and retain 'people, place and nature' as this has gained positive support including changing the current strap line to 'people, place and nature'
- In considering the current organisation values the survey results showed 'environmentally aware', 'acts with integrity' and 'innovative' as the highest rated. Comments from the Council around this highlighted that:
 - Values should be more externally focused.
 - Perhaps environmentally 'active' rather than just 'aware' which would demonstrate professionalism over and above those other environmentally aware organisations.
 - It is important to keep it simple and be very clear.

The current strategic goals are influence, relevance and inclusive growth. Survey feedback indicates members are broadly supportive although less supportive of inclusive growth. Therefore, whilst the new strategy will look to retain the essence the wording may change, and the supportive text focused on outcomes and impact. Comments from the Council around this highlighted that:

- 'Leading' would be stronger than 'Influence'
- The goals should look to focus on attracting the next generation rather than Inclusive growth and to consider environmental design to attract broad membership.

Climate and Biodiversity update

All engagement with members highlights how essential climate and biodiversity is to their areas of practice. However, discussions noted that:

- Whilst climate and carbon are well thought through and people understand it. Biodiversity is not well thought through and people don't get it and therefore need to focus on this aspect as there is potential for more of a leadership role in this area.
- Would like to see more focus on social value within sustainability element.
- There needs to be an element of 'delight in the landscape' in the strategy - community, public, inspiring and uplifting.

Any additional comments / feedback to be forwarded to [Neelam Sheemar](#).

5. AOB

5.1 Agenda suggestion for future meetings

- The Council requested that a discussion at the next meeting in February around attracting students and promoting the Landscape profession would be very useful.
- Representatives on the Advisory Council are encouraged to put forward any suggestions of items for future meeting agendas to Rowena Lovell at regulations@landscapeinstitute.org

5.2 TGN 06/19 Review

We are committed to undertaking a review of TGN 06/19. Although the implementation of the new Standing Committees is due to be in place by end of March 2025, it is anticipated that the review will be progressed before then to ensure that the new review group can be taken forward as soon as the new standing committee is in place.

6. Meeting Close

There being no further business the meeting was closed.