

# Learning Point 86

## Delivering Better Places in Scotland

### What are Learning Points?

Learning Points share what people have learned from their experience in regeneration – from people working or talking together, or from research into issues and evaluation of what is happening. Learning Points can help people and organisations to improve their practice through identifying what works and what doesn't.

The views described in learning points do not mean that the Scottish Government necessarily support them. They simply reflect what has been debated and what those involved in the event considered useful learning and lessons from their perspectives.

### What is this Learning Point about?

This Learning Point captures the key points from an event held in Edinburgh in January 2011 to launch the 'Delivering Better Places in Scotland' guide.

Scotland's good practice guide and publication of place-making case-studies from the 6 Urban Regeneration Companies in Scotland.

The event introduced the key messages of the guide and featured a keynote address by a speaker from one of the European projects studied in the guide. It also gave practitioners in attendance the opportunity to respond and reflect to the guide's key messages.

### Key messages from the event

#### 1. The Delivering Better Places guide

The publication of [\*Delivering Better Places in Scotland: A guide to learning from broader experience\*](#) is the start of a longer term ongoing process to improve how we deliver places in Scotland. The guide attempts to learn from successful places that have managed to deliver quality and enhance an area's reputation and value. It encourages us to



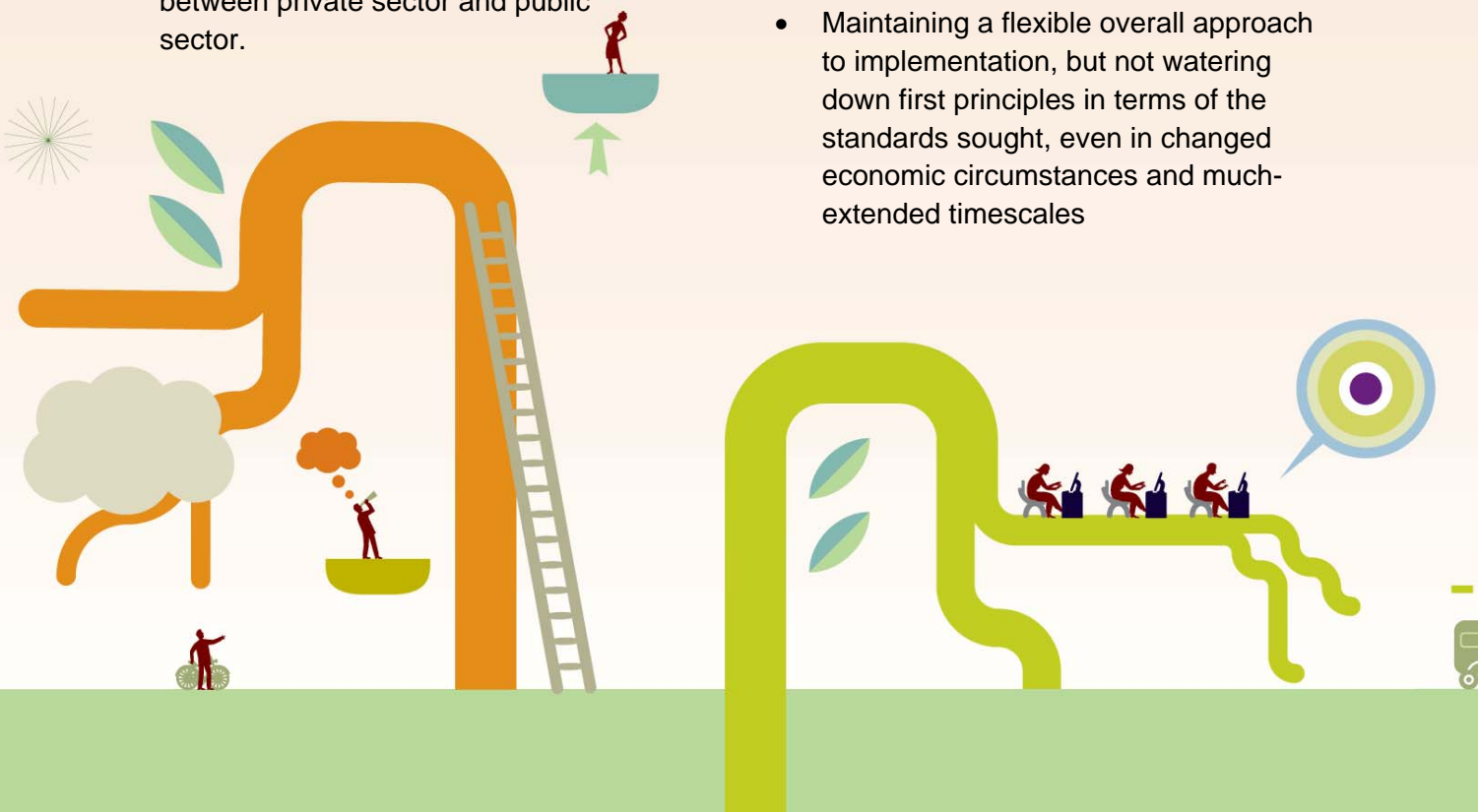
reflect on our current approach and think about what we need to do to improve our performance:

- We must change our focus from product to process – good places arise from getting the place-making process right.
- Strong public sector leadership is essential – place-making must rise up the political agenda and be engaged with properly through action and not merely words.
- In the development process generally too much of the initiative is left to the private sector. The good practice guide argues that greater leadership from the public sector can result in more investor confidence, more innovative responses and more valuable outcomes for both public and private bodies.
- Planning must be re-cast as a collaborative rather than an oppositional activity
- Both risk and reward need to be shared between private sector and public sector.

## 2. Lessons from IJburg

Tineke Van der Pol, Division Manager in the Department of Physical Planning of the City of Amsterdam, gave an inside view of the development of one of the case studies looked at in the guide. [IJburg](#) is a new neighbourhood of 18,000 dwellings on artificial islands to the east of Amsterdam and attributes its successful delivery to a number of key elements

- Strong public sector leadership - initiating and leading the development and delivery aspects of the development such as provision of infrastructure, including land drainage, public transport (a functioning tram from day 1), and the setting and maintaining of strong design standards
- A focus on social sustainability, underlined by excellent communication and long term engagement with environmental and social organisations from early on in the process
- The benefits of creating diversity by freeing up design approaches on individual plots within a strong overall framework of high architectural and urban design standards
- Maintaining a flexible overall approach to implementation, but not watering down first principles in terms of the standards sought, even in changed economic circumstances and much-extended timescales



### 3. Good things are already happening in Scotland

The unique structure of the URCs puts them in an excellent position, in their individual locations, to fulfil the leadership and the 'place-promotion' role called for in the [Delivering Better Places guide](#). In a single organisation, each URC can fulfil the role of owner/developer, project manager and facilitator, securing funding for infrastructure, the creation of new public space, and for new build and restoration. Each URC Board has representatives from the community and in all their work the URCs have a strong commitment to 'genuine community partnership.' While there were specific reasons for the creation of each URC (usually because of pressing needs for housing or economic regeneration) they have proved to be a model that can develop high aspirations and deliver quality.

6 case studies have been published to illustrate the [place-making approach taken by the 6 Urban Regeneration Companies](#) in Scotland. The case studies illustrate the different scales of place and different points in the place-making process.

### How can we build upon good practice in Scotland and learn lessons from elsewhere?

If we are to succeed and improve our place-making performance in Scotland, we must:

- Identify more place-making champions at national and local levels to drive the vision and leadership of the place-making process.
- Better align government strategies and departments whose work relates to the place-making agenda.
- Encourage our politicians to value and become more engaged in place-making.
- Support and develop 'place-makers' over 'plan-makers', ensuring dialogue focuses on real places rather than generic plans.

- Dedicate more time to care and stewardship as core values of place-making.
- Free up the place-making business to enable more creativity and diversity and support more visionary and aspirational leadership.
- Ensure economic and social justice arguments are locked more firmly into the overall arguments for better places.
- Engage communities in better quality place-making in a much more dynamic way that goes beyond simply following the mantra of consultation. Communities of course need to be part of the shared vision.
- Ensure we support our practitioners with the tools, resources and freedom to try more innovative approaches to achieve better quality.
- New structures are required to bring professional disciplines and roles together, sharing both a language and a practice that results in the making of better places.



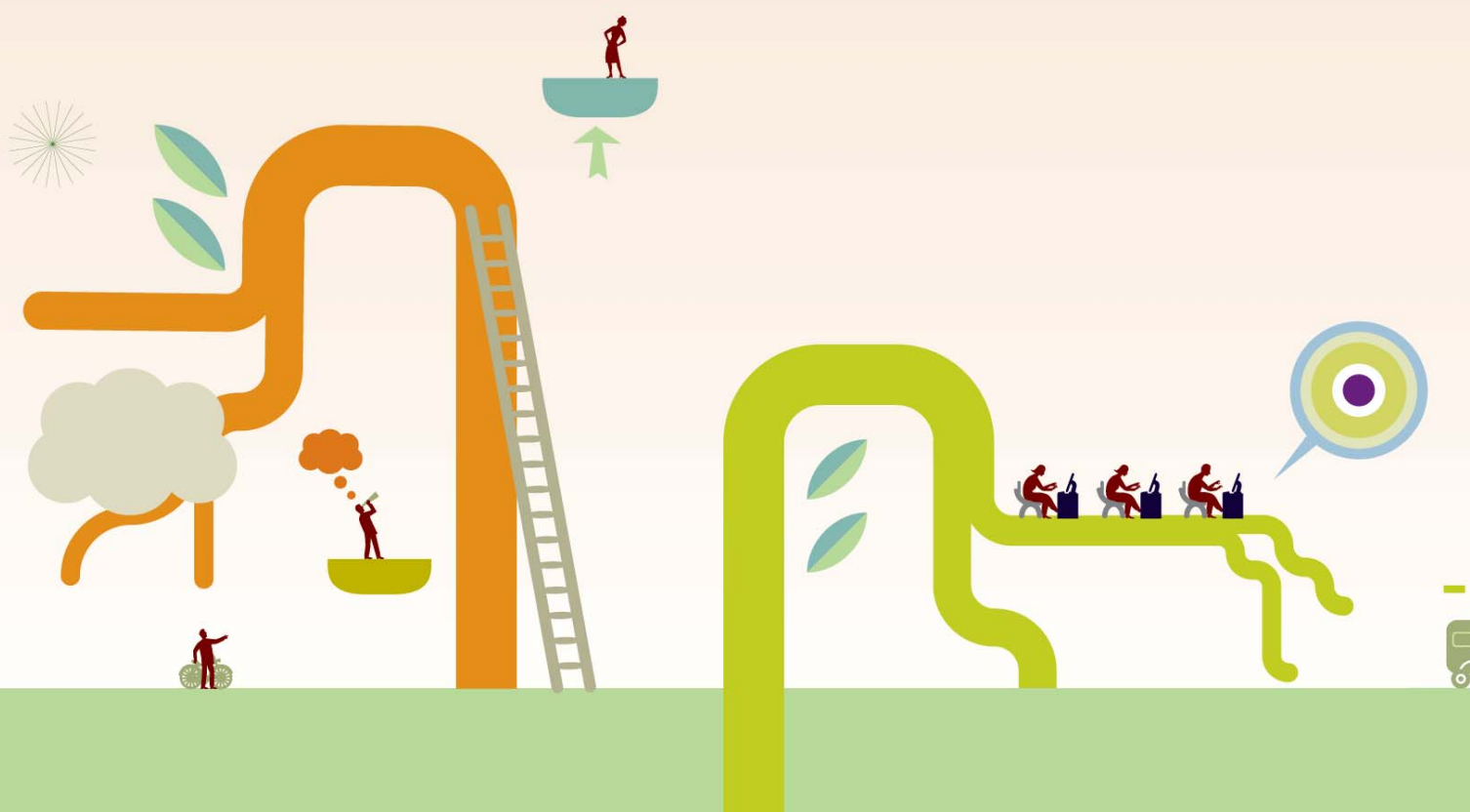
- We are doing some good stuff already and this should not be dismantled but built upon – improving our place-making processes is a long-term business.
- We need to think more about creating better models for stewardship of places – the pro-active after-care of places.
- We must embed in Scotland a ‘regime’ that aims at high standards and maintains that aim.
- We should see place as a public good – the public sector needs to lead the principal development initiative.
- There are skills deficits on the ground in Scotland that need to be addressed. Our institutions need to teach people involved in place-making the skills of place-making (and in particular those of leadership).

## Key conclusions

The good practice guide which was launched at this event is called ‘Delivering Better Places’. The key conclusion from this event was that the talk of ‘place-making’ needs to be unpicked into a practical series of changes that will, over time, translate into the delivery of better places.

Key in making these changes will be –

- A more pro-active public sector who will lead the process, with a firm understanding that place is a public good.
- The creation of new processes which will allow more creative approaches to design, procurement, engagement and stewardship, and create new structures to support collaborative visioning and collaborative implementation of that vision.
- A careful focus on the cultivation of new skills amongst local authority practitioners, particularly at the middle management level where current pressures of time and obligation leave little or no room for developing different approaches and acquiring new skills let alone applying them.
- What is called for, in short, is the development in Scotland of a whole new culture of wanting, delivering and caring for better places.



## What next?

Over time, new case studies are required to illustrate the good work already happening in Scotland. It's also important that links to other related research, publications and practitioners' experience of delivering place-making in Scotland are made available.

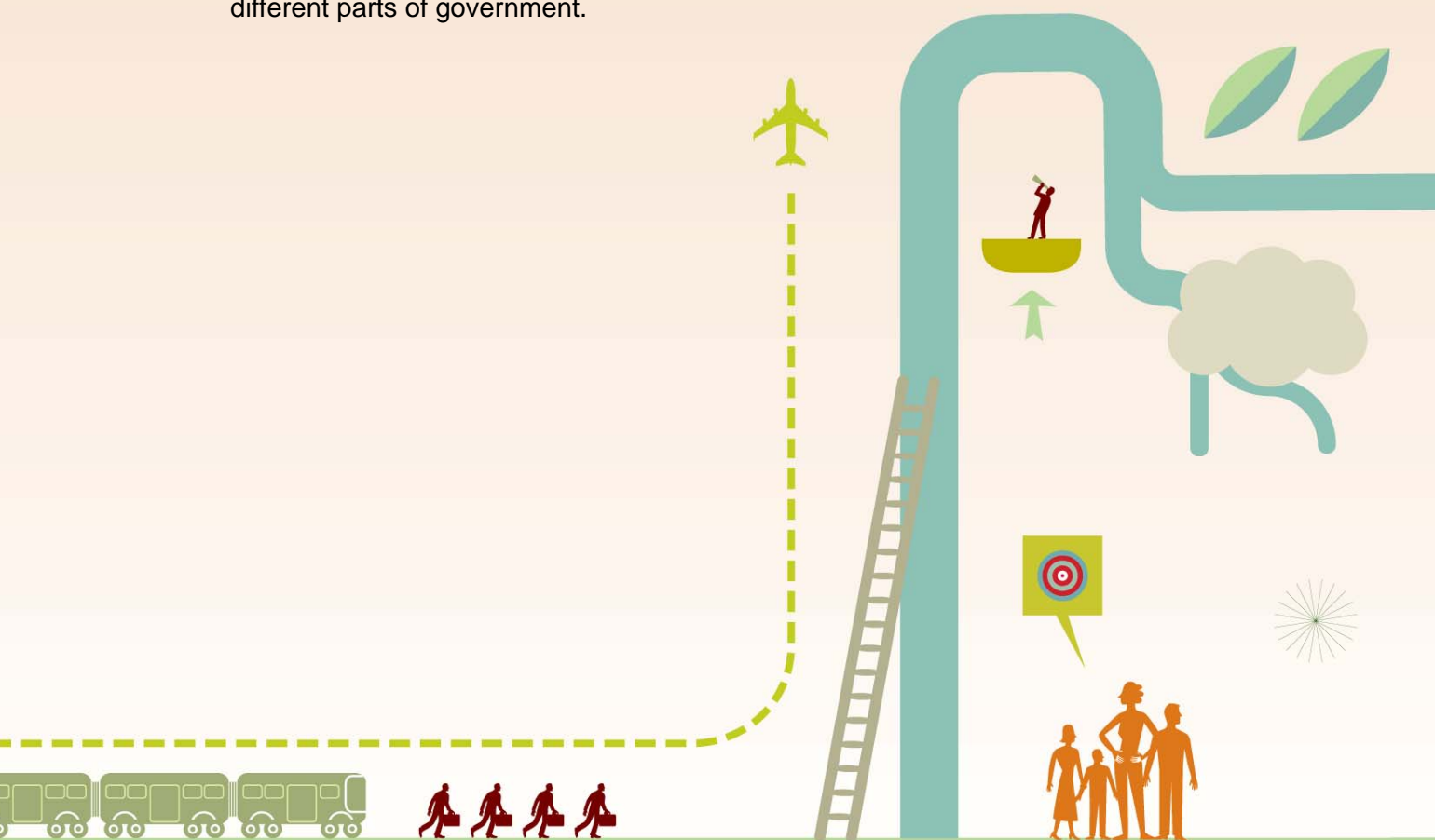
A programme of events to engage with a variety of policy and practitioner interests to share the lessons and discuss their applicability to Scotland will take place throughout 2011 and is likely to include:

- Re-convening a practitioner group to provide further critiques and produce think pieces on specific issues highlighted in the guide.
- Helping different groups draw out lessons for their particular profession or sector.
- Engaging with specific geographic areas and initiatives who are delivering regeneration projects and seeking to create better places.
- Engaging with key Scottish Government colleagues to consider how key messages relate to policy development and delivery across different parts of government.

## Find out more

Download [Delivering Better Places in Scotland: A guide to learning from broader experience](#). A [short summary of the key lessons](#) from the guide is also available.

Download the [Scottish Urban Regeneration Companies \(URCs\) place-making case studies](#) and see different scales of place at different points in the place-making process.



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### Scottish Centre for Regeneration

This document is published by the Scottish Centre for Regeneration, which is part of the Scottish Government. We support our public, private and voluntary sector delivery partners to become more effective at:

- regenerating communities and tackling poverty
- developing more successful town centres and local high streets
- creating and managing mixed and sustainable communities
- making housing more energy efficient
- managing housing more efficiently and effectively

We do this through:

- coordinating learning networks which bring people together to identify the challenges they face and to support them to tackle these through events, networking and capacity building programmes
- identifying and sharing innovation and practice through publishing documents detailing examples of projects and programmes and highlighting lessons learned
- developing partnerships with key players in the housing and regeneration sector to ensure that our activities meet their needs and support their work

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The views expressed in learning points are not necessarily shared by the Scottish Centre for Regeneration or the Scottish Government. **February 2011**