

# **a**rchitecture and the built environment

policies, strategies and actions





Market Place Theatre and Arts Centre, Armagh City (Glenn Howells Architects)

# architecture and the built environment

policies, strategies and actions



- Examining best practice in architecture and design of the built environment;
- exploring the existing situation in Northern Ireland;
- stating why high quality architecture and urban design are important;
- identifying the factors that contribute to good quality design;
- defining policy, objectives and recommendations



Island Arts Centre, Lagan Valley Island, Lisburn (Consarc Design Group) Foreground: Ned Jackson Smyth, The Island and the Elements



## Executive Summary

### Aim

To develop policy, strategies and actions to define the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's role in raising awareness in the quality of architecture and the built environment, and to bring issues of national importance to the attention of government.

### Objectives

- To advocate and campaign actively for the creation of the highest quality contemporary urban design, architecture, landscaping and infrastructure.
- To ensure robust and sensitive conservation of the existing built and natural environment.
- To promote public and political awareness of the social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits of high quality architecture and urban design.
- To generate informed and critical debate and to promote greater interest and public involvement in the design of the built environment.
- To encourage higher quality of rural design.

### Key Actions for the Arts Council of Northern Ireland

#### A RAISE AWARENESS

- Create an Architecture and Public Art Officer post in the Arts Council.
- Lobby media to cover architecture and the built environment.
- Develop education programmes through the Artist in Schools Scheme and in partnership with providers of further and higher education.
- Support Government's efforts to place creativity at the heart of the education system.
- Develop awareness-raising programmes for the public, business, and industry sectors.
- Ensure that quality of design and universal accessibility are key components of procurement processes in capital building projects.
- Encourage the integration of high quality public art into buildings and public spaces.
- Introduce a mandatory *Per Cent for Art* programme for all Arts Council-supported new-build capital projects.
- Support the establishment of an Architecture Centre to serve the whole of Northern Ireland.

#### B PROMOTE CRITICAL DEBATE & COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

- Provide opportunities for critical debate and discussion through seminars and conferences.
- Promote excellence in architectural design through individual and civic awards.
- Work with regeneration and community-based agencies to promote the importance of the social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits of high-quality design and planning.
- Fund programmes of exhibitions, lectures and critical publications.



Bruce Williams and Avril Wilson, Lifespan railings, Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast

## Recommendations to Government

### C RAISE QUALITY

- A policy on architecture and the built environment should be developed and adopted, one which supports high quality design and raises awareness among clients (public and private) and the wider public and through its own procurement processes.
- Such a policy should include strategies to:
  - ensure that projects funded by the public purse achieve the highest design quality;
  - develop skills in urban and rural design;
  - identify and encourage locally-, nationally- and internationally-based talented designers, to work in Northern Ireland;
  - review the planning process to develop planning models that are pro-active, flexible and supportive of high quality contemporary design and sensitive conservation;
  - establish an Urban Environment Task Force for Northern Ireland;
  - establish a 'Quality Watchdog' based on existing European models;
  - put design quality and universal accessibility at the heart of procurement processes;
  - afford the Arts Council an advisory role in all major planning applications;
  - encourage District Councils to adopt the government's policy on architecture and the built environment.



## I Introduction

### **Architecture & the Arts Council of Northern Ireland**

Since the advent of National Lottery Funding in 1994, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland has played a role in enhancing the physical and cultural infrastructure in Northern Ireland.

This document is the result of an extensive process of consultation and review undertaken by the Council under a specially-convened working party of professionals which was set up in 1998 (See Appendix A). Special thanks should be accorded to Mary Kerrigan and Brian Ferran for their contributions to the policy.



Eamon O'Doherty, Swans, Antrim Area Hospital

### **Remit**

The remit of the policy covers urban design, design of the built environment in the countryside, landscape, infrastructure as well as architecture in urban locations. It embraces all aspects of the design of the built environment, from the macro-scale to the finest level of detail, including:

- the nature and quality of the public domain;
- the relationship between buildings, streets, squares, parks, waterways and other public spaces that make up the public domain;
- the design of transport infrastructure such as roads, bridges, canals, etc.;
- the design and detail of buildings for public and private use;
- the detailing of streetscapes and landscapes;
- forward planning (master-planning/urban frameworks) to anticipate future requirements;
- incorporation of art works.

Many of these policy areas cannot be implemented by the Art Council alone, and the policy contains much wider issues for consideration by the Northern Ireland Assembly.



## II The Background

### Northern Ireland Now

A laissez-faire approach to urban design and an emergence of poor quality architecture throughout the western world in the latter half of the 20th century was accompanied over the last three decades by the overwhelming domination of political and economic difficulties in Northern Ireland.

These factors have combined to result in a serious deterioration in the quality of the urban environment and a decreasing distinctiveness in local character. The physical loss of the commercial centres of almost every town and city set the community an enormous task. The need to replace buildings quickly, in a society that was unstable politically and depressed economically, meant that developers were rarely impeded by lower priorities such as quality. Today, design quality is low on the agenda if it is there at all.



### Historical Precedent in Ulster

There is much to be learned from the history of the development of towns and cities in Ulster. Our distinctive settlements have their roots in The Regional Plan for Ulster produced in 1609 as part of the Plantation. The planners of the day had the exciting task of choosing the sites for new communities and determining the character of the Plantation towns. That unmistakable character remains to this day, whether it be in Coleraine, Mountnorris or Lisnaskea.

A particularly good example of a settlement conceived out of an urban design-led approach to the creation of settlements can be found in the walled city of Derry. In 1614, a master plan was drawn up to define streets and a square – the Diamond – for this new walled city. Careful attention to the design created space for key public buildings such as St Columb’s Cathedral and the Bishop’s Palace. The high quality of this urban design was reinforced by the emerging high quality architecture of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries that filled in the preordained footprint of streets. The city’s intact defensive walls are the last remaining in any settlement on the island of Ireland and today many of the buildings around the ‘Diamond’ and within the walls are listed.

Many of the historic core of settlements in Northern Ireland today are of similar quality and are a strong part of our regional distinctiveness: Royal Avenue in Belfast culminates in the monumentalism of the City Hall; the Diamond in Enniskillen provides a space for public congregation directly beside the Town Hall; Armagh’s Market Square provides the framework for a range of distinctive buildings including the acclaimed Market Place Theatre.

But in this new climate change can be effected. By examining models of exemplary development in other countries, learning the lessons of Northern Ireland’s own 17th- and 18th-century settlements and applying them to planning new developments and improving existing areas in the 21st century, much can be done to change the present situation without replicating the past.

“We also appreciate the importance of ensuring that this development is sustainable, in environmental as well as in social and economic terms. A good quality built and natural environment is key to our economy, helping for example to attract investors and visitors as well as being integral to the future of agriculture. It is also of major importance to the personal health of everyone, now and in the future.”<sup>1</sup>



## III The Case for Good Design

### What is good design?

In addition to bringing joy to the beholder and creating something of beauty for present and future generations, good design of public buildings can and should:

- respect and enhance the location, the environment and the community;
- add value and reduce whole-life costs;
- create flexible, durable, sustainable and ecologically sound development;
- minimise waste of materials and energy in construction and use;
- provide functional, efficient, adaptable spaces for home, work and recreation;
- be beautiful and healthy for users and public;
- use space, materials and resources with imagination and efficiency;
- produce buildings which are safer to construct and easier to clean and maintain.

Good design enhances people's lives, transforming how they feel and how they behave. It can

- revitalise neighbourhoods and cities;
- transform derelict sites and neglected buildings, reducing pressure on countryside;
- uplift and bring hope to neglected communities;
- reduce crime, illness and truancy;
- help public services perform better: hospitals, schools, housing, transport.

Moreover, good design in the public sector is both achievable and affordable; it delivers functional buildings and civilised places while retaining a human dimension; it is worth investing in; and it is the key to giving the client maximum value for money through the whole life of a building.

Good design, in short, is a commitment to a better quality of life for all.



### Some revealing research

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions commissioned the Bartlett School of Planning at the University of London to investigate the economic, social and environmental value added by good urban design<sup>2</sup>. The aim was to start, by means of an analysis of selected commercial developments, to provide evidence of whether, and how, good urban design added value in these three areas. It was hoped that by providing evidence to back up what is already known intuitively about the benefits of well-designed spaces and places, both private and public sectors would be encouraged to invest adequately in high-quality urban design.

The research sought to address the following related questions:

- Does better urban design add value and if so how?
- Who benefits?
- How can greater value be released?



### **Better Urban Design: adding economic and social value**

The research suggested that good urban design adds value by increasing the economic viability of development and by delivering social and environmental benefits. It also indicated that the existence of these benefits was increasingly acknowledged across stakeholder groups – by investors, developers, designers, occupiers, public authorities and everyday users.

Better urban design adds social and environmental value

- by creating well connected, inclusive and accessible new places;
- by delivering mixed environments with a broad range of facilities and amenities available to all;
- by delivering development sensitive to its context;
- by enhancing the sense of safety and security within and beyond developments;
- by returning inaccessible or run down areas and amenities to beneficial public use;
- by boosting civic pride and enhancing civic image;
- by creating more energy-efficient and less polluting development;
- by revitalising urban heritage.

Better urban design

- places developments above the competition in their local markets at little cost;
- responds to occupier demand;
- helps deliver increased lettable area (higher densities);
- reduces management, maintenance, energy and security costs;
- contributes to more contented and productive workforces;
- supports the 'life-giving' balanced mixed-use elements in developments (always including housing);
- creates an urban regeneration and place marketing dividend;
- can produce high returns on investments (good rental returns, greater capital values);
- differentiates places and raises their prestige;
- opens up new investment opportunities, raising confidence in development opportunities and attracting grant monies (funding bodies become more demanding on qualitative issues);
- reduces the cost to the public purse of rectifying urban design mistakes.



Grand Opera House, Belfast (Frank Matcham, 1895)

## The Beneficiaries

- Investors: through favourable returns on their investments and through satisfying occupier demand, although the full pay-off may not be immediate.
- Developers: by attracting investors and pre-lets more easily and hence enhancing company image. If they retain a stake in their developments for long enough, they benefit from good returns on their investments.
- Designers: because good urban design is crucially dependent on their input.
- Occupiers: from the better performance, loyalty, health and satisfaction of their employees and from the increased prestige that well-designed developments command with guests and clients.
- Employment: everyday users and society as a whole: from the economic advantages of successful regeneration, including new and retained jobs, and also from access to a better quality environment and an improved range of amenities and facilities.
- Public authorities: by meeting their clear obligation to deliver a well-designed, economically and socially viable environment and often by ripple effects to adjoining areas.



## IV Quality in Procurement & Construction

There is currently a wide variety of different procurement methodologies in use by both the public and private sectors. These range from traditional procurement methods through various forms of management contracts and design and build contracts to the use of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). The choice of procurement route is largely influenced by the characteristics of each particular project and the relative prioritisation allocated by the client to quality, cost, time and risk allocation objectives. Both the public and private sectors will wish to retain the facility to use all of the above procurement methods as circumstances demand.

It is widely accepted that there is a tendency for buildings of a lesser design quality to emerge from design and build forms and latterly from the use of PFI. Recent and current studies endorse this. Whilst there is a much greater chance of realising a building of high design quality when more traditional forms of procurement are used, it is unfortunately not true that this outcome is guaranteed. If it is accepted that good design should not be regarded as an optional extra, it is essential that appropriate mechanisms are introduced into all forms of procurement to optimise the potential for good design to be realised.

The Arts Council recommends that public sector clients and, where appropriate, private sector clients, should incorporate the following elements into the various procurement methods they wish to use.

- The identification of a 'design champion' to advise them and to ensure an appropriate and informed focus is maintained on achieving design quality throughout all stages of the project.
- The establishment by the client at the outset of a project of a clearly articulated vision, including a statement of specific quality objectives.

- The undertaking of appropriate research and other studies to ensure that as comprehensive as possible a brief is prepared for the project.
- The establishment of a budget commensurate with the quality of project.
- The selection of a design team on quality and the establishment of adequate fee arrangements to enable the design process to be properly resourced.
- The involvement of the design champion and key client representatives in the design process, including in-depth dialogue with the design team.
- The allocation of adequate time to facilitate the development of the optimal design solution, particularly during early feasibility and conceptual design stages.
- The use of independent recognised expert assessors to assist the client, particularly those clients with limited experience, in confirming that the proposed design solution meets all of the quality criteria established by the client.
- A clear definition of the quality of all aspects of the design, finishes, fittings, landscaping etc., prior to the signing of construction/PFI contracts.
- The ongoing independent inspection of projects during the construction phase to ensure compliance with the agreed quality standards.



Belfast City

## Design Professionals

The ideas of architects and other design professionals (urban designers, landscape architects and engineers involved, for example, in the design of bridges) become built reality and have great effect. The innovative work of Danish architect Jorn Utzon in conceiving the Sydney Opera House and the role of the talented Dundalk-born engineer, the late Peter Rice, in making it stand up testify to this.

But much work frequently falls far short of its architectural, urban design, landscape and engineering potential. Talented designers of all ages, locations and backgrounds, must be encouraged and supported to enable them to make a full contribution to the built environment. If design is not valued, then regardless of how many talented designers there are, clients will not seek them out.

Designers from elsewhere (architects, landscape architects, urban designers, planners), must be encouraged to work here as well as ensuring that Northern Ireland's own talented designers can travel and work abroad. As a beginning, sites could be identified which could form the basis for one of the European Housing Competitions run annually across Europe to find solutions for innovative approaches to housing.



## V Planning Systems

### Planning Elsewhere

There are as many planning models as there are planning systems around the world. For instance, in Holland every town and city is allocated a 'Quality Team', made up of construction professionals, architects, landscape and urban designers and planners along with a representative of the community and the council. All development control decisions made within the planning system are referred to the Team for approval.

Planning powers in the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain fall under the remit of the local authority. With skilled planning officers, an enlightened council and an experienced chair of the planning sub committee, much can be done to achieve good design. But often, local authorities and planning systems do not have all the skills they need to do an effective job 'in house'. In the 1930s, in what was then the Irish Free State, this was recognised when the National Building Agency was established to advise local authorities that did not have 'in house' architects. It was reconstituted in the 1980s to provide urban design services to those councils. Working from outside a local authority, their proposals were more effectively implemented after an 'in house' architect was employed by the local authority.

It has been noted that "the planning system has increasingly submitted to market forces" with a growing preponderance of edge of town and out of town shopping centres, housing estates, business parks. Existing town centres have been forced to give up their multi-use character and are dominated by retailing or offices.

"Without radical policy intervention there is a very real danger that our urban and rural neighbourhoods will decline further and be undermined – socially, economically, and environmentally – by a combination of deteriorating physical form, social polarisation, environmental degradation, loss of skills and investment and widespread crime."<sup>3</sup>

### Planning for Northern Ireland

Most of our buildings are located in towns or cities. Apart from providing accommodation for their respective uses these structures enclose and define our urban spaces (streets, avenues, squares, lanes, etc.). In so doing, they also determine the characteristics and quality of those spaces.

Good townscape consists of a sequence of spaces of varying characteristics, which provides a variety of urban experiences. To ensure a quality and varied townscape, structured planning that is informed and effective is fundamentally necessary. The quality and characteristics of urban spaces need either to be observed and recorded, in the case of existing good quality examples, and three-dimensionally predetermined where no good context exists.

Building scale, and appropriate relationships to the horizontal dimensions of the respective spaces, are a fundamental requirement in the creation of quality urban spaces, whilst architectural language (emphasis, rhythm, proportion, tactility) will determine visual cohesion and character.

<sup>3</sup> Established by the Labour government to find a way to bring people back into towns, cities and urban neighbourhoods, the Urban Task Force bases urban regeneration on design excellence, social well being and environmental responsibility within a viable economic and legislative framework.

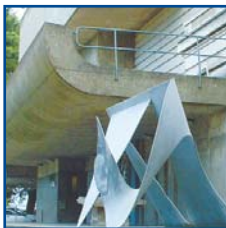


Maurice Harron, Reconciliation, Derry City

Planning authorities (assisted by the necessary design skills) should be required to prepare general urban design guidelines covering the above criteria as part of urban frameworks/master-plans. This will ensure a control of the individual pieces of architecture to be inserted into the townscape and hence the quality of town and also city spaces, and through making reference to such criteria, remove individual planning officer subjectivity from the adjudication of aesthetics. Input from a 'Quality Watchdog' on these guidelines would help to achieve consistency in standards.

These principles may also be applied to building in the countryside.

General Design Guidelines could be prepared, however, informing the architect and planner as to how to observe and respond to any particular rural context. All planning applications in rural areas should be required to address the specific contextual circumstances. Care should be taken when drawing up design guidelines to accommodate the possibility of original, innovative architectural expression and to avoid being over prescriptive. The effective implementation of design guidelines will require strong supporting legislation.



## VI Education

Education plays a vital role in determining the quality of our built environment. An appreciation of architecture and how it can impact on our total well-being will induce a public demand for better buildings and, hence, provide encouragement to those who are responsible for our built environment.

Inclusion in the schools curriculum should be made with regard to this aspect of environmental appreciation. All other environmental issues appear to be addressed accordingly, but not our built environment which, after all, has the potential to satisfy our visual perceptions and soul.

The education and delivery of appropriately-skilled graduate architects is vital in the pursuit of the production of good architecture. The ability to design well is an inherent skill which may be enhanced via education, but generally cannot be taught. A host of other skills are also required by an architect, landscape architect or engineer in the attainment of high quality design. Many of these cannot be identified in the hopeful 18-year-old who is applying for entry to a School of Architecture or Engineering, but are developed over time.

The adoption of an architectural policy will be futile if we do not produce those who can deliver. Determining and monitoring architectural selection and educational systems must therefore form the very fundamental basis of a good architectural and built environment.



## VII Public Art

Since May 1995, when the first Lottery grants were made in Northern Ireland, the Arts Council has allocated £1.6 million to more than 40 art projects, ranging from large-scale urban works to smaller scale community and rural commissions.

### Advocacy and Promotion

Besides providing funding for eligible projects, the Arts Council also has an important role concerning advice, planning and advocacy with regard to public art. To this end, it has organised public art information days and a major conference on public art in 1999, targeted at councillors, arts officers, artists, planners and other interested individuals.



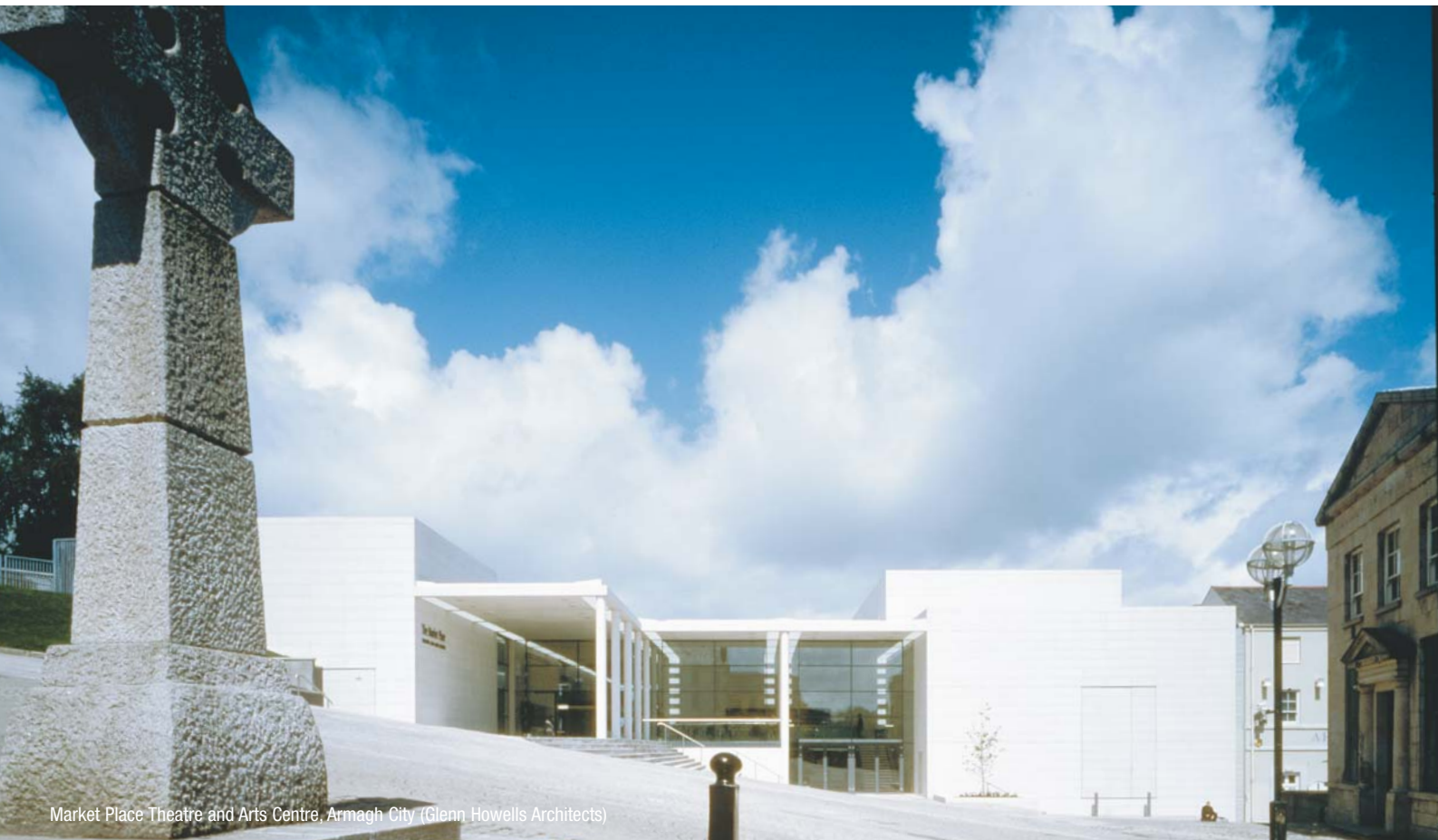
Ecos Centre, Ballymena (WDR & RT Taggart) Foreground: Peter Nelson, Untitled

Though there are many old prejudices to be overcome between artists and architects, the potential for innovative collaborations is great. Of course, as well as contributing to specific buildings, artists can join the planning process at an early stage and work beside other professionals in design teams involved in town and rural planning. It is essential that artists have the freedom to complement and extend the expertise of the other professionals working on such projects, and not necessarily be limited to making artwork according to briefs established before their appointment. This is the ideal that the Arts Council hopes to cultivate in Northern Ireland – an ideal exemplified by the close collaboration between artists and the regeneration spearheaded by development corporations like Laganside.



John Kindness, Bigfish, Belfast

Laganside has an important continuing role to play in the fostering of such creative alliances in their development schemes. Other examples of this collaborative approach are the integrated art works projects at the Royal Group Hospitals, both the Children's and the new general hospital, and the Mater Hospital. Here, creative teams of artists were appointed to work with the architects on developing site specific works appropriate to the hospital buildings, their users and staff. The results are impressive new facilities, with the work of our most imaginative and creative artists (painters, sculptors, photographers, applied artists and printmakers) contributing most effectively to the overall high standard of provision and making more welcoming what is often a highly stressful environment.



Market Place Theatre and Arts Centre, Armagh City (Glenn Howells Architects)



## VIII Disability Access

In Northern Ireland, people with disability represent 19.2 per cent of the population, the highest proportion in the United Kingdom. For many of these people and their friends and relatives, the issue of access to buildings is a real barrier to participation. Access to buildings can be a problem not only to wheelchair users and people with mobility problems, but also to people with a wide range of disability including the sight and hearing impaired.

Universal accessibility makes a building available to everyone, makes economic sense and is at the heart of good design.

The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) is already addressing issues around physical access. The Arts Council is, through a number of measures (including Lottery support to capital projects), involved in the support of best practice in relation to access and we recommend that government adopt a system of rigorous monitoring of projects in relation to access.



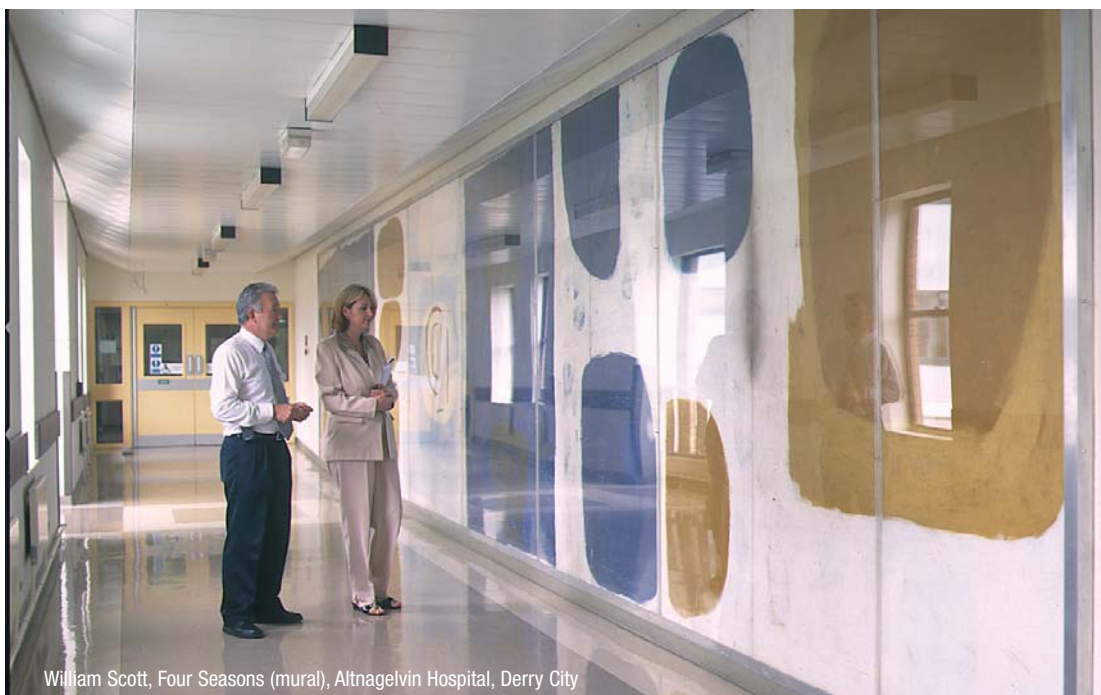
## IX A Model for Politicians

### Political will

As Northern Ireland emerges from conflict, many issues have come to the fore, not least employment and the economy. The case has already been made for the role of a high quality environment in benefiting these. If any significant change in the quality of our built environment is to be achieved, awareness must be raised at a political level, of the benefits of high quality design, and structures and legislation put in place to develop the skills essential for its delivery.

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has put his name to an annual Award for Better Public Building. The Award will be given to a building or infrastructure project constructed using public funds which demonstrates quality of design, high functionality, best value in the broadest sense to the client, users and the community. It will emphasise the government's commitment to raising the standards of public building and investing in new capital projects across the board. The award will form part of the British Construction Industry Awards scheme. It is jointly sponsored by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and the Office of Government Commerce (GC).

"This government is determined," said the Prime Minister, "to show that good design is not just about creating attractive buildings, and environments in which children learn better or patients recover quicker. Good design can also be good for business and good for the environment. This Award will recognise the progress which is being made in the vitally important area of design quality."



William Scott, Four Seasons (mural), Altnagelvin Hospital, Derry City



Waterfront Hall, Belfast (Robinson McIlwaine Architects)



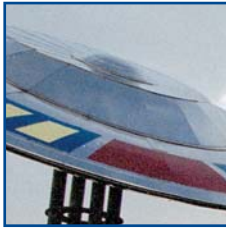
Burnavon Arts and Cultural Centre, Cookstown (McCormick Tracey Mullarkey)



Arthur Armstrong, Play Sculpture



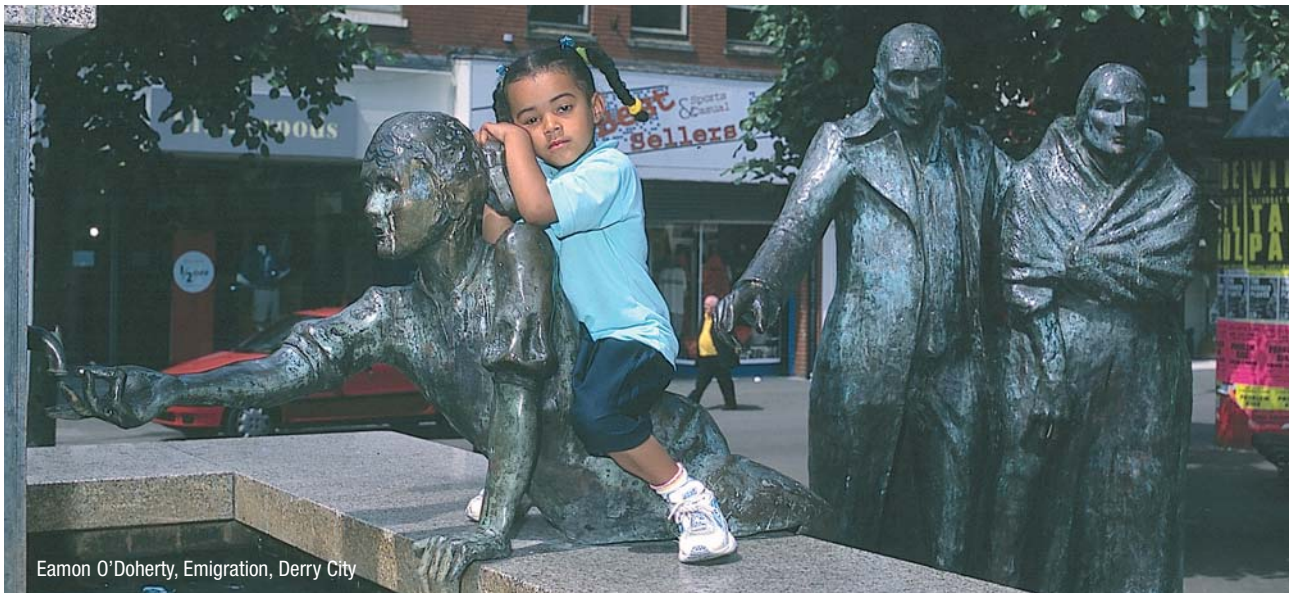
Louise Walsh, Monument to the Unknown Worker, Belfast



## X Policy

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is uniquely placed to act as a catalyst and leader in lobbying government to take a cultural approach to development, to promote the adoption of a multi-departmental architectural policy, to raise awareness of the importance of good building and urban design and to stimulate informed debate on the many and complex issues involved in the creation of good architecture.

It can act as a principal or partner in the design and building process. It can be proactive in creating a favourable architectural climate and by encouraging commercial interests to strive for architectural quality. But this requires not only that we pursue a proactive strategy, but that there is a coherent policy across government departments and on several scales: buildings, cities, landscapes and infrastructure.



Eamon O'Doherty, Emigration, Derry City

### **Mission Statement**

'The Arts Council of Northern Ireland recognises architecture and urban design as art forms in themselves and acknowledges their far-reaching impact on the lives of us all. It is committed to working proactively to raise the quality of urban design, architecture, landscape and infrastructure; to lobby to develop processes and procedures that facilitate high quality design, and to raise public awareness of the need for and benefits of such design.'



## XI Key Actions for the Arts Council

### A RAISE AWARENESS

#### Architecture Officer

- Create the post of Architecture and Public Art Officer. The successful candidate need not be an architect but must have an awareness and appreciation of high quality architecture, urban design, infrastructure and landscape.

#### Education

- Support programmes in primary, secondary and tertiary education to explain the influences on the development of our towns and cities.<sup>4</sup>
- Work with partners in education provision to find new ways of raising awareness and to support the release of creativity across all subject areas.

#### Public Art

- Encourage the integration of high quality public art into buildings and public spaces within the underlying principle that architecture and urban design are already art forms in themselves.
- Introduce a mandatory *Per Cent for Art* programme for Arts Council funded capital projects.

#### Architecture Centre

- Support the establishment of an architecture centre to raise awareness among architects, local politicians, public sector bodies, clients and the general public. A key function of such a centre would be to archive documentation on architecture and urban design and, with IT, make this information available fully accessible to the public across Northern Ireland.



Flowerfield Arts Centre, Coleraine Borough Council (Consarc Design Group)

## **B PROMOTE CRITICAL DEBATE & COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

### **Conferences & Seminars**

- Organise a two-day event, with relevant partner agencies and involving design professionals, to raise the issues and open the debate on housing design.
- Establish a programme of seminars to look at particular urban design and architectural issues. These should involve politicians, the public sector, the private sector, community groups, local design professionals and artists and also talented design professionals from outside the jurisdiction.

### **Individual & Civic Awards**

- Encourage applications for individual awards from architects under the Council's Support for the Individual Artist Programme and consider the establishment of a specific award for individual architects.
- Explore with the Civic Trust the establishment of an award for Northern Ireland.

### **Exhibitions**

- Fund a programme of exhibitions, lectures and publications on architecture, urban design, landscape architecture and infrastructure, aimed at a wide audience.

### **Promote Excellence**

- Make capital grants only to projects with appropriate procedures to select the most talented designers and to procure high quality design.
- Support design competitions.



## **XII Recommendations to Government**

## **C RAISE QUALITY**

- A policy should be developed and adopted on architecture, urban design, landscape and infrastructure, for the following ministries: Culture, Arts & Leisure; Environment; Social Development; Regional Development; Finance & Personnel; Education; Health & Public Safety; Agriculture & Rural Development; Enterprise, Trade & Investment, Employment & Learning.<sup>5</sup>
- Ensure that projects funded by the public purse achieve highest design quality.

<sup>5</sup> It is crucial that Environment, Social Development and Regional Development, in particular, are committed to achieving architectural quality.



## Develop Necessary Skills

- Encourage the development of appropriate professional skills in urban design among planners, architects, landscape architects and other professionals, by establishing a scholarship on training courses in urban design; travel bursaries to enable creative study of exemplary projects abroad; work exchange programmes with cities abroad where exemplary procurement processes are practised.
- Project managers to be trained in an understanding of the design process and the aims and objectives of high-quality design to ensure that they are better able to manage and achieve high-quality design in the end product.
- Seek out and support the most talented designers to enable them to make a full contribution to the built environment.
- Identify and encourage talented designers from elsewhere and Northern Ireland to work here and enable local talented designers to travel and work abroad.
- In partnership with the Royal Society of Ulster Architects, identify regional sites appropriate to the European Housing Competitions (run annually across Europe) for developing innovative approaches to housing.

## Planning

- Develop a flexible planning process to support high quality design.
- Ensure the statutory input of high quality designers in advising on urban design and individual designs as part of the planning process and the Planning Appeals Commission.
- Create, in district councils, the post of city or county architect with a statutory role in the planning process, preparation of development briefs and advising on appropriate procurement methods.<sup>6</sup>
- Involve a broad range of local people in proactive and realistic public consultation processes at early stages in urban planning framework development.

## Urban Task Force for Northern Ireland

- Establish a fixed term, cross-disciplinary 'Built Environment Task Force' to examine in detail all the specific factors affecting the quality of our built environment and to make recommendations for change.

## Quality Watchdog<sup>7</sup>

- Establish a body to carry out the role performed in England by CABE, in Scotland by the Royal Fine Art Commission and in Holland by Quality Teams, taking the current objectives of CABE as a model for its objectives.

This body should have statutory powers to advise on planning decisions, urban design processes and suitable construction procurement methods for public buildings or public-private partnership funded projects; advise the Assembly, local government, and commissioning clients who have an interest in achieving quality; advise on the means of selection of architects/designers, development of briefs, appropriate competition processes and procurement methods supportive of high quality design.

## Local Government

- Assist local authorities develop policies on architecture and the built environment, similar to the Dutch Architecture Lokaal Foundation.<sup>8</sup>

6 Dependent upon a decision to return planning powers to councils.

7 Sub groups could cover the two cities and each local authority area. To overcome the difficulty of local architects appraising projects designed by local architects, membership should include participants from outside the jurisdiction including mainland Europe. Members (urban designers, planners, landscape architects, artists, project managers, architects) should have a proven ability themselves to deliver high quality design.

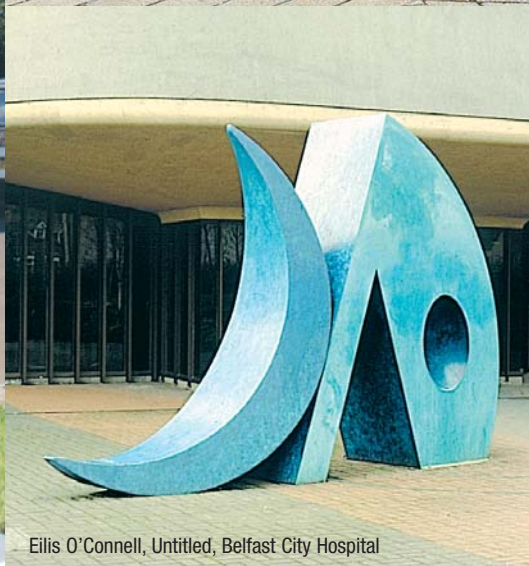
8 Set up in 1993. By 1996, it had greatly exceeded its own optimistic intentions and made an important contribution to addressing and supporting municipal and provincial policies.



Maurice Harron, Wave, Derry City



Brian Connolly, The Healing Tree, Antrim Area Hospital



Ellis O'Connell, Untitled, Belfast City Hospital



John Kindness, Waterfall of Souvenirs, Belfast



Millennium Forum Theatre and Conference Centre, Derry City (HMD Architects)

## Appendix A

### Architecture Working Group Membership

*Chair*

**Brian Ferran** Artist & Former CEO Arts Council of Northern Ireland

*Secretary*

**Mary Kerrigan** Architect, recipient of Sustainable Communities Millennium Award, examining exemplary urban design in Europe

**Kevin Baird** Architect & Heritage Lottery Fund Manager for Northern Ireland

**Ian Campbell** Architect

**Esther Christie** Northern Ireland Housing Executive (Former Member)

**Doug Elliott** Property Developer

**Joe Fitzgerald** Architect

**Alastair Hall** Architect

**Alistair Keys** Architect

**Ciaran Mackel** Architect

**Joan McCoy** Architect

**Lorraine McDowell** Lottery Officer, Arts Council of Northern Ireland

**Aidan McGrath** Architect (Former Member)

**Nóirín McKinney** Creative Arts Director, Arts Council of Northern Ireland

**Barrie Todd** Architect, President, Royal Society of Ulster Architects

**Robin Wylie** Architect, Department of Architecture, Queen's University

Special thanks to John Cole for his specialist input on procurement processes.

## Appendix B

### Architecture and Urban Design Documents

**Scottish Arts Council**

*Architecture Policy and Report of the Architecture Focus Group*

**The Arts Council of Ireland**

*Task Group on Policy for the Promotion of Public Awareness of Architecture*

(Report to the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Advancing the Government's Policy Objectives on Architecture)

**The Scottish Executive**

*The Development of a Policy on Architecture for Scotland*

**Memorandum on Architectural Policy in the Netherlands 1997 - 2000**

*The Architecture of Space* adopted by Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Ministry of Housing, Regional Development and the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Conservation and Fisheries, Ministry of Transport and Public Works

**The Urban Task Force**

*Towards an Urban Renaissance*

**CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment)**

*By Design*

CABE Objectives and Organisational Structure

## Appendix C

### Sample list of Overseas Developments in Urban Design and Architecture

Brindley Place (Birmingham City Council, delivered by Argent Developers, using a team of high quality architects)

Manchester's Exchange Square (Martha Schwartz, landscape architect)

Manchester's footbridge to Salford (Santiago Calatrava)

Liverpool's Concert Square (Urban Splash)

Dublin's Temple Bar (Temple Bar Properties and Group 91 Architects)

Port Area (Athlone National Building Agency)

Rockwood Parade (Sligo National Building Agency)

Bilbao's footbridge (Santiago Calatrava) and underground system (Norman Foster)

Glasgow's Homes for the Future (City of Architecture & Design 1999)

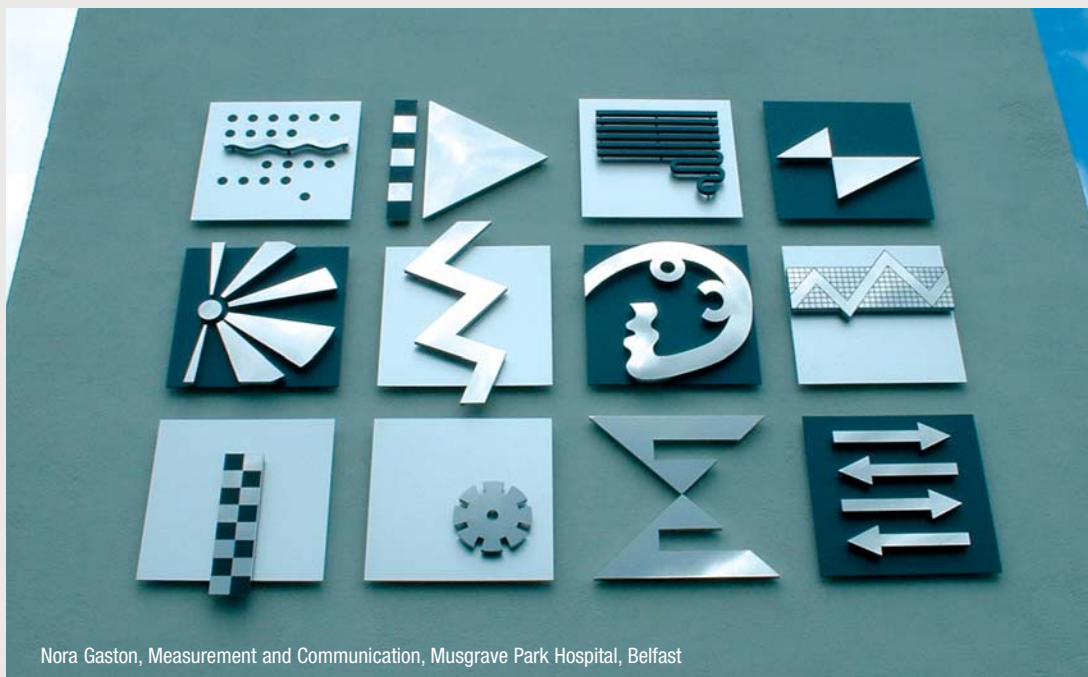
Amsterdam's Eigentijdse Ecologie, Westerpark car-free development eco-housing and community facilities (Kees Christiaanse Architects and Planners, and West 8, Adrian Geuze, landscape architects)

Amsterdam's Java Eiland, KSNM Eiland, Borneo Eiland piers (managed by Zuidelijke IJ-oever)

The Hague's Schilderswijk

Rotterdam's Erasmus Bridge linking the old port to the centre of the city

Campus for the University of East London (Ted Cullinan Architects)



Nora Gaston, Measurement and Communication, Musgrave Park Hospital, Belfast



Armagh City

Front Cover image: Brian Connolly, *Shades of my Father* (detail), Portrush

Images used at section headings:

- p1 - Vivien Burnside, *Dividers*, Belfast
- Locky Morris, *Atlantic Drift*, Derry City
- Niall O'Neill, *Fishing Boat*, Coleraine
- p3 - Ned Jackson Smyth, *Homage to the Lough*, Belcoo Fermanagh
- p5 - Locky Morris, *Atlantic Drift*, Derry City
- p6 - Niall O'Neill, *Fishing Boat*, Coleraine
- p7 - Ned Jackson Smyth, *The Island and the Elements*, Lisburn
- p11 - Detail, *Waterfront Hall*, Belfast
- p13 - Maurice Harron, *Wave*, Derry City
- p15 - Barry Flanagan, *Ulster Museum*, Belfast
- p16 - Vivien Burnside, *Dividers*, Belfast
- p18 - Brian Connolly, *Shades of my Father*, Portrush
- p19 - Deborah Brown, *Sheep on the Road*, *Waterfront Hall*, Belfast
- p21 - Peter Rooney, *Etask*, RVH, Belfast
- p22 - Eilis O'Connell, *Untitled*, Belfast
- p23 - Eamon O'Doherty, *Swans*, Antrim Area Hospital

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- p12 - Belfast City
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- p20 - Waterfront Hall

Northern Ireland Tourist Board:

- p6 - Hillsborough
- p10 - Grand Opera House, Belfast
- p14 - Reconciliation, Derry City
- Inside Back Cover - Armagh City

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