Local Government and Communities Committee

Planning (Scotland) Bill

Submission from Leith Creative

Introduction

1. Leith Creative is a place-based research project co-delivered by Citizen Curator and LeithLate. Leith Creative welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Planning (Scotland) Bill.

2. Leith Creative’s focus is on Question 6 in the call for evidence committee list.

   6. Does the Bill provide more effective avenues for community involvement in the development of plans and decisions that affect their area? Will the proposed Local Place Plans enable communities to influence local development plans and does the Bill ensure adequate financial and technical support for community bodies wishing to develop local place plans? If not, what more needs to be done?

3. Leith Creative believes the answer to the first part of question 6 is YES, that the Bill contains a new avenue for community involvement in plan-making, however, the success of this depends on adequate resources being available to communities, including capacity-building and financial investment. This is the most significant step that can be taken to enable communities to organise, develop and prepare plans. If appropriate support is not available there is a significant risk that take-up will only come from existing stakeholders, or from those who have already have the appropriate time or financial resources, leading to certain perspectives being favoured over others. We also have some concerns around the strength of the influence that Local Place Plans will have on Local Development Plans, however, the answer to the second part is also YES, we support the principle of Local Place Plans and do not see them in conflict. Our recently completed project People and Places: Make Leith Better has strong connections to local place planning as we describe below. Our main concern, however, relates to the estimation of costs concerning Local Place Plans set out in the Bill’s accompanying Financial Memorandum. That concern was communicated in detail to the Scottish Parliament’s Finance and Constitution Committee by the 26 January 2018 deadline.

Background

4. Leith Creative recently completed its People and Places: Make Leith Better project, funded by the Scottish Government Design Charrette Fund and Creative Scotland, with support from the City of Edinburgh Council. It featured a programme of wide-ranging community engagement delivered through both on-line and face-to-face surveying, creative public place-making activities, a series of focussed round-table charrette conversations – structured across our creative hub and community network; and a two-day community conference, all within the EH6/EH7 locality.

5. The primary output was the Leith Blueprint – a map and a report which we
invite the committee to view at;

and

Reasoning

6. In many respects, our project can be compared to the evidence-gathering component of a Local Place Plan although the process is not “fixed” - see the Bill's Policy Memorandum para. 77.

7. The other reason we see a connection between our work and Local Place Plans is that we have been successful in being granted further funds from the Scottish Government's Making Places Initiative 2017-18 announced on 3 January 2018 as follows:

- **Leith - Citizen Curator & Leith Creative - Develop and pilot a People’s Place Plan for Leith, following the successful Leith Blueprint which created a community 'main issues report'**.


“This will provide:

1. Support for communities keen to develop their understanding of place and build their skills and confidence.

2. Grant funding to support communities to participate in and lead design events, such as workshops and charrettes.

3. Support for communities to help deliver ideas produced in previous community engagement processes.

Projects coming forward to access support should be focussed on tackling inequality, and will have a clear impact on combating disadvantage through community-led and place-based working.

The prospectus further explains that:

There will be a particular focus on community design processes that pilot or support potential models to **support the development of local place plans** (**our emphasis**).

**Local Place Planning**

The Community-Led Design fund particularly encourages applications from projects that pilot or support potential models to support the development of
local place plans. The independent review of the planning system (May 2016) recommended that communities are empowered to plan their own place, and that those plans have the potential to form part of the statutory development plan. There is no set format to a local place plan and the Making Places Community-Led Design fund aims to explore the challenges and opportunities arising from the preparation of these community-led plans.”

9. Leith Creative's work can be seen as a positive, although we appreciate not the only way, of approaching local place planning as envisaged by the Bill. We expect our output to be a People's Place Plan.

10. We are also very well aware of the efficiencies and opportunities referred to in the Bill's Policy Memorandum (para. 76) between planning and Community Empowerment (CE) legislation including:

- the potential connections between Local Place Plans and Locality Planning (CE) and
- the connections between Local Development Plans and Local Outcome Improvement Plans (CE)

11. We are working with local partner organisations in those regards. Besides Leith Creative's Leith Blueprint and the Local Development Plan, a number of other components for local place planning are in position in Leith. These include:


12. Given our costs and indeed the central funding provided to Leith Creative so far, our assessment is that the costs of local place planning have been underestimated. While each opportunity may vary in approach or scale, the Make Leith Better project has used considerably more than the monetised cost of £13,000 estimated in the Financial Memorandum for a Local Place Plan. We have also made use of significant practical and in-kind assistance such as local venues, marketing support and, where appropriate, voluntary contributions.

13. Given the connections to local place planning and the Initiative's goal of tackling inequality whilst acknowledging that there is no certainty, it is our view that the success of Local Place Plans is at risk. They will depend on the availability of adequate funding particularly in the most disadvantaged communities. Leith is by no means the most disadvantaged community in Scotland but does exhibit inequalities the Making Places Initiative aims to tackle.
14. A further unintended consequence may be that higher costs could frustrate community buy-in and the front-loaded plan-led system the Bill's proposals are intended to introduce. As a result, we see a significant risk of communities becoming frustrated or actively disengaging from the development process, potentially causing more damage than good.

Summary

15. These comments are provided to give some contextual support to the good progress made from our experiences (albeit at realistic costs) and the all-Scotland position concerning Local Place Plans and the other resources available. It is too early to say, given the stage the Bill is at, whether Leith Creative will be the actual or only community lead on any formal Local Place Plan until the legislation unfolds and other partners collaborate or compete. This could be true of other places in Scotland too.

16. Leith Creative hopes these comments are helpful and agrees to this submission being made public.

We have also sent a hard copy of this letter to the Clerk enclosing the copies of the Blueprint for the Committee's interest.

Yours faithfully,

Duncan Bremner and Morvern Cunningham
Leith Creative