

Argyll and Bute Sustainable Design Awards – Lessons Log

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The 2015/16 Sustainable Design Awards concluded in May with the awards ceremony prior to PPSL. It is considered that the process was a great success providing excellent publicity to the high quality developments that have been occurring in Argyll and Bute. Whilst the awards process was a success there are always lessons that, on reflection, can be learned and taken forward to offer improvement to any future awards process.
- 1.2 This report provides a lessons log following on from the conclusion of the Sustainable Design Awards 2015/16 and discusses a variety of suggestions for improvement and greater input from PPSL Members whilst still retaining a process deliverable within appropriate budget and time constraints.
- 1.3 Suggested improvements include; clarification or potential removal of entry categories, mechanisms for scoring and recording of scoring, and the timing of the process to ensure site visits occur during the summer.
- 1.4 Greater Member involvement is discussed mainly around potential points in the process where more Members than those on any judging panel could be involved in the process.
- 1.5 Finally, the timing of the next awards process is discussed in terms of potentially launching in January 2018 or January 2019.
- 1.6 It is not considered necessary to make any decisions about the format of the next awards process at this stage. This report serves to prompt some discussion and act as a written reflective log that can be used to help formulate the process for the next awards. This can be revisited during 2017 when a report can be brought before PPSL to determine the timing and format of the next awards.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is asked that Members note the contents of the report and are invited to feedback any comments or suggestions for improvement.

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The 2015/16 Sustainable Design Awards concluded in May with the awards ceremony prior to PPSL. It is considered that the process was a great success providing excellent publicity to the high quality developments that have been occurring in Argyll and Bute. Whilst the awards process was a success there are always lessons that, on reflection, can be learned and taken forward to offer improvement to any future awards process.
- 3.2 This report provides a reflective lessons log following on from the conclusion of the Sustainable Design Awards 2015/16 and also discusses a variety of suggestions as to how any future process could provide greater input from PPSL members whilst at the same time retaining a process that is deliverable within appropriate budgetary and timescale constraints. This report will detail the key areas where some difficulties arose and comments as to how they could be improved in the future. Finally, two potential scenarios for the timing of the next awards process are discussed.
- 3.3 The Sustainable Design Awards generally take place approximately every three years therefore it is not considered necessary to make any decisions about the format of the next awards process at this stage. This report serves to prompt some discussion and act as a written reflective log that can be used to help formulate the process for the next awards. This can be revisited during 2017 when a report can be brought before PPSL to determine the timing and format of the next awards.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is asked that Members note the contents of the report and are invited to feedback any comments or suggestions for improvement.

5.0 DETAIL

- 5.1 The first part of this report looks at some of the lessons to take forward before turning to Member involvement and the timings of the next awards.

5.2 **Entry categories:**

Issue 1 – whilst generally clear in what they apply to, some of the entry category definitions can still cause some confusion, such as at what point the re-development of a former/or unused building actually constitutes a new build.

Potential Solution – review the category descriptions to provide clearer guidance and also provide a flow diagram to steer applicants.

Issue 2 – In any future competition there might not be enough suitable entries to create a shortlist within a category

Potential Solution – Remove the category system and simply invite entries from developments. After entries have closed, they can be reviewed and batched into related ‘categories’ at the discretion of the awards coordinator. The process can then be moved forward on the usual basis. One advantage is that it might attract wider entries for developments that don’t neatly fit an existing category and therefore attract more overall entries.

Or,

Remove the category system in favour of assessing all entries against a set entry criteria which will include how the project meets its intended brief. From there, one overall winner would be selected with commendation awards for those considered to be of sufficiently high quality. That way it is possible to compare entries for different types of development against each other as it is which entry best meets its requirements and brief that will decide the overall winner.

This overall problem and these two solutions were discussed with the Chair of Architecture and Design Scotland following the awards ceremony as they had experienced similar issues in other award processes and these types of solution were advocated as suitable, potential methods.

5.3 **Scoring**

Issue 3: The judge’s scoring sheets were provided in one overall spreadsheet which could have been more user friendly.

Potential Solution: Create individual scoring sheets for each entry in a Word document. These can be easily completed either from a print out or electronically. They can then easily be assembled and processed by the coordinating officer.

Issue 4: It was somewhat difficult to compare one judges points score against another as the amount of points awarded is somewhat subjective where one person can award more points even though they both had similar feelings about the entry.

Potential Solution: Provide a scoring guide which will help the judges assign an appropriate score to each criteria and helping ensure that scoring is consistent.

For example:

0-5 – No evidence that entry meets requirements,

5-10 – Limited evidence provided. Entry has not met certain applicable criteria at all

10-15 – Reasonable evidence put forward. Entry is demonstrating it just meets the applicable criteria

15-20 – Good evidence put forward. Entry is showing that it is meeting applicable criteria particularly well

20-25 – Excellent evidence put forward. Entry clearly meeting applicable criteria and even going beyond. Exemplar and innovative solutions.

5.4 **Timing**

Issue 5: The timing of the awards meant that site visits took place over the autumn months. This was less than ideal in terms of weather and travel – in particular the ferries.

Potential Solution – Entry period set so that entries close and shortlisting occurs prior to the end of April. This allows site visits to occur during the summer months when ferries are more frequent and the weather somewhat more reliable.

Issue 6: There needs to be a longer period of entry validation and assembly of entry information for the judges. It is important to allow time to validate each entry to ensure they meet the entry requirements and determine which category they relate to (if using a category system). This part took longer than expected and delayed the site visits further into the Autumn.

Potential Solution – Allow one month for validation/assembly after closing date.

Issue 7 – Allowing the judges enough time to assess each entry and meet to agree shortlist. Due to other commitments judges need adequate time to carry out their assessments of entry forms and then coordinating the shortlist meeting can take time.

Potential Solution – Allow one month for assessment and agree the shortlist meeting date at the start of the process.

Issue 8 – Coordinating the judges and property owners availability for site visits was challenging and caused a significant amount of back office work to make the arrangements. This also stretched out the site visit period over months rather than weeks or days.

Potential Solution – Ensure that judges agree to dedicate the same 2 weeks to carrying out site visits. This should see the majority, if not all the properties, visited in a short time period. The entry forms can also specify this date window

to ensure that property owners are aware.

Taking all this into account the following indicative timetable is suggested. This timetable is based on the same process as the 2015/16 awards. Ideas for greater Member involvement are discussed below and would potentially affect this timetable.

January to March 31st – 3 month entry period

March – 1 month validation and assembly, judges to agree an available date in April for shortlist meeting.

April – 1 month judges assessment and hold shortlist meeting

1st two weeks May – Coordination of site visit program –liaison with site owners and judges

2nd two weeks May – Site visits

June – Judges return site visit notes/scoring and photos to office.

End of June – Judges final meeting once photos and scores/notes have been assembled.

August – Report to PPSL to agree winners

September – Winners notified and preparations made for ceremony

October – Presentation ceremony

5.5 **Greater Member Involvement**

5.6 Some PPSL Members had expressed a desire to have more involvement in the judging process over and above having two nominated members on the judging panel and then being presented with the recommended winners to endorse at the end of the judging process.

5.7 Such considerations revolve around being able to offer more Member involvement balanced around keeping the process to a reasonable timetable and not overburdening the coordinating officer with work which competes with other priorities.

5.8 It was contended at PPSL that presenting recommended winners to Members, although recommendations could have been disputed, was something of a 'fait accompli' given that the judging panel had already taken the process to that stage.

5.9 **All Members on Site Visits**

Increased Member involvement could arise through including all PPSL Members on the site visits and having the final decisions taken at PPSL committee. This would give all members first hand sight of all the shortlisted entries and enable a discussion by all members at PPSL. However, experience has shown that coordinating multiple numbers of people to site can be prohibitively time consuming and expensive especially where they are on the islands. The 2015/16 process saw shortlisted entries on Mull, Tiree and Jura which would have caused significant logistical difficulties to co-ordinate large numbers of people. It was these potential difficulties that lead to the decision to send a maximum of two judges to each site who were then tasked with reporting back

their findings to the panel to enable the final discussion to take place .

5.10 All Members Form Shortlisting Panel

Increased Member involvement could instead arise at the shortlisting stage with all PPSL Members presented with the entry information once the judging panel had scored and discussed the entries. They could propose a shortlist to PPSL where Members could then discuss the proposed shortlist and propose deletion or inclusion accordingly. This would be reasonably achievable as the information could be hosted securely on a Council intranet page meaning it would not mean production of paperwork. It would add at least one extra month to the indicative timetable shown at paragraph 4.4 to allow for an additional stage at PPSL. However to be meaningful and do justice to the efforts of applicants, it would require Members of PPSL to allocate considerable time to digesting all entries in advance of the meeting.

5.11 All Members Form Final Judging Panel (After Shortlisting)

Alternatively increased Member involvement could feature at the end of the process after the judging panel had shortlisted and site visited the properties by having the final panel discussion take place in front of PPSL and then inviting Members to debate and discuss the findings before voting on a winner. This would allow Members to hear the relative merits of each entry and the discussion between the panel Members and then allow a full committee vote on the winner. This would require a dedicated PPSL meeting, potentially lasting a full day.

5.12 Increase the Number of Members on the Judging Panel

The number of Members on the judging panel could be increased to accommodate Members with a particular interest in the process, although to maintain a manageable panel this would likely only be an additional one or two. An advantage would be seen in having additional judges to split the site visits between, although this would need to be balanced against the additional logistical arrangements of a larger panel such as arranging meetings and site visits.

5.13 An additional Member involvement would be Members promoting the awards to the owners, developers or agents of any developments they feel worthy of consideration. This would help spread awareness of the process and extend the reach of the publicity. However, Members would need to maintain an impartiality if the judging process was to continue to be seen to be fair.

5.14 Status Quo

It is felt that given the ongoing budgetary pressures, particularly on travel expenses, and the increasing demands on staff resources which have resulted from recent efficiency savings, the most proportionate, balanced and efficient procedure is similar to that which has been carried out for the 2015/16 awards. However it is important to emphasise that all PPSL Members are invited and encouraged to feed their views into the process and are not obliged to accept the recommendations of the judging panel at the appropriate PPSL Committee.

5.15 **Timing of the next awards**

- 5.16 With regards to the timing of the next awards process, there was a gap of approximately 2 years and 8 months between the 2009 and 2012 awards and approximately 3 years and 4 months between the 2012 and 2015 awards.
- 5.17 It is likely that scheduling of the next awards ceremony will be difficult to achieve without clashing with the increasingly intensive and technical process of producing the Local development Plan which will be well underway at that stage. Careful consideration will need to be taken to manage this, avoiding conflicting work priorities as much as possible, and potentially considering alternative ways to resource the process.

6.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The 2015/16 Sustainable Design Awards was a highly successful process which raised awareness and promoted the high quality design that has been occurring in the area.
- 6.2 On reflection there were some areas of the process that could be improved on in future years. This report serves to discuss and present some ideas to make these improvements.
- 6.3 Several suggestions for greater Member involvement have been discussed and a decision on the appropriate option can be made at a later date.
- 6.4 The next awards process could be timed to start approximately in January 2018 or January 2019 but any final decision should be taken during 2017 once resources in relation to the Development Plan Scheme have been assessed.
- 6.4 It is not considered necessary to make any decisions about the format of the next awards process at this stage. This report serves to prompt some discussion and act as a written reflective log that can be used to help formulate the process for the next awards. This can be revisited during 2017 when a report can be brought before PPSL to determine the timing and format of the next awards taking into account the suggestions discussed here.

7.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

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| 7.1 | Policy | The awards support the implementation of the LDP and SOA |
| 7.2 | Financial | Some of the options would have financial implications particularly for taking all PPSL Committee to all site visits. |
| 7.3 | Legal | None |
| 7.4 | HR | None |

7.5 Equalities None

7.6 Risk None

7.7 Customer Service None

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