

Global Ethical Principles for the Landscape Profession



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In 2018 the Landscape Institute (LI) proposed to the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) World Council, that a new set of global ethical principles for the profession be developed to promote ethical practice across the global landscape professional community.

Landscape architects along with related landscape, parks and place professionals work in the design and management of places spanning the natural and built environment. It is also a profession that uniquely spans both the arts and sciences, with a strong appreciation of people and their culture.

These new global principles combine the intentions and spirit of many current landscape associations' codes of practice. The global principles draw from statements of principle, good practice from other professions and international ethics (International Ethical Standards Coalition (IESC)) standards¹. Both IFLA and LI are supporters of the IESC and their standards.

The aim of these principles is to ensure and promote global ethical practice, both in order to ensure public confidence in the landscape profession and promote environmental protection. Adherence to them is key prerequisite for building trust between clients, the public and landscape professionals, and in trans-national landscape professional relationships.

There are 7 proposed principles which apply to the practice of landscape professionals. They were drafted by the LI working with contributions from IFLA. They will give context to, and provide the framework for, either country or national association specific codes of practice which will be aligned with the principles². Any Codes of Practice will

be monitored (for individual compliance) by local associations and/or relevant regulators. Compliance monitoring of the specific codes of practice will allow individual associations or organisations to understand the level of compliance with the principles for their members in their differing regulatory contexts.

The principles were presented to IFLA association delegates at the 2019 World Council meeting in Oslo in September 2019. At this meeting, delegates from the 77 IFLA member associations supported the further development of the Principles with the intention to adopt the Principles globally at the end of 2020 following consultation.

These principles are the statement of a shared global vision for the protection and enhancement of the environment through ethical landscape practice. They also reference both organisations declarations in regard to the climate and biodiversity emergencies. The principles will be reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Landscape Institute in collaboration and consultation with IFLA. A full review of the principles will be conducted every 5 years.

Your input is now needed

We are seeking landscape architects, related landscape, parks and place professionals and their associations to review the latest version of these 7 ethical principles.

This consultation will open on July 6th running for a period of one month and close on Friday July 31st. Feedback will be reviewed by both LI and IFLA following the consultation with a view to suggesting further changes, if needed, and looking to adopt principles before the end of 2020 to commence implementing from 2021.

¹ <https://ies-coalition.org/standards/>

² The Landscape Institute has developed a revised Code of Practice which updates its 2012 Code of Conduct and is aligned to the 7 global principles. The draft new Code can be viewed at <https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2020/07/Landscape-Institute-Code-of-Practice-consultation-draft-202007.pdf>.



The Principles

PRINCIPLE

1

Landscape professionals promote conservation and enhancement of the environment and quality of life for now and future generations.

Guidance notes:

- i.** This means considering the impact on the environment of the work, such assessment usually to be undertaken *before* work takes place where it is possible to do so. In some cases this will take the form of a full, formal, environmental impact assessment. In other cases the assessment will be less formal and landscape professionals should use their judgement. Such assessment would include considering the impacts on the environment as a whole (both positive and negative). It will also include consideration of measures that could mitigate or remove detrimental impact where this is identified. Questions that such an assessment should ideally answer include:
 - a.** Are there any negative impacts on the environment that would be created by this work? If so, what can be done to remove or mitigate these impacts?
 - b.** Does this project make the lives of people, animals and plant life better?
- ii.** Landscape professionals consider the impact of their work on the cultural and social heritage of place including cultural and social heritage preservation. Landscape professionals should take time to understand the social history of the place where they will be working to understand the impact such work will have. This will in many cases involve engagement with local communities to understand the impact of work on the social and cultural, as well as environmental, heritage of the place.
- iii.** Impact on the environment includes a consideration of the need to reduce carbon emissions and greenhouse gas emissions in line with global targets to keep emissions to 1.5 degrees warming. However landscape professionals should aim to achieve a net zero carbon emission target in relation to their work wherever this is possible.
- iv.** Landscape professionals consider the health and wellbeing of people (physical and mental) and animals affected by their work. Plant health must also be considered. Landscape professionals will need to pay particular regard to the need to enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of those affected by work in a particular place and should seek out expert advice on this where necessary.
- v.** Landscape professionals pay due regard to the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the European Landscape Convention and RIO declaration.
- vi.** This principle covers all aspects of a landscape professional's practice including project planning, procurement of services and goods and evaluation.



The Principles

PRINCIPLE

2

Landscape professionals recognise the issue of climate and biodiversity emergency and practice in a manner consistent with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Guidance notes:

- i. Landscape professionals understand the issues raised by the global climate and biodiversity crisis and how this impacts on their work. They understand that working in the public interest means working to reduce negative impacts on the environment and promoting net gain.
- ii. The UN Sustainable Development Goals³ are a set of objectives aimed at achieving a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. The 17 Goals are all interconnected, and it is hoped that they will be achieved by 2030.
- iii. Sustainable development practices may include, but are not restricted to, the undertaking of full or partial environmental impact assessments in order to understand the impact on the environment of a particular project or task before that work is undertaken. Where potential negative impacts are identified, work is planned and carried out in such a way as to remove or reduce that impact.
- iv. Sustainability principles should be embedded into organisational procurement processes and policies. It is important that those delivering services on behalf of landscape professionals are aware of, and demonstrate, the importance of sustainable practices.
- v. Landscape professionals demonstrate good environmentally responsible practices to colleagues in the delivery of services, in order to promote better working practices to others who may be newer to the profession or undertaking professional development in this area.



Case study: X firm has committed to net zero carbon emissions by 2025. It has made a public commitment to assisting clients to get to net zero by 2030. It does this by offering “critical friend” advice and support to clients and gently challenging unsustainable practices where relevant.

³ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>



The Principles

PRINCIPLE

3

Landscape professionals work collaboratively with and are respectful of others and do not in their provision of landscape services unlawfully discriminate.

Guidance notes:

- i. Landscape professionals know and understand the legal requirements relevant to their place of practice. They act in accordance with the UN Declaration on Human Rights⁴ and where possible act in a way which exceeds the expectations of the Declaration.
- ii. Landscape professionals deliver services in a way that respects the diversity of the communities they serve.

This means being respectful of the cultural and social heritage and community cultures present in the places where services are being delivered. Respect for different cultural identities and traditions is important.
- iii. Landscape professionals actively seek out a diversity of viewpoints in any engagement or consultation relating to their work. This is likely to include a cross section of the affected community is consulted and that representatives of relevant communities are engaged.
- iv. Landscape professionals understand the need for collaboration and partnership working to benefit society. Effective implementation of this principle includes working collaboratively. Landscape professionals will be able to secure the best results by utilising an interdisciplinary approach, co-ordinating with others including government, suppliers and representatives from the local community. Parties to such partnerships established by landscape professionals for the delivery of landscape work will be clear about their responsibilities and the principles to which landscape professionals are working.

⁴ <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>



The Principles

PRINCIPLE

4

Landscape professionals comply with national and international law.

Guidance notes:

- i. It is the responsibility of each individual landscape professional to ensure they are aware of the law and regulations relevant to their role and particular projects. Landscape professionals should be aware that the law is not the same in different jurisdictions and it is therefore important to be aware of any relevant differences.
- ii. Landscape professionals deliver services in a way which go beyond the strict legal requirements in order to deliver a positive impact.
- iii. Landscape professionals should be aware of any obligations on them arising from a relationship with a particular regulated entity/firm or parent company. Where landscape professionals deliver services in other jurisdictions they should also make themselves aware of any relevant legislation and requirements relating to the delivery of landscape services in that jurisdiction.
- iv. Landscape professionals are required to think at all times about the importance of professionalism and service quality. Where a course of behaviour is not proscribed by law (e.g. bribery and corruption law in certain countries) landscape professionals think about how to ensure they protect the reputation of themselves and the profession and seek expert advice on this where this is needed.
- v. In the course of their day to day practice landscape professionals will gather, use and record the data of individuals. Such data is protected in accordance with the relevant law and that the landscape professional has appropriate systems in place for the protection of that data.



The Principles

PRINCIPLE

5

Landscape professionals are committed to continuing professional development and ensure they only provide services they are competent to deliver.

Guidance notes:

- i.** The requirements on individuals in relation to CPD will vary depending on the country. For LI members 25 hours of CPD must be undertaken each year by all Corporate members of the LI. The current requirement (subject to 3-year review) is that at least 5 of the annual 25 hours must relate to climate, sustainability and resilience. The 25 hours should be broken down into at least 10 hours of “formal” CPD and 15 hours of “informal” CPD. For some European countries CPD requirements are set out in EU directives, relevant countries will reflect these in their country specific Code of Practice.
- ii.** Most professional bodies/regulators will require a minimum number of hours to be completed on an annual basis. It is important that these requirements are met in order to ensure that landscape professionals have all the necessary skills and experience to deliver services. Where a landscape professional does not have the competence, knowledge or skills to undertake work, the expectation is that CPD is undertaken until such competence is achieved and work should not be undertaken until such time as competence is achieved.
- iii.** CPD should comprise a mix of formal and informal learning – For example formal CPD may involve participating in formal organised activities, e.g. courses, seminars, workshops, conferences. Informal CPD may involve activities undertaken by the individual on their own such as experiential/ workplace learning, reading and project research. It may also be done with others such as peer review or work shadowing/ secondments.
- iv.** Landscape professionals ensure that a record of all CPD undertaken is kept. This record can be used to demonstrate a commitment to and maintenance of competence. It may also be used to demonstrate compliance with country specific Code of Practice CPD requirements.
- v.** Landscape professionals seek out relevant professional advice where this is needed and never undertake work or provide advice where they are not fully competent to do so.



The Principles

PRINCIPLE

6

Landscape professionals deliver quality landscape services and clients and/or the public are able to provide feedback or raise issues about service.

Guidance notes:

- i.** Landscape professionals promote their services in a truthful and responsible manner. Landscape professionals do not mislead the public, clients or others in the advertisement of their services.
- ii.** Landscape professionals ensure that there are mechanisms in place which can be used by clients to provide feedback or make complaints about the quality of service received. This may include having a complaints policy and process.
- iii.** Those wishing to offer feedback or raise an issue about the services of a landscape professional should be confident that they will be dealt with quickly and effectively.
- iv.** Service complaints should be dealt with at organisational level and where breaches of the relevant Code of Practice are found, these should be reported to the relevant professional body.
- v.** Landscape professionals seek out opportunities for disseminating examples of best practice to colleagues and the wider profession, where possible.
- vi.** Landscape professionals fully engage with organisational training and supervisory processes/systems are in place to support the delivery of high quality services.
- vii.** Landscape professionals should be open to a range of dispute resolution options where this is relevant to the dispute or community/place where the dispute took place. Alternative forms of dispute resolution may be considered, including include mediation, conferencing or community engagement.



The Principles

PRINCIPLE

7

Landscape professionals uphold the integrity of the landscape profession and are honest and transparent in their relationship with their national body/regulator.

Guidance notes:

- i. Landscape professionals understand that professional behaviour is key to the integrity of the profession. Landscape professionals role model the following behaviours (adapted from the UK Nolan Principles):
 - a. Selflessness – Acting in the public interest, aware of the responsibility to protect and enhance the environment balanced against the needs and requests of client/s. Landscape professionals’ primary duty is to the public interest which is paramount in consideration of the impacts posed by a piece of work.
 - b. Integrity – Avoiding placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. Not acting or taking decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. Declaring and resolving any conflicts of interest and relationships.
 - c. Objectivity – Acting and taking decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence, without discrimination or bias.
 - d. Accountability– Being accountable for decisions and actions and submitting themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
 - e. Openness – Making decisions in an open and transparent manner. Not withholding information unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so.
 - f. Honesty– Being truthful.
 - g. Leadership – Actively promoting the above principles and being willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.
- ii. Landscape professionals are encouraged to review their practice against the International Ethics Standards Coalition (IESC) standards to which both the Landscape Institute and International Federation of Landscape Architects is affiliated <https://ies-coalition.org/standards/>.
- iii. Landscape professionals act in the public interest, to which their primary duty of care is owed.



Glossary of Terms

Code of practice: a set of written rules which explains how people working in a particular profession should behave.

Community engagement: a dynamic relational process that facilitates communication, interaction, involvement, and exchange of views between an organisation/entity and a community on a particular subject, issue or project.

Conflict of interest: A conflict of interest can arise where an individual or entity's impartiality may be undermined due to the possibility of a conflict between that person's self-interest and their professional interest or the public interest. A conflict may also occur where an individual or entity's responsibility to another limits that person or entity's ability to discharge its responsibility to a third-party.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD): the ongoing process of professional learning and development of skills undertaken by a professional throughout their career. CPD may be undertaken in a number of ways and is not restricted to attendance at classroom sessions.

Cultural identity: the *identity* or feeling of belonging to a group. It is part of a person's self-conception and self-perception may be related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality or any kind of social group that has its own distinct *culture*.

Cultural heritage: an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values.

Dispute resolution: the process of resolving disputes between two or more parties.

Impact assessment: a structured a process for considering the implications, for people and the environment, of proposed actions while there is still an opportunity to modify (or even, if appropriate, abandon) the proposals. It may be applied at all levels of decision-making, from policies to specific projects.

Interdisciplinary approach: drawing appropriately from several disciplines (or separate branches of learning or fields of expertise) to redefine problems outside of normal boundaries and reach solutions based on an informed understanding of complex situations.

Landscape professional: Landscape professionals work in the design and management of places both within and beyond the built environment. Landscape professionals enhance the quality of specified places through the provision of planning, design, research, and management services. "Landscape professional" includes landscape architects, technicians, scientists, planners and managers. It may also include urban designers, garden designers, place managers, parks managers and academics. It may also include those who give professional advice within the landscape sector.

Mediation: a dynamic, structured, interactive process where an impartial third party assists disputing parties in resolving conflict through the use of specialised communication and negotiation techniques.

Public interest: relating to the welfare well-being of the general public. This would include health or wellbeing of the environment including plants and animals. Public interest also relates to anything which has appeal or relevance to the general population.

Service complaint: a client or clients bringing a problem or issue to the attention of an individual or organisation providing a service, with the expectation of some redress.

Social heritage: culturally learned customs, codes, and rules of behaviour that are constant across generations. Examples include giving gifts on particular occasions or greeting others when one enters a room.

Wellbeing: creating the conditions for people, animals and the environment to thrive. Wellbeing refers to quality of life and prosperity, positive physical and mental health, and is demonstrated in the existence of sustainable thriving communities.



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