



People and places; planning for the future to ensure the well-being of future generations

Jen Heal is an urban designer and planner with a particular interest in placemaking in new and existing town centres and neighbourhoods. She is co-chair of the Design Commission for Wales' national design review service and leads on the Commission's placemaking agenda. Entries for the second Places for Life conference have just opened so Jen is taking this opportunity to explore how we can create better mixed use communities with a sense of place.

Never has the need to think and plan for the future of our places been so relevant. The way we plan, design and build our communities and infrastructure for the future is critical in addressing long-term challenges and ensuring well-being.

Our 2016 conference explored the connection between the places where we live and our health, well-being, relationships, access to work, social life, and impact on the environment. We brought together a multi-disciplinary group of built environment professionals to engage with the subject and challenge the status quo. The discussion was informative, the debate felt challenging and the output was fascinating. It really did get us all thinking about the role of placemaking and the difference that we can make for future generations.

The introduction of Planning Policy Wales 10 and the emerging National Development Framework mean that placemaking is now quite rightly at the heart of planning policy in Wales. There is definitely a greater understanding and acceptance of the relationship between the way we plan and design places and health and wellbeing but as the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales recently wrote in her report, there is much to do to make Wales a better place. The place we want it to be.

Placemaking is such a broad ranging subject, encapsulating small-scale local community action through to large scale strategic planning. I am interested in and inspired by the way that we can design places to positively impact people, help communities thrive and tackle problems such as loneliness, community cohesion, and equality. Important matters for future generations.

Places are for people. Yet people are often not at the centre of the design of places. We need to put people back at the centre – real people with their basic needs, their desires and what we know is best for healthy, happy and sustainable lifestyles.

Recent, acclaimed examples of residential developments in the UK such as Marmalade Lane in Cambridge and Goldsmith Street in Norwich demonstrate what can be achieved with carefully considered home design alongside landscape design and tenant participation. The results are high quality places to live, built at a higher density with an active public realm. But they don't hold all of the answers and we need to look at a range of ideas and approaches that match the range of needs and opportunities in our cities, town and villages in Wales.

That's why we're inviting entries for written reflections and articles to appear in our second Places for Life publication. Anyone with an interest in what makes a great place to live and the difference that where we live makes to health, happiness and wellbeing can submit an abstract.

I'm really hoping that submissions will stimulate and contribute to the debate around good placemaking. There are some great examples of high-quality, well- designed, buildings and places in Wales. Let's celebrate the economic, social, cultural and environmental difference that they make to this great country of ours.

Good placemaking really can make a difference. Good design can make everything better. Putting people at the heart of our thinking about placemaking will make Wales a better place.

Abstracts must be submitted to the Commission by Friday 3rd July 2020. Selected authors will be announced by Friday 17th July 2020. Completed essays should be received by Design Commission for Wales by midday on Friday 7th August 2020. The selection and editorial decision of the Design Commission for Wales is final.

If your article is chosen to be included within the Places for Life II document, you will receive a copy of the publication and be profiled in future Places for Life activities. Please contact Jen Heal, Design Advisor at the Design Commission for Wales if you have any questions and submit your abstract to Jen at the following email address:

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