



16 December 2015



Sandy Robinson, Principal Architect, Scottish Government; Arthur Acheson, Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment (MAG); Carál Ní Chuilín, Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure; Joan Devlin, Chief Executive, Belfast Healthy Cities and Leo Kosonen, former Chief Planner of Kuopio, Finland.

The places we live in shape our lives, our health and our wellbeing.'

That was the message at an event hosted today by Belfast Healthy Cities, the World Health Organization (WHO) body in Northern Ireland. The event included contributions from planning specialists from Finland and Scotland as well as Ministers and planners from Northern Ireland. The seminar drew on European examples to examine how place making can effectively support health and wellbeing.

Among the speakers were Culture Minister Carál Ní Chuilín, Leo Kosonen, former Chief Planner of Kuopio (Finland), Sandy Robinson, Principal Architect of the Scottish Government and Phil Williams, Director of Planning and Place, Belfast City Council.

Minister Carál Ní Chuilín's Department is responsible for the Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment (MAG) and she welcomed the event as an opportunity to share experience and learn from the regions.

"It is important that we share experience and policy ideas. Belfast has much to offer other regions and we can also learn as we continue the regeneration of our city in a way which promoted health, wellbeing and a positive lifestyle. The Ministerial Advisory Group is pleased to support today's

important event and I commend Belfast Healthy Cities for facilitating this important exchange of views and ideas.”

The event was opened by Belfast Healthy Cities’ Chairman Nigel McMahon.

Nigel said,

“The challenge for our planners and other policy makers is to take into account how health and wellbeing is affected by the space in which we live and work. Today’s event is a wonderful opportunity to hear from our own planning specialist in Belfast as well as from Scotland and Kuopio, which is a city which closely resembles Belfast in population and physical size.”

Other speakers include Leo Kosonen, who was the City Planning Manager of the City of Kuopio for 15 years and developed the “Kuopio Model” which has been used as a tool of city planning in Kuopio for twenty years and has influenced planning policy across Finland. The model focuses on promoting vibrant, attractive and liveable city centres that encourage people to live, work and shop in city centres. A key principle of the model is managing traffic flows in a way that allows people to access the city, but prioritises walking and cycling in the city core. Mr. Kosonen has latterly worked as a research fellow of the Finnish Environment Institute and refined the model with academic colleagues in Australia.

Sandy Robinson, Principal Architect, Scottish Government, leads the Architecture branch within the Architecture and Place team at the Scottish Government has responsibility for a range of projects and policy initiatives including the Creating Places policy statement on architecture and place.

The seminar was also addressed by Belfast Deputy Mayor Cllr Guy Spence. Attendees will take part in a series of workshops facilitated by Belfast Healthy Cities, Groundwork, the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) and the Strategic Investment Board.