

May 2020

Climate and biodiversity action plan

The Landscape Institute's commitment to addressing the climate and biodiversity emergencies

**Landscape
Institute**
Inspiring great places

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We all, individually and professionally, have a role to play in addressing this crisis: the LI is here to support you to make a difference. As a start, I would urge every practice, whatever its area of expertise, to build a business plan with the UN SDGs at its heart.

Romy Rawlings, LI Honorary Secretary and Trustee



Local government is at the front-line of climate action, whilst suffering from a shortage of natural environment experts. It's critical to balance development targets without losing sight of biodiversity and climate change — this is why landscape professionals' perspective is so important.

Ciara Hanson, Member of the LI C&B Expert Panel

Foreword



Adam White
President,
Landscape Institute

We are in a climate and biodiversity crisis.

The science is absolutely clear that the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss are happening now. I know many of us are seeing this in our everyday lives. Last year the Landscape Institute took the step of declaring an emergency; we knew as a profession that we had to take action, and fast.

We have under a decade to limit global warming to a maximum of 1.5°C.¹ Anything short of this goal will see worsening droughts, floods and extreme heat, throwing millions worldwide into jeopardy. At home we are already seeing the effects: more than two-fifths of UK species have experienced significant decline in recent decades.²

Landscape professionals are uniquely positioned to tackle this crisis head-on. We are a profession that weaves human and natural systems together. For years we have worked with nature, designed green infrastructure, and enhanced communities, respecting the past while being mindful of the future. The work we have done and will do makes a vital contribution, but we must do more.

We must look at what we are doing as *professionals* and ensure we are the best we can be. This will require resources and training, and better evidence to guide decision making. We must be the champions for sustainability in every scheme we work on, and as a sector we must ensure our voice is heard by governments around the world.

But just as importantly, we as *individuals* need to be prepared to stand up and make a difference. We can each take action in our community and in our own lives: changing how we travel, where we spend our money, what we eat, and more.

The climate and biodiversity emergencies are the challenge of our lifetime and as landscape professionals, we must play a key role in defining the path forward. We have the power to create resilient places and restore natural habitats, and be low carbon when we do so.

We can make a difference. The time to deliver is now.



Daniel Cook
Chief Executive
Officer, Landscape
Institute

Our Royal Charter requires us work for the benefit of people, place and nature. In fulfilling our mission and our public interest duties, the Landscape Institute declared a climate and biodiversity emergency in June 2019 – a first among the UK built and natural environment professional bodies. It was important that this was not just words; but that it represented a commitment to real action for both the LI and the landscape profession.

This is in line with our strategy to build our influence, our relevance, and our inclusivity. We have recognised the need for sustainability in all we do, the need to link to global initiatives like the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the major challenges ahead arising from climate change. In declaring an emergency, we also recognised that we did not have all the answers. A panel of expert members

helped us to shape this plan, and we have also reached out to engage with and learn from other professions. I want to thank the members and experts who have worked with us on creating this important document.

I am proud that, within this plan, you will see measures to help drive real change across our sector. These include plans to upskill the sector, new professional entry requirements, international collaboration on a new ethical framework and code of practice, and commitments to collaborate on policy and advocacy.

We are going to do even more to ensure our members are at the forefront of delivering nature-based solutions. When looking back to this time, we want to be certain that our actions have indeed worked to better safeguard life of all kinds on this planet – not just for now, but for the future too.

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2019. *Global Warming Of 1.5 °C* <<https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>>

² State of Nature Partnership, *State of Nature 2019* (Sept 2019) <https://nbn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/State-of-Nature-2019-UK-full-report.pdf>

To use all means within the scope of the Landscape Institute to respond to the biodiversity and climate emergencies

In June 2019, the Landscape Institute Board declared a climate and biological diversity emergency. In its public statement the LI committed to take real, tangible action. The LI promised to improve member awareness of the actions they can take to tackle and adapt to these twin emergencies, and in particular to demonstrate how it, and the wider built environment professions, can contribute to government commitments to reduce our greenhouse gas (GhG) emissions to zero by 2050.¹

This report describes the overall mission, and four strategic areas of direct action that the LI will undertake to address these issues.

The science has been abundantly clear: action is needed immediately on both climate and biodiversity immediately. In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that in order to keep the rise in global temperatures below 1.5C this century, emissions of carbon dioxide would have to be cut by 45% by 2030.² Just as critically, we must also take action on halting the decline of biological diversity: both as an objective in its own right, and to prevent further ecosystem collapse. In 2019, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) showed that up to one million species could be lost in coming decades,³ more than ever before in human history.

These crises are explicitly linked, and there is a strong interrelationship between climate change, biodiversity loss, and human wellbeing. The landscape sector is at the juncture of these issues, and our response must address the existential threats to all three. Landscape professionals can help mitigate climate change – by reducing their own footprint, by creating places that encourage low-carbon lifestyles, and by building resilience into our environments to help them adapt to already-inevitable climate shifts.

The Landscape Institute has a duty to respond to these threats, and professional bodies like ours

must play their part. In 2019, the Committee on Climate Change called on the LI and other bodies to step up their efforts in helping the UK meet its obligations:

“[We are] challenging the relevant professional bodies (such as the Landscape Institute [...]), to increase their level of engagement with members regarding climate change, and to improve the training, guidance and professional accreditation they offer”⁴

The LI’s aim – set out in its Royal Charter – is “to protect, conserve and enhance the natural and built environment for public benefit, by promoting landscape architecture”. To stay true to this aim for future generations, the LI is acting now to respond to the climate and biodiversity emergencies (hereafter referred to as “the emergencies”).

This will be achieved through a strategy focused upon four pillars, relevant to the LI’s role as a professional body:

- i. **Equipping the profession** to provide solutions to the emergencies
- ii. **Regulating and monitoring** the sector to encourage greater sustainability
- iii. **Advocating** for measures to address the emergencies with governments and industry
- iv. **Leading through our own sustainable business operations.**

These four pillars are described in this report, which sets objectives for us to meet, workstreams to deliver them, and examples of specific actions and commitments we will need over the next three to five years.

We’re today announcing with this report that the **LI will reduce its own corporate carbon footprint to net zero by 2029**, the year of our centenary. Although our footprint is relatively small, we hope that this will act as an inspiration to others to set similar targets and to spur thinking about how we can all make a difference.

¹ As set out in the Climate Change Act 2008 (amended 2019). Some parts of the UK, such as Scotland, have set more ambitious targets.

² *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C (SR15)*, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), October 2018

³ *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), April 2019

⁴ Committee on Climate Change, *Progress in preparing for climate change – 2019 Progress Report to Parliament* (10 July 2019), <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/progress-in-preparing-for-climate-change-2019-progress-report-to-parliament/>



With this plan we're also highlighting significant actions included in our business plan for the 2020-21 financial year. We are working to embed our response to the emergency across all areas of our operations:

- We are leading the development of new draft **Global Ethical Principles for the Landscape Profession** with our global landscape body IFLA, as well as our own new **draft LI Code of Practice** – both of which will explicitly reference sustainability and the climate and biodiversity emergencies for the first time. Both documents will be available for consultation later this year. After adoption, these frameworks will underpin practice for the next five years for landscape architects and related landscape professionals around the world.
- We will introduce from July 1 2020 our **new CPD policy** that requires at least five out of 25 hours of CPD to relate to skills related to climate and biodiversity. We are also currently consulting on **new entry standards** to include similar skills sets for future professionals.
- We will accelerate **new policy development** on issues such as environmental net gain and **new technical guidance** on issues such as embodied carbon and sequestration for hard and soft landscape materials.

- **New LI Award 2020 categories** will include a *Sir David Attenborough Award for Enhancing Biodiversity* and an *Excellence in Tackling Climate Change Award* for the first time. New criteria that include sustainability have been introduced for judging.
- Our new programme of **CPD days and webinars** has increased focus on climate and biodiversity topics for practitioners. This theme will also be a priority for our local branch events programme.

This action plan builds on the work of the profession's leaders and members, the LI employee team, and the expert panel. At the heart of this plan is a commitment to collaborate across industries and provide the support our members need to do high-quality sustainable work.

It is not a static document: the plan and activities will be reviewed regularly along with our usual business planning, to ensure that the LI can continue to respond to the emergency in the most effective way possible.

Finally, this action plan is only deliverable in partnership between the Landscape Institute, the landscape sector, and other stakeholders across the built and natural environment. The final section of this report outlines how you can get involved in helping us make this ambition a reality.



This action plan is of paramount importance. As we go forward towards a regenerative future, natural and ecologically-robust landscapes will have an increasingly vital role to play.

Martin Brown, Member of the LI C&B Expert Panel



The evidence is there, we must embrace the challenge and adapt our practice urgently to its demands. The goal is one we share with our fellow natural and built environment professionals, as well as society as a whole.

Sean Rushton, Member of the LI C&B Expert Panel

Our action plan

Equipping the profession to provide solutions to the emergencies



The LI's expert panel is a great example of how we can tackle these crises with a collaborative and multidisciplinary approach. Knowledge exchange in such an environment is vital.

Dr Anastasia Nikolgianni, Member of the LI Policy Committee and C&B Expert Panel



Action is urgently needed — and we can all contribute. With partners across Northern Europe I'm working on spatial adaptation to heat stress in public open space. This is just one example of how green/blue infrastructure can make a difference.

Dr Debbie Bartlett, Member of the LI C&B Expert Panel



**1
GUIDANCE
AND
TRAINING**

WE WILL... EQUIP THE PROFESSION TO TACKLE THESE EMERGENCIES THROUGH THEIR WORK

This pillar focuses on the Institute’s role as a source of guidance and training. Our role here is to help equip the profession with the tools and resources they need to design, create, plan, manage and promote projects that address the biodiversity and climate emergencies. We provide a hub for advice and knowledge-sharing between members, produce technical guidance and information assets, run training and networking events, and use the combined expertise of our members to inform the practice of other professionals.

Success indicators:

- LI members are **highly skilled experts** on climate and biodiversity issues relating to landscape
- LI members have **access to the training and guidance required** to keep their expertise functional and up-to-date
- LI technical resources and guidance on addressing the emergency are **cited in national policy and practice guidance and by other professional institutes**
- LI is **recognised a leading source of guidance and support for practitioners** internationally on how landscapes can be designed, planned and managed to respond to the emergencies

Objectives We will...	Actions How we can meet this objective
1.1 Embed biodiversity and climate emergency considerations into all our technical guidance and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a skills audit of the landscape sector and profession to identify key areas for improvement • Review all current and future LI guidance and related documentation and develop a programme for guidance across priority themes (see box below) • Collaborate with industry and other professions to jointly produce new guidance
1.2 Deliver training and learning that will enable practitioners to find climate and biodiversity solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have already... been developing a co-ordinated plan of CPD events, including new online events and regular webinars • Work with IFLA and with other national associations to share case studies of best practice from overseas
1.3 Ensure that practitioners can measure the impacts of their work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and/or signpost towards tools to measure the carbon impacts of different design decisions at a landscape scale • Work with partner organisations, suppliers and their supply chain to accelerate clearer information on embodied carbon/sequestration potential for hard and soft landscape materials, and provide sustainable specification guidance for practitioners • Work with others on the development of natural capital accounting methodologies to better evidence the environmental outcomes of our members’ work • We have already... published information and run CPD events on natural capital accounting for landscape
1.4 Develop new partnerships to enable collaboration between academics and LI practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster new partnerships that can deliver collaborative guidance on climate and biodiversity solutions, including creating practitioner and academic joint working groups • Explore practitioner peer review for particular documentation to ensure knowledge outputs are relevant or can be applied in real-life settings

Example areas for development

- **Understand the emergencies as framework.**
 - Landscape resilience
 - Adaptation to climate risks
 - Use of lifecycle and cost-benefit approaches
- **Translate understanding into practice.**
 - Wildlife corridors, rewilding, and habitat connectivity
 - Low-carbon material specification
 - Designing and managing for adaptation
- **Foster skills in collaboration.**
 - Working with ecologists on habitat restoration
 - Working with the planning system on city resilience
 - Working with contractors and your supply chain
- **Measure impact.**
 - Natural Capital Accounting
 - Biodiversity Net Gain
 - Standards, incl. BREEAM, Building with Nature

2 REGULATION AND OVERSIGHT

WE WILL... USE OUR ROLE AS A REGULATOR TO MONITOR AND ENCOURAGE BEST PRACTICE

This pillar focuses on the Institute’s role as a regulator of professional competence. Our role here is to apply ethical and professional standards and duties which ensure that being a LI “Chartered Landscape Architect” or “Chartered Landscape Professional” remains a prestigious, respected and authoritative role; to provide a monitoring and oversight role of the sector, tracking trends and change over time; and to recognise exemplary practice through our LI Awards and Registered Practice scheme.

Success indicators:

- All Landscape Institute members and registered practices **are aware of and understand their** ethical and professional duties and responsibilities in relationship to the emergencies
- LI members **adhere to these** duties and responsibilities throughout their work
- LI members and registered practices set targets for their **carbon emissions and wider sustainability-related impacts**
- The number of climate- and biodiversity- related entries to the **LI Awards increase**

Objectives We will...	Actions How we can meet this objective
<p>2.1 Clarify and set new ethical and professional duties in relation to sustainability, climate and biodiversity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have already... led a project to embed sustainability into new Global Ethical Principles for the international landscape profession, in partnership with IFLA • We have already... drafted a new LI Code of Practice linked to the new global ethical principles • After adoption, implement and develop guidance and resources for members from 2021-22 onwards in adhering to the new Code of Practice in the context of the emergencies
<p>2.2 Revise relevant CPD requirements and qualification pathways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have already... Introduced a minimum standard of 5 hours compulsory CPD for all eligible LI members per annum on sustainability-related topics from 1 July 2020 • We have already... Committed to improve recording and monitoring of the CPD and training members undertake and need through a new online platform • We have already... Published a proposed new LI competency framework that will place climate, resilience and sustainability as new mandatory landscape skills for future LI members, with new skills also related to biodiversity, natural capital, and ecosystems services
<p>2.3 Support employers and LI Registered Practices to operate as low-carbon sustainable businesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have already... Encouraged Registered Practices to declare and commit to action through the Landscape Declares campaign • Promote tools for calculating corporate carbon footprint to all practices within our sector • Develop or signpost towards resources that enable practices to measure and reduce their corporate emissions, comply with new legislation, and to deliver against UNSDGs and other global goals • Encourage better light-touch sustainability reporting in the landscape sector through enhanced regulation of our LI Registered Practices
<p>2.4 Monitor sector progress in sustainable behaviour</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed sustainability metrics into future sector surveys and other industry research to better understand change over time • Incentivise success in carbon measurement or reduction through case studies • Celebrate ambitious/successful Registered Practices, and use them to promote the landscape sector publicly as a leader in sustainability • Work with the landscape and construction sector to establish industry-wide environmental targets and standards, including on carbon reduction
<p>2.5 Award best practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share examples of best practice through our case study library, with a dedicated section for these issues • We have already... Introduced two new LI Award categories from 2020, celebrating best practice in creating connected habitats for biodiversity and mitigating or adapting to climate change • We have already... Embedded environmental criteria across all relevant LI Awards from 2020, ensuring that the “best of” landscape practice is truly sustainable



**3
POLICY
AND
ADVOCACY**

WE WILL... ELEVATE THE VOICE OF LANDSCAPE IN ADVOCATING FOR GLOBAL CHANGE AND PUBLIC POLICY REFORM

This pillar focuses on the Institute’s role as a national advocate for people, place, and nature. Our role is to raise the influence and profile of the landscape sector and celebrate its successes, engage government and decision-makers to shape public policy, to promote the role of our members in addressing national issues, and to build partnerships with professional bodies and other national stakeholders.

Success indicators:

- LI outputs are **referenced in and influence the development of** local and national policy
- The LI is **viewed as a trusted, collaborative, and effectual partner** by other national stakeholders
- The LI is **seen as a key source of thought leadership** on responding to the emergencies by its members
- **Landscape professionals are recognised** as an expert group on responding to climate and biodiversity issues by clients, decision-makers, and other professionals
- Landscape professionals are represented **on key decision-making, leadership and strategic groups related to climate and biodiversity in the UK and beyond**

Objectives We will...	Actions How we can meet this objective
<p>3.1 Develop evidence-based policies for climate and biodiversity outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow our research and evidence base on the linkages between landscape and climate/biodiversity and how to maximise its impact • Encourage and share research by the sector, including promoting the policy impact of work by our academic members and accredited university courses
<p>3.2 Advocate for public policy change and embed the emergency into all our key asks of government</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have already... Begun embedding consideration of the emergency into all LI policy outputs • Continue to promote the climate and biodiversity benefits of urban green infrastructure, including SuDS, and address issues of funding, quality, and management • Collaborate with others on how biodiversity net gain (BNG) can be better realised and expanded into a wider environmental net gain • Push for better national planning policies to address the emergencies, including through design quality frameworks • Advocate for landscape and nature-based solutions as part of a ‘green recovery’ from the COVID-19 pandemic • Better promote our past work on these issues, including revisiting our 2008 climate change position statement
<p>3.3 Increase our engagement and collaboration with others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage proactively with neighbouring professions (e.g. planning, ecology, landscaping, architecture) to co-ordinate and share resources • Grow our relationship with the national agencies and government departments, across all four UK nations • Raise our national profile through international platforms, including engagement with COP and other UN bodies • We have already... been collaborating through the UK Construction Industry Council on a construction climate action plan • We have already... been collaborating with other environmental bodies on climate and biodiversity solutions, for instance through the Environmental Policy Forum
<p>3.4 Ensure that the LI and the sector can present a stronger combined voice on the emergency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an agreed set of language, use of terms, definitions and meanings around these issues • Empower our members to extend their influence on these topics, including locally through our regional branch network • Facilitate discourse and debate within the sector
<p>3.5 Promote our commitment to addressing the emergency with the public</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be bolder in challenging national debates on broader climate and biodiversity issues such as peat-use, agricultural land-use, or afforestation. • Host industry roundtables and webinars with policymakers and thought leaders beyond our sector • Promote our LI Award winners and relevant case studies through national press and social media • We have already... Added our voice to cross-sector initiatives, such as encouraging the education system to give greater focus to the climate emergency and ecological crisis. • We have already... published a special edition of our Journal focussed on climate and biodiversity and committed to allocating space in all future editions

WE WILL... ACT AS A SUSTAINABLE LEADER IN OUR OWN BUSINESS OPERATIONS

This pillar focuses on the Institute’s role as an organisation in its own right. We are a charity operating in the public interest, and our role here is to lead by example in our own business practices, reducing our own carbon footprint, acting in a sustainable way, and ensuring that we are not setting a standard for others that we do not ourselves meet. By taking real actions and starting on this journey to improve, we will share what we learn and encourage others to follow.

Success indicators:

- LI **reduces its own carbon footprint** to net zero by 2029 or sooner
- LI employees **are champions for sustainability** at work and at home
- LI is **recognised as an industry leader** amongst professional bodies in sustainable practice, influencing the behaviour of others
- LI **achieves relevant certifications** for its operations

Objectives We will...	Actions How we can meet this objective
4.1 Reduce our carbon footprint to net-zero by 2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a target to reduce our corporate carbon footprint to net zero by 2029. • Undertake the baseline assessment of the LI’s recent corporate carbon emissions by end 2020-21 • Implement a schedule to reduce carbon footprint from 2021-22 year onwards with year-on-year improvements.
4.2 Change practice across the whole business to reduce carbon emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review all internal processes that we have control over to reduce their associated carbon footprint, including moving more services online where appropriate • Work with – or switch – our suppliers to promote sustainable practices throughout the supply chain • Find new ways of working for our staff and volunteers to reduce unnecessary emissions, including updating our expenses policy • Undertake a sustainable investment review to ensure that all the Institute’s investments, pension funds, and banking services are provided by environmentally and socially responsible and well-governed institutions • We have already... taken a range of steps to start reducing our footprint (see box below)
4.3 Align our business plan to the UN Sustainable Development Goals & more sustainable practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map our business activities against the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and embed these into future forward planning • Further upskill our LI employee team on sustainability issues, including through knowledge sharing with members • Develop broader sustainability reporting for the LI and work towards triple-bottom-line accounting
4.4 Communicate and ensure we are held to account on these commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are now... Promoting this action plan to our members and wider stakeholders as a statement of intent • Report against carbon reduction targets and sustainability publicly in our annual reports from 2022 onwards • Aim for ISO14000 certification to evidence significant improvement • Create sustainability champions amongst our staff and branch volunteers at a local level

Some ways we’re already reducing our own footprint:

- Implemented a sustainable travel policy to reduce travel by staff and members, avoiding flights except where absolutely necessary and offsetting any carbon on those undertaken
- Reduced our travel footprint by reducing the number of in-person meetings, switching to video or teleconference where possible
- Moved to a default plant-based menu for our events, with an ‘opt-in’ for meat (instead of the usual ‘opt-out’)
- Changed the way our Journal is printed and distributed, working to switch to biodegradable wrapping, plant-based inks, and low-carbon recycled paper in future editions
- Increased the sustainable procurement of office items such as stationery and reducing our printing
- Working with our landlord to increase the energy efficiency of our office and reducing our in-office electricity usage

Next steps

This action plan is only the beginning. We will be monitoring progress against these objectives over the coming years and working with the sector to seek new avenues to create change.

This report also represents the areas over which we have direct control as a professional institute. Landscape is by its nature a collaborative discipline; we will have much greater influence working together as a sector and in partnership with other professions.

How you can get involved...

Send us feedback: Is there something we've forgotten? We want to hear your ideas and feedback on the areas set out in this document: whether there are other things you think we could be doing as a professional body, or whether there are better actions we can take to meet these ambitions.

Join a member group: Over the coming months and years, we will be establishing task-and-finish working groups and advisory panels to help us deliver several of the action areas contained in this document – for instance those in 1.1 (pop-out box) and 3.2. If you would like to volunteer to join one of these groups, please let us know.

Send us case studies: We will be researching and promoting practical examples of how our members can make a difference on-the-ground. If you have a case study of good (or even bad) landscape practice – across design, planning, management or science – please share.

Partner with us: Finally, whether you are a Landscape Institute member, another professional, an organisation, policymaker, decision-maker, etc. – if you can help us deliver the ambitions set out in this document, please get in touch.

All enquiries to: climate@landscapeinstitute.org



Not unlike the current challenges we are all facing with the pandemic, on climate action we are all in this together and our individual actions need to start at home, in our practices and our communities. The LI has taken a great step forward in this regard.

Hope Parnham, Member of the LI C&B Expert Panel and President-Elect, CSLA



We are well placed to make a huge difference – at home, in how offices are run, but particularly through project work. For example, we have known for decades that going peat-free is good for nature – we are only now understanding how peatbogs help mitigate climate change.

Claire Wansbury, Member of the LI C&B Expert Panel

Acknowledgements

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To ensure that the Landscape Institute developed a coherent and ambitious set of actions to respond to the emergency, we recruited an advisory panel comprising thirteen members and non-member professionals from related disciplines to provide advice and insight.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks the members of the panel for their time and their valuable insight:

The climate change and biodiversity expert panel

Romy Rawlings DipLA, CMLI (LI Board rep)

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Inspiring great places