

Review of Architecture & Design Scotland

Summary Report

June 2025



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Ministerial Foreword

This year marks 20 years since Architecture and Design Scotland was established as a national champion for good architecture, design, placemaking and planning. Over this period much has changed, and the organisation has accomplished a great deal, helping to embed the benefits of good design across an array of issues and places.

This report sets out the process and recommendations of a review undertaken to ensure Architecture & Design Scotland remains fit for purpose in addressing the opportunities and challenges we face.

Scotland's architecture is a national asset - a defining part of our identity and culture. It is and a central element of the places that shape how we live and a daily influence on our lives. Good architecture and design thrive within a culture that values innovation and harnesses creativity to get the very best out of our resources and investments. I believe that the recommendations in this Review report will place Architecture & Design Scotland in the best position to help create those conditions.

A key theme within the recommendations is the importance of collaboration and partnerships to grow our capacity and increase impact. I want to see these partnerships stretch across Scotland and beyond, advancing and expanding our collective creativity.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Chair, Board, and staff at Architecture & Design Scotland for their positive and collaborative approach throughout the review process. I also want to thank the members of Scotland's architecture and design community, and all those who participated in the review to help shape this important work.

In times of challenge and complexity, creativity is more valuable than ever. Implementing the Review recommendations will help ensure that good design delivers the best outcomes for Scotland and support a vibrant new chapter in our architectural legacy.



Angus Robertson MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Constitution,
External Affairs and Culture

Overview

In February 2024, the Scottish Government began a review process to analyse activities in place to support architecture policy delivery in Scotland. As the key vehicle for the delivery of architecture and place policy, the review principally focussed on the work of the Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) Architecture & Design Scotland (A&DS).

The initial outcomes of this review were shared with A&DS in October 2024 and a further phase of work to interpret and test recommendations with A&DS and with stakeholders was undertaken from late 2024 to early 2025. This report summarises the outcomes of this review and sets out a series of recommendations for reform of the body.

The Review found that A&DS has played an important role in helping to successfully establish the place agenda in the built environment sector in Scotland over the past decade. It established the basis for continuing support of the body, however, the Review found that change is now required in order for A&DS to operate with maximum impact.



Recommendations summary

- › **Sector Development:** A significant element of A&DS resource should be refocussed towards supporting sectoral growth in architecture and design
- › **Centre of Excellence:** A&DS operates as a centre of excellence in architecture and design meaning a greater emphasis on expert support for design priorities and less activity on facilitation and place promotion
- › **Priorities:** A&DS's role to support and promote architecture and design should focus on the discrete priorities of housing, climate and digital. Programmes on health and education buildings should be retained
- › **Strategic activity:** A&DS support for good design processes is focussed on strategic activity rather than local interventions
- › **Income generation:** Income generation via the provision of chargeable A&DS design services should be explored
- › **Short Term Sustainability:** exploration of voluntary severance scheme for A&DS
- › **Nested model:** Develop a 'nested model' for A&DS services within an existing host public body
- › **Strategic partnerships:** A&DS should develop and operate within strategic partnerships in order to increase impact, optimise resources and embed structural collaborations within everyday working practice
- › **National design body model:** Explore the potential for A&DS services to be embedded as part of a dedicated national design body promoting and supporting the design sector in Scotland to drive innovation, knowledge exchange and business development across the creative workforce

1.0 Introduction and Context



Purpose

1.0 Architecture & Design Scotland (A&DS) was established as a non-departmental public body (NDPB) in 2005 and is a national champion for good architecture and design. A&DS works to help deliver Scottish Ministers' policies and objectives for the built and natural environment. This report summarises the process and conclusions of a review of A&DS as the key vehicle for the delivery of architecture and place policy.

1.1 The specific review of A&DS was based on the statement that:

“We expect all public bodies to demonstrate that they remain fit for purpose against the present and future needs of Scotland’s people, places and communities.”

1.2 The decision to undertake a review of A&DS was based on the following considerations:

- **Financial:** A&DS faces significant financial challenges, and the Review intended to inform options for the viability and financial sustainability of the organisation
- **Timing:** The most recent previous review of the performance and functions of A&DS was undertaken in 2009
- **Delivery:** A&DS currently works across a wide range of government objectives and the Review seeks to help identify areas of relevance, skill, and duplication
- **Policy context:** The policy landscape around architecture and design has progressed significantly since the previous review was undertaken alongside changes in the activities and composition of A&DS
- **Technology:** The increasing use of digital technology and data in architecture and design provides opportunity for impactful policy delivery.

1.3 The Review sought to deliver an assessment of:

- whether the NDPB is the best way to deliver services.
- A&DS’ fitness for purpose to deliver the service and what improvements can be made
- what scope there is for greater collaboration with other public sector organisations to build a more effective delivery services for the people of Scotland
- options to support the long-term financial sustainability of the organisation
- the specific future focus of A&DS in order to achieve greatest impact for public resources deployed to support Scottish architecture and design

Roles and Responsibilities

1.4 The Review was led by Scottish Government with regular input and involvement from A&DS. The involvement of an independent review team was not deemed necessary due to the collaborative nature of the work, the relatively light touch nature of the project and the available resources.

Review methodology

Functional Assessment

- 1.5 As part of the Public Service Reform programme, a Rapid Functional Assessment (RFA) tool was developed to review whether existing public bodies are fit for purpose and enabled to deliver outcomes and services effectively. The Review of A&DS involved early piloting of this draft RFA process.
- 1.6 The RFA process was a collaborative and transparent process between A&DS and the SG Review team. The RFA methodology was shared in full with A&DS. Due to the pilot nature of the work and resourcing constraints, the RFA process took place over a longer timeframe than initially envisaged, beginning in February 2024 with the outcomes shared with A&DS in May 2024.

Stakeholder engagement

- 1.7 Following the RFA process, engagement took place with key stakeholders in Scottish architecture, design, and planning sectors as well as via desk top review of related context. Stakeholder engagement was conducted through semi-structured interviews with stakeholders invited to provide general views on the current role, effectiveness, and any other relevant aspects of A&DS.
- 1.8 In addition to individual meetings, a series of roundtables were convened by the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS) to support the review process. These sessions involved engaging with around 80 leading architecture practices from across Scotland, as well as representatives from RIAS.

Sector Analysis

- 1.9 In addition to the functional assessment and stakeholder engagement, analysis of the economic impact and potential of architecture and design was considered. This drew on research and analysis undertaken by the Scottish Government Office of the Chief Economic Advisor (OCEA).

Engagement and implementation

- 1.10 Following development of review recommendations in October 2024, Scottish Government and A&DS collaborated through a series of workshops to explore the implications of the review and potential delivery opportunities.
- 1.11 Further stakeholder engagement then took place in early 2025 through roundtable events supported by the RIAS in order to test the approach with stakeholders and discuss the options and priorities involved in delivering the recommendations.

Functional Assessment summary

Architecture and Design Scotland

- is generally performing well in line with its agreed objectives
- has appropriate and robust governance procedures in place
- engages proactively and positively with SG sponsor team
- has potential to reform its role and activities to increase impact

Potential risks include

- significant and increasing projected budget deficits risking viability
- limited capacity to reduce costs
- too broad a remit and limited resources
- a particular focus on facilitation and place promotion, to the cost of its support for architecture and design
- low visibility with key stakeholder groups
- overlap with sponsor team and other public/ third sector activities
- a need for greater evidence on impact

Key issues

- the provision of a resource delivering technical expertise on architecture and design is important and should be retained
- the low visibility and awareness of A&DS functions amongst key architecture stakeholders is significant and is an indication of a divergence from the original purpose of a body intended to support architecture and design
- greater emphasis on evaluation and more specific metrics/ measurable evidence is required and is likely to strengthen the value and impact of the organisation
- A&DS has a good track record of driving improvement in capital investment projects through embedding design thinking, particularly at briefing stages. This should be developed and capitalised on, linking with related activity across other organisations.
- developments in technology provide good opportunity to increase the impact of design through combination with digital platforms. Consideration should be given to the potential role of digital in implementing reform options
- development of academic relationships may help to transition A&DS towards additional income streams via research funding, as well as developing a more strategic approach to activities of the organisation

Areas for further exploration identified include (but are not limited to):

- identifying potential additional funding sources
- potential structural reform options to deliver budget sustainability and increase impact
- rationalisation of the role and functions of A&DS
- consideration of the ability of A&DS to support economic growth/ sector development
- more direct support for Ministerial priorities, in particular the Housing Emergency and Climate Emergency

Stakeholder engagement

- 1.12 As part of the review process, targeted stakeholder engagement was conducted with a range of organisations and individuals. Discussion with external organisations was undertaken under Chatham House rules with comments unattributed.
- 1.13 Three roundtable events were held in summer 2024, facilitated by the RIAS, with a further three events taking place in early 2025. These events involved engagement with individuals from over 80 leading Scottish architecture practices and the RIAS.
- 1.14 In general, the initial round of engagement reported awareness of the role of A&DS as a public body with a remit to promote good design and stakeholders recorded that they felt there was a continuing role for A&DS. However, there was a low level of awareness of the specific activities of A&DS from stakeholders, in particular from architects. There were differences expressed in what the future role of A&DS should be and what priorities are relevant.

Key issues

- the presence of A&DS illustrates a commitment and ambition for architecture and design at a national level
- the model should be based on the premise that design creates value
- architects are unsure of the role of A&DS and reported there is little visibility of the organisation in the industry, or a detailed understanding of activities
- A&DS have delivered well in previous years to help establish design within public sector building programmes
- as a small organisation, A&DS are spread thinly resulting in difficulties in being able to focus/ communicate impact on a specific type of work
- significant concerns were raised around the reality of construction procurement falling short of the intentions of policy statements.
- architecture is considered as a 'supply chain component' in public sector procurement models – we need to change that
- as a result of Grenfell Inquiry there is a push on ensuring construction competency – ensure the range of skills of architects are recognised in that competency discussion
- there is a role for A&DS in promoting the role of the architect and promotion of Scottish design more generally
- providing support/information for practices who wish to work in Europe and abroad would be welcome
- retrofit- architects have key skills. What is the A&DS role in promoting sustainability
- develop the evidence base and promote investment in design as investment in innovation which can lead to lower project costs and more impactful outcomes
- strategic relationships with other design and culture institutions could deliver benefits for the profession.
- strategic visioning - supporting briefing, client support and creating the framework for good design. This involves more focus on the organisation

performing as a strategic enabler rather than a 'doer' on smaller projects across a broad range of issues

- multi agency collaboration is needed to address systemic challenges
- there is a need for stronger advocacy to highlight the contribution of good architecture and design to innovation, efficiency, and better outcomes

Sector analysis

1.15 Alongside the functional assessment and stakeholder engagement, the strategic context and growth opportunities in architecture and design were taken into account as part of the review. This principally involved consideration of analysis and research undertaken by Scottish Government's Office of the Chief Economic Advisor (OCEA) into economic opportunities in the creative industries.

Architecture statistics¹

- › architecture is the best performing sub-sector of Scottish creative industries looking at combination of GVA and employment growth (2013-19)
- › architecture was the second-largest creative sub-sector by GVA in 2019 (£561.7m)
- › architecture showed strong productivity growth of 3.1% from 2013-2019, well above the creative industry negative average of -1.5% and the Scotland average of 1.9%
- › direct architecture employment in Scotland is circa 10,000 and employment growth from 2013-19 was 9.2%
- › 23% of architecture firms in Scotland have five or more employees, well above the Scottish industry average of 12.3%. Additionally, 6.8% of all architecture firms had over 20 employees, indicating a strong presence of larger established firms within the sector
- › architecture is one of the strongest performing export sub-sectors in the creative industries; the category of 'advertising, market research and architecture' is estimated to account for 14.8% of global creative service exports
- › competition in the sector is driven by creativity and reputation.

¹ Unless otherwise stated, figures are from internal analysis by Scottish Government's Office of the Chief Economic Adviser using the SG growth sector database [Growth sector statistics - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

- › Scottish architecture has a strong community with an active professional body (RIAS) and public sector body (A&DS)
- › the architecture sector requires more business development support and brand building
- › Scottish architecture has good potential to add societal value such as through design improvement input to public projects

1.16 Performance may be even stronger if a broader definition of architecture were used. There are other SIC codes related to architecture. OCEA analysis suggests if they were included, the sub-sector's performance could be higher.

1.17 Data and statistics used for economic analysis and comparison comes from 2019. At the time of the report, this was considered the most reliable recent year as subsequent years' data is less reliable due to the Covid pandemic disproportionately affecting many creative industries.

2.0 Key considerations



- 2.1 The outcomes of the functional assessment and stakeholder feedback indicate that improvements can be made to increase the impact of A&DS through adjusting the activities of the body.
- 2.2 As a small NDPB, A&DS resources are limited and currently spread over a wide range of issues. There are potential benefits in reforming the structure of A&DS to achieve budget sustainability and optimise impact from the allocation of resources.
- 2.3 The conditions around public finances, Ministerial priorities and the shape and composition of built environment and creative industry organisations have evolved significantly since the previous review of the body. The economic analysis has also identified new opportunities for the growth of Scottish architecture and design.

A&DS role

- 2.4 The current aim of A&DS to make ‘the implementation of the Place Principle an everyday reality’ is derived from the policy direction within the Creating Places statement as well as increased focus on place-based working in Scotland. However, this has led to the role of the organisation moving away from architecture and design, resulting in low visibility of A&DS work in some key stakeholder areas. This limits the reach and impact of the organisation and has led to real and/or perceived duplication with the role of other organisations.
- 2.5 Feedback from the architecture profession has been that awareness of current A&DS activity is very low. Priorities for the sector revolve around growing opportunity and supporting the benefits of design within high value sectors, such as construction. The role of design to develop solutions to societal problems was also highlighted as a strong opportunity not fully capitalised on.
- 2.6 Scotland has a high quality and very well-respected architecture profession and there may be benefits in adopting a more strategic approach which more directly supports the development of the architecture profession. A well-functioning and innovative architecture profession is then well placed to deliver economic benefits as well as applying the advantages of good design to a wider range of social and environmental outcomes.

Architecture practice

- 2.7 A compelling case exists to switch A&DS’s focus from promoting good design outcomes in the built environment towards supporting the architecture and design sector more actively.
- 2.8 As part of improving public services, there is good potential to consider A&DS design involvement in public projects to improve efficiency and impact. This involves developing a strong evidence base to help to embed high quality architectural design skills early in the process and throughout.

- 2.9 There is potential for architecture and design skills to develop solutions to social problems by initiatives aimed at addressing societal and environmental issues.
- 2.10 The economic analysis identified good export opportunities for architecture.
- 2.11 Developing networks and partnerships with design bodies in Scotland, the rest of the UK and internationally can help the increase resources A&DS can call on to develop its role. This can be extended to strengthening links with other design sub-sectors where knowledge transfer opportunities exist.

Cultural activity

- 2.12 Alongside supporting the health and impact of Scottish architecture practice, there is an important cultural role played by architecture and this has been acknowledged and supported through previous policy delivery work.
- 2.13 Including consideration of a public programme as part of sector development work may help to identify synergies and opportunities to promote and support architecture as both as a business activity and as cultural activity. In particular, the role of strategic partners and building on complementary activities has potential to maximise resources, activity, and impact.
- 2.14 Scottish architecture has benefited from international promotion, in particular through participation in the Venice architecture Biennale. An independent review² of Scotland's participation at the Venice Biennale was report published in April 2025 and stated that different tactics were needed for art and architecture. Consideration of other international promotion opportunities alongside any potential future participation in the Venice Biennale may help determine the maximum impact for any resources allocated to support this activity.

Centre of excellence

- 2.15 A shift towards supporting sectoral development may be combined with maintaining and strengthening functions on technical design expertise and there are good examples of this operating well in other public bodies. This would likely require a more streamlined and focussed approach around a clearly defined set of priorities. This prioritisation would provide opportunity for A&DS technical design expertise to be presented as a national centre of excellence.
- 2.16 This role may take a variety of forms, such as researching, collating, and publishing cutting edge developments in architecture and design; publishing strategic national guidance documents on design; providing design advisory service for nationally significant building and placemaking projects; coordinating architecture and design related activity across organisations nationally.
- 2.17 The A&DS design review function has been referenced positively by stakeholders and a similar function may support efficiency and good outcomes for major public sector capital investment/ nationally significant projects. Developing A&DS as a centre of excellence has potential to increase the viability of income generation through paid-for design advice services.

² [Scotland + Venice Review](#) (Culture Radar: April 2025)

Income generation

- 2.18 Developing an income generation or cost recovery model would help support budget sustainability and potentially provide A&DS with resources to invest in innovation and development. Comparable models for income generation from other design organisations currently exist and operate successfully. Subsidy control issues would require to be explored in developing any income generation model.
- 2.19 Current constraints around public finances mean that income generation from public sector clients is likely to be challenging - in the short term at least - and there needs to be a clear benefit for service users and a viable client base. Income generation viability may be supported by developing the evidence base on the impact of design approaches based on research and exemplar models.

A&DS structure

- 2.20 The below options for structural reform are indicative only and provided for discussion and potential further exploration. They have not been examined in detail, nor tested for legal viability.

Maintain status quo

- 2.21 This would involve maintaining A&DS as stand-alone, arms-length body in its current form. Budget challenges and a transition to a refreshed role mean that maintaining A&DS in current form is likely to pressurise resources. Identifying additional routes of income generation from external sources within the short term is also unlikely, although this may be achievable over a longer timeframe.
- 2.22 A&DS operated a voluntary severance scheme in late 2024. Further reductions in the size of the organisation would place considerable pressure on its ability to deliver. Without proper consideration of medium to long term structure options, any savings through reducing the size of the organisation risk viability of the body.

In-house delivery of activities within Scottish Government

- 2.23 Fully integrating A&DS within SG core would effectively mean abolishing the public body, with the staff and functions transferred to government. There would be little in immediate savings through this route given A&DS's high level of expenditure on staff costs that would require to be maintained due to non-compulsory redundancy policy. However, bringing A&DS staff into SG may deliver some efficiencies by releasing SG staff to resource other priorities and increasing overall capacity.
- 2.24 In the event of a transfer of the functions of A&DS to Scottish Government, the provision of design advice for individual projects would require careful consideration to avoid prejudicing Ministerial involvement in planning applications.

- 2.25 A move to integrate A&DS within Scottish Government would likely be perceived negatively by stakeholders and could be viewed as a significant removal of support for architecture and design and consequently an erosion of support for the climate agenda and sustainable development.
- 2.26 If A&DS were to be absorbed into core SG, then retaining a distinct design unit with a similar purpose to that of A&DS would go some way to addressing concerns. However, this would likely simply replicate the existing structure and functions with the loss of the advantages of the arms-length, independent operating model.

Merger/ 'nested model' within another publicly funded organisation

- 2.27 This model would involve A&DS either formally merging or developing a new shared governance and corporate structure with another organisation. Nested models can be structured where a distinct area of activity and resource is located within a larger host organisation, which often has a complementary overarching focus or purpose. Nested models operate successfully within other public body structures and provide efficiencies and shared resources whilst preserving distinct and operationally independent activities.
- 2.28 Benefits of adopting a nested model would include:
- retaining a distinct architecture and design body and professional skills within public sector
 - retaining Ministerial oversight and accountability
 - providing operating efficiencies and organisational resilience
 - providing greater flexibility and delivery capacity than through Scottish Government
 - opportunity to capitalise on synergies with other services provided by a host body
 - increased potential to develop income generation/ cost recovery through linking with wider services within the host organisation
 - opportunity to build on successful examples *operating within public bodies*
- 2.29 There are a variety of models for a nested approach from full merger and integration within a host body. The identification of an appropriate host organisation would be dependent on any changes to the role and functions of A&DS and the outcomes of any the wider public service reform agenda.

Merger within a not-for-profit organisation/ academia

- 2.30 Merger with a not-for profit or academic institution may increase the autonomy and independence of the organisation and transfer ongoing budget responsibility away from government to an external organisation. It may also deliver benefits in terms of cross-fertilisation of ideas and approaches not common to public sector working. It would, however, reduce the ability of government to directly influence the operations and functions. It would also alter the accountability of the organisation. It is likely to be perceived as a net loss of support for architecture and design by stakeholders.

Strategic partnerships

- 2.31 Reform of A&DS structure aims to increase the impact of the body. However, as a small organisation A&DS have limited resources with which to address significant policy challenges and priorities. Therefore, considering the activities of A&DS within a wider context of related organisations will help to optimise the ability of the body to effect positive change.
- 2.32 Strategic partnerships around architecture, the wider design sector, the creative industries, and the construction sector would provide a strong and coherent framework for A&DS to operate within. The operation of A&DS within a strategic partnership structure would be an important step for the body in pivoting its operations to focus more on supporting sectoral development.

Wider design remit

- 2.33 Evidence suggests there is value in exploring how the functions of A&DS may evolve to support design in a wider context, beyond that of the built environment. Experience from other countries such as Denmark as well as research undertaken by V&A Dundee and Creative Scotland suggests a strong community is important for developing the wider design sector.
- 2.34 The design community in Scotland is distributed across a range of disciplines. Scottish architecture currently has strong community with an active professional body (the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland) and a public sector body in A&DS which provides a robust framework to support sectoral development. Establishing a sound and well-functioning sector development and strategic partnership model for architecture has potential to be expanded to support other design disciplines over the longer term.
- 2.35 This model also has potential to increase the visibility and relevance of A&DS to a wider audience of potential public and private sector clients as part of an income generation approach.

3.0 Recommendations



Recommendations on adjustments to the role of A&DS

- 3.1 The evidence from the RFA, stakeholder engagement and A&DS's own evaluation work suggest that the role of the organisation is not well understood by some key groups and that the limited resources of the body are spread across the very broad policy landscape of place. Analysis of the economic opportunities in the creative industries suggests that there are currently untapped opportunities to support growth of the architecture and design sector in Scotland.
- 3.2 There is consequently a strong case for adjustments to the role of A&DS to enhance the impact of the body through streamlining and refocusing activity and capitalising on the key opportunity of sector growth in the architecture and design sector.

Sector Development

› **Recommendation:**

A significant element of A&DS resource is refocussed towards supporting sectoral growth in architecture and design.

- 3.3 The identification of the value and growth potential of the architecture sector makes a compelling case for A&DS resources to be pivoted to support this opportunity.
- 3.4 Scotland has a high quality and well-respected architecture profession and A&DS supporting the sector more directly has good potential to increase economic benefits of sector activity as well as supporting the impact, health, and influence of a key element of Scotland's creative workforce.
- 3.5 Priorities for the sector revolve around growing opportunity and supporting design within key market areas such as public sector projects as well as promoting opportunities in the rest of the UK and internationally.
- 3.6 Consideration of opportunities to support and promote Scottish architecture internationally should include the cultural activities as well as business development. This may include assessing the benefits of previous activities, such as participation in the Venice Biennale, alongside other opportunities to support Scottish architecture domestically and internationally in order to design a suitable programme of activity.

Centre of Excellence

› **Recommendation:**

A&DS operates as a centre of excellence in architecture and design meaning a greater emphasis on expert support for design priorities and less activity on facilitation and place promotion.

- 3.7 Transitioning A&DS design support towards a centre of excellence model involves streamlining activities to develop a national expert resource to share information, skills, research, and emerging best practice on current and future design challenges.
- 3.8 Developing A&DS as a centre of excellence has potential to improve the impact, profile and reputation of the body as well as improving sector productivity and positive outcomes for public and private development projects. It may also increase the viability of income generation through the development of paid-for A&DS advice services.
- 3.9 The development of an approach where A&DS resources are split between supporting sector development and a centre of excellence model has potential to deliver multiple benefits including:
- developing the creative design workforce as an engine of growth and innovation in high value sectors, such as construction
 - increasing impact and direct contribution to developing the creative workforce and supporting economic growth
 - aligning current creative industries sector development activity and resources
 - improving the profile and reputation of A&DS and increasing the viability of income generation through paid-for design advice services
 - developing a more strategic approach, moving away from project-based activity
 - prioritising limited resources towards areas of greatest potential impact
 - supporting the needs of the Scottish architecture and design community

Priorities

› **Recommendation:**

A&DS's role to support and promote architecture and design should focus on a discrete and well-defined set of priorities.

- 3.10 A shift towards supporting sectoral development combined with maintaining functions around technical design expertise would likely require a more streamlined and focussed approach around a clear set of priorities.
- 3.11 This Review recommends housing, climate and digital as priorities to be tested for viability and benefit. These are key national priorities with clear potential to benefit from enhanced links to the role of good architecture and the design.

3.12 Developments in digital technology will have an increasing role within the design and construction sector and developing an understanding of the opportunities for the design sector is crucial. This work, and the utilisation of public sector and open-source data, offers a comparative advantage for A&DS to support the design and development sector, potentially supporting income generation.

› **Recommendation:**

Programmes on health and education buildings should be retained.

3.13 A&DS has developed valuable expertise in healthcare and education building design. This role should be retained, developed and where appropriate, expanded to support all types of public buildings.

Strategic activity

› **Recommendation:**

A&DS support for good design processes is focussed on strategic activity rather than local interventions.

3.14 A&DS has developed a programme of work involving interventions at local levels, often working in detail and over long periods with local interventions. In to increase impact, the focus of A&DS activities should be on fewer, bigger, more strategic activities and programmes.

3.15 There is a need for A&DS to carry out essential functions that are at the vanguard of innovation and that are not provided by others. Involvement in specific local interventions should be limited to support for nationally significant projects, or in support of an income generation model.

Income generation

› **Recommendation:**

Income generation via the provision of chargeable A&DS design services should be explored.

3.16 Currently A&DS relies on SG funding to support all activity. This limited and restricted funding model constrains the ability of the body to innovate and significantly limits financial resilience, should one of these sources cease to support programme activity.

3.17 Design expertise is a high-value service and there is potential for A&DS to develop an income generation or cost recovery model to supplement public

funding and make best value of public investment. Comparable models for income generation from other design organisations currently exist and operate effectively.

- 3.18 The identification of key potential service users and related opportunities, constraints and motivations would require to be considered as part of a model for income generation. Subsidy control issues would also require to be explored.

Recommendations on adjustments to the structure of A&DS

Short Term Sustainability

- › **Recommendation:**
Exploration of a voluntary severance scheme for A&DS.
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- 3.19 In order to address immediate budget sustainability, this recommendation was provided to A&DS in October 2024. Acting on this recommendation, A&DS took forward a voluntary severance scheme in late 2024 with staff exits taking place in March 2025 to address budget pressures.

Nested model

- › **Recommendation:**
Develop a 'nested model' for A&DS services within an existing host public body.
-

- 3.20 This Review considers a merger/ nested model to be the most advantageous option for the medium term. Any nested model would have to consider wider reform and change activity across potential host organisations.
- 3.21 A nested model would see A&DS operate as a distinct organisation but nested within the infrastructure of a larger public body. This would provide resilience and efficiency on operational issues whilst providing the necessary autonomy and independence to fulfil the discrete functions of a national architecture and design body.
- 3.22 Benefits of adopting a nested model would include:
- retaining a distinct architecture and design body and professional skills within public sector
 - providing operating efficiencies and organisational resilience
 - providing greater flexibility and delivery capacity than through Scottish Government
 - opportunity to capitalise on synergies with other services provided by a host body
 - increased potential to develop income generation/ cost recovery through linking with wider services within the host organisation
 - opportunity to build on successful examples operating within public bodies

3.23 The identification of an appropriate host organisation would be dependent on any changes to the role and functions of A&DS and the outcomes of any the wider public service reform agenda.

Strategic partnerships

› **Recommendation:**

A&DS develop and operate within strategic partnerships in order to increase impact, optimise resources and embed structural collaborations within everyday working practice.

3.24 A strategic partnership around architecture, the wider design sector, the creative industries, and the construction sector would provide a strong and coherent framework for A&DS to operate within. Organisations identified to explore the potential for strategic partnerships include:

- V&A Dundee - V&A Dundee's remit as a national centre for design is a clear opportunity for A&DS to engage with at a strategic level
- Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS) - As the professional body, the RIAS represents the views of Scotland's architecture sector and has credibility, expertise, and capacity to contribute to an effective strategic partnership
- Creative Scotland - Creative Scotland provides programmes with a clear relevance to current and future A&DS activity. Capitalising on resources, networks and learning through partnership working would be of significant mutual benefit

3.25 The important cultural role of architecture has been a key feature of previous policy delivery. There is good scope for strategic partnerships to support a public programme of architecture, both domestically and internationally, and exploration of this should be pursued.

3.26 Additionally, strategic links with organisations such as the Design Council, BE-ST, Scottish Futures Trust, Historic Environment Scotland and higher education institutions should be considered.

National design body model

› **Recommendation:**

Explore the potential for A&DS services to be embedded as part of a dedicated national design body promoting and supporting the design sector in Scotland to drive innovation, knowledge exchange and business development across the creative workforce.

- 3.27 Architecture and the wider design sector have both been identified by research as having good domestic and export growth potential. However, despite this potential neither architecture nor the wider design sector is currently supported in a coordinated way to capitalise on the position. Linking resources to support architecture with wider investment in design would provide multiple benefits.
- 3.28 Such a model would:
- link investment and key programmes of design support in Scotland
 - support learning and intra-sector collaboration, developing Scotland's innovation and product development capacity
 - support design thinking across multiple industries and policy areas, including public sector service design.
 - align architecture and design as key 'Brand Scotland' assets, promoting Scottish creativity and innovation internationally and in RoUK
 - mirror successful example models such as the Danish Design Center
 - increase the visibility and relevance of design to a wide audience of public and private sector service users, supporting income generation potential.
 - provide operating efficiencies and organisational resilience
- 3.29 Establishing well-functioning sector development activity for architecture over the short to medium term would provide an effective platform to be expanded to cover other design disciplines over the longer term.
- 3.30 This would be a longer-term ambition to explore and would not involve the creation of a new public body but may be achieved through mergers and/ or strategic partnerships under an umbrella identity and governance structure.

Conclusion

- 3.31 Supporting architecture and design through an increased focus on sectoral growth and greater coordination across national bodies has potential to deliver multiple benefits.
- 3.32 Short term actions to stabilise the sustainability of A&DS and pivot activity towards new priorities will play a useful first step in transitioning the organisation towards new priorities around sectoral growth and design excellence.
- 3.33 Over the medium term, consolidating new priorities and roles within wider structures (such as through nesting/ strategic partnerships) will provide improved resilience and help to establish relationships and opportunities
- 3.34 Long term direction should explore a more comprehensive model that supports design and architecture through a dedicated national partnership or body. This provides an opportunity to capitalise on the significant economic, social, and cultural benefits that can be delivered through a thriving architecture and design sector.



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St Andrew's House
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ISBN: 978-1-83691-766-3 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, June 2025

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1614274 (06/25)

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