

To mark the week of the Global Climate Strike in September, ArchitecturePLB facilitated a multi-disciplinary workshop to debate the issues and work towards agreeing to some priority actions we can take as professionals within the construction industry. Participants on the day included council members and officers, landscape and sustainability consultants, local climate activists, project managers and contractors.

Over the course of the session, we asked our participants to discuss three key themes; new development, reuse of existing buildings and lifecycle / whole-life carbon. The areas of discussion were drawn directly from the commitments set out by 'UK Architects Declare Climate and Biodiversity Emergency'.

Key themes arising from the workshop demonstrated a clear need for a multi-layered approach, with areas of responsibility ranging from national and regional government and regulatory bodies, to the construction industry and individual building owners and occupiers.

Reflecting on the broad discussion, three main layers emerged, namely:

- under the radar change;
- education and behaviour change; and,
- high level / legislative change.

1_Under the Radar Change

Discussions suggested that under the radar change, with a focus on low hanging fruit, falls principally to the construction industry to address and, to varying degrees, can be actioned and implemented day-to-day and without delay.

Our group identified the following action areas:

- focus on simplicity of buildings in construction and use;
- maximise fabric first approaches;
- use smart technology and maximise the potential of renewables;
- loose fit and adaptability;
- focus on lifecycle planning, both for buildings and landscaping;
- development of consistent and transparent tools of analysis and monitoring;
- more conscious selection of materials;
- sharing knowledge with peers regarding best practice and experience; and,
- informed case by case analysis of existing buildings' potential for retrofit, weighing environmental and societal benefits against financial drivers.



2_ Education and Behaviour Change

Under the category of education and behaviour change, a broad range of short-to-medium term targets were debated, focusing on knowledge sharing between the construction industry, clients, and current and future building occupants.

Areas of change included:

- shared contribution towards a shift in values;
- improving understanding of carbon footprint arising from individual actions;
- helping users feel proud of where they live and work, how their buildings operate and what they are made of;
- understanding long term economic benefits against short term outlay;
- changing public perception about retrofit and energy saving measures;
- making large-scale refurbishment approachable;
- providing simple and accessible monitoring and assessment tools; and,
- better training of building and site managers.

3_ High level / legislative change

The most significant systematic changes were seen as associated with legislation and regulation on both a local and national level. Recurrent themes throughout the discussions included:

- financial incentives to sustainable development and retrofit, including changes to VAT levels;
- challenging Local Plans to be as bold as the London Plan;
- improvement to public transport systems;
- making more of urban centres and improvement to social services in rural communities;
- interrogating the role and value of BREEAM and other current sustainability standards;
- requirement for better energy regulations;
- policy requirement for carbon lifecycle modelling and potential carbon rationing; and,
- better regulation of under-occupied property



ArchitecturePLB intend to build upon this first workshop to facilitate further inter-disciplinary sessions to share knowledge and help to align goals, change “business as usual” and work with the degree of urgency necessary.

With this in mind we challenged each of the participants to make meaningful changes in response to the Climate Emergency. We have already heard back from Fabrik Landscape Architects that “It was thoroughly thought-provoking and enjoyable, and certainly led to a rousing Morning Meeting at the beginning of the week!”

We look forward to embedding some of these outcomes with WinACC and the Winchester City Council in their emerging Local Plan, ensuring meaningful change happens. Please stay in contact and we look forward to hearing from all of you about your actions!

