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## RIBA welcomes Government urban skills investment

RIBA President Paul Hyett has welcomed the Government's commitment to improve urban design skills, a policy backed up today by a £41 million investment over three years. The announcement came in the Deputy Prime Minister's Sustainable Communities White Paper, which also confirmed a 200,000 increase in new homes across London and the South East over the next twenty years.

The RIBA particularly welcomes the emphasis in the White Paper on improving the condition of the existing housing stock and giving power to RDAs to reclaim urban land and for the creation of new housing and new urban green spaces. There is also an additional investment for local authorities to improve the quality of their parks and public spaces.

Commenting on today's announcement, Paul Hyett said:

"The key to creating sustainable communities lies in encouraging more people to live in towns and cities. That initiative is reliant on the successful transformation of dangerous, dirty and run down areas into attractive places to live – all of which was established by Lord Rogers' Urban Task Force. That will take an enduring commitment by future Governments to the delivery of good public services, decent infrastructure such as schools and health facilities, well-designed buildings and public green space. In today's White Paper, the Government has shown real intent to match their commitment with the necessary resources.

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"In these ambitious proposals, the Government is putting forward a design led approach to improve the quality of life and increasing by 200,000 the number of homes in the South East. The Government is reversing the years of decline in new house building and have shown a commitment to improving design skills in the construction sector.

"In improving the quality of existing homes, we will encourage the Government to ensure a commitment to raising the ecological performance of all housing, new and retrofit, which will help Ministers to meet their green targets and also tackle fuel poverty. We are meeting with the Environment Minister, Lord Whitty, this week and will make our case to him.

"It is clearly evident that this programme of investment in buildings and infrastructure will only be delivered through close partnership between Government and the construction industry - within which architects must play a vital role".

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Notes to Editors

1. Paul Hyett is available for interview

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