

RIBA Ethics and Sustainable Development Commission

The RIBA's Ethics and Sustainable Development Commission has produced a final report, with recommendations on how the built environment sector can best reflect and engage with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations' plan of action for people, prosperity and the planet.

The report puts forward a series of nineteen recommendations, grouped under the following headings:

- Leadership on ethics, values and standards
- Collaboration and influence
- Ethics and sustainable development in practice
- Knowledge and competence
- International activity
- Governance

The table below sets out an initial RIBA response to the recommendations as a starting point for the development of an action plan based on the Commission's findings.

RECOMMENDATION	RIBA RESPONSE
1.0 OVERARCHING AIM	
<p>On the basis of its work, the Commission invites RIBA Council to formally reassert the Institute's unequivocal commitment to placing public interest, social purpose, ethical behaviour and sustainable development at the heart of the Institute's activities and to develop a plan of action based on the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.</p>	<p>By its resolution dated 11 December 2018, the RIBA has reasserted the Institute's unequivocal commitment to placing public interest, social purpose, ethics and sustainable development at the heart of its activities.</p> <p>The RIBA is establishing a leadership group, chaired by Caroline Buckingham, VP Practice and Profession, to develop an action plan in response to the recommendations of the Ethics and Sustainable Development Commission.</p>

<p>In order to deliver this objective, the Institute needs to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alongside other professional bodies, provide determined leadership on ethics and sustainable development, • develop a strategy for driving standards and creating the demand for ethical and sustainable architectural practice both in the UK and internationally, and • demonstrate publicly its own and its members' commitment to the public interest, social purpose and sustainable development in architecture. 	<p>The RIBA already undertakes significant work with other professional bodies in the fields of ethics and sustainable development, most notably under the auspices of the Construction Industry Council, and also with IStructE and RTPI as partners in the UK Built Environment Action Group, and wishes to build upon this cooperation.</p> <p>The five presidents of the architecture institutes of England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have committed to drive forward five shared principles to strengthen and safeguard the future of the profession, which are consistent and supportive of the recommendations of the Ethics and Sustainable Development Commission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place the public interest and value to society at the heart of all they do. • Be accountable and the Gold Standard. • Reflect the diversity of the population in their workforce. • Research, build and share essential knowledge. • Lead the profession in the fight for a more sustainable built environment.
<p>2.0 LEADERSHIP ON ETHICS, VALUES AND STANDARDS</p>	
<p>2.1 Ensure that a commitment to the public interest, social purpose and sustainable development is a core requirement of Chartered and Chartered Practice membership.</p>	<p>In March 2019, RIBA Council approved a major revision of the both the RIBA Code of Conduct (chartered members) and the RIBA Code of Practice (chartered practices). The new Codes are broader in scope in relation to duties to society and buildings users, and those in the workplace and the wider world, and have a greater emphasis on the impact of architects' professional activities on the environment.</p>

<p>2.2 Establish the Institute, alongside other professional and industry bodies, as a thought leader in ethics and sustainable development.</p>	<p>Much of the work of the RIBA in relation to ethics and sustainable development is informed by its Expert Advisory Groups, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architects for Change • Sustainable Futures Group • Planning Group • Conservation Group • Housing Group • Regulations and Standards Group • Health and Safety Group • Professional Conduct Panel <p>We will build upon the outputs of these Groups to show thought leadership.</p>
<p>2.3 Create a new form of institutional accountability to the public for its public interest, social purpose and sustainable development objectives.</p>	<p>As a charity, acting in the public interest is already enshrined in the RIBA charter.</p> <p>The RIBA is committed to transparency and accountability on these key issues. From 2018 the RIBA Annual Report has included key statistics on diversity and inclusion in the profession. We will explore expanding this section to include social purpose and sustainable development metrics.</p>
<p>3.0 COLLABORATION AND INFLUENCE</p>	
<p>3.1 Work to increase demand for demonstrably sustainable architecture through engagement with outside bodies, including: co-professional, commissioning, funding, insurance and legislative organisations.</p>	<p>The RIBA Quality Tracker tool (a project in collaboration with CIOB and RICS) is a good example of an RIBA initiative that can demonstrate the value of setting and monitoring clear project quality objectives, including sustainability targets.</p>

<p>3.2 Work to influence and strengthen the policy and regulatory environment, particularly through lobbying, to help deliver ethical and sustainable outcomes.</p>	<p>The RIBA places the public interest at the heart of its policy and regulatory work.</p> <p>A good example of this is the activity of the Expert Advisory Group on Fire Safety, which has placed priority on the public interest as the guiding principle for its work in seeking to influence the future regulatory framework and establish enhanced levels of competency.</p>
<p>3.3 Collaborate with key industry bodies to align the wider construction and property industries with jointly agreed standards for ethical and sustainable practice.</p>	<p>The RIBA is a co-signatory to an increasing number of international standards for ethics and sustainable practice, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UN Global Compact • The International Ethics Standard • The International Fire Safety Standards coalition
<p>3.4 Actively engage in knowledge exchange with those working beyond the boundaries of standard architectural practice.</p>	<p>It is recognised that this is an area where the RIBA needs to extend its activity and engagement.</p>
<p>4.0 ETHICS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICE</p>	
<p>4.1 Establish a comprehensive plan to drive the advancement of professional ethics and sustainable architecture across the profession.</p>	<p>The first priority of the leadership group on ethics and sustainable development will be to advise on the development of the RIBA action plan.</p>

<p>4.2 Promote evidence-informed design to drive and enable continuous improvement in the standard and performance of the built environment.</p>	<p>The RIBA has an established commitment to the promotion of evidence-based design, through projects such as the RIBA Value Toolkit, the Green Overlay to the RIBA Plan of Work, Carbonbuzz, guidance on Embodied and Whole Life Carbon Assessments for Architects, and through its policy and advocacy work to Government, and we will continue to build upon this commitment.</p>
<p>4.3 Facilitate and actively promote the routine use of Post Occupancy Evaluation with open reporting of outcomes and sharing of standardised data.</p>	<p>The RIBA Sustainable Futures Group is currently working on updated guidance on Post-occupancy evaluation and the next revision of the RIBA Plan of Work will place even greater emphasis on the importance of Post-occupancy evaluation to continuous quality and building performance improvement.</p>
<p>4.4 Provide tools and guidance to make ethical practice (including employment standards, equality and diversity), and sustainable design central to the architecture profession.</p>	<p>Tools and policy guidance form an important part of the RIBA's support to its chartered practices. Currently these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIBA Chartered Practice Employment Policy Guide • RIBA Chartered Practice Quality Management System • RIBA Health and Safety Policy Template • RIBA Environmental Policy Guide • RIBA Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Guide

<p>5.0 KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCE</p>	
<p>5.1 Address the knowledge and engagement gap in respect of ethics and sustainable development and ensure that everyone entering the profession has adequate knowledge and understanding of ethics and sustainable development.</p>	<p>The current review of the ARB RIBA education criteria is very much focussed on embedding professional skills and awareness (including ethics and sustainable design) more effectively at Parts 1 and 2. ARB and RIBA will shortly be going out to consultation on the draft revised criteria.</p>
<p>5.2 Ensure that all teaching staff in validated schools of architecture have appropriate knowledge of ethics and sustainable development.</p>	<p>Whilst the RIBA is a stakeholder in the ARB RIBA education criteria, the Institute can only directly influence the curriculum not the selection/training of teaching staff which is a matter for individual schools.</p> <p>We do take account of school resources, including the expertise of the teaching staff, during visiting boards.</p>
<p>5.3 Ensure that the Institute has appropriate systems in place, through validation and CPD, to confirm that new entrants to and existing members of the profession have appropriate up to-date knowledge of ethics and sustainable development.</p>	<p>RIBA requires that chartered members must undertake at least 2 hours of their annual CPD in each of ten core curriculum areas. A number of these relate to ethics, social purpose and sustainable development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architecture for social purpose • Health, safety and wellbeing • Legal, regulatory and statutory compliance • Sustainable architecture • Inclusive environments • Places, planning and communities <p>The new RIBA CPD online recording system will make our monitoring of CPD much more effective.</p>

<p>5.4 Develop and promote tools and guidance that can assist architects and practices to respond effectively and robustly to ethical issues that are beyond the scope of legal and/or code of conduct definitions.</p>	<p>The RIBA recently published a key guidance document – Ethics in Architectural Practice, and we are currently delivering a series of CPD sessions which explore ethics in practice.</p> <p>This will be an area for further development in the action plan.</p>
<p>5.5 Encourage and enable professional involvement with research methods and outcomes, and establish a programme to develop research literacy across the profession.</p>	<p>This is an area which the RIBA has engaged actively in the past with a number of initiatives, and would like to be more active.</p> <p>We will continue to promote research literacy in architecture.</p>
<p>6.0 INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY</p>	
<p>6.1 Develop programmes to build international capacity in the built environment sector, to help drive sustainable development and ethics in practice, ensuring that these are both culturally and environmentally appropriate, and socially.</p>	<p>The RIBA will seek opportunities to build international capacity in the built environment sector, in particular through its membership of international architectural organisations, such as the UIA, CAA and ACE, and its engagement with UN.</p> <p>We have been a key partner in the delivery of the first phase of the FCO Global Future Cities initiative, which seeks to build professional built environment capacity in planning, architecture and engineering in 19 rapidly growing cities in 10 developing and middle-income countries.</p>