

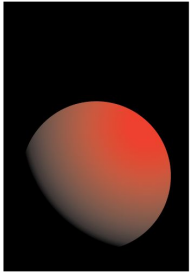


UK Architects Declare
Climate & Biodiversity
Emergency

Architects Declare: How it all began ...



July 2024



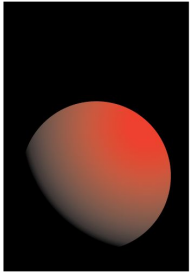
UK Architects Declare Climate & Biodiversity Emergency

When we celebrated UK Architects Declare's 5th birthday at a special event on 24th July 2024, Michael Pawlyn talked about how AD started and some of the changes that have occurred since our launch in May 2019. Michael was one of AD's co-instigators and is a member of our Steering Group.

More than 120 people joined us at this event, generously hosted by HaworthTompkins.

Thank you to everyone who took part or who sent in their best wishes, and to all who support our work!





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“In early November 2018, Steve Tompkins and I met up in a pub to talk about the recent IPCC report, which was way more alarming than previous reports. There’d been relatively little reaction from the architectural community and we wrongly assumed there was a low level of concern. So we had a rather gloomy couple of pints and we were talking about some of our favourite sources of ideas, like Donella Meadows, and how we need a paradigm shift if we are to rise to the challenge of the planetary emergency.

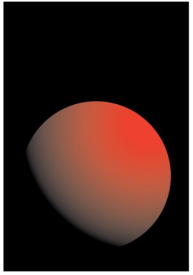
“At the time I’d just recently started writing *Flourish* with Sarah Ichioka, which included a chapter about agency. Steve and I talked about where each of us had agency.

“HaworthTompkins had recently won the Stirling Prize, so the idea emerged over the evening of getting all the UK Stirling winners to sign some kind of declaration. Steve then involved Caroline Cole and they went to meet all the Stirling winners and all credit to Caroline and Steve for getting them on board.

“It turned out that other people had been having similar ideas, and Julia Barfield and Andrew Waugh had also been speaking to Caroline about how to respond to the IPCC. So we formed a fledgling steering group and we were soon joined by Smith Mordak and Mike Cook and as time went on it became clear that the way to frame this would be as a declaration of climate and biodiversity emergency.



Michael Pawlyn with fellow Steering Group member Tom Gibson, speaking at AD's 5th birthday event at HaworthTompkins



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“We launched in May 2019 and thought we’d then have to work really hard to get maybe 50 practices signed up so that we could then go to the RIBA and get them to declare an emergency. As it turned out, 200 firms signed up in the first two days, which shows that our assumption was absolutely wrong - and that just about everyone was concerned about where the best science showed we were heading. And it was really energising to see such a fantastic response.

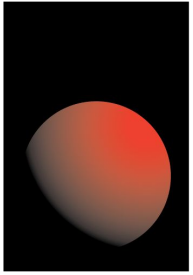
“We then set up a website and the idea was to make it as easy as possible for other groups in other countries to set up, and we started talking to movers and shakers in other disciplines. Really the idea spread with its own energy and, as some of you may know, we now have over 8,000 companies signed up in 28 countries.

“The next move was to develop a theory of change, and that was very much influenced by Donella Meadows, the idea of a paradigm shift from conventional sustainability to regenerative design.

“Clearly there’s still a lot to do and I’m not suggesting for a moment we should be complacent. We’re not yet on a safe pathway to the future for humanity and sometimes it’s easy to feel daunted by the level of change that’s going to be necessary. Just like an arduous hike, if you keep looking at the mountains ahead it can feel exhausting. Sometimes it’s important to stop and look back and see just how far you’ve come. And I think we’ll come to see this last five years as a period of really quite profound change.



Steering Group members Zoe Watson and Deepthi Ravi (top) spoke about AD’s current and future work, and fellow SG member Carrie Behar (bottom) gathered people’s ideas for AD to focus on.



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“When AD started, pretty much no one outside of Sweden had heard of Greta Thunberg, Extinction Rebellion had yet to hit the headlines, *Doughnut Economics* had only recently been published, the WellBeing Group of Governments had yet to form, China had yet to announce a date for decarbonisation, the idea of a Law of Ecocide, the Rights of Nature, or Future Generations legislation were all seen as distant dreams.

“And yet since then a lot of governments have actually implemented them.

“And one area where I think all of us as signatories can enjoy some credit: five years ago hardly anyone was talking about regenerative design, and now everyone is. That’s something we’ve all created together - the potential for architects to reclaim our agency as shapers of the future, as integrators and systems thinkers, as people who want to be able to proudly look our children in the eye in ten years time and say “Yes, I saw this coming and this is what I did about it.”

“Thank you all for everything you’ve done and thank you for joining us this evening!”



The UK Architects Declare team at the birthday event: Steering Group, manager and communications officer



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Find out more about [our story](#) and [Our Plan for Change](#). All [our resources](#) are freely available online, where you can find all our current and past [Steering Group](#) members.

We're grateful to all our supporters. To make a financial contribution to our work - and see our current contributors - see the [Support Us](#) page on our site or email us at hello@architectsdeclare.

Thank you.

Photos from our 5th Birthday event: Mervin John Panicker.



Steering Group member Anna Pamphilon (left) with the birthday cake created for AD by Joy at HaworthTompkins, and fellow SG member Julia Barfield (right) blowing out the candles.

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