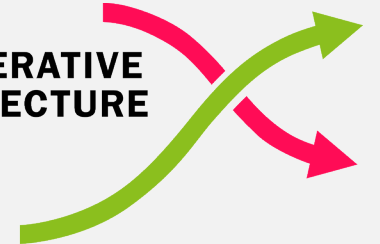


UK Architects Declare
Climate & Biodiversity
Emergency

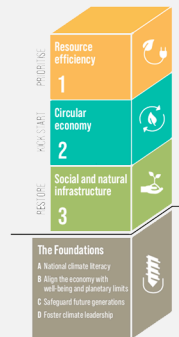
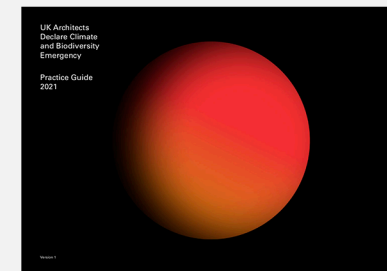


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Our Plan for Change

Together, we can
build a better future



**Building
Blocks**

a manifesto
to transform the
Built Environment

May 2024

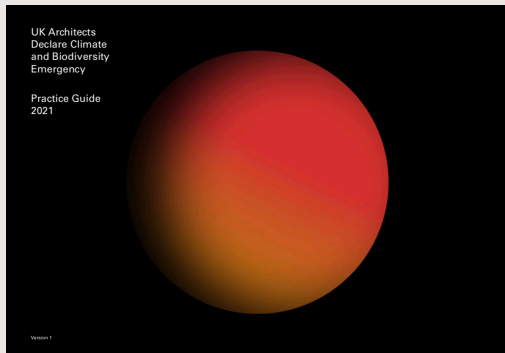
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We are in a planetary Climate and Biodiversity Emergency.

Our Vision for our sector's part in tackling this by 2030 is bold:

“A built environment planned, constructed and operated within planetary boundaries to deliver environmental justice and to support the flourishing of all life for all time.”



Construction is a major contributor to the emergency — and our industry has the solutions needed for rapid progress.

The main obstacles are at the level of paradigms and mindsets.

To shift these rapidly, we need a tipping point, with:

- Shifts clearly articulated
- Skills to deliver them
- Industry support
- Public demand

AD has a dual approach, with a common focus on building agency and delivering change.

Supporting and encouraging our signatory practices on pathways to delivering their declaration. We know this is challenging. Everyone has different starting points. No one can claim they've arrived.

Demonstrating where leaders - in government, institutions and industry - can change the systems behind the crisis: to move us away from degenerative 'business-as-usual', beyond 'sustainability' and towards fully regenerative solutions.

Inside, we set out AD's work to make our vision a reality.

- Change is possible: What's the emergency & why architects?
- UK Architects Declare: Who we are & how do we work for change?
- Creating change: Where can we best act & when do we need results?
- Tackling barriers to change: What's holding us back & how can we reduce barriers?
- Our track record: What have we done so far & what's in our current action plan?
- Our strategy for change to 2025 and 2030.
- Getting involved: How can you be part of this?

Change is possible

What is the emergency?

Our present course is taking us to a future no one wants to see. Earth's life support systems are under increasing threat. We can already see the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency in the UK and it's hitting others much harder and faster. We're destroying our safe operating space.

42% of the UK's emissions are controlled or influenced by the built environment [1]. Globally, urbanisation and construction keep increasing in scale and intensity, bringing more global heating and habitat loss each year.

Promoting 'sustainability' can't turn this around alone. At the root of the crisis are delusions: there are no limits to growth; technology solves all problems; making things less bad is good enough. These beliefs enable a failing system.

Meeting society's needs within safe ecological boundaries requires a paradigm shift. Reversing the crisis means seeing our buildings, places and infrastructure as integrated components of a regenerating, self-sustaining system: working with the principles of nature, not against them.

No nations are on track to meet their Paris Agreement targets [2]. Even if they do, global heating will soon likely exceed 1.5°C [3].

This is rapidly approaching, and every 0.1°C increases the risks to us all.

Why architects?

Architects are at the heart of shaping how our built environment benefits people and nature and thrives in rapidly changing conditions. The future will be different from the past, and architects can meet this challenge.

We have the knowledge, skills and creative drive to translate climate and biodiversity priorities into positive change, leading with better practices, design and materials. We can help instil better industry mindsets and partnerships. Working together, we will use emerging knowledge to build momentum and deliver the shift we need.

We have influence, although our sense of what we can do individually is often undermined by uncertainty, others' inaction and prevailing attitudes.

We can enhance our agency by empowering teams, forging stronger associations within and beyond our sector and understanding the barriers to change.

With all the advances architects have led in recent decades - and facing the reality that, despite this, we have not turned the crisis around - we need to bring new learning and reinvigorate the spirit of innovation.



UK Architects Declare

Who are we?

Created in 2019, UK Architects Declare quickly attracted hundreds of architectural practices seeking urgent change. More than 1,330 practices of all sizes have signed across the UK.

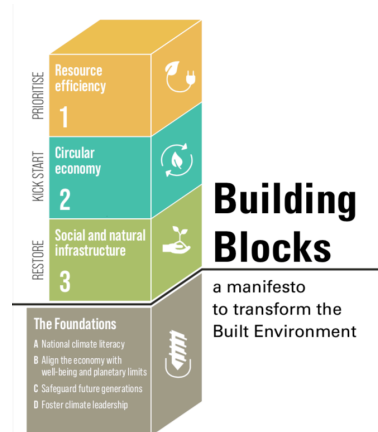
Globally, our declaration has inspired thousands of others. Built Environment Declares - with Engineers, Landscape Architects, Contractors, Interior Designers and others alongside Architects in the UK, and more than 40 declare groups in 28 countries - now has over 8,000 signatories.

UK Architects Declare's Steering Group (SG) members are committed volunteers working at key positions in a mix of practices, large and small. Other volunteers join SG members in small groups to plan and deliver our work.

More and more signatories of all sizes around the country contribute annual donations to support our work, enabling us to expand our activities. This financial support is invaluable and makes a huge difference to what we can achieve.

We are pleased to thank all our contributors on our [Support Us page](#).

● UK Architects Declare [Climate & Biodiversity Emergency](#)



How do we work for change?

Architects Declare is many things: a declaration, a programme, a network, a charity, a critical friend, and a partner for change.

Declaration: 12 principles to tackle our Planetary Emergency through action.

Programme: guidance, examples and dialogue to help all build on their declarations.

Network: an expanding base of shared ideas, inspiration and action.

Charity: working for the public benefit.

Critical friend: opening dialogue on our declaration; calling industry, institutions, media and governments to rise to its challenges.

Partner: building dialogue and joint projects to drive positive change.

Our dual approach has a common focus on building agency and delivering change:

1. Supporting and encouraging our signatories on pathways to deliver their declaration.
2. Demonstrating where leaders can change the systems behind the crisis: to move us away from degenerative 'business-as-usual', beyond 'sustainability' and towards fully regenerative solutions.



Building Blocks Parliamentary launch 2024

Our declaration is a shared commitment for architectural practices to:



Raise awareness of the emergency among clients and suppliers.



Advocate for faster change in our industry.



Establish climate and biodiversity principles as key success measures.



Share knowledge and research on an open-source basis.



Evaluate projects against mitigating climate breakdown.



Upgrade existing buildings for extended use.



Evidence design with whole life carbon accounting and post occupancy evaluation in scope of work.



Adopt more regenerative design principles.



Collaborate to reduce construction waste.



Accelerate the shift to low embodied carbon materials.



Minimise wasteful use of resources in architecture and urban planning.



Support those who are working for climate justice.

Creating change

Where can we best act?

Our evolving programme is informed by a coherent theory of change and solid research into how change happens in complex systems governing societies and built environments.

To change our current, crisis-inducing system, we have to intervene at its highest levels. Research shows that the most effective leverage points for change are the goals that drive the system and the paradigm that shapes it [4].

Actions at lower levels (better rules, technologies, information or standards) can support progress, but relying on these alone - even through sustainability programmes - simply cannot work at the scale and pace we need. They will always be frustrated by the current faulty mindsets and goals governing the system as a whole.

We're working for a transition that's far more than just an industrial shift focused on carbon: a broader cultural shift that raises perspectives and ambitions.

Perspectives: working on principles aligned with nature.

Ambitions: beyond tackling the negatives, towards generating the positives.

When do we need to achieve results?

2030 is a horizon that serious policy makers and campaigners are focusing on for urgent change. For example:

- To keep global heating to no more than the Paris Agreement target of 1.5°C, emissions must be reduced by 45% by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050 [5].
- 2030 is the target for the UK's Net Zero Strategy [7] and Strategic Framework for International Climate and Nature Action [8].
- The UK has committed to the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities, combat catastrophic climate change, and protect our natural environment [6].
- RIBA's 2030 Climate Challenge provides a stepped approach towards reaching net zero [9].

Our vision for the UK addresses the underlying systems change we urgently need:

A built environment planned, constructed and operated within planetary boundaries to deliver environmental justice and to support the flourishing of all life for all time.

Tackling barriers to change

What's holding us back?

There are many factors that resist efforts to change a system. For example:

Cultural: resistance to moving on from the familiar paradigm; fear of uncertainty; assumptions of 'growth' and 'progress'; poor debate on systemic issues; short-term thinking; limited key sector buy-in; silos hampering work across disciplines; the skills valued by society; ideas around productivity, competitive advantage.

Policy: zero or low ambition policy on key issues; misaligned planning system and building regulation; regulations for one priority creating obstacles to others; social justice not integrated across key policies.

Economic: perverse incentives and subsidies; inadequate skills, knowledge, policy & supply infrastructures; poor accounting for true externalities; inadequate focus on the triple bottom line.

Technological: skills gap in wider industry; poor upscaling of new products; mismatch of leading edge with dominant market; capacity and certification issues for sustainability products & services.

Many barriers are hangovers of a 'legacy' mindset.

Sticking with 'the way things have always been' creates inertia and can capture the disruptive innovations that could instead enable regenerative solutions [10].

How can we reduce them?

There are also many factors working in our favour: drivers towards systems change, and for regenerative design in particular.

But relying only on drivers, or pushing them harder, won't bring the results we need in the time we have. We must also find ways to bring down the barriers to change. Our efforts will then naturally have greater results.

Recognising, pooling and expanding our agency as architects have added value here. Some of the ways architectural practices can tackle barriers include:

- Collaborating with each other and other professionals towards common goals;
- Promoting open-source attitudes to data e.g. on performance;
- Creating consistent and cohesive messaging;
- Highlighting gaps in knowledge or policy;
- Contributing to advocacy for change;
- Upskilling ourselves and others with new knowledge and approaches;
- Engaging with local communities on regenerative principles and ideas;
- Looking to the wider community when developing project briefs.

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UK Architects Declare Strategy for Change 2024 - 2030

WHY

Construction is a major contributor to the Planetary Emergency. We have the solutions needed for rapid progress. The main obstacles are at the level of paradigms and mindsets *e.g. endless economic growth, linear resource use, conquest of nature.* To shift these rapidly, we need a tipping point, with:

- 1 Shifts clearly articulated
- 2 Skills to deliver them
- 3 Industry support
- 4 Public demand

NOVEMBER 2024
Our Actions to COP29

NOVEMBER 2025
Our **Direction of Travel** by COP30 - towards AD's vision for 2030

2030
Where we want to be

DEVELOPING AD
2024 - 2030

FOCUS AREAS

We continue to focus on key areas that move us towards the changes we need by 2025.

HOW
the UK needs to change?

ONE
Regenerative design principles to be embedded within UK practices.

TWO
Regenerative design principles to be embedded within UK & local policy.

OUR VISION FOR THE UK

QUESTION 1

What can enable & accelerate our success by 2025?

- Expanded annual funding
- Established voice
- Core paid team
- Strategic partnerships

● 10% ● 30% ● 60%

Developing AD

- Register AD as a Charity
- Secure significant funding
- Involve volunteers in our work
- Enhance our comms.

Supporting signatories

- Promote Regenerative Design Primer as 'work in progress'
- Revisit our Practice Guide
- Roll out Design Conversations
- Review regional opportunities

Shifting system goals

- Promote learning from the Regenerative Architecture Index
- Advocate for our Building Blocks manifesto
- Engage with Design Media
- Work with RIBA to change its Mission

WHAT

We need  to achieve

• Regenerative Design Primer adopted by increasing numbers of practices

• Regenerative Architecture Index recognised as sector's flagship scheme

• AD valued as a 'critical friend' by practices, institutions & stakeholders

• Regenerative culture seen as the 'avant garde' of the profession

• 'Design Conversations' used as part of normal practice

• AD networks active in all regions

• Building Blocks policies driving regenerative design (e.g. embedded in planning policy)

• Architects' role championed in innovative policy agendas

• AD's Building Blocks manifesto seen as successful in 2024 General Election debates & beyond

A built environment planned, constructed and operated within planetary boundaries to deliver environmental justice and to support the flourishing of all life for all time.

QUESTION 2

Should AD aim to cease to exist as an organisation by 2030?

- This is a serious question and we need to build positive conversations on our ultimate success criteria.
- By 2025 we will agree our organisational aim for 2030:
 - Either "AD's Mission to be completed by 2030"
 - Or "AD's Mission to evolve beyond 2030"

How can you be part of this?

Architectural practices

- If you've not yet made your Declaration, consult with your teams and do so now: add your voice.
- If you've already declared, use our Practice Guide, Masterclass videos and other resources to start your roadmap.
- Use our Regenerative Design Primer and Architecture Index to become part of the shift to a regenerative paradigm.
- If you're making progress, share it - and problems too.
- Where a project is facing significant challenges with your Declaration, see if an AD Design Conversation can help.
- If you'd like to help with working groups or regional groups, get in touch.
- Join the growing number of practices - large and small - making an annual financial contribution so we can do more.

Professional bodies

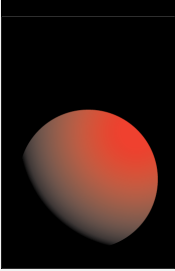
- Consult with stakeholders on revising your mission and purpose. Do they address the planetary emergency?
- Work with us to improve and share knowledge, training and opportunities, advocate for change and promote results.

Media

- Review how your coverage of design priorities and practices align with what the planetary emergency shows is important.
- Open up a meaningful debate.
- Meet the challenges of constructive journalism [11].

References

- [1] UK Green Building Council, 2021 <https://ukgbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/UKGBC-Whole-Life-Carbon-Roadmap-A-Pathway-to-Net-Zero.pdf>
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- [11] Why constructive journalism? <https://constructiveinstitute.org/why/>



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Thank You.

Together, we can build a better future.

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