UK Architects Declare Practice Guide →
01 → Practice Roadmap



UK Architects Declare
Climate & Biodiversity
Emergency

UK Architects Declare Practice Guide

UK Architects Declare

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Architects Declare was launched as a not-for-profit organisation in the UK on 30 May 2019. Since April 2024 UK Architects Declare is a registered charity. At the time of publication, it has over 1,424 signatories in the UK. It is part of Built Environment Declares, which is now represented in 27 countries around the world.

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01 Practice Roadmap

This document has been created by an Architects Declare working group to help signatories convert their declaration into meaningful action and build momentum within their practice. The guide is intended to be a live, working document that helps fulfil the fourth point in our 12-point declaration by encouraging the sharing of knowledge and research on an open source basis. We expect this guide to evolve and be refined in future iterations as our understanding of the climate and biodiversity crises develops, and as our industry innovates to find new solutions to these challenges. We encourage our signatories—and other architectural practices or built environment practitioners —to contact us with feedback on this version and examples for the next version.

Throughout the guide we have referenced projects, suppliers, methods and frameworks which our contributors have experience of. We included these specifics to help clarify our intention but encourage practices to do their own due diligence on specific services. We have contacted the practices and initiatives featured in the guide to request permission to reproduce their work. If we have missed any, please do get in touch so that we can resolve this in future versions of this Guide.

This is section 1 of the guide focusing on the Practice Roadmap, please read in conjunction with all other sections of the guide.

The Architects Declare Practice guide would not have come to light without the contribution, kind help, and guidance of an enthusiastic group of volunteers, and excellent feedback from expert reviewers. We would like to acknowledge and thank all:

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Climate context

The world is in a twin crisis, the climate and biodiversity global crises. We know that our oceans have become 30 percent more acidic since the Industrial Revolution. Extreme and devastating climate events are multiplying rapidly across the globe and the population of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians is estimated to have fallen by 70 percent in the last 50 years. The pace of ice loss in the Arctic and Antarctic has tripled over the last decade.



As the earth's life support systems come under increasing threat, we also know that construction is responsible for over 40% of global CO_2 emissions, (see Fig. 1) yet the scale and intensity of urban development, infrastructure and building construction globally continues to expand, resulting in greater greenhouse gas generation and loss of habitat each year. Current ways of regulating building performance and construction have not achieved significant reductions in carbon emissions from buildings.

For everyone working in construction and the built environment sector, meeting the needs of our societies within the earth's ecological boundaries will demand a paradigm shift in practice. If we are to reduce and eventually reverse the environmental damage we are causing, we will need to re-imagine our buildings, cities and infrastructures as indivisible components of a larger, constantly regenerating and self-sustaining system.

Such a transformation cannot happen without a wide-ranging declaration of intent, followed by committed action, international cooperation and open-source knowledge sharing. Our united declaration supports more effective lobbying of policy makers and governments to show leadership and commit resources.

Since the first issue of this practice guide in 2020 the industry has tried to move forward however the latest Global Status Report gives us challenges and highlights that the industry and governments need to move quicker. The world needs to cut its emissions by 45% by 2030 for a 1.5 pathway. With the construction industry carrying a third of global CO_2 emissions and almost half of global material use the task is fast.

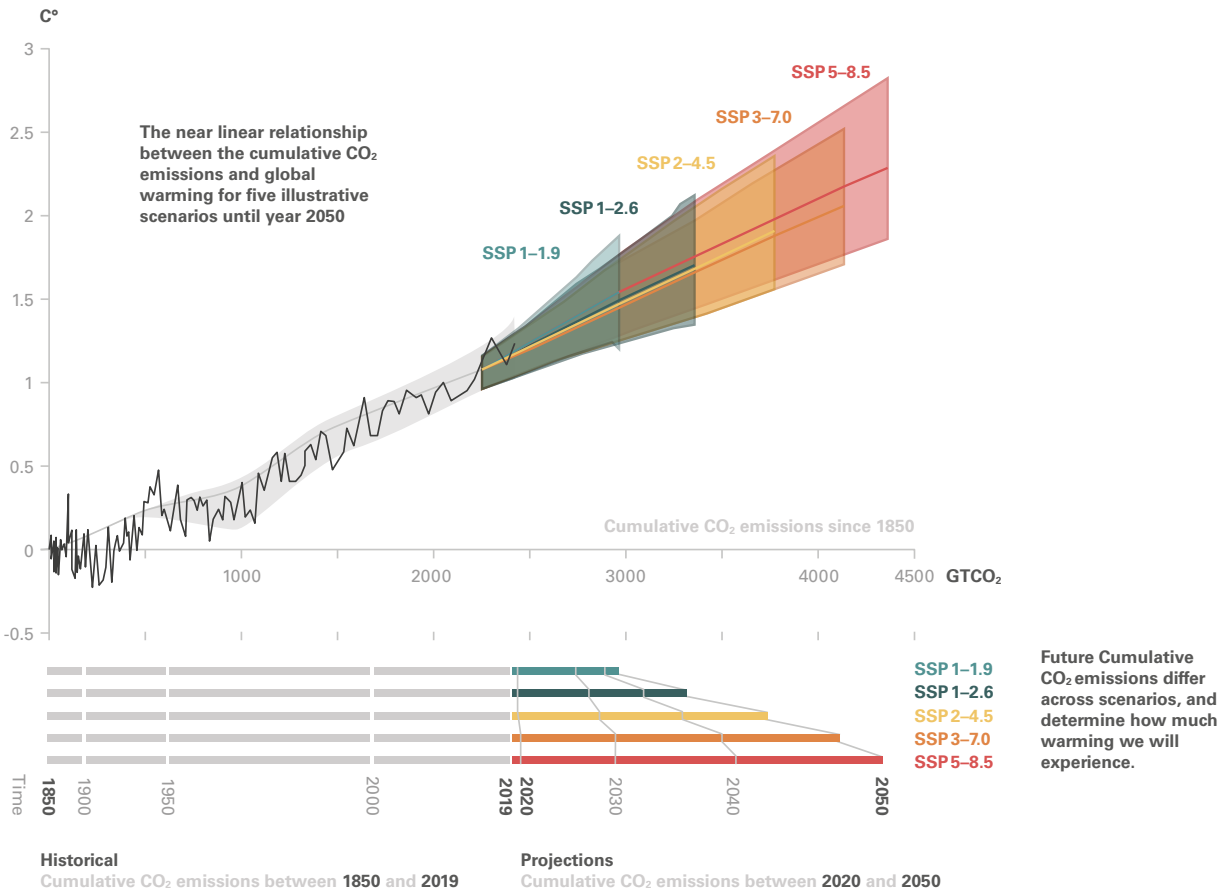


Fig. 1 **Global surface temperature increase since 1850–1900 (°C) as a function of cumulative CO2 emissions ($GtCO_2$)**

Source **IPCC report AR6 2021, Summary for Policymakers, Figure SPM.10**

The carbon budget is running out

A carbon budget is the amount of additional greenhouse-gas emissions that can be released while retaining a chance of limiting long-term warming to a given temperature.

The Paris Agreement[1], adopted in 2015, set the goal of keeping warming well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C.

In 2024, global temperature exceeded 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels for the first calendar year[2]. This does not, by itself, mean the Paris 1.5°C threshold has been breached, which is assessed over a much longer period.

But the trajectory is worsening: **WMO estimates a 75% chance that the 2026–2030 average will exceed 1.5°C.**

Every tonne of emissions matters. We need credible roadmaps that reduce emissions, stay within the remaining carbon budget and accelerate the transition to net zero.

1 https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement

2 https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/degrees-matter

At the time of writing, the UNEP has published a report concerning this. Limiting Overshoot—Navigating exceedance of 1.5°C and pathways towards return | UNEP—UN Environment Programme[3].

As an industry we now have a two fold challenge, one of mitigation and adaptation, both are urgent, mutually reinforcing, interdependent, and necessary to limit overshoot.

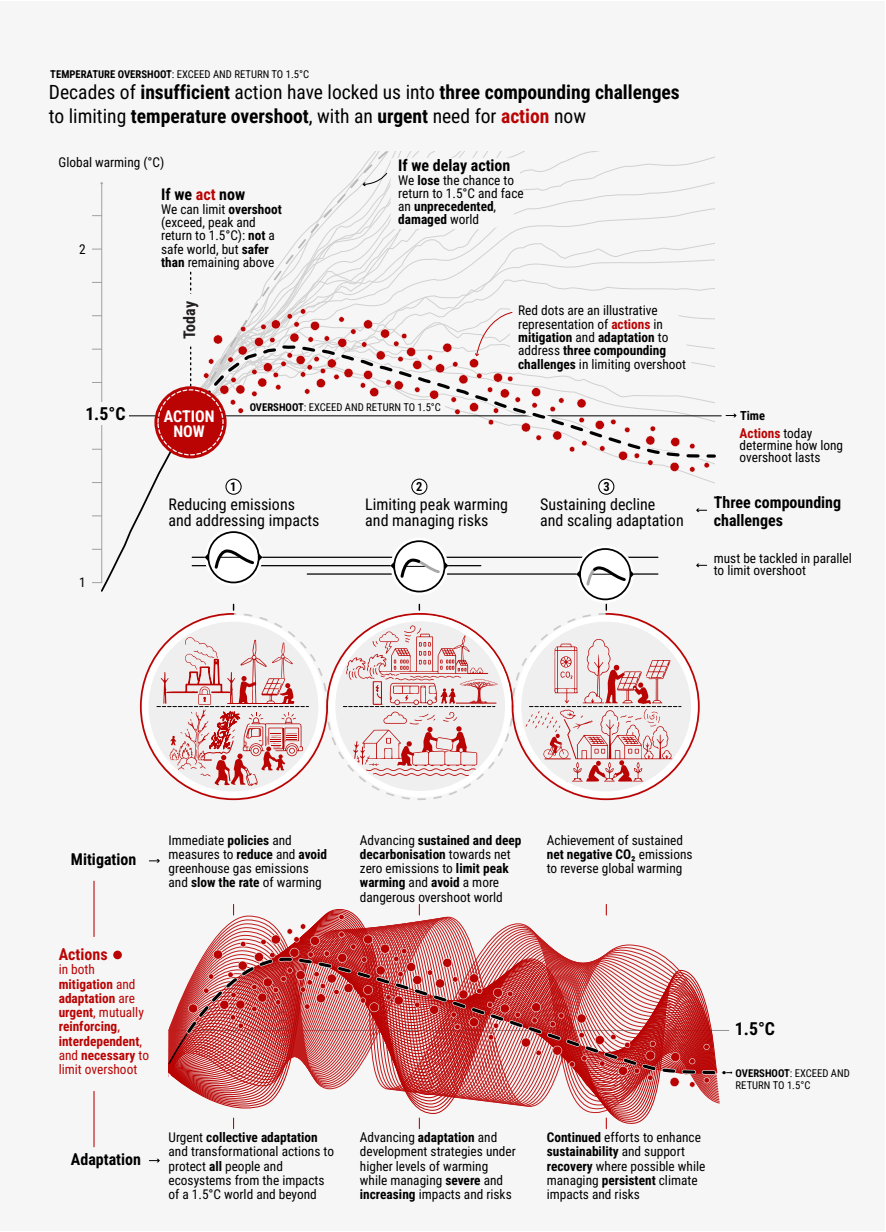
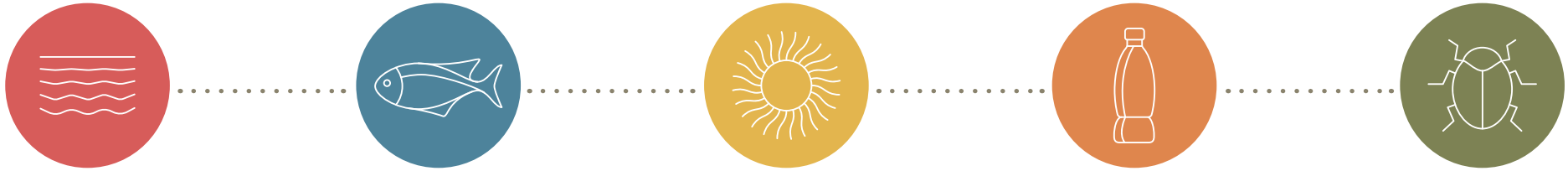


Fig. 2 **Page from Limiting Overshoot**
Source **UN Environment Programme**

3 https://www.unep.org/resources/limiting-overshoot-navigating-exceedance



1 Changes in land and sea use
Humans have altered 75% of land and 66% of marine environments since pre-industrial times.

2 Direct exploitation of organisms
In 2015 a third of marine stocks were being fished at unsustainable levels.

3 Climate change
Global warming has impacted almost half of threatened mammals and one of quarter birds.

4 Pollution
Marine plastic pollution has increased tenfold since 1980, with an average 300–400 tons of waste dumped annually into the world's waters.

5 Invasive alien species
The numbers of alien species per country have risen by about 70% since 1970.

Fig. 3 **Five main drivers of biodiversity loss**
Source **IPBES Report**
Graphic **UK Architects Declare**

Biodiversity loss

In December 2024 the WWF published their latest Living Planet Report which identified the five major threat categories that are driving biodiversity's rapid decline.

In the 2024 Living Planet Report[4], analysis was carried out for five regions: Europe and Central Asia, Asia Pacific, Latin America & Caribbean, Africa and North America. Taking species population as a measure, a significant loss in biodiversity was found in all regions, with encroachment on natural land identified as the most prominent threat to wildlife. Latin America & the Caribbean have sustained a loss of 95% since 1975 and Africa 76% loss in the same time period.

In the UK 16.1% of species are threatened with extinction, 41% of species have seen their population decrease since 1970, and 72% of land is managed for agriculture, according to the RSBP UK State of Nature 2023 report[5]. They note that 'changing agricultural management has had the biggest single impact upon nature in the UK over recent decades'

4 https://assets.worldwildlife.org/www-prd/documents/5gc2qerb1v_2024_living_planet_report_a_system_in_peril.pdf

5 http://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/state-of-nature-report

Killer facts

Food systems

Food systems cause one thirds of human-caused GHG emission. Food systems accounted for 34% of global human-caused greenhouse-gas emissions in 2015.

Source Carbon Brief / Crippa et al., Nature Food 2021[6]

29.9 million

29.9 Million disaster-related displacements in 2025. Floods, storms, earthquakes, wildfires and other disasters triggered almost 30 million internal displacement events worldwide.

Source DMC, Global Report on Internal Displacement 2026 [7]

1.73 Earths

1.73 Earths—that's how much we are using. Humanity is currently using nature 73% faster than Earth can regenerate it.

Source Global Footprint Network / Earth Overshoot Day 2026.

80%

80% Embodied carbon emissions account for up to 80% of a building's total emissions over its life span in UK yet are unregulated.

Source Carbon Brief

50%

Buildings and construction use nearly 50% of global material extraction .The built environment has the largest material footprint of any sector.

Source UNEP & GlobalABC, Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction 2025–2026[8]

9%

The IEA estimates that carbon emissions from cement, steel and aluminium used in buildings alone accounted for 9% of global emissions in 2024.

Source Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction 2025–2026

45%

The emissions cut needed by 2030 for a 1.5°C pathway. Current national climate pledges remain far short of what is required.

Source PCC/UNFCCC; UNEP Emissions Gap Report 2025[9]

92%

Global North is responsible for 92% of total excess CO2 emissions.

Source Jason Hickel

CO^2

44% of all the CO_2 we emit now will still be around in 400 years.

Source Max Fordham

6 https://www.carbonbrief.org/food-systems-responsible-for-one-third-of-human-caused-emissions

7 https://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data/

8 https://www.unep.org/technical-highlight/cities-grow-and-climate-risks-rise-new-unep-report-shows-path-climate-resilient

9 https://wedocs.unep.org/items/9f0bf855-2069-42a6-a856-4b389f740c5c

220+ million

220+ million people could be at risk of flooding each year. BY 2050 WRI's Aqueduct Floods projects 191 million people exposed to river flooding and 30 million to coastal flooding annually by 2050.

Source World Resources Institute, Aqueduct Floods Methodology | World Resources Institute [10]

Only 1%

Only 1% of building elements are reused after first use. North-West Europe remains largely linear: most reusable building elements are recycled or discarded rather than reused.

Source Interreg NWE FCRBE Project (2018–2023); figure cited in project materials.[11]

Denmark

Denmark led the way in 2023 with mandatory LCA + carbon limits for buildings >1,000 m²; France, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Finland have since followed with national requirements.

Source Global Forest Watch (WRI)

2050

By 2050, ocean plastic could outweigh fish. If we continue on the current trajectory, plastic in the ocean could exceed fish by weight by 2050.

Source Ellen MacArthur Foundation — New Plastics Economy analysis.[12]

40%

40% of global deforestation is commodity driven. Agricultural commodities such as cattle, soy, palm oil and other products are major drivers of forest loss.

Source Global Forest Watch (WRI) [13]

In just one year

In just one year LETI Operational energy targets have been met by: 30,000 homes at masterplan level / 2,500 homes pre-construction.

Source LETI, April 2020—April 2021

96%

96% of the world's mammal biomass is humans + livestock. Wild mammals account for just 4%.

Source Dasgupta Review (2021); underlying biomass estimates from Bar-On et al. (PNAS, 2018).[14]

70%

70% of bird biomass is farmed poultry Domesticated poultry outweighs wild birds by roughly 3:1.

Source Bar-On, Phillips & Milo, PNAS, "The biomass distribution on Earth" (2018).[15]

Two thirds

Two thirds of people in UK want action now to save planet.

Source Greener UK / Climate Coalition

10 https://www.wri.org/research/aqueduct-floods-methodology?utm_source=chatgpt.com

11 https://vb.nweurope.eu/projects/project-search/fcrbe-facilitating-the-circulation-of-reclaimed-building-elements-in-northwestern-europe/?page=2&tab=%2C%2C%2C%2C%2C%2C%2C%C2%A0&utm_source=chatgpt.com

12 https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/the-new-plastics-economy-rethinking-the-future-of-plastics-and-catalysing

13 https://globalnaturewatch.org/topics/commodities/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

14 https://catalogue.unccd.int/1659_Dasgupta_Review_-_Full_Report.pdf?utm_source

15 https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.1711842115

Architects Declare

The AD movement is about encouragement, with every signatory organisation expected to self-govern its progress toward achieving the declaration commitments it has made.

Architects Declare (AD) formed in the UK in May 2019, as a declaration of Climate and Biodiversity Emergency, after the IPCC's 2018 report. AD is both a public declaration of our planet's environmental crises and a commitment to take positive urgent action in response to climate breakdown and biodiversity collapse.

AD's aim is to transform the built environment so that it is planned, constructed and operated within planetary boundaries delivering positive social benefits for all.

The AD movement is about encouragement, with every signatory organisation expected to self-govern its progress toward achieving the declaration commitments it has made. On the basis that no single architect is currently meeting every part of the radical commitment to change, a firm 'no public blame and shame' policy is in place.

AD is part of the wider Built Environment Declares movement which brings together a large number of professionals involved in the sector: architects, designers, landscape architects, engineers, project managers, surveyors, developers and estate managers, contractors, material suppliers, students, academics etc.

As of August 2026, 1,424 UK practices are signed up to UK Architects Declare, and over 8383 companies in 27 countries worldwide have declared a Climate and Biodiversity emergency under the wider umbrella of 'Built Environment Declares' (previously Construction Declares). This worldwide initiative continues to grow, with more countries and professions soon to initiate their own declarations. We hope that this growing awareness and recognition of the gravity of the crises humanity and nature face will help to provoke necessary change. We are starting to work together with our international sister organisations, sharing knowledge and galvanising energy across borders, and feeding knowledge back into the work we are doing in the UK. It feels only right that we address these global issues on an international platform.

In 2020, the UK Architects Declare Steering Group surveyed AD signatory Practices to understand how they were changing the way they operated and conducted business, and to identify barriers that individual Practices could not address alone. The survey found that, while most Practices had already made changes since joining the movement, significant work remained, and meeting the declaration commitments in full would be a longer-term aspiration. It also revealed that signatories wanted Architects Declare to be more than a moment of declaration: they sought a continual, supportive network that could bring their voices together, galvanise action and share knowledge. A key finding was the need for greater practical support in translating the declaration commitments into meaningful action. This led to the development of the Practice Guide, intended to help Practices move beyond good intentions and embed change within their work.

Since then, Architects Declare has evolved from supporting individual PracticesImpact Report towards measuring impact, sharing evidence and advocating for wider systemic change. Its 2024 , marking the movement's first five years, reflects on the progress achieved since 2019, while recognising that no Practice can claim to have "arrived" and that the transition remains challenging. The latest 2025 Impact Report[16] builds on this through AD's first annual survey of signatories, alongside impact stories and an overview of its work across Advocacy, Engagement, Guidance, Education and Paradigm Shift. Together, these reports demonstrate a shift from declaration towards ongoing action, learning and accountability, while highlighting the continued importance of collective working, knowledge-sharing and addressing the systemic barriers that individual Practices cannot overcome alone.

Most of all there needs to be a total shift in mindset and culture – a shift from an extractive, degenerative, linear mindset to a regenerative, circular, low carbon mind set. To effect system and mindset change we knew we needed a strategy for change. The next few years will be decisive in shaping our collective future—now is the moment to act.

16 https://bed-dev.com/uploads/UK-AD-assets/2025-AD-Impact-Report-final.pdf

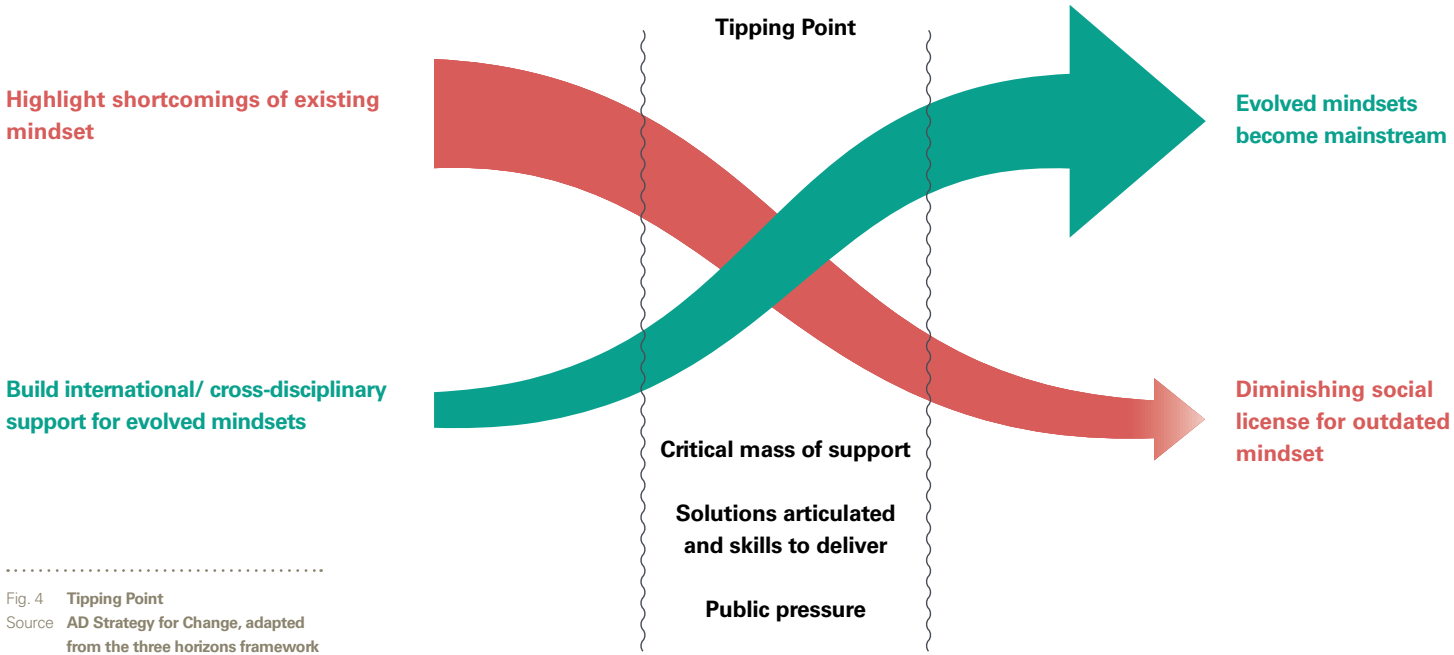


Fig. 4 **Tipping Point**
Source **AD Strategy for Change, adapted from the three horizons framework**

Our Strategy

30 years of conventional design accompanied by limited levels of 'sustainable' design have not got us even remotely near where we need to be. Indeed, the very term 'sustainable' has been hijacked and overused resulting in the continuation of business as usual. Soon after forming, the AD steering group instigated a workshop, led by consultants from the New Economics Foundation, which was to define our Strategy for Change based on understanding how change happens and the industry's capacity to effect that change.

The AD steering group's Strategy for Change is underpinned by the systems thinking of Donella Meadows and an understanding that the most effective way to effect change is by changing the paradigm or mindset out of which the system behaviour emerges. Current goals/economics are based on infinite growth, linear resource use and a view of nature as something to be plundered, it is this kind of thinking that has led to the emergency we find ourselves in. We need to move on from the current paradigm of merely targeting Sustainable design, which often simply mitigates negatives, into the realm of Regenerative design which strives for a net positive impact of our projects.

In preparing the proposed AD Strategy for Change the Steering group have also harnessed the Three Horizons thinking[17] which looks at three possible futures:

1. Business as usual
2. Disruptive innovations (H positive—good; and H negative—bad)
3. A positive Vision of a Future within planetary boundaries.

This was featured more extensively as a tool for enabling regenerative design thinking in our second AD event Ideas into Action[18].

17 www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5KfRQJqpPU

18 https://uk.architectsdeclare.com/resources#architects-declare-resource

The declaration points



1 Raise awareness

Raise awareness of the climate and biodiversity emergencies and the urgent need for action amongst our clients and supply chains.



2 Change fast

Advocate for faster change in our industry towards regenerative design practices and a higher Governmental funding priority to support this.



3 New goals

Establish climate and biodiversity mitigation principles as the key measure of our industry's success: demonstrated through awards, prizes and listings.



4 Share knowledge

Share knowledge and research to that end on an open source basis.



5 Evaluate projects

Evaluate all new projects against the aspi–ration to contribute positively to mitigating climate breakdown and encourage our clients to adopt this approach.



6 Upgrade existing

Upgrade existing buildings for extended use as a more carbon efficient alternative to demolition and new build whenever there is a viable choice.



7 Whole life

Include life cycle costing, whole life carbon modelling and post occupancy evaluation as part of our basic scope of work, to reduce both embodied and operational resource use.



8 Regenerative design

Adopt more regenerative design principles in our studios, with the aim of designing architecture and urbanism that goes beyond the standard of net zero carbon in use.



9 Collaborate & reduce

Collaborate with engineers, contractors and clients to further reduce construction waste.



10 Low carbon

Accelerate the shift to low embodied carbon materials in all our work.



11 Minimise waste

Minimise wasteful use of resources in architecture and urban planning, both in quantum and in detail.



12 Climate justice

Support those who are working for climate justice and strive to ensure equity and an improved quality of life for all.

Purpose of this guide and how to use it

This Guide is designed to assist practices of all sizes—and at any stage in their journey on the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency—as they seek to fulfil their commitments to our shared declaration.

One of the declaration points is to share knowledge and research on an open source basis, and this guide helps us to fulfil this. As such, we expect it to be a live working document which will evolve and be refined through the sharing of research and experience, as our understanding of the climate and biodiversity crises develops, and as our industry innovates to find new solutions to the problems we face.

Throughout the guide we have named suppliers, methods and frameworks which our authors have experience of. We included these specifics to help clarify our intention but encourage practices to do their own due diligence on specific services.

There are two key areas of influence that each AD Signatory has, through which they can emulate and contribute to the climate and biodiversity goals set out by the AD Declaration points. These areas are: Practice operations and Project work, both are important and may overlap or be in dialogue with each other.

For the purposes of clarity the AD Practice Guide is structured in two parts:

Part 1 Practice Roadmap looking at the overall business strategy and operations

Part 2 Project Design Guide which focuses on day-to day guidance for project work

Given the evolving nature of the subject matters the content of the guide will evolve over time and we hope it will generate further debate. In accordance with Point 4 of the AD Declaration, we would welcome feedback and we intend to review and update the document as our knowledge base increases collaboratively, so please send any feedback to the AD Practice Guide working group here info@architectsdeclare.com.

We have adapted the AD Practice Guide into 10 separate sections that can be updated as and when necessary but read also as a single document.

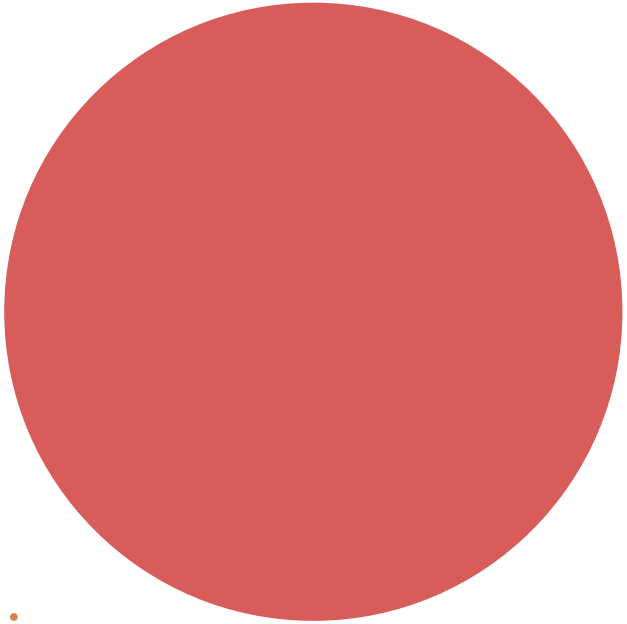


Fig. 5 **Comparing office projects**
Source **Haworth Tompkins**

"Typically an architectural practice will build or refurb at least 100 times the area of their own office each year and major building work presents much bigger opportunities than just inhabiting or using a building so a practice's design work is around 1000 times as significant in terms of pure carbon accounting. The practice's premises are important in terms of setting the right culture and showing your staff and visitors that you are committed."

Michael Pawlyn
Exploration Architecture

PART 1
PRACTICE ROADMAP

Practices have signed up to Architects Declare in recognition of the climate and biodiversity emergency and the recognition that, as a profession, architects are very much part of the problem. In signing the declaration, we all have acknowledged that we should be leaders in developing solutions. This requires answers to some very practical questions: do we know how much energy our designs are using? How do we practically engage with the clients, consultants, and everyone working in our practices, to reach the goals we signed up to?

The original Architects Declare UK Practice Guide was published in 2021, at the start of a critical decade for our response to the Climate Emergency. Five years later, halfway to 2030, we are refreshing the guide following feedback from across industry.

The built environment industry creates around 37% of global carbon emissions.[19] 2025 was the hottest recorded year in the UK. 2026 is hotter and drier still. Rainfall is down. Wind speeds are up. Wild fires are burning across Europe. The impacts of climate change are not only tangible, but are increasingly dangerous. The urgency with which we must act is only increasing.

We still recognise that for our signatories to meet all of the Architects Declare declaration points[20] will involve collectively building a new culture of practice committed to decarbonisation, regenerative design and advocacy.

This Roadmap has helped some of our signatories transition from standard practice towards a more regenerative culture but we have new signatories and experienced practices who need to push on.

The guide is organised by five steps defining a path to a regenerative future. It should be read alongside all chapters including the AD Regenerative Design Primer which encourages a rounded way of thinking about the implications of our actions through 'Being a good ancestor', 'Co-evolving with nature' and 'Creating a just space for people'.

The steps in this guide are not intended to be prescriptive and can be applied to practices of all sizes. We have provided a template at the end of this guide that you can tailor according to your practice's specific characteristics or needs.

The guide is structured in five sections:

1 **Align and commit**
2 **Understand impact**
3 **Put your house in order**
4 **Collaborate and educate**
5 **Close the loop**

In these five sections, the guide providespractical guidance for structuring sustainability strategies, five-year plans, and roadmaps. It helps practices define goals, metrics, and actions, supporting new commitments and pathways. It serves as a reference point for practices beginning or reassessing their sustainability journey.

It is a reference to validate existing strategies and confirm alignment with broader sustainability goals. It should be used alongside other resources such as LETI, RIBA outcomes, or the AIA 2030 challenge. It should help review operations, guide immediate actions, and support long-term reflection on progress and gaps.

The guide supports knowledge sharing and organisational engagement. It should help you to drive changes such as appointing Sustainability Leads and delivering staff training to improve climate literacy. Practices use it to measure, reflect, and iterate continuously, embedding an ongoing cycle of learning, improvement, and cultural change.

Many signatories will already have progressed through some of the steps we suggest. We hope this guide gives confidence on the route you are travelling and provides extra ideas for you to develop and areas to advocate for change beyond the practice.

19 https://www.unep.org/topics/energy/buildings

20 https://uk.architectsdeclare.com/

1 Align and commit

This guide is about a journey. It is intended to help your practice develop a shared understanding of the climate and biodiversity emergency we face, what our declaration points mean and to provide practical steps to make meaningful and urgent change.

Align values

- Host a 'no-blame' democratic climate emergency roundtable discussion in your office, open to all practice members.
- An external facilitator may help provide neutral safe space for all voices to be equally heard.The workshop can be relatively short but should cover both project work and practice operation impacts.
- Commitments can be aligned with existing business plans, internal goals, or financial targets, enabling indirect progress tracking through related milestones like ISO14001, RIBA Sustainable Outcomes, SBTi, BCorp etc.
- Share values and progress internally through reports or meetings to maintain staff awareness.

Additional step for larger practices

- Instigate discussions between Partners/ Directors/Principals and all employees, encourage debate and transparency.

Commit to action

- Review and discuss the various frameworks and commitments available then map them against the practices previous work, to find alignment or measure gaps.
- Set in motion an exercise to re-define practice values, goals and appropriate project targets which are reported, ideally publicly, against a timeframe.
- Assign time, resources and budget to tackling next steps—For example: 1 person for 1 day / month for small practices (1-10 people) and up to 3 dedicated people within large practices (50+ people).
- Commit to practice operations targets such as the UN Race to Zero or Science Based Targets[21]
- Commit to a public declaration and regular publishing of progress.
- Commit to project targets such as the RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge, the WorldGBC's Net Zero Carbon Buildings Commitment or the UK Net Zero Carbon Building Standard.
- Initially, tracking can be informal and embedded in broader discussions, but a pathway towards a formal system should be developed.

Additional steps for larger practices

- Define responsibilities for actions, taking account of office structure and locations, and work typologies and sectors.
- Ensure alignment between management groups and across different office locations, taking into account differences in international markets and legislative contexts.

21 https://sciencebasedtargets.org/

Commitment	Covers Practice	Covers Projects	Metrics
Architects Declare www.architectsdeclare.com	✓	✓	
RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge www.architecture.com/about/policy/climate-action/2030-climate-challenge		✓	✓
LETI www.leti.london/carbonalignment		✓	✓
UN Race to Zero www.unfccc.int/climate-action/race-to-zero-campaign	✓		✓
UKGBC Net Zero Carbon Buildings Commitment www.ukgbc.org/ukgbc-work/thecommitment		✓	✓

Fig. 6 **Comparisons of declarations**
Source **Architects Declare**

"Since signing UK Architects Declare in 2019, our commitment has played an important role in shaping our ambitions as a practice, the goals we set for our projects and the way we challenge project briefs. The first version of the Practice Guide has provided a valuable framework for developing our sustainable design roadmap, helping us critically assess our work, identify key themes to guide our ambitions and foster meaningful debate within the practice."

Caterina Mangia
David Chipperfield Architects

2 Understanding impact

Once you have committed to action it's important to take time to carefully understand the environmental impact of the practice, recognising that as architects our business operations are likely to be dwarfed by our project impacts. Despite that imbalance it's important to understand that our business impacts are within our direct control and having them well understood will make it easier to advocate for change with our clients and contractors, who are directly responsible for the project impacts.

Measure business related carbon emission impacts

- Carry out carbon footprint assessment of office and operations, covering as many scopes as possible in accordance with the GHG protocols (LINK). Use a third-party calculator and dashboard if helpful
- Produce (and ideally publish) a Carbon Transition Action Plan (CTAP). Ensure this is understood across the business[22].
- Commit to publishing operational carbon intensity annually. This could be reported alongside existing financial reporting commitments or as part of Science Based Target reporting commitments. It could also be a stand alone statement on your practice website.
- Host an open discussion around the results, with clear graphs identifying carbon hotspots and showing relative impact of various personal and office choices. Assess biodiversity & biophilic design around the office.
- Measure air quality within the office (CO_2 level, VOCs, Temp & humidity) then discuss factors which affect these results.
- Increase carbon literacy by sharing an example of a personal carbon footprint and encourage staff to carry out their own footprint assessment to help them understand typical impacts. The Carbon Literacy Project[23] have some free resources and links to online courses.

Additional steps for larger practices

- Make public carbon reduction commitments aligned with national reduction pathways.
- Upgrade building fabric, windows & ventilation in your office(s).
- Install renewable energy sources on your premises (potentially through partnership with local NGOs such as Power Up North London).

Measure project imapcts

- Carry out a full Life Cycle Assessment or Whole Life Carbon analysis for at least one project in each sector which the practice works in, or on typical elements and build-ups on projects.
- Create a library of components that have been carbon assessed to learn from e.g. facade panels, floor build ups, ceiling build-ups.
- Calculate Whole Life Carbon impact of practice's project work, annually. Benchmark against the Net Zero Carbon Building Standard (NZCBS).
- Set targets to review impacts of your projects and reduce every 6-12 months; this should be aligned with operational carbon reduction trajectories.
- For more detail on measuring and reducing project impact see Part 2 of this guide, which starts on p.33.

Additional steps for larger practices

- Estimate Whole Life Carbon impact of practice's project work, annually.
- Report against external commitments and explain assessment methods.
- Compare client aspiration for highly sustainable/regenerative design across each sector with a view to advocating for change.

22 https://www.usefulsimple.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/UST_Climate-Transition-Action-Plan.pdf

23 https://carbonliteracy.com/

Personal Impact
Average Footprint Globally
4.7 tCO_2e
Source Our World in Data

Personal Impact
Average Footprint UK Citizen
10 tCO_2e
Source Mike Berners Lee

Practice Impact
Small Practice
11 tCO_2e
Scope 1-3, 2026
Source Collective Works 2026

Practice Impact
Single house
Whole Life Carbon
Proposed 138 tCO_2e
Source Collective Works 2026

Project Impact
SME
275 tCO_2e
Scope 1–3, 2024–2025
Source Haworth Tompkins 2026

Project Impact
Largescale housing
22,045 tCO2e
Lifecycle stages A–C, completed 2025
Source Haworth Tompkins 2026

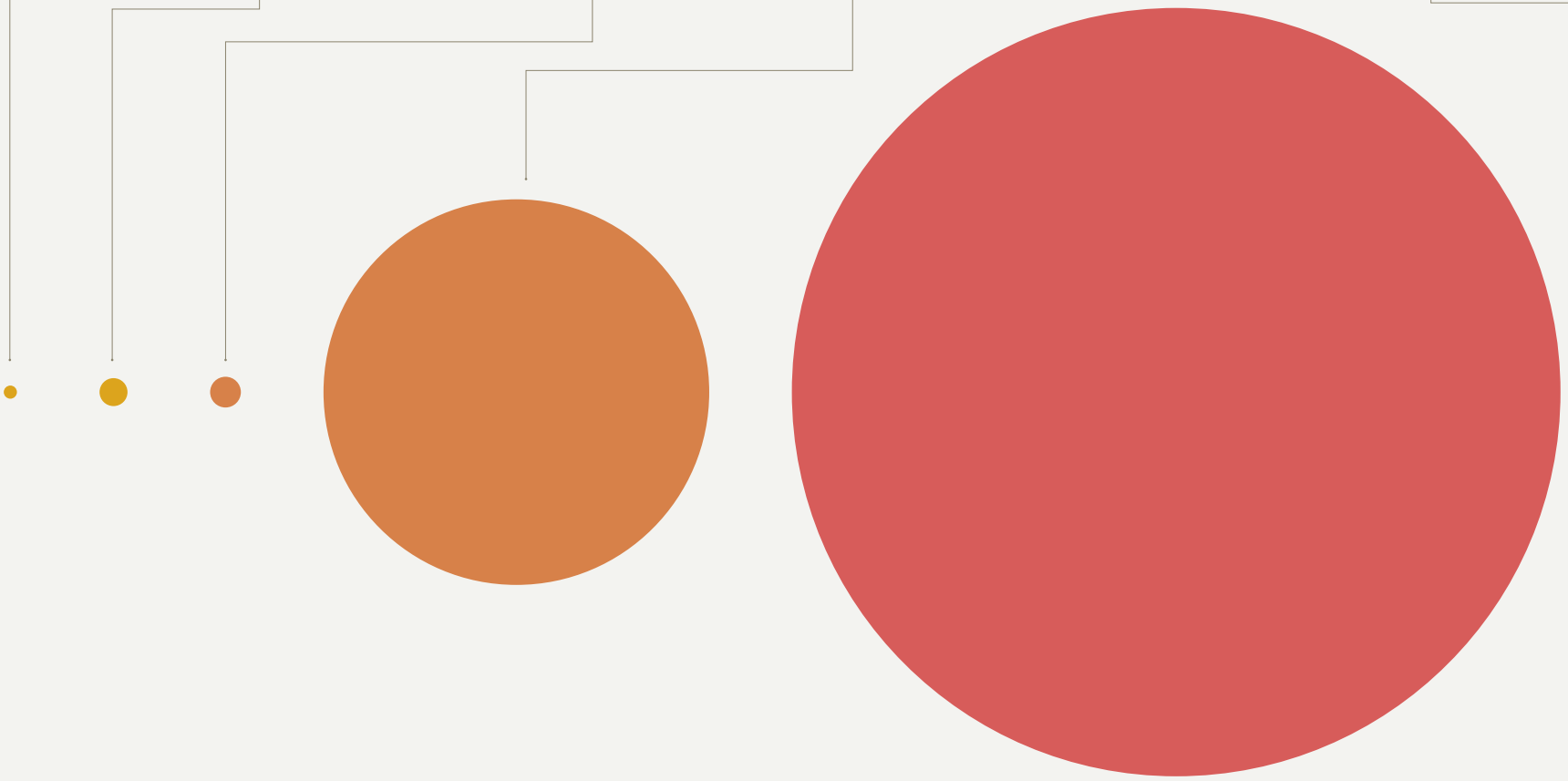


Fig. 7 **Comparing personal, practice and project impacts**

Office carbon footprint examples

- https://www.ahmm.co.uk/expertise/sustainability/ahmm-carbon-emissions/
- https://www.carbontrust.com/our-work-and-impact/guides-reports-and-tools/sme-carbon-footprint-calculator
- https://www.bennettsassociates.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/260714-Bennetts-Associates-Carbon-Footprint-Net-Zero-Roadmap-2026-Insights-2.pdf
- UST_Climate-Transition-Action-Plan.pdf
- 250707_USL-1067_UST-Impact-Report-24_DD_v7_Digital.pdf
- MICA Carbon Reduction Plan 2025

Project carbon calculators

- FCBS Carbon
- https://studiobark.co.uk/resources/smallcarbon
- www.ahmm.co.uk/expertise/sustainability/delivering-net-zero-in-use-toolkit/
- H\B:ERT V2 & VERT | Hawkins\Brown
- One Click
- Morgan Sindall uses CarboniCa on construction projects to reduce whole life carbon | Morgan Sindall Construction

Personal impact tools

- WWF carbon footprint tool footprint wwf.org.uk/
- www.footprintcalculator.org/
- https://ecological-footprint-calculator.climatehero.org/

See examples above or on p. 36 for solutions to reduce the office carbon footprint.

Tool	Country of origin	Applicable to the UK?	Project type	Online/ offline	Scope	Data source
One Click LCA	Finland	Yes	Buildings and infrastructure	Online	Modules A–C (+D)	Built-in with access to some of the most widely spread local EPD databases, including Ecoinvent which contains generic LCA data.
eToolCD	Australia	Yes	Buildings and infrastructure	Online	Modules A–C (+D)	Uses Ecoinvent database (EPDs) which includes data by the Building Research Establishment in the UK
Tally	USA	Yes	Buildings	Both	Modules A–C	Uses GABI database which contains EPDs and US generic data.
Sturgis Carbon Calculator	UK	Yes	Buildings	Online	Modules A–C	EPD database built over more than 10 years of practice in the UK. It allows the possibility to input additionally EPDs manually.

"At RSHP we are committed to a net zero pathway following the science-based targets, limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 °C. These targets cover all aspects of our operations (Scope 1, 2, and 3), including all our overseas offices. We have been tracking our carbon footprint since 2019, with an offsetting commitment following the Oxford ramp-up approach with permanent carbon removal projects"

Michelle Sanchez
RSHP

3 Put your house in order

Once you have understood your impact you'll be in a much better position to make meaningful changes. We suggest tackling the business side first, starting with the overall structure and then focussing on energy, transport, products, services and waste, using GHG protocol reporting as a consistent year-on-year metric.

Once these changes are underway you should focus on upskilling to ensure that the practice design work, which has a larger overall footprint, is as sustainable as it can be. As you progress, keeping staff engaged and sharing ideas will help to maintain momentum and ownership as your new strategies emerge.

Reduce Business Impacts

Governance & finance

- Gain an external accreditation of practice strategy such as an ISO 14001 or B Corp certification. These provide external visibility of the strategic work you do and can also be invaluable when bidding for work.
- Consider alternative ownership structure such as an Employee Owned Trust or Social Enterprise.
- Investigate R&D tax credits for research work.
- Consider impacts from financial services. Review pension funds e.g. Ethical Consumer[24] for divestment opportunities and check the ethical credentials of your bank then consider switching.
- Transparent publication of annual carbon footprint results.
- Share an example of a personal carbon footprint and encourage staff to carry out a personal carbon and ecological footprint assessment to help them understand typical impacts and increase carbon literacy. Carbon Hero have a methodology: Ecological footprint calculator[25].

Energy

- Agree annual energy targets for the office use benchmarks from the UKNZCBS.
- Implement tangible improvement strategies against key milestones and ensure IT infrastructure is energy efficient—e.g. nighttime shutdown.
- Try to isolate and monitor AI use. The implications of energy and water use are currently opaque but as users, we should try to understand our use ahead of data availability from suppliers.
- Measure energy use by home workers. Culture for Climate Scotland has guidance.[26]
- Publicise environmental credentials around the office and create a very simple building user guide with insights from team.
- Negotiate with your landlord if changes to energy supplier, lighting or HVAC are desirable. The UK Green Building Council has published guidance on renewable energy procurement.[27]
- Consider opportunities for agile and shared use of office space.

Additional steps for larger practices

- Carry out ESOS assessment in line with Government requirements.
- Discuss green lease options with landlords.
- Upgrade building fabric, windows and ventilation.
- Install renewable energy sources on your premises (potentially through partnership with local NGOs such as Power Up North London[28].

24 https://www.ethicalconsumer.org

25 https://ecological-footprint-calculator.climatehero.org/

26 https://cultureforclimate.scot/guide/guide-to-measuring-impact-on-emissions-from-home-working/

27 https://ukgbc.org/resources/renewable-energy-procurement-part-2/

28 https://www.powerupnorthlondon.org/

Reduce Business Impacts

Transport

- Undertake commuting and business travel survey then support staff in swapping to lower carbon commuting.
- Allow people to work en-route to holiday by offering additional flexibility for slow travel: sustainabletravelleave.org[29].
- Enable staff to access meetings remotely to avoid commuting—learn from the positives of the pandemic.

Additional steps for larger practices

- Identify a sustainable travel champion and develop a sustainable travel plan.
- Provide showers, lockers, changing spaces and secure indoor storage for bikes.
- Develop a Sustainable Travel Policy -especially those practices engaged in international projects which may require long distance travel. WWF have a good example[30].

Products and services

- Review major office spending and switch to local and low impact suppliers where possible.
- Organise fewer deliveries by sharing with nearby practices and neighbouring businesses.
- Investigate Green data providers and low carbon hosting services.

Additional steps for larger practices

- If you provide food in the office, implement a switch to low-carbon, plant-based, local and fair trade alternatives; promote plant-based catering, no GMOs, no RSPO palm oil, plastic-free packaging.
- See WELL Building Standard for more ideas.

Waste

- Engage in understanding quantities of material used and waste from your business operations.
- Consider Terracycle (or other) for non-standard waste streams: terracycle.com[31]
- Eliminate SUP (single use plastic).
- Ensure e-waste recycling system in place and IT waste generation is minimised through responsible procurement policies.

Additional steps for larger practices

- Target zero waste to landfill.
- Develop protocols for hazardous waste,

29 https://www.sustainabletravelleave.org

30 https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/WWF-UK%20Sustainable%20Travel%20Policy%202023.pdf

31 https://www.terracycle.com



Governance

- Mission and engagement
- Ethics and transparency



Environment

- Environmental Management
- Air and Climate
- Water
- Land and Life



Workers

- Financial security
- Health, wellness and safety
- Career development
- Engagement and satisfaction



Community

- Diversity, equity and inclusion
- Economic impact
- Civic engagement and giving
- Supply chain management



Customers

- Customer Stewardship

Fig. 9 **The five impact areas measured during the B–Corporation assessment process**

Reduce Project Impacts

Training and skilling up

- Identify training opportunities and use CPDs and in-house presentations to share knowledge amongst your peer network, invite experts to share their experience.
- Use the RIBA Climate Literacy Network RIBA Academy—Climate Literacy Video Series[32].
- The Climate Literacy Project[33] also has some good resources.
- Ask those who are already trained to train others in order to develop a learning culture and consider bi-weekly workshops on specific topics for upskilling.
- Identify roles and responsibilities for introducing change in your practice for two main areas: practice operations and design work, consider appointing a champion for each.
- Discuss resourcing options to support those staff who may be able to spend a half day or a full day per week/fortnight focusing on specific tasks.
- Consider recruitment to fill knowledge gaps within your office.

Update systems and libraries

- Build a Library of success stories: strategies, systems, processes and team structures which have worked well in the past.
- Ensure all staff are familiar with the RIBA 'Plan for Use' guidance and that the office implements this.
- Within project programmes set regular project reviews and sustainability kick-off meetings and use Project Quality Plan to monitor performance against agreed sustainability objectives.
- Ensure that all learning from project reviews and monitoring is fed back into the next design project—set up internal systems to enable this. See the Closing the Loop chapter [hyperlink]
- Identify gaps between intent and outcomes, review all output, and identify blocks to action and performance gaps.

Additional steps for larger practices

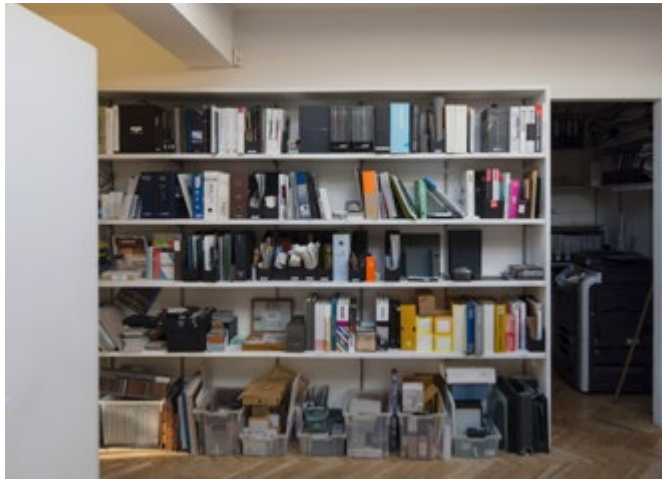
- Set tangible targets for each major typology within the practice.
- Include environmental impacts in material libraries.

Communicate across practice

- Make sure everyone in the practice knows they are an AD signatory and discuss the AD declaration points regularly to instill a sense of ownership.
- Define practice-wide, regular communication platform and include climate action on agenda for office away days.
- Maintain transparency and openness in regularly communicating progress, successes and shortfalls, on company website, newsletter and social media.

Additional step for larger practices

- Share action plan or roadmap with internal and external commitments internally and on company website, newsletter and social media.



Update systems and libraries

32 https://riba-academy.architecture.com/ilp/pages/description.jsf?menuId=1106#/users/@self/catalogues/150435/courses/493223/description

33 https://eu.patagonia.com/gb/en/actionworks/organizations/the-carbon-literacy-project/

"We are developing a toolkit specific to our office, to use as a guide to low carbon design and to measure how well our designs are doing in terms of form efficiency and embodied carbon."

Jennie Hunter
CZWG Architects



Training and skilling up

Practice structure

Engagement from the practice's leadership, including CEO, partners and directors, is crucial for the practice to be most effective as an AD signatory.

Re-appraise the business plan priorities and, if necessary, identify the type of work you now want to target as a result of being part of AD. Encourage open discussions regarding the ethics and trade offs of taking on projects generally and specifically on a case by case basis. Transparency in decision making is key. The RIBA has published an ethical practice guide to help guide decisions[34].

The way your organisation is structured and /or owned can influence how effective it is in meeting AD commitments. Kate Raworth's talk at the Architects Declare gathering in Nov 2019 makes the point well as part of the wider picture[35].

Collective responsibility for the studio's output, along with transparency of income and profit distribution, usually helps to foster a sense of common purpose and shared endeavour. Wider ownership such as an Employee-Owned Trust, B Corp or similar might be considered as an alternative practice model.

Some of the available structures, cert–ifications and standards for responsible and ethical business:

- B Corp – Certified B Corporation (e.g. Stride Treglown, Kennedy Woods, Expedition Engineering)
- SEUK – Registered Social Enterprise
- Employee Ownership Association (EBT/ EOT)
- ISO 26000 – Social Responsibility
- ISO 14001 – Environmental Management
- Science Based Targets Initiative
- EMAS – EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme
- Planet Mark Certified
- UNFCCC Climate Neutral Now Initiative
- IBE – Business Ethics Network
- Local sustainable business groups such as Heart of the City, Islington Sustainable Energy Partnership, Camden Climate Change Alliance + other Non-London examples.
- Carbon Literate Organisation

34 https://www.ribabooks.com/riba-ethical-practice-guide_9781914124723

35 www.vimeo.com/387734201

4 Collaborate and educate

Architecture is a team effort so once you have worked through your impact and made appropriate changes you are encouraged to engage with your clients and design teams to set ambitious targets for project performance. While having these discussions you will likely discover areas where policy and regulation don't align with best practice so you can join forces with others and lobby for change on such issues. Although there are clear spheres of influence within the industry you shouldn't underestimate the collective power we can have as advocates for a better built environment.

Communicate with clients

- Engage in discussions about the climate and biodiversity emergencies at the earliest stage on your projects—discussions of overall budget, life cycle costing and resilience can be introduced to find common ground with clients and establish shared values.
- Once the design team is appointed, revisit the discussion and identify allies on the team with knowledge of relevant performance.
- Encourage clients to take a long term view and to cost projects in this way. See Working with Clients section on page 28.
- Communicate your Architects Declare commitments to new and existing clients, consultants, suppliers, and stakeholders.
- Engage your wider professional network in conversations around Architects Declare and the wider Built Environment Declares movement. See Built Environment Declares Climate and Biodiversity Emergency[36].

Additional step for larger practices

- Advocate for life cycle costing, whole life carbon modelling and post occupancy evaluation to be part of the wider design team's basic scope of work, to reduce both embodied and operational resource use.

Collaborate with project team

- Engage in a stakeholder roundtable, identify common aims and areas of opportunity, highlight challenges and start to develop strategies to overcome them.
- Define project targets at each stage and monitor performance against them in design team meetings.
- Follow the e 2020 Plan of Work (PoW) Sustainability Strategy section and the RIBA Sustainable Outcomes Guide, in relation to the 2021 RIBA Plan for Use guidance.

Additional step for larger practices

- Discuss and agree the performance targets in your scope and contract with continuous monitoring and reporting at the outset of the team engagement process and review regularly at each RIBA PoW stage.

Advocate for change

- Share innovation with generosity and co-operation.
- Engage with national and local citizens groups and other NGOs , professional institutions, local MPs and local government officers and councillors on issues that matter to you.
- Consider supporting relevant networks, action groups and campaigns which promote sustainable design, circular economies and climate literacy e.g. AECB, LETI, ACAN, Passivhaus Trust, Association for Sustainable Building Products.
- Join the Heads of Sustainability group who share knowledge in a supportive and collaborative manor across the profession.
- Consider joining Architects Declare Regional meetings and contribute to the Architects Declare Working Groups.
- Individual architects to consider joining ACAN and their working groups.
- Join your regional Architects Declare group: hello@architectsdeclares.com
- See all UK signatories practices here: uk.architectsdeclare.com

Additional step for larger practices

- Use your influence responsibly and advocate for positive change.

36 https://structuralengineersdeclare.com/



Advocacy and knowledge guidance networks

ASBP
Alliance for Sustainable Building Products
www.asbp.org.uk

AECB building knowledge
Association for Environment Conscious Building
www.aecb.net

ARCHITECTS CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK
Architects Climate Action Network
www.architectscan.org

LETI
London Energy Transformation Initiative
www.leti.london

Passivhaus Trust
Passivhaus Trust
www.passivhaustrust.org.uk

UK GBC
UK Green Building Council
www.ukgbc.org

5 Close the loop

Successes should be celebrated and failures learned from by understanding how decisions have influenced outcomes, through post occupancy evaluation. Lessons from sustainable projects can be undrstood, problems mitigated and effective strategies repeated to improve our work. This is important, not just for our practice, but for the wider industry, who need to be better at sharing knowledge and celebrating buildings designed within planetary limits

Review and improve

- The journey to regenerative practice is not a linear one. AD recognises the need to reflect on what we have done. Depending on the scale of a practice, changes might not be revolutionary but a slow evolution in working methods. This is okay! Incremental steps towards our goals should be recognized and reflected upon.
- Review and update the internal and external commitments which the practice has set and share the results with the entire office.
- Encourage feedback and reflection on successful initiatives as well as those that struggled to gain traction.
- Monitor and Report on Project Performance—While many clients and organisations believe that they are already fully engaged with reviewing the performance of their projects, there is still very little actual reviewing and evaluation of building performance at the in-use stage.
- Revisit targets and set stretch goals.
- Adjust resourcing to allow time and budget for review and feedback.
- Provide client post completion services through engagement in RIBA stage 7.
- See Part 2, Chapter 5: Designing for Performance.

Additional step for larger practices

- Feedback to teams to improve Design Process and Decisions
- Help with the definition of benchmark targets across industry

Celebrate success

- Share stories of most sustainable projects (see Part 2, Chapter 5 Designing for Performance, Feedback & Closing the Performance Gap) and consider entering them for relevant awards.
- Consider entering projects 1–2 years after occupation, when it has been possible to conduct BPE/POE—note recent changes to RIBA competition data requirements.
- Offer up data within press releases as increasingly even to publish a project online or in a publication one needs to provide info on the project's operational energy and embodied carbon.
- Celebrate successes by sharing stories of sustainable projects and submit\ting them for relevant awards, for example the Regenerative Architecture Index.



Available awards with a sustainability focus

- AT/AD Regenerative Architecture Index

- RIBAJ MacEwen Award—
  Recognising architecture for the common good
- RIBA Regional Sustainability Awards
- RIBA Stirling Prize

- Architecture Today Test of Time Awards

- AJ Retrofit Awards
- AJ100 Sustainability Champion
- AJ100 Sustainability Initiative

- NLA Don't Move Improve—Environmental Leadership Prize
- ASBP Awards—Ideas For A Better Built Environment

- Dezeen Sustainable building
- Dezeen Sustainable interior
- Dezeen Sustainable design

- Lafarge Holcim Awards for Sustainable Construction

- CIBSE Building Performance Awards

"MICA is delighted to continue to be an active participant in Architects' Declare, a group that continually challenges to assess our commitment to the environment, the planet as well as our clients and people, aspects that are enshrined by our BCorp status. The UK drought and wildfires of summer 2026 and the climate events anticipated to follow with El Nino this year are a stark reminder that these actions have never been more urgent."

Jessie Turnbull
MICA Architects

Working with clients



How to engage with a client

- Set up a Sustainability and Regenerative design workshop with the client and design team at the start of the project (RIBA Stages 0-1 or 2). Refer the the AD Regenerative Design Primer.
- Advocate and agree best practice targets for operational energy, embodied carbon, material re-use, potable water use, biodiversity and habitat increase, post occupancy evaluation and reporting on meter data after building completion.
- Refer to RIBA Sustainable outcomes guide, RIBA plan of work Sustainability Overlay, LETI publications, Living Building Challenge and the UKNZCBS.
- Advise on any specialist appointments required to meet targets e.g. to provide analysis of operational energy, to audit materials for re-use, to assess biodiversity uplift potential, to provide whole life carbon and circular economy assessments. Ideally appoint specialists early to influence the design from concept.
- Track progress at each work stage. Identify deliverables and assign responsibility for each action.
- Ensure that your client understands the benefits of building to higher environmental standards e.g. targeting Passivhaus certification can improve construction quality resulting in robust buildings that are easier to maintain.
- Ensure that your client understands the risk associated with not targeting low energy design from the outset and the high cost penalties for retrofitting buildings within the first 10-20 years of their life.
- Advocate that your clients consider future-proof design solutions that increase resilience to climate change and extreme weather patterns i.e. designing to reduce overheating risk, provision of a heatwave strategy, increase biodiversity and natural habitat, consideration of drainage (SUDs) and flood mitigation.
- Explain the importance of retaining an architect from inception to completion in order to achieve project sustainability targets.
- If you inherit a project, take this opportunity to improve its sustainability credentials. Set up a workshop with the client to review the opportunities to improve its sustainability targets, advocate for capital and lifecycle costs to be taken into consideration. Focus on improving energy efficiency, reducing construction waste through materials and specification and by working with contractors to develop good onsite practices.

Key considerations for advising clients

How to engage with a client

- Set up a Sustainability and Regenerative design workshop with the client and design team at the start of the project (RIBA Stages 0-1 or 2). Refer the the AD Regenerative Design Primer [weblink].
- Advocate and agree best practice targets for operational energy, embodied carbon, material re-use, potable water use, biodiversity and habitat increase, post occupancy evaluation and reporting on meter data after building completion.
- Refer to RIBA Sustainable outcomes guide, RIBA plan of work Sustainability Overlay, LETI publications, Living Building Challenge and the UKNZCBS.
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- Explain the importance of retaining an architect from inception to completion in order to achieve project sustainability targets.
- If you inherit a project, take this opportunity to improve its sustainability credentials. Set up a workshop with the client to review the opportunities to improve its sustainability targets, advocate for capital and lifecycle costs to be taken into consideration. Focus on improving energy efficiency, reducing construction waste through materials and specification and by working with contractors to develop good onsite practices.

Smaller /Private Clients

- Smaller and private clients with less experience may require additional support to guide them towards the most sustainable outcome. This will rely on interpreting the client's brief to integrate clear sustainability targets at the outset and clear communication. It is important to stress the long-term benefits of a sustainable approach to gain client buy-in and avoid only satisfying short-term objectives. It may also be necessary to explain the urgency of the climate emergency and point towards industry guidance and evidence to support these targets.
- Consider stressing the benefits of targeting higher building performance specifications including:
  - improvements to building energy efficiency could lower energy bills,
  - investing in high performing building fabric could improve indoor comfort, as well as the health and wellbeing of occupants,
  - good environmental design could reduce the overheating risk, and
  - avoids the need for retrofitting in future.
- Highlight the importance of specialist involvement when required, and be upfront about the cost and programme requirements.
- Be sensitive to any client pressures but ensure there is adequate time and budget for the effective coordination and delivery of a quality output.
- Where there are constraints due to low client aspirations, limited budget or challenging site conditions target the big wins which provide the largest energy and carbon savings.
- It is important to stress the long-term benefits of a sustainable approach to gain client buy-in.

Most local authorities and public institutions have declared a climate emergency already, so suggest ways in which the project will help achieve their targets.

Housing Associations (HA)

- Housing Associations have a particular ethos, as they remain solely responsible for the whole life of their assets. As such Housing Associations are often interested in how to make their stock more sustainable and easier to maintain in the long run. They often have their own sustainability policies but it is still important to debunk myths and overcome concerns about the installation and maintenance of renewable technology, heating and ventilation systems.
- Identify a Sustainability Champion in the HA and work with them to develop or respond to the project brief, alongside other stakeholders
- Review the HA Sustainable Design Guide and Employers requirements. Raise any concerns related to climate literacy and sustainable design. Identify any areas that are missing and suggest they update their documents e.g. to include embodied carbon emissions, low carbon technologies and POE requirements.
- Ideally ensure tenants are engaged with the design and POE development process - this will increase their sense of environmental stewardship for the homes they live in and the project as a whole. Include tenants in monitoring biodiversity. Engage with facilities managers to provide lessons learnt from existing buildings and improve the design to reduce maintenance.
- Explain how passive design should be the starting point for reducing energy demand.

Local Authorities/Public Institutions (LA)

- Most local authorities and public institutions have declared a climate emergency already, so suggest ways in which the project will help achieve their targets. If no climate action plan exists already, consider writing to LA with solutions as the ones outlined in Friends of the Earth local authorities climate action plan checklist and ACAN Embodied Carbon group's briefing note to local authorities.
- Identify a Sustainability Champion within the LA to work alongside other stakeholders when developing the brief or responding to a brief.
- Review local plans and policies that already exist. Look for best practice in the local authority's portfolio, or to exemplars by other local authorities if none to date.
- Review local authorities' data and map resources to ensure the project is appropriate at the strategic level.
- Focus on their sustainability policies and review these as necessary to ensure they include all relevant areas that might be missing e.g. embodied carbon, POE.
- Explain how excellent building fabric and energy efficient design should be the starting point for reducing energy demand before considering other climate change mitigation measures : extra insulation is not hugely expensive, but providing more services and systems can be costly.
- Discuss availability of funding streams that support low-energy building, especially those supporting a retrofit-first approach. Consider procurement methods that could be available to LA and schemes that exist already e.g. Energiesprong.

Many clients will have their own sustainability policies in place; however, it is important to identify how these can be implemented efficiently and how to avoid greenwashing solutions.

Larger/Developer Clients

Larger commercial clients and developers may be more concerned with the initial investment or the capital value of their asset rather than the long-term benefits of sustainable targets. However, it is still possible to make the business case to invest in more sustainable objectives as there is a growing demand for low energy building solutions. Additionally building regulations, policy, and financing are likely to shift towards these objectives in future which could render the current business-as-usual model obsolete. Many clients will have their own sustainability policies in place; however, it is important to identify how these can be implemented efficiently and how to avoid greenwashing solutions.

- Review the client's sustainability policy and identify what their priorities are. Use these to inform the approach and qualify design decisions on the project. Recommend that your client follows best practice targets and any appropriate environmental certifications schemes that will lead to more sustainable outcomes e.g. LETI design guidance, RIBA Sustainable Outcomes report, UKGBC Net zero carbon buildings framework, etc). Avoid 'green' certifications just for the sake of marketing.
- Stress that building regulations are shifting towards improving energy efficiency and incentivising heat pumps over gas boilers. Investing in delivering these targets sooner rather than later will pay diffidence and de-risk the transition when regulations catch up.
- Learn what climate literacy capabilities exist within the client organisation and project team, as well as within the design team. Seek additional specialist input where needed.
- Work on an interdisciplinary basis to develop the sustainable design strategy for the project.
- Research similar size developers who are leading on sustainability in that sector and hold them up as exemplars and show that this has enabled their success. Appeal to their ambition and suggest that they can do better than their competitors by getting ahead in this market.
- Work with clients to develop their climate crisis policies to promote their brand.
- When reviewing your client's portfolio, advise against the creation of stranded assets that become too expensive to run or refurbish in the near future. Recommend that existing assets are refurbished over demolition where this is safe and practical to do so (use Whole life carbon assessments to assess whether refurbishment, deconstruction for re-assembly, or new build is the best option). Advise that new build assets target excellent fabric performance to ensure the energy demand is low and will fit within a decarbonised grid.
- Work with the client to future prooftheir portfolio i.e. resilient to future climate change scenarios, avoids fossil fuel and is, energy efficient.
- For design and build procurement ensure that good environmental performance specifications are included within Employer's Requirements.
- Work with clients to demonstrate the long-term benefits of life cycle costing when investing in low energy solutions.

Where can I dig deeper?

Measuring office impact

www.carbontrust.com/resources/briefing-what-are-scope-3-emissions

www.recyclenation.com/2015/08/15-ways-your-office-can-reduce-its-carbon-footprint

www.bennettsassociates.com/sustainability

www.ahmm.co.uk/expertise/sustainability

www.haworthtompkins.com/studio/regenerative-design/our-carbon-footprint-report-2019

climax.community/climate-essentials

Measuring project impact

LETI publications www.leti.london/publications

RIBA Sustainable Outcomes www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/sustainable-outcomes-guide which includes the RIBA Challenge 2030 www.architecture.com/about/policy/climate-action/2030-climate-challenge

Net Zero Carbon Buildings—A Framework Definition, UKGBC

Embodied and Whole Life Carbon Assessment for Architects—RIBA

RICS Whole Life Carbon Assessment for the Built Environment www.rics.org/uk/upholding-professional-standards/sector-standards/building-surveying/whole-life-carbon-assessment-for-the-built-environment

www.architecture.com/awards-and-competitions-landing-page/awards/riba-presidents-awards-for-research/2020/the-hawkins-brown-emission-reduction-tool

RIBA POE primer: https://www.riba.org/media/wrelsxu3/ribapoebpeprimerpdf.pdf

AHMM Net Zero Carbon Toolkit: https://www.ahmm.co.uk/expertise/sustainability/delivering-net-zero-in-use-toolkit/

The Embodied Biodiversity Impacts of Construction Materials https://expedition.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/231103_Embodied-Biodiversity_Report_Compressed.pdf

Skilling up

UKGBC (UK Green Building Council) Virtual Learning Portfolio

RIBA Academy: access to the RIBA academy is free to RIBA members. The academy is currently offering CPD courses on Passivhaus principles and design, fire safety for designers, community engagement strategies and off-site construction.

Architects Declare/LETI Masterclasses

AECB—Association of Environment Conscious Building

ASBP—The Alliance for Sustainable Building Products

Green Building Store www.greenregister.org.uk

BRE—Building Research Establishment

Open University

Carbon Leadership Forum

Supply Chain Sustainability School

www.haworthtompkins.com/studio/regenerative-design/reading-research-and-tools-suggestions

www.retrofitacademy.org

Working with the client

LETI Client Guide for Net Zero Carbon Buildings www.leti.london/clientguide

LETI Embodied carbon primer www.leti.london/ecp

UKGBC Embodied Carbon: developing a client brief www.ukgbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/UK-GBC-EC-Developing-Client-Brief.pdf

Councils who have declared climate emergency www.climateemergency.uk/blog/list-of-councils

Universities who have declared climate emergency www.climateemergency.uk/universities

www.ukgbc.org/ukgbc-work/circular-economy-guidance-for-construction-clients-how-to-practically-apply-circular-economy-principles-at-the-project-brief-stage

www.ukgbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Building-the-Case-for-Net-Zero_UKGBC.pdf

www.ukgbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Delivery-Guidance-Report.pdf

www.ukgbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Nature-based-solutions-to-the-climate-emergency.pdf

www.ukgbc.org/ukgbc-work/embodied-carbon-practical-guidance

www.ukgbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Social-Value.pdf

Absolute Zero by UK FIRES

https://www.riba.org/media/edul2w5z/buildingknowledgepathwaystopoepdf.pdf

Appendix

Practice checklist

1 Align and commit	2 Understand Impact	3 Put your house in order	4 Collaborate and educate	5 Close the loop
Align values	Measure business impacts	Reduce business impacts	Communicate with clients	Review and improve
Commit to action	Measure project impacts	Reduce project impacts	Collaborate with project team	Celebrate successes
			Advocate for change	

Practice Template AD 5 year plan

Link to overall template
docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1XsifZLcscKjVdFj-pXZgOqfIolfLesGcoAfJ1YcC7mo/edit#gid=0

Architects Declare Declaration Points	Business Incentive How will this benefit the practice? Ways it can benefit income streams —this can help get directors etc on board.	Current Status What's normal now in the practice? What knowledge is already there?	Next 6 Months What can realistically be achieved in the coming 6 months?	One Year From Now What can be achieved in the subsequent 6 months?	Five Years From Now Where do we want to be in 5 years?
1 Raise Awareness					
2 Change Fast					
3 New Goals					
4 Share Knowledge					
5 Evaluate Projects					
6 Upgrade Existing					
7 Whole Life Carbon					
8 Regenerative Design					
9 Collaborate & Reduce					
10 Low Carbon					
11 Minimise Waste					
12 Climate Justice					

Practice Template AD 5 year plan

Low carbon example

Link to overall template docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1oleU9_AHrVZZGiv5yQL3xs-LerQvPdc2EuuaSQUWVDw/edit#gid=1727580733

Architects Declare Declaration Points	Business Incentive How will this benefit the practice? Ways it can benefit income streams —this can help get directors etc on board.	Current Status What's normal now in the practice? What knowledge is already there?	Next 6 Months What can realistically be achieved in the coming 6 months?	One Year From Now What can be achieved in the subsequent 6 months?	Five Years From Now Where do we want to be in 5 years?
10 Low Carbon	Embodied carbon statements required for referable schemes in London under New London Plan	**Projects**			
		No quantifying of embodied carbon other than on large retrofit projects to justify proposals	Target $kgCO_2/m^2$ and strategy to achieve this for all projects. Create checklist for early client meeting - ensure understand building's long term ownership, priorities, maintenance etc	Report target / predicted $kgCO_2/m^2$ in stage reports	Domestic projects achieve <300 $kgCO_2/m^2$
	Potential work in helping clients include targets & strategy in Employer's Requirements	Some evidence of decision making based around embodied carbon			Non-domestic projects achieve <350 $kgCO_2/m^2$
	More clients are now interested – offer this as an additional service	**Knowledge**			
		Highest level - awareness of metrics, EPDs, assessment methodology, which materials are higher / lower embodied carbon	Include in internal office sustainability awards	Train staff on implications of other disciplines' input to encourage good collaboration	All staff understand implications of embodied carbon and methods to minimise this
				Internal CPD on embodied carbon assessments carried out on live project	All staff able to carry out basic embodied carbon assessment
		Lowest level - limited awareness - may have attended 1 internal CPD	More detailed internal training on embodied carbon - stages, EPDs, how retrofit is measured, successful case studies	New samples in materials library to include E.C. data	
				Staff to request EPDs when speaking to manufacturers / suppliers	
		Software			
		Trial of H\B:ERT underway (Free Revit-linked quick feedback tool)	Create library of materials with embodied carbon embedded for use in Revit	Expand Revit embodied carbon library	Embodied carbon routinely assessed through Revit models
		More complex software available, but has cost & training requirements	Test H\B:ERT on live project.	Train all staff on H\B:ERT & use on all projects	
		Fees / Appointments / Bids			
		No reference to embodied carbon unless specifically requested	Ensure fees allow for calculation & statement for referable schemes in London	Offer external CPD to clients on embodied carbon	All fees include for appropriate level of embodied carbon assessment and reduction
				Include embodied carbon commentary in all bids / competitions	

Architects Declare was launched as a not-for-profit organisation in the UK on 30 May 2019. Since April 2024 UK Architects Declare is a registered charity. At the time of publication, it has over 1,424 signatories in the UK. It is part of Built Environment Declares, which is now represented in 27 countries around the world.

This document has been created by an Architects Declare working group to help signatories convert their declaration into meaningful action and build momentum within their practice. The guide is intended to be a live, working document that helps fulfil the fourth point in our 12-point declaration by encouraging the sharing of knowledge and research on an open source basis. We expect this guide to evolve and be refined in future iterations as our understanding of the climate and biodiversity crises develops, and as our industry innovates to find new solutions to these challenges. We encourage our signatories—and other architectural practices or built environment practitioners —to contact us with feedback on this version and examples for the next version.

www.architectsdeclare.com



UK Architects Declare
Climate & Biodiversity
Emergency