



How can the construction industry serve the needs of a society threatened by climate change?

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Abstract

Construction serves the needs of society with infrastructure that provides safe and healthy places in which to live, work, learn and play, with transport that serves trade and leisure, and with industries that drive our economic prosperity. Yet in serving important societal needs, construction has also been a major contributor to the degradation of the planet's natural resources and acceleration of climate change. These harmful impacts are now threatening human prosperity and safety. The Henderson Colloquium, organised by IABSE UK in September 2020, asked key players across multiple sectors of the construction industry this question: How can the construction industry serve the future needs of a society threatened by climate change? The discussions revealed the need for deep-seated change across all elements of the industry including our business models, our professional institutions, education, and government policy. These outcomes are being shared in this paper to stimulate thinking in a wider, international forum of construction professionals.

Keywords: construction, climate change, societal needs; Henderson Colloquium; uniting vision; drivers for transformation; decarbonisation; built environment, industry leadership; global responsibility

1 Introduction

IABSE UK held their annual Henderson Colloquium virtually in September 2020. These colloquia have been convened for the past forty-five years and are relatively small affairs to give everyone time to contribute meaningfully. They have tackled many important topics in the past, though none quite as pressing as in 2020, and have often been catalysts for real change in the industry.

Traditionally we invite leading practitioners, policy makers, influencers, and others from a wide

spectrum, not just within the construction industry, to encourage lively and stimulating debate.

Over two days, with forty invited participants drawn from multiple sectors, we explored the actions needed across the industry, the professional institutions, the financial sector, government and education to achieve a net zero carbon construction industry. We arrived at a view on the outcomes required and key actions ahead.

Although the focus of the colloquium was the UK, most, if not all, of the outcomes and actions are applicable universally and can be adopted by local