

Construction Leadership Council – addressing the climate emergency

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The co-chair of the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) has called on the industry to show the same spirit and energy shown during the coronavirus pandemic to addressing the climate emergency.

The comments from Andy Mitchell come just days after the CLC launched a new industry change programme: ConstructZero, a cross-industry approach to drive carbon out of all parts of the construction sector, from manufacturing and design to construction and operation of assets.

He writes: “The construction industry must come to terms with the impact of the built environment on the climate.

The last year has shown the incredible things that we are capable of when we work together, responding to COVID-19 and keeping our industry working safely and effectively.

We must now bring the same spirit and energy to addressing the climate emergency. If our industry is to thrive, we must proactively address the challenges we face before it is too late.

From the fantastic work of CLC members like the Green Construction Board and the Infrastructure Client Group working with the ICE in developing technical solutions and pathways, to the incredible innovation being delivered on sites by contractors across the UK every day, many in our industry are already grappling with this challenge.

However, given the complexity of the task we face, it is understandable that many others, from SMEs to larger companies, need more help and support to understand how best to address the changes that need to be made.

As a result, although we're making progress in places, as a whole the sector is not moving at the speed it needs to. The good work and innovation that exists is not systematic and is often duplicated.

New solutions must be shared and rolled out across the industry; and people must be willing to champion collaborative change.

In short, we must find a way to work more effectively together.

Earlier this week, the Construction Leadership Council launched a new industry change programme: ConstructZero, a cross-industry approach to drive carbon out of all parts of the construction sector, from manufacturing and design to construction and operation of assets.

It is a bold and ambitious plan, laying out the priorities to deliver a fundamental change in the sector.

We've done so because we recognise the need, now more than ever, for a huge programme of industry change over the next decade and beyond.

The CLC's role is not to develop new solutions, roadmaps or new pathways – there are many groups in the industry well placed to do this – but we believe that the CLC does have a critical role to play in bringing people together to consolidate collective actions and plans for the sector. We can help drive change by helping to share innovative solutions and set transparent goals and clear actions that everyone can help to achieve.

Building on the success we have seen over the last twelve months convening the CLC's Covid-19 Task Force, we will aim to ensure that we take a collective and consistent approach, giving every business the understanding and awareness to act.

In practice, that will mean:

- Consolidating current industry efforts into a single programme and plan of action to deliver against the ConstructZero priorities
- Setting out clear and ambitious targets to demonstrate that the sector is making the right progress
- Championing the policy change we'll need to see from Government
- Signpost people across our industry towards the action they can take.

By providing a consolidated action plan, clear targets and a single ambitious vision for change we hope

that we can bring together the excellent work being done across the industry in a coordinated way to drive real transformation.

In addition to our role in convening ConstructZero, there are a number of changes to our core CLC objectives that we will be making to ensure that all our work complements the need to de-carbonise our industry at speed.

Firstly, we'll be using the CLC's skills workstream to develop a 'Net Zero supply chain' recognising that as the industry develops our skills needs will evolve, driving requirements for the creation of high-value green tech jobs in construction.

At the same time, we'll be working with the CLC member trade bodies to change expectations and ambitions amongst UK construction clients and consumers. We know that the industry cannot invest effectively in low carbon options unless the demand is consistent.

Finally - and perhaps most importantly - we'll be sharing the industry's performance data and reporting on our successes (and our failures) each quarter to Government and the wider public.

We hope that by doing so we'll be creating accountability and transparency for ourselves as well as the wider industry.

None of this is going to be easy, and I appreciate that for many people it may seem totally out of reach.

However, the last twelve months have shown us what we're capable of when we work together.

We need everyone to work together - and we need people to step up as champions of the industry that will help to drive behaviour change and support others to tackle these challenges.

We've seen the transformative impact that collective ambition has had on our industry's standing with Government during COVID, who are now clear that the construction industry must be a key partner in the drive to reach UK Net Zero by 2050.

But more importantly, we have a responsibility to the people who work on our projects and to those who use our buildings and infrastructure to find a better way to build - one that creates a built environment that is sustainable for the future."