

Coarum Workshop 5 – Sustainability

By Ben Rainger – Smith Scott Mullan Associates

The fifth members workshop in the Coarum series on “Sustainability - why it should be at the core of the new RIAS”, was hosted by Smith Scott Mullan Associates, Edinburgh on 23rd August 2018

Education, promotion and leading the profession

Climate change and adapting to its effects are increasingly being recognised globally and locally as an urgent requirement. The build environment contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions and as such will play a key role in reducing the impact of climate change and reducing global temperature rises to the lower end of predictions.

This event was part of a series of events organised by the EAA to canvass members on their thoughts on what the new RIAS should look like and what its priorities should be focused on sustainability. Hosted by Smith Scott Mullan and Chaired by Ben Rainger (EAA vice president) the speakers Chris Stewart (Collective Architecture), professor Sandy Halliday, Richard Atkins, Chloe Yuell, Scott McAulay and Delia Murguia discussed how the RIAS approached sustainability in the past and present and outlined thoughts on why it should be at the core of the new RIAS going forward.

Previously, the RIAS has championed sustainability, developing an accreditation scheme and having a strong environmental policy. However, over the years these have fallen by the wayside.

The speakers discussed a series of areas where the RIAS could make sustainability the core of the organisation going forward, including;

Accreditation in sustainable design

The RIAS Accreditation in sustainable design is a good measure of an architect's knowledge, experience and understanding of sustainable design and construction, and should be better promoted both to architects and amongst the wider construction industry as a recognised measure of competence, similar to Conservation Accreditation.

Sustainability policy

The RIAS should revive its sustainability policy

Learning

Architecture and construction are one of the few if not only industry where we do not analyse the completed building to learn for the future. RIBA stage 7 provides an opportunity for learning and understanding where designs have succeeded, failed or not worked as expected.

Education

It was felt that education is at the core of understanding how sustainable design works and how it benefits the client, occupiers and wider society. The new RIAS should seek to promote education in sustainable design in schools, university and across the profession. This could be as part of a wider strategy to encourage architecture forming part of the school curriculum and making sustainability a core element of the university courses so new architects have an intuitive understanding and appreciation of sustainable design.

CPD

The RIAS should include sustainability as part of the mandatory CPD requirements to enable continual learning.

Sustainability committee and champion

There was disappointment that sustainability does not have a voice within the RIAS. A new committee or group to develop strategy and promote both inside and outside the RIAS. Furthermore, a sustainability champion should be considered

Procurement & Plan of works

Sustainability should be embedded into procurement, including recognising the RIAS sustainability accreditation within the public procurement process, similar to conservation accreditation.

Lobbying

The RIAS should continue to lobby Scottish Government to recognise the importance of sustainable design and its value to wider society. This is increasingly important as the population increases along with associated new development.

Working together across organisations within the construction industry

The key to delivering successful sustainable design is ensuring that all members understand the benefit of what is being developed. By working with other industry bodies, the RIAS can help promote, educate and lead the construction industry to design and deliver sustainable development.

Overall, the event was hopeful that the measures discussed and put forward could enable the RIAS and Scotland to take the lead in the design and delivery of sustainable buildings and developments. We look forward to the next steps and opportunities these could present.