



BUILDING FUTURES

10 BIG CLIMATE SOLUTIONS SUMMIT #2

Sonia Browse Architects

SUMMIT REPORT - MARCH TO MAY 23

THE BUILDING FUTURES SUMMIT

Our Summit brought together thirty leaders from different sectors of the built environment to address the second of our ten [Big Climate Solutions](#).

Over two, half day workshops (one in person and one online) and two follow up sessions, we developed three key proposals to make a real difference to the impact of the construction sector in Scotland.

In the first workshop, we addressed two objectives - to identify and agree strategic barriers to change; and to imagine a new set of rules that can overcome these barriers. We identified a number of barriers - some relatively easy to remove and others much harder to break down. Most could be grouped under the various headings of leadership, systems thinking, skills, evidence, legislation and regulation.

In the second part, we chose four themes to explore in more depth and try to understand how the rules could be changed to allow and encourage progress at the pace and scale required.

The Summit created the space for leaders to develop proposals that we feel can:

- Encourage industry to push government to go further and faster on regulation
- Create place-based solutions for effective transition that place communities at their heart
- Ensure we have the right skills in place to deliver a zero carbon future
- Create an open source evidence base to support the transition to zero carbon

There is a strong commitment from partners to take these ideas forward.

OUR LESSONS

- Acknowledge the **scale and depth** of the climate and linked emergencies.
- Ensure **systems not silo** thinking in all that we do.
- Our workstreams need to be **game changing** to inspire others and demonstrate **the art of the possible**.
- **Make strong alliances** that can show the benefits of action.
- **Create political space** for Ministers to act.
- Provide **certainty for investment** in built environment skills and infrastructure.
- **Improve education** at all levels to drive greater response.
- We need a sandbox to **test new ideas** and allow them to fail as well as to thrive.



THIS IS AN EMERGENCY, WE NEED TO ACT LIKE IT.

TO SEE WHY [CLICK HERE](#) 

OUR PROPOSITIONS

AN EXEMPLAR OF PLACE-BASED RETROFIT

Given the need to respond to climate change at scale, there should be community-wide exemplars of how to retrofit green solutions into the fabric of our towns and cities. By looking at a whole place, and not just single buildings or homes, we can transform how the natural and built spaces respond to climate change.

We will need to change many of the current systems and break down traditional silo thinking

That's where regulation comes in - creating clear legal frameworks for what is allowed and encouraged, and what is not.

The construction industry in Scotland, from house builders to architects and from quarry companies to surveyors, already sees the need to change.

Our proposal is that the construction sector comes together to suggest a new set of rules and new targets to govern the industry. These will go much further than current regulation and will show that the sector is up for the challenge. By pushing government to do more, the industry will create an ambitious route map for change within the industry.



to create better places - for peoples lives, for nature and for the climate. By thinking of places more holistically, we will create funding models that also work for the whole place. There will be different pathways to funding places and properties, with options for different tenures and for community buy-in.

Having the right skills in the right places, to ensure delivery, will be crucial. A range of climate building skills will be needed to implement by all organisations in the industry.

Critically important is how we use the exemplars to inspire other communities and ensure rapid replication of what works.

BETTER RED TAPE

The construction sector generally works on long term projects and investment timelines. The industry wants clear, consistent and uniform policies to help their planning processes.

BUILDING AN EVIDENCE BASE FOR ZERO CARBON

If we are all to play a part and have a say in the world we build around us, we need to understand the data which will allow us to get involved and question what is happening to our built environment - especially as it adapts to a zero carbon future.

By creating an open-access repository of information about land, planning, construction materials, new build and retrofit, we can help accelerate the move to net zero. We can open up mapping and modelling; information about ownership and conveyancing and analysis about flooding, contamination and noise.

Building on early work, we propose to identify all the relevant data sources and bring the data owners together to establish a single data gateway. It is a strategic project to improve our knowledge and help us monitor progress to net zero in the construction sector.

OUR STARTING POINT

Despite us all working on the wicked issues of climate and nature for years and even decades, we have not achieved the pace and scale of change that is clearly needed.

Between us, we know the solutions, and are not short of good ideas.

The issue we are wrestling with is all about **WHY** the solutions are not being adopted and **HOW** we might find ways to make them happen.

We need to understand the barriers that are holding us back and design new rules that will help in the future.



David Barbour

SUMMIT SUMMARY

BARRIERS



At a high level, the things that are getting in the way of progress include too much short-term and narrow thinking; the lack of a clear unified model for change; and complex competing demands which distract from the key priorities.

More specifically, silo thinking prevents meaningful collaboration and innovation; regulation creates 'red tape' instead of facilitating and enabling change; there is a lack of cohesion, focus and leadership; and the prevailing narrative is not consistent with the crises we face

NEW RULES

We urgently need to adopt a systems approach; we need to ensure a fairer distribution of benefits; we need to pilot new solutions; we need new models

that reflect climate outcomes in procurement and investment; and we need to share a positive vision for the future. We need government to help by offering a clear and predictable road-map for industry-led regulation. And we need them to agree a different measure of success - moving beyond GDP to a wellbeing economy.

SOME SUGGESTIONS

It is important to **make strong alliances** with organisations across the construction sector who can demonstrate solutions. This will allow real progress on multiple issues.

We need to **create the political space for Ministers to act**. We need to give them the reassurance that people are behind them when they make the bold choices that are increasingly necessary.

By democratising data, we can realise **the art of the possible**, providing businesses, people and communities with the tools to make informed, climate conscious decisions.

We need to create frameworks with guaranteed **long-term workstreams** aligned to climate solutions.

People deserve the **right to healthy and sustainable housing** that will be an asset to future generations.

We need a **gold standard climate test** in building regulations with clear mandates for new build and retrofit.

Our leaders need to be better educated about climate change - **every board needs a climate champion** to hold us to account.

We need to **empower communities**, using local skills and materials when we can.

The sponsors of the Summit will continue the open participatory approach to the discussions so far, to support the following:

Set up three workstreams:

1. Place-based approach. This will be led by Jennifer Phin of A. C. Whyte and Zero Waste Scotland - working on systems change to break down silo thinking and create opportunities for whole-place retrofit and new funding models.
2. Regulation for zero carbon. Aiming to push government to go further and faster in their response to climate change, the industry want a national, integrated regulatory framework aligned to stronger zero carbon ambitions. The organisers will explore this proposal further with Jim Brannan, from Balfour Beatty plc and Zero Waste Scotland.
3. Evidence for change. Bringing together key players to create an open access database of land and buildings data. This will be led by Ailsa Macfarlane, of Built Environment Forum Scotland and Zero Waste Scotland.

Inform government and business leadership: raise the results of the Summit with the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, the [Construction Leadership Forum](#) and other Ministers to discuss how these ideas might be delivered.

Guarding the process: the organisers will convene a small group from the Summit to ensure the workstreams remain true to the key ideas and lessons.

Spread the word about the Summit workstreams. **We need to make the ideas contagious.** This will include a series of concise briefing papers on key aspects of the work as it progresses.

Note to all: *we recognise that our Summit merely scratched the surface of the Building Futures topic. We hope the process and workstreams will inspire others in the sector to take up the challenge.*

We have captured the process, contributors and recordings from our Summit and would encourage you to explore the resources and comment.



[CLICK HERE](#)

Convenor

The Building Futures Summit was convened and supported by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, who are committed to helping Scotland deal with the climate and nature emergencies.

Financial support for this event was given by Zero Waste Scotland, which exists to promote responsible use of products and resources.



Partners

The partners who gave freely of their time, knowledge and ideas came from across Scotland and beyond - representing business, investors, land owners and managers, government, third sector organisations, universities and think tanks.

Organisers

The organisers (Alan Caldwell, Clare Hamilton, and Simon Hooton) devised the process and facilitated the discussions. They will be organising future summits on other themes.

