

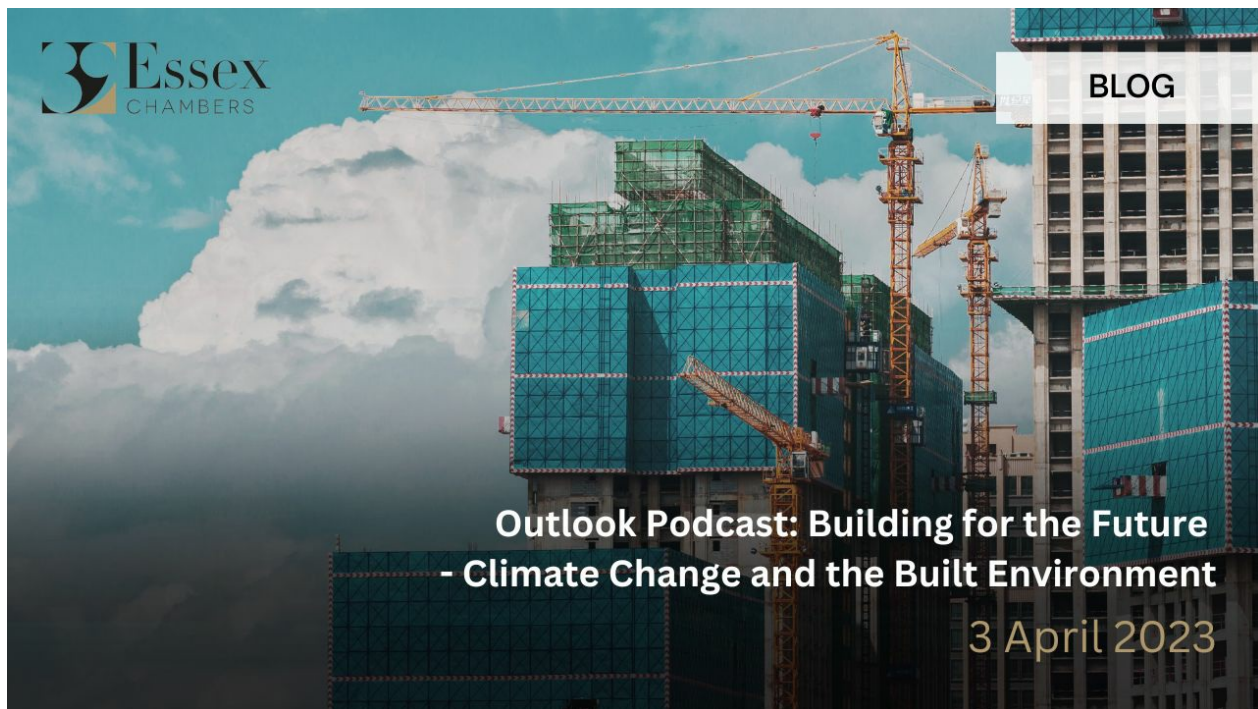
OUTLOOK: Building for the Future - Climate Change and the Built Environment

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Commercial and Construction

3RD APR 2023

Construction



In this episode Camilla ter Haar and Ruth Keating discuss 'Building for the Future – Climate Change and the Built Environment' with Stephen Hodder MBE.

Stephen is a former RIBA President and established the CIC Climate Change Committee. He is also the Chairman of Hodder + Partners. The practice that he founded (Hodder Associates) received the most important award in British Architecture for a single building, the inaugural Stirling Prize for Architecture for the Centenary Building, University of Salford.

Given 80% of buildings for 2050 exist today, there is not only an enormous challenge to upgrade current building stock, but also the need to consider in the first instance the re-purposing of existing fabric rather than demolish. This episode focuses on the importance of design and construction to achieving net zero.

Work of the Construction Industry Council Climate Change Committee

On 1 May 2019, the UK Parliament declared an Environment and Climate Change Emergency. In the following month, the Climate Change Act was amended to commit the UK government to a net zero emissions target by 2050. To coordinate the efforts of the professional institutes in the built environments in meeting these targets, Stephen Hodder as Chairman at that time of the Construction Industry Council (CIC) established the CIC Climate Change Committee.

Why should the construction industry care about climate change and carbon zero?

Inroads have been made in other industries to reduce carbon emissions – yet the construction industry is at risk of falling behind. This is particularly so given that the construction sector accounts for 38% of global carbon emissions and has a significant impact on natural habitats.

Given the Sixth Carbon Budget effectively commits the industry to net zero on new buildings by 2025, there is no time to lose.

Designing and constructing for Net Zero

Awareness around climate change and net zero has increased over time but there is now a real sense of urgency to act. In the past, methods such as natural ventilation and solar shading to mitigate solar gain have been used. However, the issue of climate change has accelerated – particularly in light of the Environment and Climate Change Emergency declared in 2019.

All projects start with the client and so that agenda of net zero needs to be set by the client from the beginning. However, there are other forces that will become increasingly influential in the drive for net zero – including funding institutions, large scale tenants and local planning authorities.

There are further future developments that may impact the industry – for example, amending Part Z of the Building Regulations to regulate embodied carbon on all major construction projects.

The CIC Climate Action Plan

In June 2021 the CIC launched the ‘Carbon Zero: the professional institutions’ climate action plan’ – the aim of which is to promote action and upskilling within the industry. Within the plan there are ten work streams which embrace 72 deliverables. The actions have been divided into three priority groupings: short-term, medium term and longer term. The action plan has a five year life span and the intention is to upskill every professional in the industry in that time.

The aim of the plan is to help professionals think about net zero and in particular, what a net zero building looks like. Professionals need to be empowered to understand what is necessary to develop a net zero building and so, work stream one of the action plan is focused on education. This workstream includes a free CPD programme for professionals working in the industry.

Tips for the construction industry

Three top tips for the industry are:

1. The CIC’s Climate Action Plan signposts to other information online and is intended to be a ‘one stop shop’ for those professionals trying to educate themselves on what is a complex subject.
2. Professionals have a responsibility at the inception of a project to impress upon the people who commission buildings the imperatives of climate change.
3. The industry needs to improve on post-occupancy evaluation – it is one thing to design a building to net zero, but work needs to be done to ensure that the building is ultimately performing as it is meant to.

To hear more of our discussion, a link to the podcast can be found [here](#).

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