for **COLLABORATION CHANGE**

The Edge Commission Report
on the Future of Professionalism

the **EDGE**

Collaboration for Change

The Edge Commission Report
on the Future of Professionalism
Second Edition, January 2020

Commission Chair
and Principal Author

Paul Morrell

Industry comments on the first edition

"The Edge Commission report on the Future of Professionalism is manna from heaven. Paul Morrell and his colleagues have reviewed the landscape comprehensively, communicated their findings elegantly and nailed it with conclusions around which we can rally support. We must engage with this work and collaborate for change."

Ben Derbyshire, PPRIBA, May 2015

"The title of the Edge Commission's Report: 'Collaboration for Change' neatly encapsulates the challenge facing professions today. If professions are to remain relevant in an ever more interconnected and technologically advanced world, they will need to work together more closely."

Sean Tompkins, CEO of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, May 2015

"The recommendations in the report highlight that change is almost impossible without industry-wide collaboration, cooperation and consensus and the professions and other key institutions can lead the way in ensuring that this collaboration is in the public interest."

Chris Blythe, Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Building, May 2015

"The challenges related to the industry are well rehearsed within The Edge Commission's recently published report on the future of professionalism, Collaboration for Change. It pulls no punches."

CIOB, Understanding the value of professionals and professional bodies, 2015

"The report was particularly eye-opening in the way it discussed the effect that the industry could have on Government policy and the wider community if only we can maximise the potential of working together."

John Field, President CIBSE, June 2016.

"In the months since the Edge Commission Report on the Future of Professionalism was published it has become essential reading for all those leading the professional institutions and for every built environment professional and educator interested in the future of their industry."

Constructing Excellence, Oxford Club, 2016

Foreword to the Second Edition

Given how much effort was put into the original printing of this report by so many people, it is gratifying to see it have a second life. Less gratifying is how little change needs to be made, 5 years after its first publication, to ensure that it is still current.

Certainly there is an air of change about the industry, but still the newsworthy stories are about 'modern methods of construction', artificial intelligence, robotics and virtual reality – whilst the realities that we actually need to deal with are already here and are all too real. Modernisation of any aspect of the industry's output is to be welcomed, of course, but it has always been easy to point to things that would improve its performance, and much harder to know what would make those things happen.

The success of moves for modernisation also needs to be judged by reference to the contribution that they make to long-standing "wicked problems". The *Collaboration for Change* report pointed to three issues in particular which would benefit from collective action. These were the issues of trustworthiness, buildings failing to perform in accordance with their promise ('the performance gap'), and the challenges of climate change – looking at what buildings do to the environment and what the environment is capable of doing to buildings.

Over the years since the report was published, each of these has become more pressing. Public trust in institutions (whether professional, political or corporate) has broken down still further. In the context of the shocking Grenfell fire and the questions it has raised about building regulations, Judith Hackitt's measured
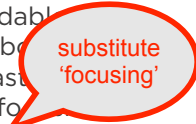
that connects the inception, design and construction of built assets through to their safe and effective life-long use. But still the response by the industry to any kind of pressure tends to be to revert to a factory setting of lowest initial cost followed by a miserable, adversarial tug-of-war over final cost. And above all, the threat of climate change has moved from urgency to emergency – but the increase in breast-beating is no substitute for action.

In his recent book of the same name, Martin Cruz Smith expounds the Siberian Dilemma. If you fall through the ice of a frozen lake, and you can't get out, then hypothermia will kill you in five minutes. If, however, you do get out, then the sub-zero temperatures will kill you in about a minute. So what do you do?

Some of the choices around climate change feel just about as bleak – but the answer is that you try and get out, because it's always better to be doing something, to give yourself a chance.

It is surely time, therefore, for a traditionally reactive industry to get on the front foot about some of these issues, recognising that the barriers to action are not really technical, nor intellectual - as we know most of what we have to do. Instead they are matters of culture, organisation and will; and a failure of concerted effort. Just as surely, there can be no better time than ahead of COP26, to be held in the UK later this year, to propose the framework for a plan that is measurable, deliverable and affordable. Some of the construction professions are talking about this and developing their thoughts; but it is well past time for institutions that are not engaged, or who fondly think they can act alone, to break the habit of focussing on protecting and promoting only their own sectoral interests and to substitute a shared commitment to principles and plans that will bring about real change.

substitute 'focusing'

Who knows, we might, in the process, acquire the habit of collaboration, and move on to other matters, which will, if fixed, justify some pride in the part the construction professions can play in creating a built environment that is fit for society in the 21st century.

Paul Morrell
January 2020

Foreword to the First Edition

By chance, as the text of this report was coming together, I came to be in Tallinn in Estonia. In the Middle Ages, this was one of the all-powerful Hanseatic League, a city that owed its existence and its wealth to trade. There grew up around this a structure of trade and merchant guilds with the objective of guarding the reputation of their members (so that today's museums are full of instruments to prove quantity and quality), but also protecting their interests by controlling competition at home, seeking to remove barriers to trade abroad, and accumulating privileges. At the top of this pyramid of organisations stood The Great Guild – and it was necessary to be a member of that in order to become a councillor, or a magistrate.

Meanwhile, and by contrast, doctors, lacking a proven body of knowledge, competed for business with barber surgeons and 'old wives'.

Eventually the League, putting self-interest before common interests, imploded, by-passed by new trade routes, and undercut by more efficient competitors less pre-occupied with their own internal struggles.

Today, the merchant class and many of the trades are still with us (and there are many new ones, of course) – but the assumption of power and the statutory means of limiting competition are gone.

It is impossible to miss the parallels in the issues raised in the series of panel discussions on the future of the professions initiated by the Edge and summarised and expanded in this report. The questions that the professions face are not, for the most part existential, but rather evolutionary. What is of value will remain, but both the context and terms of trade will change as the professions adapt to keep themselves relevant to the needs of successive ages.

This report is not, therefore, either designed or intended as a third party critique of the professions. Rather it represents a rehearsal of possible responses to some of the issues they face, the great majority of them generated by contributors from the professions themselves.

It has not been a simple exercise. The challenges of publishing a commentary on the state of the professions is, in many ways, the same as the challenge facing the professions themselves: how can one pull together an enormous diversity of practice and opinion into something that is both cohesive and progressive, without grinding everything down to a denominator that is either too low or too bland?

But if there is a theme, it is that institutions in the future will be judged not by what they claim for themselves, but by what they contribute to others; not by what they have come to expect, but by what they commit to. And if there is a single message, it is that their future will be more successful if addressed collectively.

Paul Morrell, Commission Chairman
April 2015

Executive Summary

The value of institutions, and pressures for change

It is clear that institutions continue to perform a valuable role, chiefly in setting standards of competence and conduct for members, setting standards and frameworks for education, regulating members, improving the standing of members in the market (particularly internationally), providing industry leadership and aspiring to serve the public interest. They also confer on their members a badge of membership/status that should demonstrate that they have attained an entry level of competence and will be bound by a code of conduct, as well as providing fellowship and collegiate support.

They have also shown themselves to be adaptable, and there is every reason to believe that they will continue to be so.

However, the standing and perceived value of the professions is being challenged, with detractors seeing in their conduct and practice a tendency towards protectionism, resistance to change, the reinforcement of silos and the preservation of hierarchies.

There is also a risk that the institutions lose control of the very things that are claimed to differentiate their members from those lacking a professional designation: quality control and oversight of educational standards; a transparent and enforced code of ethics; a defined duty to serve the public interest; the development and dissemination of a relevant body of knowledge; and a demonstration of leadership on some of the great issues that reach across the whole of the built environment.

It is one of the conclusions of the Commission that the threats and pressures for change that the professions face, if not yet existential, are real and profound, and demand change.

This is, however, balanced by an equally powerful conviction that there is an opportunity for the professions to find a new position for themselves that captures the best of the values of their past, while being relevant to 21st century circumstances and the challenges we face, and valuable to both their members and society.

Key recommendations

The report identifies six areas where institutions could, by joint action, demonstrate their effectiveness and thereby enhance their relevance and value:

- **Ethics and the public interest**, and a shared code of conduct
- **Education and competence**
- **Research and a body of knowledge**
- Collaboration on major challenges, including **industry reform** in the interests of a better offer to clients, **climate change** and **building performance**

Ethics, the public interest and a shared code of conduct

All institutions claim adherence to a code of ethics and an obligation to serve the public interest as a special quality that differentiates their members from those lacking a professional designation. There is, however, confusion between ethics and the public interest, and the latter is not clearly defined, and nor is it policed by the Privy Council.

Institutions should therefore resolve the confusion between ethics and the public interest, by clarifying and codifying a rigorous, shared understanding of expectations in respect of each at the individual, corporate and institutional level - raising awareness, providing guidance to members, operating a transparent sanctioning process, and moving from a tendency to exclusivity (centred on members' interests) to one of inclusivity (centred on the public interest).

In parallel, institutions should look at the operation of sanctions against members who fall short of established expectations of ethical conduct or the service of the public interest, to secure increased client and public confidence through transparency.

Education and competence

The siloed nature of the built environment's education system needs to be reviewed, on a cross-disciplinary basis to see how institutions can use their badging to promote construction as a career of choice in a way that engages current and future generations, demonstrating relevance, encouraging greater integration and preparing future professionals for work in a multi-disciplinary environment.

Hand-in-hand with this, there is a need to improve the 'guarantee' of a particular quality of individual - by appropriate control of qualifications and entry to the profession; benchmarking the expertise of members; here too through increased transparency of sanctions, again increasing client and public confidence in the competence of accredited professionals; and possibly becoming agents for disclosure (perhaps through a public feedback system like TripAdvisor?).

Research and a body of knowledge

Institutions should recognise the importance for their future of re-establishing a working body of knowledge, and of disseminating research and best practice – for example, by establishing a joint think tank, a King's Fund for construction, to conduct develop, curate and disseminate research, and to develop policy for the industry.

Collaboration

The authority of the institutions would increase exponentially if they presented a shared view on matters of public interest, and particularly those that are too big for any one institution - such as industry reform in the interests of producing a better offer to clients; fixing the gap between predicted and actual performance of built assets (a gap that would be a scandal in any other industry, and should be in construction); and addressing the impact of the built environment upon climate change.

Action that would be evidence of such collaboration would include:

- **On industry reform:** developing a shared vision of how structured reform of the industry might improve efficiency and the offer to clients and society; securing buy-in to the vision; and developing an action plan for its implementation.
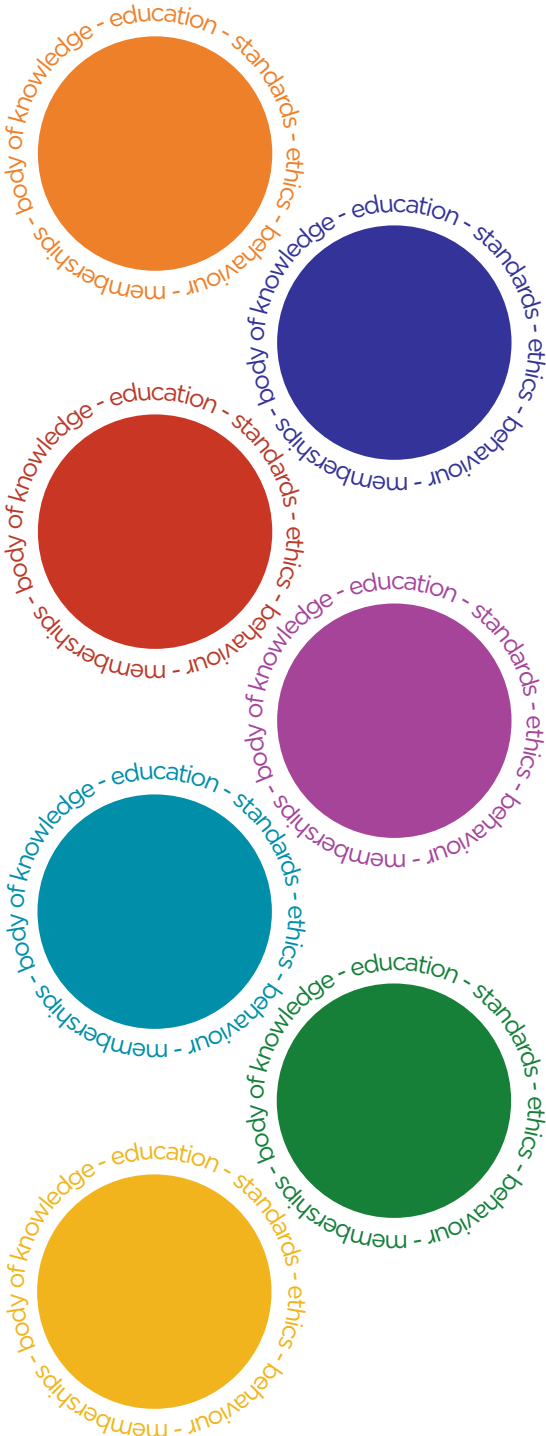
  Few in the industry believe that it is organised in a way that works well for clients and the full depth of the supply chain. There is little or no integration between design, product manufacture, construction, operation and asset management; no feedback loop that increases the chances of a completed asset performing as it should, and of future projects learning from the past; and no alignment of interests both within the supply chain and between the supply chain and the client. This fragmentation of interests destroys value.

- **On climate change:** developing the policies and industry capabilities and skills necessary to respond to the impact of the built environment on climate change (mitigation) and the impact of climate change on the built environment (adaptation); establishing a joint cross-institutional policy position; and publishing cross-disciplinary recommended behaviours for members on designing for mitigation and adaptation.

- **On building performance:** tackling the divide between what is promised by the industry and what is delivered – the performance gap, taking responsibility for the whole-life of projects, developing common metrics; and committing to measurement and evaluation, and the dissemination of findings. There can hardly be a cause more deserving of cross-industry collective contemplation and action than the constant failure of its product.

The more detailed recommendations that lie behind this summary are given in the body of the report, and are summarised in the Conclusions section.

Finally there is no need to re-invent the means through which the collaboration implicit in so many of the recommendations can be managed. To the extent that action is required across different professions and institutions, the Construction Industry Council can and should be developed and empowered as a shared vehicle for joint initiatives, and encouraged to initiate the consideration of issues beyond those passed down from individual institutions. Without that we lack the means of thinking and improving across institutional boundaries, and lose a key potential advantage of the professions.

INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTIONS

(circles labelled around edge: body of knowledge – education – standards – ethics – behaviour – memberships)

CHALLENGES

Performance Gap

Climate change

Loss of public trust

Globalisation

Low level of member engagement

Growing scepticism of younger professionals

Siloed education

Proliferation of 'professions'

Rise of mega-firms

Limited Learned Society role

EXCLUSIVE

OPPORTUNITIES

Performance
measurement

Climate change

Ethical standards
in a global market

Industry vision

Inter-disciplinary
collaboration

Effective
dissemination
of research

New patterns
of education

Transparency

Public interest

INCLUSIVE

CONDUCT · JOINT
OF CODE

OF RESEARCH · SHARED
DISSEMINATION

CHANGE · COLLABORATION
CLIMATE NO

'PERFORMANCE' · WORKING
ON TOGETHER

Introduction

This report represents the summation of a series of sessions organised by the Edge with a number of the professions with which its it works* to consider the current status of the professions serving the construction industry; and to examine, in that now rather overworked phrase, their "fitness for purpose" for a world in which the assumptions and demands of society are very different from those prevailing when the first built environment professions were formally constituted in the mid-19th century.

This, of course, begs questions both about the purpose of the professions, then and now, and also the nature of socio-economic change.

On both questions, there was a wide range of views espoused by those giving evidence to the Commission, by audience members in plenary discussion and by the members of the panel themselves. The extremes of views ranged from a difficulty in seeing any value in the professional institutions at all, to a belief that the realistic plan is gradual evolution within existing institutional structures. Indeed, contradictions and paradoxes have characterised the discourse throughout, and some of these are explored further in the body of the report.

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* Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE), Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE), Landscape Institute (LI), Royal Academy of Engineering (RAEng), Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), Society for the Environment (SocEnv) and, in a collective capacity, the Construction Industry Council (CIC).

The main structure of the Commission's work has been a series of evening sessions at which representatives of different constituencies of the professions have made brief presentations, followed by questions and answers directed first by the panel and then by an invited audience.

These sessions were broadly organised around four themes:

- **The environment:** should it be a professional requirement to address environmental issues, including responsibility for long term performance and reporting?

- **The economy:** how can professionals continue to do what they regard as the right thing, when this is not a priority for their client?

- **Society:** how can professionals working across the built environment and their institutions maintain relevance and deliver value to society?

- **Future value:** how can institutions share and co-operate to improve the quality, standing and value of professionals?

The names of the panel members and of the speakers are listed at the end of this report. The list of audience members who accepted an invitation to attend one or more of the sessions and summaries of the presentations made at the evidence sessions, and of the subsequent questions and answers, are available on the Edge's website **www.edgedebate.com**.

The exercise is not presented as an academic study, but as a provocation piece, prompted by presentations made to the Commission, considering a number of ways in which the professions might develop. Unsurprisingly, there is also a range of aspiration and attitude across the different professions, and between individual members within a single profession; generalisation is therefore inevitable. The Commission has, however, taken every effort to avoid a generalisation based on isolated examples.

It should also be noted that the Report takes as its lead the matters raised in the evidence sessions and given in subsequent written evidence, and it seeks to focus on longer-term issues which relate to the outward-facing aspects of the professions' structure and practice. It therefore gives less coverage to other concerns of the

institutions, some of which are acknowledged as being of no less importance, and which may indeed be more immediately pressing – such as the lack of diversity in the professions, and the urgency of recruiting additional qualified people into an hollowed-out industry responding to growth.

Finally, by way of introduction, it is not the purpose of the Commission to produce a third party critique of the institutions. They are member organisations and it is for the members to decide whether each individual institution serves its interests well enough to justify the subscription. Rather, the report offers a summary of some of the key issues we face, generally framed by the members of the professional institutions; proposes that we are at one of those moments in history when the accumulation of changes in the environment in which the professions practice calls for a considered response; and makes recommendations for a selected list of actions.

The value of the exercise is now entirely in the hands of those to whom it is addressed: if no action is triggered, than the Commission's work will follow the fate of many similar exercises that have gone before. If it is agreed that we are 'at a moment', then it is to be hoped that it would also be agreed that it would be more than a shame to watch it pass by unattended.

Prior work by the Edge

In 2011, the Edge initiated a series of debates on what it means to be a building professional in the 21st century, and this was followed by the publication of a special issue of the Building Research and Information Journal in January/ February 2013.

In that special issue, the Edge proposed a set of actions that marked out the way in which an individual professional should behave. These (with headings added by Bill Bordass in his address to this Commission) comprised:

Ethics and behaviour

1. Be a steward of the community, its resources, and the planet. Take a broad view.
2. Do the right thing, beyond your obligation to whoever pays your fee.
3. Develop trusting relationships, with open and honest collaboration.

Engagement with outcomes

4. Bridge between design, project implementation, and use. Concentrate on the outcomes.
5. Don't walk away. Provide follow-through and aftercare.
6. Evaluate and reflect upon the performance in use of your work. Feed back the findings.
7. Learn from your actions and admit your mistakes. Share your understanding openly.

The wider context

8. Bring together practice, industry, education, research and policymaking.
9. Challenge assumptions and standards. Be honest about what you don't know.
10. Understand contexts and constraints. Create lasting value. Keep options open for the future.

Source: *Building Research & Information: Special Issue on New Professionalism*, guest edited by Bill Bordass and Adrian Leaman, volume 41, number 1, January/February 2013, **http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rbri20/41/1**.

These principles are revisited in this report in the context of the Commission's deliberations.

The
Professions

What makes a profession?

In his presentation, Sunand Prasad referred to the criteria for the professions identified by Lord Benson in a House of Lords debate in 1992, as summarised below:

1. The profession must be controlled by a governing body, which in professional matters directs the behaviour of its members, with those members subordinating their private interests in favour of support for the governing body.

2. The governing body must set adequate standards of education as a condition of entry and thereafter ensure that members obtain an acceptable standard of professional competence and continue training and education throughout their professional life.

3. The governing body must set the ethical rules and professional standards higher than those established by the general law, to be observed by the members.

4. Those rules and standards should be designed for the benefit of the public and not for the private advantage of the members.

5. The governing body must take disciplinary action, if necessary expulsion from membership, should the rules and standards it lays down not be observed, or should a member be guilty of bad professional work.

6. Work is often reserved to a profession by statute - not because it was for the advantage of the member, but because of the protection of the public, it should be carried out only by persons with the requisite training, standards and disciplines.

7. The governing body must satisfy itself that there is fair and open competition in the practice of the profession so that the public are not at risk of being exploited. It follows that members in practice must give information to the public about their experience, competence, capacity to do the work and the fees payable.

8. The members of the profession, whether in practice or in employment, must be independent in thought and outlook. They must not allow themselves to be put under the control or dominance of any persons or organisation that could impair that independence.

9. In its specific field of learning, a profession must give leadership to the public it serves.

Source: Lord Benson, *Criteria for a group to be considered a profession*, Hansard (Lords) 8 July 1992, 1206-1207.

This is an excellent summary, and not much was added to it either in comments made in the evidence sessions of the Commission, nor in the consideration of other definitions put forward in the course of this study. Nonetheless, both Ian Brinkley and Sunand Prasad referred to the current and continuing growth in the professions, with the 'professional occupation' category in the national census increasing by 50% in the decade between 2001 and 2011. This is the result of occupations well beyond the traditional bounds of the longer-established professions rightfully seeking increased professionalism in the way they work.

The development is to be welcomed, but there remains a sense on the part of the traditional professions that there is still a difference between what is expected of them. In seeking to identify that difference, the traditional professions frequently point to ethics, but the implicit (and at times explicit) claim to some form moral superiority is both arrogant and misplaced. As words by Jeremy Till quoted at a previous Edge Debate indicate, it is also insufficient.

> *"One of the most commonly made mistakes is to confuse professional propriety with an ethical position, as if acting in accordance with the codes of professional conduct will ensure ethical behaviour...standards even my hairdresser could meet."*
>
> From *Architecture Depends*, MIT 2009, Professor Jeremy Till, Head of Central St Martin's, Pro-Vice Chancellor University of the Arts.

The context for this is the consideration of the different and broader issue of the public interest – that is, interest beyond those of professionals and their clients. Certainly this is presented as a touchstone of the professions, and it is addressed in some depth later in this report, but the reality is that it is a concept that is poorly defined, and only randomly served. It too, therefore, is insufficient as a differentiator between different understandings of professionalism.

Instead, differentiation may lay in a more personal quality, which is consequently not picked up in definitions of the institutions themselves, as opposed to their members – and that is the requirement and the capacity to exercise judgement.

"Any profession is defined by some set of knowledge and principles and experience that allow its members to take personal responsibility for making better than random judgments for their client in areas of uncertainty and risk. This body of knowledge is in part the result of training, but is largely a result of practical experience. It comprises both explicit and tacit knowledge - learnt not through theory, but through a process of reflection on experience; by watching others, and trial and error, coupled to actively thinking about why some things worked well and others failed."

Professor Alan Penn, Dean of the Bartlett faculty of the Built Environment, UCL

As a protection against this becoming just another form of arrogance, another quality of true professionalism must also be the preparedness to acknowledge that some judgements made in good faith will subsequently be found to be wrong, and to reflect and learn from that.

This leads on to another intangible quality of institutions that was raised by a number of contributors – the concept of fellowship. This is about more than social inter-action: it is also about the gathering of the tacit knowledge referred to by Alan Penn, and understanding that can be shared without the need to express things in language. It can also create a sense of solidarity in professionals seeking to do the right thing.

"I derive considerable comfort from a feeling that I'm part of a family of people whose commitment runs beyond simply serving the client. It might be difficult to define what that wider public interest is, but it's something that motivates you to do more than absolutely necessary; to talk hard to your client about things that the client might not immediately want to do but might be encouraged to do; and it is this delightful feeling that I'm not on my own in doing it."

Colin Haylock, Past President RTPI

There is therefore value in tribalism, in the strong professional bond that binds together the social groups of professions with different base disciplines, and this needs to be borne in mind in seeking ways to increase collaboration between them, and integration of their processes.

Reverting to the more concrete criteria for what makes up a profession, however, there are three particular attributes, which have been adopted as an organisational framework for this report.

• A claim to ethical behaviour that is higher than the law.

• A body of knowledge.

• A membership institution 'keeping the gate'.

Thoughts on each of these that have emerged from this Commission follow, after one more piece of context: the cases for and against the professions.

The case for the professions

The case for the professions is inextricably linked to the functions performed both by the institutions and by their members, and their value therefore largely depends upon the extent to which they can, through their institutions, convert those principles that differentiate them from non-professionals into standards of conduct and service that also differentiate them.

At the institutional and individual level, this includes:

At the institutional level

- Setting standards of competence and conduct for members (raising the bar).

- Setting standards and frameworks for education.

- Regulating members.

- Improving the standing of members in the market (particularly internationally).

- Maintaining/developing a collective body of knowledge, and investing in research.

- Providing industry leadership.

- Developing new areas of action for members.

- Serving the public interest.

- A source of independent and unbiased specialist expertise.

- Providing a collective voice in society and engaging in public discourse.

At the individual level

- Achieving the entry level of competence.

- Earning the badge of membership/status.

- Keeping up to date;

- Observing the code of conduct.

- Acting in the public interest (for some institutions).

- Providing mutual, collegiate and social support.

Taken together, these attributes and actions add up to a powerful reason for being on the part of the institutions, and a reason for belonging on the part of individual members; and they still represent the core of a valuable differentiation from those who practise outside the organised professions.

Pressures
for change

The value of the professions does not go unchallenged, though, and the charges most frequently levelled against them by their detractors (including some members of the professions themselves) include:

- That the object of some of what they seek is protectionism.

- That they are slow to change, preserving existing practice and business models, and so potentially obstruct the development of new and better ways of working.

- In particular, that they tend to reinforce silos and seek to preserve hierarchies, when the requirement is (or may be) for increased integration in the service of clients – and this, too, can be perceived as a restraint on trade.

All of this, to the extent it is valid, points to a natural conservatism that runs the double risk of alienating the young and failing to respond to the pressures for change - and hence to the even bigger risk of the institutions carrying the seeds of their own destruction, leading on to decline and fall.

"Despite the lengthy debates I still find I have little personal alignment with the institutions and many of the people who represent them. I can't relate to a lot of what was said and/or the lack of progressive thinking that was openly displayed. I want to look forward rather than back, and I feel that I may represent a sizeable proportion of contemporary practitioners."

Isabel McAllister, Panel Member and Director of Sustainability, Mace

More broadly, there is a widespread perception that the institutions are under pressure on a wide range of fronts, from the regard in which their members are held through to the vulnerability of their own business model. While the above criticisms clearly need to be taken into consideration in institutions' plans for their own evolution, there are other forces, less negative but probably more profound, that will shape the future of the professions and demand and drive change.

More specifically, these forces include:

- A loss of trust on the part of the public (and a consequent loss of automatic authority).

- A parallel shift in authority and control in the industry away from professionals towards contractors and managers of various types.

- A prevailing political mood against regulation (generally) and protectionism (definitely).

- Client impatience with poor delivery and lack of accountability.

- Client demand for cross-disciplinary working, and the consequent growth in major UK companies and global multi-disciplinary corporations.

- Globalisation and the shift of power from the recently dominant economies - both an opportunity and a threat.

- The impact of new technologies/applications.

- Offsite manufacture cutting across traditional ways of organising the process.

- The challenge of marrying large and (very) small corporate modus operandi.

- Competition between corporate and professional bodies of knowledge, and between both of them and the apparent omniscience of the internet.

- Pressure on the 'business model' of the institutions (potentially leading to reduction in entry qualifications/standards, reduced investment in developing body of knowledge etc).

- The need to serve the mass of the membership (with different opinions and different interests) preventing the establishment of a single point of view on matters of great public interest (climate change, housing supply etc).

Amongst the most pervasive of these drivers for change are:

Loss of respect and trust

There is an irony in the loss of public trust, in that while the professions cling to the importance of representing the interests of society, society itself seems to be less and less respectful or trustful of the professions' opinion – or that of anybody who claims a position of authority (even if only in an intellectual sense). The professions are not alone in this: as politicians, the police and many others in positions of supposed trust know only too well, there is a general mistrust of authority and a scepticism about its motives – and, in some well-publicised instances, with good cause. An enfranchised public is now educated and well informed, and a right to choose and challenge has replaced any earlier expectation of deference.

A further irony is that the loss of the public's automatic respect for the professions seems to be matched by a perception on the part of politicians that they may, at worst, obstruct growth, or at the least are unlikely to be engines for growth. This is notwithstanding the fact that the evidence suggests that, in a developed economy, there are far more prospects for growth in professional services than in manufacture. Government and its officials nonetheless increasingly look to the corporate world as a source of trusted advice.

The growth of professionalisation

Occupations once considered outside the traditional understanding of the professions have increasingly developed codes of conduct and claim for themselves (often legitimately) the qualities possessed by the professions with a longer history. Ian Brinkley referred to this and some of the causes, and stressed that it is a trend that is going to continue.

There is no point in responding to this by being affronted, or laying a claim to superiority. Instead, each institution (or, more usefully, all institutions involved in the built environment) should be clear about its distinctive proposition to clients and society, and how that proposition is underwritten.

Changing patterns of ownership

When most of the codes, regulations and expectations by which the professional institutions exist were laid down, the prevailing assumption was of a partnership, wholly owned by its practitioners, almost all of whom were in a single profession.

The situation today is very different, with many firms combining disciplines, often including activities that fall outside the regulatory framework of any professional institution, and frequently including external ownership.

The issue of balancing the interests of shareholders with other stakeholders now has a particular potency. Within the bounds of the law and the regulations of their own profession, the owners of a business are clearly free to trade their holdings, but this is, to say the least, a long way from how things were when the Victorians established the professions, and it raises new questions about how and where the balance is to be struck between the interests of different stakeholders, including owners, employees, clients and the wider public.

"There's every chance at some point that Mouchel will come back to the market ... as with any business, Mouchel is always potentially for sale, because every business is ultimately for sale for the right price."

Grant Rumbles, Chief Executive of Mouchel, quoted in *Construction News* 18 July 2014

The rise of major multi-disciplinary consulting firms

While individual institutions tend to stay in their silos and argue in defence of what they perceive to be their members' interests, an increasing number of those members are employed in major international consultancies that are generally seeking to integrate their offer to clients across separate disciplines. This is one of a number of trends that suggest that the future will not be about what institutions claim for themselves, but rather about what companies choose to make of themselves.

It also represents a challenge to the institutions in maintaining relevance to these major practices while maintaining authority in the face of their market power, and continuing to serve the (sometimes quite different) interests of the multiplicity of small firms which make up a large proportion of their membership.

Changing patterns of employment

Related to the above, and facilitated by changes of institutional rules by which members are less restricted in their choice of employment, increasing numbers of professionals find themselves working not in private practice, but in differently constituted organisations on both the supply and demand side of the industry. In the meantime, the institutions tend still to concentrate on a model close to the traditional private practice, and have not found a way to represent the interests of members sharing a core discipline but working in very different environments and with different loyalties.

Generational change

Much is made of the new expectations of Generations Y and beyond: that they are ambitious; want variety, flexibility and autonomy to manage their careers (and consequently have no loyalty to the idea of a job for life); seek purpose and fulfilment beyond salary and status; while wanting to belong, are less attracted to the idea of membership of what might be perceived as an exclusive club; and hope to achieve a better work/life balance than their parents.

In truth, while valid and significant, these may well be aspirations that all generations would have entertained had they thought that the possibility was close enough to justify it. But there are four other attributes possessed by the generation now approaching qualification or recently qualified that are more directly relevant to the subject of this study.

These are:

• A comfort with new technologies, both as a means of social exchange and a working tool, and a greater awareness of their potential.

• A greater interest in the creation of assets and the consideration of their long-term purpose, rather than in the narrower slice of time involved in design and construction.

- A concern that (in spite of some wavering, encouraged by public scepticism, political weakness and a lack of leadership in their own sector) still extends to the greatest asset of them all - the planet we inhabit, and the impact of their work upon it.

- More than a preparedness to collaborate, a desire to do so, and an impatience to the point of anger with the difficulty that older generations seem to have with that simple idea.

In the passionate but thoughtful presentations made to the Commission, this did not come over as arrogance, nor as a dismissal of the older generation. There was no sense of 'Move over, you've had your turn'. Instead there was a call for the institutions to look forwards and outwards, rather than backwards and inwards; to replace a world view that is too often negative with a positive one; to 'get ahead of the curve' on great social issues; and above all to demonstrate leadership.

"I know we're debating, but to me it felt like we're being a bit pessimistic, telling each other what the problems are with this institution and that institution, and the CIC should do this better, and the whole industry should do everything better - and I had a feeling of 'Oh, I'm quite young, should I just leave now?'"

Comment from the floor, Session 4

Given that some professions are projecting a loss of 20% of their membership over the next decade, with those reaching retirement age not being replaced by an incoming younger generation, a continuing failure to attract the young is potentially terminal.

Some responses to these pressures also create new issues of their own. There are therefore a number of potentially conflicting forces that the institutions need to balance, including:

• The balance between maintaining, and ideally expanding, membership numbers for reasons of both influence and the financial viability of the organisation and having the means to invest in its programme; and the need to maintain rigor in the standard of entry, without which the value of a qualification is undermined in the perception of members, clients and the wider public.

• The balance between technical skills, which many employers (particularly the smaller ones without the resources to run their own training programmes) look for in entrants to the profession, so that at least a proportion of their time can be put to profitable use; and the professional skills of analysis, judgement and recommendation which are the distinctive characteristic of what it takes to be a professional.

• The balance between maintaining traditions and history that are an important part of each institution's journey to the present; and the need for modernisation necessary to keep the institution relevant to the culture, practice and issues of the day.

In some organisations there is also ambiguity (not to say sometimes a tension) in their leadership between the executive and the officers; and so another balance has to be struck – between the sense of ownership that professionals see in being led by 'their own', and the energy that comes from new ideas, set against the need for continuity and the delivery of long-term programmes (which is more likely to come from the officers).

Ironically, one of these tensions relates to the effect that the executive might have on an institution's potential to reform and progress, with one view being that asking officials to plan for reform would be 'like asking turkeys to vote for Christmas', while another suggested that it's more often the members who have difficulty with the idea of modernising to stay relevant.

An example that illustrates both of the first two issues is offered by the negative reaction by some QS members to the RICS's recent notice of possible changes to the final hurdle to membership – the Assessment of Professional Competence. This reportedly included "a proposal to ditch the highest of the three APC levels [designed to teach QSs how to use all this information to deliver strategic advice to clients] in order to reduce complexity and expand more quickly overseas" (*Building*, 28 August 2014). The purpose of the notice was to consult members, and it is a matter for the RICS, but the reaction does demonstrate the need to balance expansion with the maintenance of standards. This must surely remain a primary objective of the professional institutions, and while it might result in a smaller membership for some, quality may ultimately be more valuable than quantity.

With so many plates to keep spinning, it is no surprise that there will be critics of wherever the balance is struck: traditionalists will bridle at any mention of modernising, updating or streamlining; while reformers might point to any adherence to tradition as evidence of being old-fashioned and, in the phrase du jour, 'out of touch'.

In the end, though, the institutions (and therefore the professions represented by those institutions) are hostage to the views of their members. That is both their strength and their weakness. Strength because of the value of inward solidarity, and of an outward contribution that is entirely dependent upon the intellectual output of the members; and weakness because of the difficulty of gauging exactly what the view of members is, when only a minority engage with the day-to-day business of the institution – and those not necessarily the most representative of the membership as a whole, nor sufficiently in touch with the wider world to prevent excessive inwardness.

Survival by adaptability

Notwithstanding the above, it would be premature to post obituaries. The fact is that institutions and their members have shown themselves to be adaptable, and therefore resilient, and some have actually managed to grow their membership, year on year – largely through international adventure.

It is also easy to recognise a number of successes in the way that the institutions continue to operate, including:

• Sufficient value being perceived in membership for most graduates and many school leavers to aspire to achieve a professional qualification.

• A matching expectation on the part of many employers that staff will subscribe to the structured learning and subsequent oversight that membership of a professional institution entails.

• Respect in many international markets (and increasingly beyond Commonwealth countries, where there has been a tradition of following UK practice), leading to growth in both membership and influence.

• Political recognition of the institutions as a source of authoritative opinion – albeit only some institutions, and then only on some subjects

However, many contributors to the debate expressed the view that the institutions could do much more; and that one barrier to progressive change is their measure of complacency.

The underlying pressures also remain, and although some of them (such as the members' reluctance to fund the organisation through sustainable levels of subscription) can be expected to be cyclical, others (such as the loss of an automatic right to respect, at least in the UK) appear to be structural and probably irreversible within any foreseeable timescale.

All of the above, coupled with the macro changes that reach far beyond the industry and the individuals who work in it (globalisation and an eastward shift in the economic centre of gravity, the pace of technological change etc – all with the potential to be highly disruptive to current ways of doing business) adds up to an irresistible pressure for change; but also points to the direction in which change might take us.

By contrast, it must be said, the plans of many of the institutions look modest, introspective and parochial - increasing membership, internal re-organisation etc. Of course the housekeeping has to get done, but if the professions want to attract the best people into the industry, and keep them engaged, then they need to demonstrate more leadership. This means developing a vision which addresses the major challenges that the young in particular perceive themselves to be facing; and creating a working environment, in terms of culture and practice, that offers purpose and meaning, and the potential to make a difference.

Each professional institution therefore needs to have a plan for its future that is based on more than its past - and Sunand Prasad points out the internal contradiction intrinsic to the idea of groups of people engaged in *production* of the built environment having formed into professions modelled on the clergy, law, and medicine (none of which *makes* anything), through "a complex mix of self-image and self-interest".

A good starting point is the consideration of ethics and a duty to serve the public interest, both cherished concepts of the professions and universally claimed as a (if not *the*) distinctive attributes that they possess.

Action Areas

Ethics and the public interest

What do you do, as a professional, when your principles point one way, and a client's needs or wants point in another?

Few things enlivened the discussion more than the consideration of ethics. This was frequently elided with the issue of the public interest, and there was also confusion about the extent to which both factors operate at the personal or institutional level. Although the two subjects are inevitably linked, both having to do with taking decisions in a broader context than the service of self-interest, the dilemmas they pose are different.

It is perhaps convenient to start by considering ethics, as while there is clearly some debate about whether all professionals have a duty to serve the public interest, there is no debate about whether they should act ethically. Questions, therefore, relate to the definition of terms, how well professionals live up to their published codes, and the sanctions available when they fall short of the standards expected of them by their institutions, their peers and their clients.

Some differentiating definition of terms might therefore be helpful.

Ethics

While there are variations in wording, a portmanteau definition of ethics would be that it is the branch of philosophy concerned with morality, with distinguishing between good and evil in the world, between right and wrong human actions, and between the virtuous and non-virtuous characteristics of individuals.

The complications arise when the term is stretched beyond a generally accepted understanding of decent human behaviour to embrace less objective and less universal views of what is 'right'. Few professionals working in the built environment are philosophers; and it is perhaps this and the complexity and the risk of creating unintended consequences when defining an issue at a fine level of detail that has motivated most institutions to revert to a fairly high level of principle in establishing a code of ethics.

Almost without exception, these principles include:

- Integrity: honesty, straight dealing, reliability, safekeeping of client funds.

- Objectivity/independence: the avoidance of bias, conflict of interest or influence over-riding judgement.

- Competence, due diligence and rigour: possession of a defined body of knowledge and level of skill; maintaining the appropriate level of skill; performing services only in areas of current competence; practising with care and in compliance with agreed technical standards.

- Fitness for purpose: ensuring that services actually meet and fulfil needs and expected outcomes.

- Confidentiality: treating matters learned about others in confidence, and publicising only with authority.

- Professional conduct generally: complying with the law and the regulations of the institution, and not bringing the profession into disrepute.

In addition, most institutions have or require machinery for resolving ethical conflict wherever it might arise or be perceived to arise.

These core values, which occur repeatedly, at different levels of detail, across the codes of all of the institutions, should be uncontroversial – and could usefully be standardised across the built environment professions, so that embedding them in the educational process can also be consistently applied.

They are also, almost invariably, qualities that clients and stakeholders, in both the public and private realms, would expect of professional consultants.

Some institutions then add matters that are less to do with the relationship between professionals and their clients, and more to do with third parties with whom members may have fairly direct contact. These include:

•   Treating working colleagues or other members of the institution with respect, and guarding their reputation.

•   Assisting the education, training and continuing professional development of other members (ICE).

•   Safeguarding the health and safety of those impacted by their work.

•   Avoiding prejudice and encouraging diversity in employment practice.

These, too, should be reasonably uncontroversial and capable of being harmonised across the institutions.

There is then one other third party obligation, which, because it is not included in the code of conduct of most of the built environment institutions, may be controversial – but probably shouldn't be. This is the obligation to notify the institution of any perceived breach of the code by another member.

This leaves a number of examples where consideration of the public interest is passed down to members, and these are considered further below.

Clearly, what the institutions themselves regard as 'professional' is also a dynamic thing – and if it weren't, then they would lack the adaptability to survive. To illustrate this point, things that were once proscribed by one institution or another but which are now permitted, generally in response to changes in the structure and practice of business, include:

• Direct advertising.

• Limited liability.

• The inclusion of unqualified principals in a practice that can nonetheless describe itself as chartered.

• The admission of members operating outside professional practice (for example, the RICS and surveyors working for contractors, or the RIBA and architects becoming directors of construction companies).

• Becoming a company director.

It is reasonable to deduce that there are almost certainly rules currently operated by some institutions that will also be subject to change – and once that change is made no one taking advantage of it can be accused of being unprofessional.

At all times, therefore, institutions need to keep rules (existing or proposed) under review to establish whether they are genuinely to do with the protection of client or public interest, or whether they are closer to a restrictive practice designed to protect the membership – even from each other.

And having taken out the latter, it would be instructive to look at what remains and decide four things:

• Whether it adds up to anything that goes beyond a modern interpretation of the Ten Commandments.

• Whether provisions are sufficiently clear for them to be both enforced and sanctioned by an institution with the will to do so – without which they offer no real protection to third parties.

• Whether any part of that sanction provides a route to redress for an offended third party – without which their value lays only in deterrence.

• Whether they offer any assistance to members seeking to uphold values that do not suit their employers or clients.

Beyond that, there is a risk that a preoccupation with the moralistic aspects of ethics will divert attention from a matter of equal or greater importance to clients - which is the matter of competence.

Similarly, where individual examples of professional work turn out not to be reliable, it would be of little comfort to those who relied upon that work to learn that, in another corner of the woods, the profession is serving the common good.

This balance between competence and conduct (or ethics) was a recurrent issue in discussions around the Commission's work. Opinions varied from "It is all to do with competence, and nothing to do with ethics" through to a widespread unease that the balance has tilted too far towards the interests of members and their clients, and that the professions have a duty to take a more active role in matters of great public interest.

Reference has already been made to the special issue of the Building Research and Information journal published in January/February 2013 following a series of debates initiated by the Edge on what it means to be a construction professional in the 21st century, and the set of principles proposed as a code by which an individual professional should behave.

Few would argue with all of the principles espoused. Indeed, many of them are the qualities it takes to be a decent human being - but that also might be said to be their weakness. If they are decent qualities, but not everybody is decent, then what particular reliance can clients and the broader public place upon such declarations? Institutional codes really only mean something (or something that can rightfully secure third-party trust), therefore, if there is some kind of sanction in the event that they are not honoured. Practically none of those who contributed to the Commission's deliberations maintained that practitioners could be presumed to be acting ethically simply by virtue of being members of a profession.

"I am horrified [when professionals strike ethical positions as if they know what they are and others don't]. Claiming a higher code is the antithesis of the humility one might expect from a professional."

Chris Blythe, Chief Executive CIOB

Some of the principles also beg some pretty big questions. For example, in the injunction 'do the right thing, beyond your obligation to whoever pays your fee', what is 'the right thing'? Is it a personal decision on the part of the professional – and, if so, is it part of the proposition to the client/s that their interests will not be served (even if they are decent, honest and legal) if they do not match the professional's standard?

And should the same principle also be extended to 'beyond your obligation to whoever pays your salary'? Under those circumstances, most employers would doubtless admire the employee's personal conscience, but might wish they would take it elsewhere.

Similarly, in the objective to 'create lasting value', creating lasting value for whom?

The principles are therefore an excellent source for individuals seeking a code, but provide little practical assistance in resolving the moral dilemmas that lie at the root of the stark question: *what do you do, as a professional, when your principles point one way, and a client's needs or wants point in another?*

This question was asked repeatedly of contributors to the evidence sessions, but the lack of any clear or convincing answer from any speaker only served to reinforce just how knotty a dilemma it is.

Again, the impression (and a suspicion levelled at most of those in practice) is that the client's wishes will almost always prevail – and 'doing the best we can' (which one can take to mean seeking to persuade the client to do things differently) is the closest that professionals might come to standing against their clients' demands.

It would therefore be a service to the professions, particularly were it to lead to a shared view across the members of separate built environment institutions who routinely work together, if those institutions were to harmonise their codes of conduct and issue guidance to members as to how to interpret those standards in the day-to-day conduct of their practice.

The value of this exercise would lie not just in the creation of the standard, but also in the enrichment of a shared understanding of ethics that would be the product of the discussion and debate necessary to develop it.

The public interest

The obligation to act in the public interest is not an automatic part of the definition of a profession (although going beyond self-interest is), but it is a necessary part of any profession seeking the endorsement of a Royal Charter.

All institutions claim this obligation as a special quality that differentiates their members from those lacking a professional designation, and there was virtual unanimity in the evidence sessions that the professions owe a duty to serve the public interest. It is therefore salutary to look at how well the concept is understood, and how it is enshrined in the rules and regulations of the professions, at both an institutional and individual level.

The Privy Council is the body charged with the granting and oversight of Royal Charters, and one of its requirements is that incorporation by charter should be in the public interest. In the words of the Privy Council, "once incorporated by Royal Charter, a body surrenders significant aspects of the control of its internal affairs to the Privy Council". This is particularly true of architects, in respect of whom the Privy Council is also responsible for some of the affairs of the Architects Registration Board; and a similar but different arrangement applies in respect of engineers and the Engineering Council.

The term 'public interest' is not, however, defined; and nor is it policed by the Privy Council, which stresses that it cannot intervene in the internal affairs of chartered bodies any more than it could intervene in the private affairs of a citizen. It lacks the statutory powers to do so - and could hardly do so anyway, given that there are about 400 active chartered bodies within the purview of the Council.

The Privy Council therefore has no power to investigate (or even take a view on) any matter of fact or law relating to a chartered body; nor to require a chartered body to make any changes to its constitution; nor to offer remedies in the event of a complaint that a chartered body is in breach either of its charter or of general law. The only recourse for that is to the institution itself - or, if it is believed that the institution is acting unlawfully, to the courts. The only power that the Privy Council has in relation to chartered bodies, once satisfied that their by-laws accord with public policy, is the reactive one of considering changes to charters and by-laws that are submitted to it for approval.

So, once granted a charter, no body will be deprived of it again on the grounds of failing to serve the public interest.

It is therefore for every institution to demonstrate to the Privy Council that it passes a public interest test as part of the process of obtaining a charter; and it can point to package of measures through which it may legitimately claim to do so, including:

•   Developing, publishing and requiring the members to act upon quality standards and associated guidance.

•   Regulating the conduct of members, as individuals and organisations, to ensure compliance with codes of conduct.

•   Setting educational and other entry requirements, and obligations for continuing professional development to build skills, so that the public can assume a given level of competence on the part of an individual carrying the relevant qualification.

- Regulating the conduct of members, as individuals and organisations, to ensure compliance with quality standards.

- Advising (or speaking out) on matters of public interest where the profession's expertise should be regarded as authoritative.

- Building and deepening a relevant knowledge base through sharing experience, research and innovation.

Thereafter, however, it is for individual institutions to hold themselves to account. It follows that the interpretation of exactly what obligations are created in serving the public interest is highly variable; and the obligations placed on members in the same respect are more variable still.

Sue Illman, President of the LI, made a pertinent observation here – which is that, as far as the Landscape Institute is concerned, the obligation to act in the public interest is one that is limited to the institute itself, and not to its individual members. Decisions made by individual members in deciding whether or not to accept a commission, and then how to act in the performance of a commission, should consequently be restrained by ethics (as above) but not by any consideration as to whether the object of the commission itself might be in the public interest. This certainly simplifies life for members, but it does constrain the capacity of institutions to meet their own public interest test (as one of the most obvious ways of delivering it is to place a concomitant obligation on members).

Although by no means universal, there are also instances where institutions (including the LI) specifically pass down to members an obligation to consider the rights of others, which might be deemed to include the public interest, albeit with different language conveying different degrees of compulsion.

These include:

- Respecting the relevant rights and interests of others (RIBA).

- Showing due regard for the environment and for the sustainable management of natural resources; and having full regard for the public interest, particularly... in relation to the well-being of future generations (ICE).

- Having regard to the public interest and to the interests of all those affected by their professional activities (IStructE).

- Safeguarding the public interest in matters relevant to the art, science and practice of building services engineering; and having due regard to environmental issues in carrying out their professional duties (CIBSE).

- Having regard to the interests of those who may be reasonably expected to use or enjoy the products of their work (LI).

- Having full regard to the public interest in fulfilling professional responsibilities and duties (CIOB).

- Promoting the usefulness of the profession for public advantage (RICS).

These statements do, however, illustrate one problem of personalising the duty to the public interest: they use language ('have due regard…', 'respect…') that is neither sufficiently precise to convey how onerous the duty is, nor consequently to establish and sanction a breach.

Has any member of any institution ever been sanctioned for failing to put the public interest above their client's or their own?

Any attempt by individual institutions to ensure that the public interest is served, either institutionally or by members, is also hampered by the absence of any clear definition of the term, beyond understanding that it implies a concern for the general public, as opposed to the interests of a particular person or group; and where a public interest test applies in statute (for example, in competition law, the Freedom of Information Act etc) it is generally left to courts or tribunals to interpret the term.

To illustrate the difficulty of pinning down the concept, the US-based International Federation of Accountants has proposed a definition of the public interest by reference to the 'the net benefits derived for, and procedural rigor employed on behalf of, all society in relation to any action, decision or policy' (*A Definition of the Public Interest*, IFAC Policy Position 5, June 2012); while the Institute of

Chartered Accountants in England & Wales, representing the same profession, argues that a definition of public interest would itself be against the public interest, regarding the 'infinitely wide set of individual circumstances' that could apply to the term as beyond the reach of a detailed definition that avoids unintended consequences. Instead it substitutes a framework for decision-making – albeit one that is not so different from the IFAC policy paper.

Seeking to define the public interest, or the ways in which it might be served, also risks becoming a highly introspective exercise which, in and of itself, would be of little interest to the public.

The real test, therefore, is the extent to which institutions make plans that either bring about a public good that otherwise might not have come into being, or accelerate its development or, conversely, involve ceasing to participate in activities or policies that are not in the public interest. This means first of all identifying a cause. A number came up during the Commission proceedings, including:

- The impact of airport construction, and of air transport itself.

- Working conditions for construction workers in the Middle East – and most particularly, as a current example, in Qatar leading up to the construction of facilities for the World Cup in 2022.

- And possibly both the most extreme but also the most current, the situation in Gaza and the West Bank, about which the RIBA has recently become entangled in a doubtless well-intentioned decision to take a position.

But many are not within the power of professional institutions to solve, and they can have no particular duty to do so. They are either well beyond the scope of the institutions' province, or they are essentially matters of personal conscience; and while practitioners may choose to act on that conscience by, for example, declining a commission, or eschewing a particular market, some would argue that this puts them at a disadvantage relative to members who do not share their concern, or are just less squeamish, and they consequently seek collective action. It is, however, a curious kind of conscience that accepts self-denial only when all others are denied too.

The practical implication of this for the professions is that institutions and their members can really only be said to be serving the public interest where they have agreed, individually or collectively, what that means from the point of view of their own area of practice, and have then declared plans for positively serving public interest or preventing harm to it.

The decision as to whether or not a public interest duty extends to members is a critical one for institutions. If it does, then business decisions made by those members presumably need, at the least, to put the public interest into the mix when making them; and, at the most, to satisfy themselves that the public interest is best served by every decision. That would put members of the professions in an impossible position, effectively making them responsible for responding to all of the ills (actual or perceived) of the world.

Above the level of individual issues, though, there are also some really difficult questions to be answered by any institution that does major on the public interest as a core part of its raison d'être, including:

- Who are the public, who represents them, and how are they to be consulted?

- While the public presumably embraces all members of society, how are different impacts on different groups of society to be evaluated against each other?

- How should benefit to the public interest be valued against the cost of delivering it?

- Given that the public has no more constant and consistent a view of things than do the professions themselves, who defines where the interest lies at any one time, and how it might change as the views of society change?

- What credentials are required of those claiming to speak for the public interest if they are to be trusted?

- Is there a political dimension to this? While partisan responses to any issue may differ radically, is there a view of the public interest that should supersede the stance of a democratically elected government?

- What is the right response when cultural differences (for example, between nations) touch on matters of ethics which are claimed to legitimise actions abroad that would be regarded as unethical in one's 'home' market?

- Who polices the commitment to serve the public interest?

- How are the different duties and actions of individuals, companies and institutions ranked and reconciled?

- More specifically, how is the statutory duty to clients, shareholders, employees, pensioners or other directly involved stakeholders to be balanced with the interests of the public at large?

- Having taken a position based on analysis, is there then an obligation to keep the situation under review, to ensure that the assumptions made in declaring that position to be in the public interest hold good? This is a particular challenge for an industry in which there is no habit and little inclination to review completed projects for their effectiveness, let alone the consequences of abstract decisions.

"Isn't it rather a long time since we've asked the public what's good for them, if indeed we ever have? I suspect our defence would say that simply asking what the public need is a hopeless endeavour, for they are not able to tell us, and when they try, they tell us what they want, but not what (only we know) they need. This paternalistic conceit is reinforced by its own closed and self-serving logic. So might it be that, regardless of any societal value, the real benefit of this notion of public good and our enduring adherence to it lies mainly in enabling us to assert a moral and intellectual superiority in the eyes of a (presumably grateful but otherwise directionless!) public whose only role is to pay for the privilege of accessing it?"

Professor John Connaughton, Professor of Sustainable Systems in the Built Environment, University of Reading

Several of these questions also hang on the difficulty of an institution establishing a consensus view in an objective but democratic way. Again, it is a matter for members of institutions collectively to decide what they expect or demand of each other and of any policy consequently adopted by the institution itself. But in order to be consistent on some of the issues listed above, institutions would need to assemble a 'league table' of ills to be addressed, and the means by which their members' interests can be polled in order to avoid a policy line being captured by a minority special interest group. If Israel is on that league table, then what is the relative position of China? And those seeking to make a cause of China might first like to read Edge Member Chris Twinn's thoughtful paper on China's attempts to balance growth with the Confucian principles of "support for the common good, acceptance of one's place in society, and a balance with the natural world" (Chris Twinn, 2013, *Professionalism, Sustainability and the Public Interest: What Next?* Building Research and Information, volume 41, number 1, January/ February 2013).

In the meantime, ambivalence about the precise definition of the public interest and institutions' expectations of themselves and their members becomes, at best, a cause for confusion and contention within the membership, and at worst grounds for an accusation of hypocrisy. There is something of the Emperor's new clothes in the institutions preaching the public interest when it is not policed by the Privy Council; when that obligation is rarely passed down to individual members in the form of binding regulations; when institutions face a democratic difficulty in establishing a point of view about the major issues facing society (particularly given that, for many of them, there is more than one legitimate point of view); and when it has not been possible to trace any cases of members being expelled from institutions for operating within the law but outside the public interest.

It would therefore be genuinely in the public interest if the institutions were to clarify and codify exactly how they understand the term 'the public interest' in pursuit of the obligations of their charters, and produce (as for ethics) a rigorous, harmonised view of their expectation, both on behalf of themselves and of their members. This would include articulating the issues that arise, engaging with the public, raising the profile of public interest with members (as for ethical issues) and giving them practical guidance – specifically as to the extent to which their conduct and practice should be modified to acknowledge a duty that extends beyond the immediate one owed to clients.

Sanctions

The existence of a code, no matter how comprehensive, does not of itself guarantee compliance, of course. Even FIFA has a code of ethics, but without enforcement codes mean little.

One test of how much more protection clients of a profession and the wider public have in respect of matters of ethics, over and above the protection offered by the law, might therefore lie in disciplinary statistics.

However, with the exception of the RICS (which goes further than publish rulings, and also makes public the disciplinary proceedings held for the more serious charges), all institutions engaged in this exercise declined to offer such statistics, either through non-response or by citing confidentiality. This is curious. Apart from the fact that transparency might be regarded as one of the characteristics of an organisation's commitment to ethics and the service of the public interest, if the enforcement of the code of conduct were seen as an asset rather than a source of potential embarrassment, then clients and the public could take comfort from knowing that there will be an institutional response to a breach, and that members in breach will face a public sanction. This would have a value both to members and the public.

In the meantime, because of this lack of transparency, it is not possible to glean any statistics about the offences typically addressed in disciplinary hearings, but the suspicion is that these rarely if ever relate to failures of serving the public interest (as above) or of competence.

The question of competence is perhaps an area that the institutions are reluctant to stray into, because disputes between clients and professionals as to the quality of service are essentially a civil matter. Nonetheless, the expectation of competence is something that clients rely upon when appointing chartered professionals, and more than one speaker commented on specific cases of consultants venturing beyond their area of competence – for example, re-designing for sustainability, or neighbourhood regeneration.

Another way of looking at things?

On questions of both the public interest and ethics, it would be interesting to explore the extent to which both might better be served by treating them as commercial imperatives (thinking in the long term) rather than moral ones, seeking to establish where either or both could be sacrificed to short term self-interest, and also how that might be addressed were it to happen.

A narrative along these lines would run as follows:

- In most circumstances, value for money will be a leading (if not the leading) criterion for clients seeking professional services.

- Most clients will attach value to integrity – recognising that those who do not deal fairly with others may well not deal fairly with them either.

- The codification of what integrity means on the part of service providers carrying a particular designation therefore also has a value, so long as clients can rely upon the fact that is it enforced.

- There is consequently a value to clients seeking assurance about qualities like independence, probity, integrity and adherence to a defined code of ethics in employing professionals who carry such a designation.

- And there is similarly a value to those professionals being an accredited member of a body that underwrites a clear code of conduct upon which clients can rely.

On a matter of interest to both clients and professionals (some of whom still yearn, hopelessly, for a return to the days of fixed fee scales), there would also be a value in standards being codified and policed to a degree that offers protection against those aspiring to a proper level of service being undercut by competitors misleadingly making an offer to clients based on a substandard service.

It is clear that this focus on a duty to clients, rather than to the public interest, would frustrate the expectations of many of those participating in the evidence sessions conducted by the Commission.

Equally, it is a focus that most professional institutions would regard as a derogation from their higher duty and clearly the professions do lose some value, and their members therefore suffer some loss of status, if they decline to play a role in any matter that sits above the relationship between that institution and its members, and the dealings of individual members and their clients.

There were two categories of response to the question. The first related to externalities – actions which impact on third parties. This is a powerful point; or more accurately it would be if taking full account of externalities is considered a professional duty. However, this links back to the poor definition and lack of guidance relating to the public interest; and few professionals can honestly claim that they take fully into account in their work one of the greatest externalities of all – the impact of the built environment upon energy consumption and climate change.

A second, and in many ways more interesting, answer came from Matthew Taylor, who suggested that the greatest loss the professions would suffer if they limit their efforts to service of the client's commercial interests would be their legitimacy. He cited the example of the Police Federation as an organisation that had completely lost sight of its original purpose, leading to a siege mentality by which the solidarity of members was almost defined by opposition to the public rather than its service.

> *"Legitimacy is derived from the fact that you believe you're in the business of balancing professional interest and public interest, and if you abandon that, or even the pursuit of that, you abandon your legitimacy, and you become simply a trade association."*

Matthew Taylor, Chief Executive RSA

Matthew then developed that idea with a suggestion that 'the new professions' should seek to define themselves by inclusivity, reaching out to engage the public in their work, rather than in the exclusivity of club membership.

This connects to the question as to why, in an age in which it seems to secure no particular privileges (with only architects having protection of title, no built environment profession having protection of function, the abolition of mandatory fee scales etc), the professions should embrace their duty to act positively in the public interest, beyond the rather artificial (and unenforceable) presumption implicit in the granting of a Royal Charter.

Two answers to this emerged or were implied in the Commission's deliberations:

- That this taps into something deeply attractive to potential, new and (it is to be hoped) long-standing members of the professions who are seeking a purpose beyond the confines of a bilateral contract with their clients.

- That most institutions do seem to have a preoccupation with an ability to influence Government, and it also seems to meet an expectation of members. For that to work, however, the professions need to have a disinterested proposition that will improve the lives of citizens in some way.

Both of these answers are well served by the idea of a legitimacy rooted in something other than self-interest.

In some ways, this might be seen as a commercial case for serving the public interest – and, much though it might disappoint the genuinely altruistic members of the professions - that may also give it a better chance of genuine observance.

It would therefore be a service to the professions in general and their members in particular, if the institutions could collectively debate, quite separately from the rather different topic of ethics, what exactly acting the public interest means at an institutional level, agree whether and how that obligation should be passed down to members, and produce guidance for members to interpret how this should affect the conduct of their day-to-day business on behalf of clients.

Recommendations:

A-1) Develop and standardise a national code of conduct/ethics across the built environment professions, building on shared experience in the UK and internationally.

A-2) Take a lead in raising the awareness of members to a shared understanding of ethical issues, creating guidance (rather than prescription), and monitoring both individuals and practices.

A-3) Define and harmonise the commitment to the public interest at institutional, practice and individual level, again raising awareness and creating guidance.

A-4) Make public and clear the procedures for complaint and the institution's sanctioning process, details of members who have been sanctioned, and the grounds for doing so.

Education, competence, and the development of a body of knowledge

Although much of the discussion at the evidence sessions centred on issues of ethics and the public interest, more than one speaker also commented on the potential distraction of this issue away from a matter of more immediate concern to clients (who probably either take ethical conduct for granted, or assume that the prospects of securing it in both the professional and non-professional sectors are similar) – and that is the competence, knowledge and expertise possessed by those holding themselves out as professionals.

> *"What our clients and customers want is our knowledge and the judgments it enables. Society also wants that and where Institutes are falling short is in being floppy about the knowledge and judgment of their members, not so much about their ethical behavior. Ethics are of course essential but it is knowledge on which is based our service to both clients and public."*

Sunand Prasad, Senior Partner Penoyre & Prasad, formerly President RIBA

From the point of view of the institutions, as 'keepers of the gate', the starting point for the development of this knowledge is clearly the tertiary education process.

Education

Education was not a specific topic for this series of debates, but it inevitably intruded as a consequence of being critical to the base level competence assumed by new entrants to the professions, and also for the way that it shapes the attitude of those entrants to other disciplines and to the way that the industry functions.

No specific evidence was given on the institutions' relationship with academia, and their oversight of the content and quality of accredited courses, the extent of this therefore remains an open question. The degree of their oversight is, however, critical to the professions' claim to act as an effective gatekeeper of competence.

By contrast, a great deal was said about the siloed nature of the professions, and the fact that the starting point for this is the fragmentation of the education process, and that this also stands in the way of bringing greater collaboration or integration – and the call to 're-set the DNA' of chartered professionals.

The first response to this tends to be to call for standardisation and more shared time on courses. Many universities already conduct parts of their programme (or an entire post-graduate programme) building across professional divides, but there are both practical and philosophical difficulties in seeking to impose this as a standard. For example:

- Many schools or universities lack one or another of the disciplines necessary to establish a multi-disciplinary faculty.

- Some of the best departments in specific disciplines are relatively isolated within their universities, or separated from cognate built environment departments by university school/faculty structures.

- Accumulating the depth of knowledge required in each professional specialism is time-consuming, and this is only going to increase as the needs of the industry and its clients become more complex – and yet there is already a critical time pressure on covering the syllabus for most courses, and there is an equal but opposite pressure to reduce the cost of courses, particularly in architecture.

- Finally, the excellence of some courses may come in part from the focus that relative isolation allows them, and a 'sausage machine' approach would distinctly impoverish the diversity of professionals in the labour market, and the potential for innovation.

There is also an element of the market showing the way here, particularly given increasing fees for students and reducing fees for professional work. This should mean that those teaching institutions that get their offer right will attract fee-paying students to their courses; and those students will then find gainful employment on graduation.

As with so many issues considered in this study, there is therefore a balance to be struck. The value of diversity is recognised, but many of the most impassioned pleas for that relate to teaching establishments, which are themselves highly respected, and whose graduates are equally highly valued. However, many professionals practise in small firms that do not have the resources to hire a diverse range of skills and instincts and meld them into an effective team; and there remains widespread concern about the quality of new entrants, even if only anecdotally, and particularly about the embedding of a habit to act in disciplinary isolation, rather than in a multi-disciplinary team in an atmosphere of mutual respect and aligned objectives.

Recommendation:

B-1) For the built environment institutions to commit to a cross disciplinary review of the siloed nature of the education system, to see how they can use their badging to encourage greater integration.

Recruitment

Although not directly related to the question of education, the difficulty of attracting bright people into some parts of the industry was a recurrent theme, and to this can be linked the concerns of younger entrants to the built environment professions summarised above.

The responses to both require deeper consideration than emerged in the Commission's deliberations. Beyond the agreed need to promote all construction industry professions as a career, though, two more specific recommendations were put forward: one relating to the same issue of cross-industry collaboration and flexibility of routes into the separate professions; and the other being an imaginative response to the twin predicaments of institutions seeking resources and graduates seeking to manage their debt. This idea of flexibility in the face of new economic realities was also a recurring theme.

"Most universities have suffered huge depletion in their numbers with the issue of fees, so a lot of the courses are having to consider whether they can carry on. We are responding ... by looking at things like alternative routes of entry into the profession, and how we can set up new educational models to allow people to come through different routes. But at the grassroots level we've got to look at part-time earning, working in practices, and putting that together with academic input to encourage young people into the profession."

Sue Illman, President, Landscape Institute

Recommendations

B-2) Collectively promote the built environment as a career path of choice, demonstrating the relevance of the institutions (and membership thereof) in a way that engages current and future generations.

B-3) Provide the means of allowing and encouraging greater movement between professions during a career.

B-4) Provide access to young members by accepting a donation of time in return for a lower subscription.

Competence

The codes of conduct of almost all of the professional institutions involved in the built environment include a requirement for competence, for keeping up to date, and for each member to stay within the bounds of their own expertise. The possession of a professional qualification should therefore be a clear signal, both to employers and clients, that its owner also possesses a base level of current competence. The question (and it remains an open one) is how reliable that signal is.

At least two speakers (both, possibly tellingly, operating in a 'professional' capacity but without institutional accreditation) referred to frequent encounters with poor advice given by the people who are professionally qualified, but who are clearly operating beyond their area of professional competence.

Again, some transparency around disciplinary proceedings would cast light on the suspicion that it is rare for members to be sanctioned for a lack of competence.

Transparency would be further aided by some form of public rating system by which the experience of clients and colleagues dealing with a particular individual can be placed on record. The need for safeguards in such a system is fully recognised, but there is a strong feeling that if something along those lines is not mediated by the institutions themselves, then it will eventually come into being on a non-mediated basis.

"How do you actually protect the quality of professionalisation ... and give consumers and businesses the confidence of what they're buying if everyone is trying to be a professional or wants to describe themselves as a professional organisation?"

Ian Brinkley, Chief Economist, Work Foundation

Recommendations

B-5) Improve the 'guarantee' of a particular quality of individual - for example by benchmarking the expertise of members.

B-6) Become agents for disclosure as guardians of quality – for example, a TripAdvisor type public feedback system for individual/practice performance.

Research and the development of a body of knowledge

Not a great deal was said about research and the development of a genuine body of knowledge in the evidence sessions, although it is claimed by all as a key attribute of the professions. However, there was a lot in the written submissions, generally by Edge members, that suggests that the claim is not well supported by practice and action.

There need to be more examples like the published proceedings of the ICE and the CIBSE Guides - well researched, digested for publication, widely disseminated and regularly updated.

This is, therefore, one of those issues that balances both threat and opportunity: if the claim to an organised, specialist body of knowledge is not genuine, then it amounts to empty special pleading. If, however, it is genuine, then it represents a real potential benefit to clients and society, and therefore a real competitive advantage for an institution's members.

This leads to the following recommendations to the institutions.

Recommendations

B-7)   As learned societies, engage with and disseminate research and best practice, including: agenda setting; pulling knowledge together coherently for members; reviewing how institutions themselves should respond to emerging evidence from research and practice; and adjusting requirements for membership, practice and education accordingly.

B-8)   Establish a joint think tank that could pool the resources of the institutions to conduct research and develop policy for the industry – a King's Fund for the built environment.

B-9)   Determine how the professions can support standards that link better across sectors internationally – for example (taking an ambition from the RICS), linking matters financial to accounting to valuation to measurement to ethics to the environment.

Institutional organisation and the relationship with Government

As member organisations, how individual institutions organise themselves internally is entirely a matter for them, and was beyond the scope of the Commission's brief.

However, the extent to which those individual institutions need to think or act together in order to improve both the service and standing of their members, and the extent to which it happens (or not) was another recurrent theme.

A single institution for the built environment?

Several speakers (and many prior commentators) have touched on the possibility of overcoming the silo-based nature of the existing institutions by having a single institution for all of the built environment. The idea is appealing, but such a recommendation would be stillborn. It is so unlikely that it would happen, and even less likely that it would be brought about by decisions made and actions taken by the existing institutions, that energies would be better directed to more incremental change.

Certainly there is plenty of frustration expressed about the inability or disinclination of the existing institutions to work together to address some of the great issues considered above, and some members of the Edge have suggested that they would regard the Edge itself as their professional institution as it addresses the issues in which they have the most urgent interest, and does so on a multi-disciplinary basis.

There is, however, no sign of a body of influential industry figures which might motivate the creation of a new institution; and as noted above, most practitioners value their existing qualification and designation – particularly where it is covered by a Royal Charter.

In any event, the time that it would take to establish a new organisation, and the disruption (or even conflict) that that would cause, would set back an agenda for change to a degree that would be self-defeating.

If lasting change is to come, therefore, it is more likely to be accomplished through channels that already exist.

Construction Industry Council

Attempts by the industry to organise itself to collaborate do not have a good history, and in that context the CIC is a success story. First envisioned by Ted Happold as a potential alternative to silo-based institutions, it has not made a great deal of progress towards the idea of a single institution for the built environment, but it has managed to retain and grow its membership over the 25 years of its existence, and all of the key institutions relevant to the built environment remain members.

Holding such diverse organisations, each jealous of its own territory does, however, come at a price. The first element of this price is that the agenda can lack ambition – not in breadth (if anything, it perhaps tries to do too much) but in depth, and the ability to bring about real change and reform. Because of its constitution, this is not a criticism of the CIC itself, but rather of its members, at least some of whom maintain an ambivalent attitude towards this umbrella body. On the one hand there is at best a hesitation about their preparedness to allow the CIC to represent the points of view of individual institutions; and on the other hand some have suggested that its programme lacks the value that justifies membership.

This may be why the CIC was mentioned only once by speakers in the sessions that preceded the presentation by Graham Watts.

The CIC also suffers from a 'professions and trade' problem referred to above, in that the management of construction is represented principally by the CIOB, but most of those who manage construction (the contractors) would regard their trade association (whether that might be the CBI, the UK Contractors Group, the Federation of Master Builders, the National Federation of Builders or one of the host or organisation representing the separate trades) as their lead representatives on most critical issues.

This multiplicity of organisations is the inevitable product of a fragmented industry; but the difficulty they seem to find in organising themselves for collaboration on matters of common interest should not be inevitable.

Again, though, by comparison with other sectors of the industry, the CIC as the professions' own attempt to organise themselves for collaboration (a necessary first step towards wider industry collaboration) is a success story; and the programme of work undertaken in developing and implementing a shared vision of the future of BIM, co-ordinated by the CIC, is an exemplar of how things could/should be.

From the point of view of the professions, the CIC also remains 'the only show in town', and the development of shared programmes should be directed through it, and any weaknesses in its ability to deliver those programmes should be fixed at source. Unless the CIC is able to initiate the consideration of issues beyond those passed down from individual institutions, then we lack the means of thinking and improving across institutional boundaries, and a key potential advantage of the professions is lost in the interests of protecting 'turf'.

Recommendation

C-1)   Develop and empower the CIC as a shared outlet for joint initiatives and announcements, lobbying, campaigning etc on selected cross-industry issues.

Construction Leadership Council

In an industry that lacks collective leadership, the creation of a council that brings together separate constituencies of the industry to address, with Government, matters of critical shared interest can only be welcomed. It is still too early to say how it will fit into the complex geography of industry organisations, but with a focus on the Construction 2025 strategy, the Construction Leadership Council cannot be the only (or even principal) body through which progress and reform are mediated. Even within the bounds of its agenda, there is still need for a forum for reaching industry views on a range of strategic issues across the supply chain, in advance of engaging with Government.

For the professions, the first port of call is probably by participation, through the CIC, in a newly reshaped Strategic Forum for Construction. This now comprises five colleges representing clients, the professions, contractors, specialist contractors and product suppliers, with Government representatives invited to attend when there is an agreed purpose and need; and one of its declared purposes is to facilitate the industry's partnership role in the CLC by providing a conduit for considering and agreeing industry positions and strategies for presentation to the CLC.

Exactly how (and how well) this will work remains to be seen, but as for the CIC itself, it must be better to work on making existing organisational structures effective, rather than to imagine that shuffling the deck or a re-branding exercise will get us any nearer what is really needed - a reformed industry with a focus on its clients rather than a fixation with its own internal politics.

For the professions (but not just for them), the challenge is to envision and commit to that reform, even when it may also demand reform of the business models of their members; and, at an organisational level, to determine how they might be represented on such bodies by individuals who carry their trust without the backing of a collective view on every issue. In short, they need not to be mere delegates (with all the bureaucracy and delay that that entails) but respected individuals with delegated power.

The relationship with Government

There was much discussion, particularly in session 3, about the relationship with Government. Clearly the institutions regard a dialogue with Government as an important part of their role, and equally clearly the members expect it and value it. Too often, however, the real value that could be derived from that dialogue, both for their membership and for wider society, is compromised by some of the consequences of a fragmented industry and a consequent multiplicity of institutions.

Those consequences include:

•   Multiple causes crowding each other out in the clamour for Ministerial attention.

•   Contradictory opinions or mixed messages, even on matters of common cause, having the same effect.

•   Too much of what is being pitched to Government being intended or perceived as lobbying by a special interest group, rather than a proposition for the improvement of the lives of citizens – which is (or should be) the primary concern of Government.

•   Even where there is common cause, the constitutional and organisational realities of multiple institutions making the development of a shared view that can be presented to Government with authority a slow process, and often too slow to be helpful.

"In three years in Whitehall, I repeatedly sat in meetings with Ministers or senior officials in which separate factions of the industry (including the professions) pleaded their special interests – often in negative terms, and sometimes in opposition to the interests of other segments of the industry. When they did come together, they rarely brought a consensus - and still more rarely a settled position that related to a matter that would gain real traction with a politician: a better service to citizens, or a better offer for the taxpayer. No doubt these meetings are promoted to memberships as an indication of access. They are, however, a wasted opportunity. In order to gain not just a polite hearing, but also respect and traction, industry or professional delegations need to be broadly representative and propose solutions to the social/economic/environmental problems sitting in a Minister's in-tray."

Paul Morrell, Government Chief Construction Adviser, 2009-12

It would be easy to say, as it often is, that the response to this is for the institutes to develop a single voice. However, if the aspiration is for that 'single voice' to speak on all matters related to the built environment, then it is impractical and probably unhelpful – and the prospects of it actually happening are vanishingly small.

The chief executive of one institution has also pondered "whether the call for a single voice is as much about corralling and muzzling the various professions" as about presenting a coherent view. It doesn't really matter whether that suspicion is well founded or not: the very fact that it exists demonstrates how unlikely it is that all institutions will subscribe to a 'self-denying ordinance' to speak only through a single channel. It is matched by a fear that the process of reaching agreement will so much reduce the professions' stance on issues to their lowest common denominator that the noise of multiple views will be replaced with an inaudible whisper, and the signal will still be lost.

However, to decline to develop a coherent view on any issue seriously compromises the contribution that the professions can make to the national debate; and worse, creates a void into which louder voices will intrude.

It may therefore be better to focus on what those issues might be, and whether it is possible to reach a common view, before deciding how that should be promulgated and by whom. This, too, turns on the issue of collaboration.

Collaboration on strategic issues

Discussion about collaboration ran through many of the themes of the Commission's work.

The siloed nature of the institutions is seen as a considerable threat to their future, but correcting that also represents a considerable opportunity, as the authority of the professions of the built environment would increase exponentially were they to develop and present a coherent view on matters of public interest; However, collaboration remains a problem – both structurally and culturally.

It is also ironic that, although the relationships around a construction project are too frequently confrontational, individual members of professions and their practices work together day by day in a collaborative, constructive way in order to deliver the projects for which they are commissioned; but they do seem to struggle to establish the same kind of collaboration at an institutional level.

There are valid reasons for this: the institutions do have different (and sometimes competing) interests; they will inevitably focus in their programmes upon matters of direct interest to their membership; and all of them are constrained by resources. The time that it takes an individual institution to reach a position on any issue is also multiplied when multiple institutions need to agree with each other, so that they are not well equipped to deal collectively with issues that require a rapid response.

A series of factors therefore comes together to drive the conclusion that it's not realistic to expect the institutions to reach a collective view on all issues, even on matters of great public interest.

Nor is it always possible or necessary to reach a single view on any issue. The ICE pitches its ambition and its purpose more realistically when it states that its objective is to provide the best possible view of the engineering implications of a policy matter touching the built environment, including the implications of different decisions; and Matthew Taylor endorsed that as perfectly reasonable position to adopt.

This also acknowledges that few policy issues will turn on technical expertise alone, and certainly not the technical expertise of a single profession – nor even a collective view of all professions engaged in the built environment. Decisions will also be driven by sociological factors, by economics, by the law – and, when it comes to decisions by Government, by politics.

The latter is also one of a number of reasons why what might be the "right" decision at one time, will not remain so forever. While wisdom might be constant, received wisdom is not; and even where principles are constant, the information and understanding against which they are applied may change - and there is a ready and recent example in the announcement by the Friends of the Earth that it is withdrawing its objection to the principle of nuclear power.

There are many issues, which society faces that relate to the built environment, or to services provided by built facilities, and it would be curious to the point of dereliction if the relevant institutions felt they had no part to play in addressing them. They are certainly weakened, or at least missing an opportunity, if they do not do so.

"Society would expect the professional bodies to collaborate. They would expect the professionals in the built environment to understand that they work in a complex multidisciplinary world, and they would expect us to find mature ways of working with each other."

Colin Haylock, Past President, Royal Town Planning Institute

Topics for institutional collaboration

Beneath the great national issues there is a host of matters, principally relating to regulation, where the Government has a duty to consult and can be expected to want to get things right, and where a collective point of view of those working in the sector is therefore of great value.

As a generalisation, it is perhaps true to say that the professions are better at dealing with these micro issues than with the macro. Doubtless this is largely due to the fact that the issues are clearly less difficult, with less room for major differences of opinion, but also perhaps because there is, for most issues, a natural respondent (that is, a segment of industry for whom the issue is most relevant) that lessens the difficulty of establishing a shared view across multiple professions and their institutions.

There is then a number of major issues which relate to the built environment, but not exclusively so. These include:

- The growing gap between the demand for suitable homes and their supply.

- The need to address the country's ageing social and economic infrastructure, much of which still depends upon the legacy of the Victorians.

- The need to develop sufficient generating capacity to maintain the nation's power needs.

- The challenges of energy consumption and climate change.

Realistically, some of these stretch far beyond the reach of the built environment professions, even acting collectively, and they are therefore topics for which the laying out of alternatives and their consequences would probably be the right approach.

There are, however, other issues which have more direct relevance to the built environment, which are (generally) less politically fraught; and where collaboration across the institutions could make a real difference, when little else could.

"The future of the built environment depends on the ability of the specialists to deal with the pace of change and help create a resilient society. The specialists have to create expert communities that meet the characteristics of a profession and they have to publically demonstrate that they are competent to support society in the development of the built environment."

Barry Clarke, Professor of Geotechnical Engineering University of Leeds, Past President Institution of Civil Engineers

Three broad themes that might meet these criteria would be:

- Industry reform in the interests of producing a better offer to clients.

- Fixing the consequences of the lack of a feedback loop within routine industry processes, frequently leading to a gap between predicted (required) and actual performance.

- Addressing the impact of the built environment upon climate change (and the impact of climate change upon the built environment), in terms of both mitigation and adaptation.

These issues are also inter-connected: one feature of the industry that needs to be reformed is its lack of attention to the performance of built assets beyond completion; and one element of the performance gap is a wastefulness in energy consumption, compounding the problems of global warming. Similarly, it is scarcely credible that we can meet the challenges of the transition to a lower carbon industry delivering a lower carbon product through the current structure and practice of the industry. That is therefore a good place to start.

Industry Reform

Few of those who make their living in the industry believe that is organised in a way that represents the optimal balance between the needs of suppliers (anywhere in the value/supply chain) also to make a living, and the needs of clients to procure assets that meet all of their targets (in terms of time, cost, quality and performance) and which therefore represent value for money.

Both the causes and consequences of sub-optimal situations have been well rehearsed, but there is probably broad consensus that the principal matters of structure/process that need to be fixed comprise:

- The lack of integration between design, product manufacture, construction, operation and asset management.

- Partly as a result of the above, the lack of a feedback loop that increases the chances of a completed asset performing as it should, and of future projects learning from the past.

- A lack of alignment of interests both within the supply chain (a consequence of the lack of integration) and between the supply chain and the client (a consequence of traditionally adversarial relationships).

While individual practitioners can use their experience and skill to duck and weave through these shortcomings in the industry, it is certainly beyond their powers to change the routine offer available to all clients.

In discussing the above, an interesting question arose in response to the suggestion that one measure of success of the professions (and therefore by implication the institutions) might be the extent to which they can develop a better proposition for clients. The question was whether the institutions actually owe a duty to clients, given that they have no relationships with them. Clearly this is factually correct, but it would be curious if an institution does owe a duty to the public interest, and to its members, but not to that specific group of the public who actually fund the industry and its professions.

Nonetheless, even if the institutions engage, the necessary reform cannot be achieved by them acting collectively but in isolation – as, by definition, a move towards integration can only be implemented by those who are to be integrated. There is consequently a need for collaboration not just across separate institutions (already difficult) but also across the cultural (and often contractual) divide of 'professions and trade', and beyond that into interests that traditionally have not been at the table at all as buildings and other built assets get designed and constructed – specifically asset/facility managers, and those with a real understanding of how a built asset might perform in use. The latter is particularly critical, given that that is where real value for money invariably lies.

However, were an alliance of institutions to take the lead in developing a vision of how a more efficient industry were to function, of securing wide buy-in to the vision, and then developing a timed action plan for the implementation of reform, then there could scarcely be a move that would have greater positive impact on the public good, given that almost all of us are both end users and end payers for construction – whether directly, or through the price we pay for goods and services, or as taxpayers.

Recommendations:

D-1) Establish a shared vision as to structural reform of the industry that would improve the industry's offer to clients …

D-2) …and its offer to society.

Climate Change

Although coverage of the Commission was always intended to extend to issues much broader than the environment, it is of course a matter of primary interest to the Edge and issues relating to the environment ran like a thread through the Commission's deliberations.

Questions about climate change in particular also represent both a challenge to individual institutions' interpretation of the public interest, and a test as to how well it is served.

The starting point (for Governments, institutions, companies and individuals) is a linked pair of questions: "Do you believe in the potential for global warming to lead to catastrophe; and if so, do you think anything can be done about it?"

The answer to the questions, and the consequences, are both binary, and have particular consequences for those working in the built environment. If the answer to the first question is no, then there is already a great deal of misdirected expenditure accompanied by a waste of resources, both human and natural, and the public interest duty would be to put a stop to that.

If the answer to the first question is yes, but to the second is no, then the natural conclusion would be the same as above – but again there would be an added duty to be sure.

And if the answer to both questions is yes, then few would argue with the proposition that we are not doing enough.

Also, surely none would argue that this is not a matter of great public interest, and therefore one upon which the institutions should assume a duty not just to inform (as they should) but also to act.

The challenge and the test therefore is first for each institution to declare its position in respect of both questions – and ideally to do so collectively in order to increase the power of the answer.

Anecdotally, one would expect the answer to both questions to be 'yes', and a series of consequences follow. The first is dealing with the fact that it is clear that there is a significant minority in Parliament who take a very different view - either in being clear that the answer to the first question is no, notwithstanding the lack of scientific support for their view, or in believing that something must be done, but that there are higher or more immediate priorities.

Also, there is a significant minority (possibly a majority) of the public that would answer 'no' – raising the interesting question as to whether the public interest is still to be served even when the public itself believes that the action taken is positively against its interests.

Given this weight of opinion, it is perhaps understandable that the professions' response is a pragmatic one: simply put, to do the best they can – particularly given that, if they take a more robust line, not all of their competitors will do the same, and those who share neither the obligation nor aspiration to follow the proclamations of a professional institution will have no inhibition in offering services which are cheaper/better suit the short-term demands of clients who feel no compunction to follow a Green agenda.

This does, however, put the issue of climate change into the category of matters of discretion rather than matters of compulsion; and one would ask how ethical it is for a profession or its members to deliver buildings, which pay insufficient attention to energy efficiency and other responses to climate change. They would hardly take the same approach in respect of (for example) structural stability or life and safety issues.

Certainly, if the professions themselves equivocate, then they can have no strong grounds for complaining when Government and the media pay more attention to personalities (and particularly business personalities - who might present any suggestion of restraint in the use of resources as the enemy of growth) than to professionals on this critical issue.

Recommendations:

D-3) Set environmental matters high on the professional portfolio both collectively and individually, with action and measurement.

D-4) Establish a joint institutional position re the right response to the impact of the built environment on climate change (mitigation) …

D-5) … and the impact of climate change on the built environment (adaptation).

D-6) Publish cross-disciplinary recommended behaviours for members re designing for climate change.

Building performance

The absence of a feedback loop in the design, construction, commissioning and operation of buildings has long been recognised as a problem, but in the battle between good intentions and barriers to action, the barriers are clearly still winning.

The consequence is a gap between how buildings are meant (and probably promised) to perform, and how they actually perform in service that in any other industry would be regarded as a scandal. This situation is so serious that there was unanimity amongst the speakers at the session at which it was discussed that the professions could be accused of mis-selling. This is probably an over-dramatic way of putting it, but it is extraordinary how much professional effort is put into the process of design and construction, and to essentially procedural matters relating to their relationship with their clients, while so little attention is paid to the product and whether it actually works – and all the time bemoaning that clients themselves pay insufficient attention to whole life.

"All of the built environment professions and their institutions currently focus on output, building a building and have forgotten that it's buildings in use that matter; and many of systems are designed on the same principle – so there is a catalogue of "BREEAM Excellent" buildings that are shocking in use. We need a shift from output to service, focusing, like the automotive industry, on customer experience and whole of life performance."

Paul Fletcher, "former Chartered Architect", speaking from the floor

There can hardly be a cause more deserving of cross-industry collective contemplation and action than the constant failure of its product.

Recommendations

D-7) Take responsibility for the whole-life of projects, by getting involved from the start and remaining involved beyond project delivery to monitor performance through post-occupancy evaluation.

D-8) Develop and maintain joint codes and standards/key performance metrics so that all construction professionals are working from a shared understanding of (building) performance.

D-9) Agree cross-disciplinary recommended behaviours for members re holistic post occupancy evaluation of projects …

D-10) … and an integrated system for publishing this information…

D-11) … against which members should be obliged to report annually.

D-12) Develop the awards system to be a truer reflection of the performance of buildings, with the ultimate accolade being reserved for a building that after 10 years of use out-performs others.

A useful focus for this work would be an agreement as to the principle and format of Display Energy Certificates for all buildings as the first phase of knowledge, with the exposure of public display forcing change.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The coverage of the presentations, discussions and written submissions over the course of the Commission's work were both wide-ranging and diverse, and unsurprisingly there were frequently differences of opinion, some of them quite pointed. Unanimity was rare, but conclusions emerging from a mixture of the discussions of the panel, and matters upon which something close to a consensus was reached in the evidence sessions, lead to the following summary:

- The professions, or at least the people possessing the skills that they offer, have shown themselves to be adaptable, and there is every reason to believe that they will continue to be so.

- Nonetheless, the threats and pressures for change that the professions face, if not yet existential, are real and profound, and demand change.

- Ironically, one of the pressures that the existing professions face is the increasing 'professionalisation' of occupations beyond those that organised themselves a century or more ago. In those circumstances it is essential to codify and comply with those attributes that distinguish an accredited body of people in whom (and in whose judgement) the public can place trust.

- The distinctive attributes of a professional institution are:
  - That, through entry standards and continuing professional development, it underwrites a level of competence on the part of its members.
  - That it assembles and develops a body of knowledge.
  - That it sets and ensures compliance with a code of ethics.
  - That it should owe a duty to the public interest.

- The distinctive attributes of a professional, in addition to compliance with the requirements of their accrediting institution, are the ability to:
  - Assemble and process right and relevant information relating to their specialist area of practice.
  - Exercise judgment in processing and interpreting that information.
  - Convert that analysis into a recommendation for policy, decision or action.

- Although a body of knowledge is an essential attribute of the professions, the organisation of research and the processing and dissemination of its findings is generally not well handled across the industry.

- A code of conduct underpinned by a commitment to ethics is an essential attribute of a profession in which the public can place trust, but codes across the various institutions are randomly (and unnecessarily) variable, and members lack guidance as to their interpretation in day-to-day practice.

- The sanctioning of members who are in breach of the institutions' codes also lacks transparency and is therefore of limited benefit to the public.

- A duty to serve the public interest, and the extent to which that duty is passed down below the institutional level to members, is also highly variable (to the point of being absent in some institutions' code of conduct) and it raises a fundamental question to which no contributor during the evidence sessions had a convincing answer: how can professionals continue to do what they regard as the right thing, when this is not a priority for (or is even contrary to the wishes of) their client? Has any member of any institution ever been sanctioned for failing to put the public interest above their client's or their own?

- It is critical that the professions maintain (or, on some interpretations, regain) their legitimacy by engaging in some of the great challenges facing society, as they relate to the built environment.

- Legitimacy would be increased if efforts are made to include the wider public in both plans and debates on issues directly affecting them (such as fracking, for example), sharing expertise objectively, in substitution for presuming to know best based purely on that expertise – replacing, or at least supplementing, exclusivity in favour of inclusivity.

- The scale and breadth of the challenges we face is such that a positive response to them extends far beyond the reach of a single profession, and they must consequently act collectively.

- The call for collaboration across the professions was as close to unanimity as any of the issues raised in the evidence sessions, almost matched by consensus that the professions have been poor at collaboration at institutional level, and make poor use of the CIC beyond matters of shared business interest (health & safety, education, diversity etc) – which, though important, are essentially introspective. This is in marked contrast to the routine way in which the different professions collaborate at project level to meet their clients' needs.

- There is neither a realistic prospect of a single institution for the built environment professions, nor would there be a particular need for one if they could act together. Nor is there a need to reach a common view on all things; but there is a need to agree a series of critical topics on which it is both necessary and realistic to collaborate, and to set a plan and a programme for producing valuable output.

- There is a particular issue with the young, many of whom believe that the institutions spend too much time looking backwards, and inwards, and lack both foresight and leadership.

- There are three issues in particular about which there was a powerful consensus in favour of cross-institution collaboration:
  - Addressing the silo-based nature of the industry, and its effect on the offer to clients and the performance of the products it delivers.
  - The challenge of climate change, and the belief that however much institutions might be doing separately, it isn't enough and could be far more effective if championed and addressed collectively.

- The absence of a feedback loop in the industry, and the consequent gap in the performance of built assets as offered to clients and the performance actually achieved in use – with energy performance being just one marked example of that gap.

The last of these is a topic in itself, and the difference between the promise and the performance of the industry's product was widely equated with mis-selling in evidence sessions. It would be a source of scandal in any other sector, and should be in construction.

In the extreme, a starker summary of all of the above would be that the institutions risk losing control of the very things that are claimed to differentiate their members from non-professionals. Viz:

• With varying levels of control (and sometimes limited oversight) of the content and quality of accredited educational courses.

• With those regulations that relate to ethics being randomly different, with a lack of transparency in any enforcement on matters of competence, acting in self-interest etc (that is, beyond the mechanistic requirements such as compulsory PI cover).

• With the concept of service of the public interest, while cherished, being poorly defined, rarely passed down to members and (probably) unenforced.

• With, save for some exceptions (such as the ICE's published proceedings, and the CIBSE Guides), knowledge being poorly captured and shared; and research lacking strategic direction and effective processing and dissemination.

• With institutions, in their silo-based nature, failing to keep up with changes in patterns of ownership/corporate structure and employment; failing to demonstrate leadership; lacking the will to come together to address some of the great issues that reach across the whole of the built environment; and, as a consequence of all of the above, risking alienating or disaffecting the young.

It is suggested that the accumulation of forces for change is such that, although not yet amounting to an existential threat, it has the potential to be so. However, this is balanced by an opportunity for the professions to find a new position for themselves that captures the best of the values of their past, while being relevant to 21st century circumstances and valuable to their members, society and the challenges we face.

A series of actions designed to move the institutions on in respect of all of these matters is contained in the body of this report, and is summarised below.

Summary of recommendations

There has been, both in the evidence sessions and in the discussions surrounding the Commission's work, an enormous variety of views, and consequently an equally long list of recommendations, either explicit or implied. The full list, organised under the headings generally used to structure this report is included as an annex to this report. All (or almost all) are worthy of consideration, and if they were implemented, the result would be a better world and a better offer to clients. Realistically, however, both the capacity and the appetite for change are finite, and there needs to be a focus on priorities.

So, scheduled in the body of this report, and summarised below, is a more focused list of recommendations, distilled in discussion between panel members and offered to the institutions as key actions that, it is suggested, would lead not just to that better world, but also to a better position for the professions.

Ethics and the public interest.

A-1) Develop and standardise a national code of conduct/ethics across the built environment professions, building on shared experience in the UK and internationally.

A-2) Take a lead in raising the awareness of members to a shared understanding of ethical issues, creating guidance (rather than prescription), and monitoring both individuals and practices.

A-3) Define and harmonise the commitment to the public interest at institutional, practice and individual level, again raising awareness and creating guidance.

A-4) Make public and clear the procedures for complaint and the institution's sanctioning process, details of members who have been sanctioned, and the grounds for doing so.

Education, competence, and the development of a body of knowledge

B-1) For the built environment institutions to commit to a cross-disciplinary review of the silo nature of the education system, to see how they can use their badging to encourage greater integration.

B-2) Collectively promote the built environment as a career path of choice, demonstrating the relevance of the institutions (and membership thereof) in a way that engages current and future generations.

B-3) Provide the means of allowing and encouraging greater movement between professions during a career.

B-4) Provide access to young members by accepting a donation of time in return for a lower subscription.

B-5) Improve the 'guarantee' of a particular quality of individual - for example by benchmarking the expertise of members.

B-6) Become agents for disclosure as guardians of quality – eg, a TripAdvisor-type public feedback system for individual/practice performance.

B-7) As learned societies, engage with and disseminate research and best practice, including agenda setting; pulling together some of the knowledge coherently for members; reviewing how as institutions they themselves should respond to emerging evidence from research and practice; and adjusting requirements for membership, practice and education accordingly.

B-8) Establish a joint think tank that could pool the resources of the Institutions to conduct research and develop policy for the industry – a King's Fund for the built environment.

B-9) Determine how the professions can support standards that link better across sectors internationally – e.g. (taking an example from the RICS) linking matters financial to accounting to valuation to measurement to ethics to environment.

Institutional organisation and the relationship with Government

C-1) Develop and empower the CIC as a shared outlet for joint initiatives and announcements, lobbying, campaigning etc

Collaboration on strategic issues

On industry reform

D-1) Establish a shared vision as to structural reform of the industry that would improve the industry's offer to client…

D-2) …and society.

On climate change

D-3) Set environmental matters high on the professional portfolio both collectively and individually, with action and measurement.

D-4) Establish a joint institutional position on the right response to the impact of the built environment on climate change (mitigation)…

D-5) … and the impact of climate change on the built environment (adaptation).

D-6) Publish cross-disciplinary recommended behaviours for members on designing for climate change.

On building performance

D-7) Take responsibility for the whole-life of projects, by getting involved from the start and remaining involved beyond project delivery to monitor performance through post-occupancy evaluation.

D-8) Develop and maintain joint codes and standards/ key performance metrics so that all construction professionals are working from a shared understanding of (building) performance.

D-9) Agree cross-disciplinary recommended behaviours for members on holistic post occupancy evaluation of projects …

D-10) … and an integrated system for publishing this information…

D-11) … against which members should be obliged to report annually.

D-12) Develop the various awards systems to be a truer reflection of the performance of buildings, with the ultimate accolade being reserved for a building that after 10 years of use out-performs others.

All of these recommendations therefore pick up on attributes that the institutions claim as differentiating their members from those who practise without a formal professional designation. If it could be demonstrated that those claims were justified, then this would bring about a happy coincidence of private and public interests: for practitioners, competitive advantage derived from the value of a professional designation (not just to them, but also to their clients); and, for the public, a uniquely skilled but inclusive engagement with some of the most challenging issues of the age.

Next steps

No report concerning the future of the professions can be of enduring value unless the commitment already shown by participation (both by institutions and individuals) leads into a sense of ownership and hence to action. This in turn means that there needs to be a significantly shared understanding of both the issues and means of addressing them for the professional institutions to want to collaborate in developing an action plan – collaboration being something which they all regard as essential, but equally acknowledge as difficult at an institutional level.

This report's final recommendation therefore relates to its afterlife, and the proposition for the next steps is:

• That this version of the report be regarded as a draft for consultation, with the professional institutions, their members, and Edge members, invited to comment.

• That, through those consultations, there should be established an agreed short list of recommendations, and an outline action plan for implementation.

• That at the right time, the report is circulated widely and discussed at a series of events across the country, with a launch event in London followed by events in key UK cities during 2015.

• That, in parallel, the findings are publicised in industry publications and institutional journals.

In all of this, it is the hope of the Commission that this report will be seen as a constructive contribution to encourage debate and action at a time when challenge and opportunity are seen as weighing in the balance.

Commission Panel members

Commission Panel

- **Paul Morrell**, formerly Senior Partner Davis Langdon, latterly Government Chief Construction Adviser (Chair)
- **Jenny Baster**, Group Legal Director Arup
- **Tony Burton**, Senior Partner Gardiner & Theobold, Chair of the CIC
- **Isabel McAllister**, MACE
- **Alan Penn**, Dean Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment
- **Karen Rogers**, formerly Design Leader Heathrow Airports Ltd

Commission sessions and speakers

Note: job titles correct as at the date of giving evidence.

Should it be a professional requirement to address environmental issues, including responsibility for long term performance and reporting?

Speakers:
- **Chris Blythe** – Chief Executive Officer, Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB)
- **Keith Clarke** – Atkins Global
- **Stephen Matthews** – Chief Executive, The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE)
- **Scott Steedman** – Director BSI, Editor in Chief Ingenia, The Royal Academy of Engineers (RAEng)

Session 2: *The Economy*
(23 April 2014)

How can professionals continue to do what they regard as the right thing, when this is not a priority for their client?

Speakers
- **Ian Brinkley** – Chief Economist, The Work Foundation
- **Stephen Hodder** – President, The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)
- **Nick Russell** – President, The Institution of Structural Engineers
- **Sean Tompkins** – Chief Executive Officer, The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)

Session 3: *Society*
(7 May 2014)

How can professionals working across the built environment and their institutions maintain relevance and deliver value to society?

Speakers
- **Matthew Taylor** – Chief Executive, The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA)
- **Colin Haylock** – Past President, The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)
- **Barry Clarke** – Past President, The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE)
- **Sue Illman** – President, The Landscape Institute (LI)

Session 4: *Future Value*
(22 May 2014)

How can institutions share and co-operate to improve the quality, standing and value of professionals?

Speakers
- **Bill Bordass** – Policy Adviser, Usable Buildings Trust
- **Lee Franck** – Structural Engineer, Civil Structures and Bridges team, Arup
- **Daisy Froud** – The Bartlett School of Architecture (formerly AOC)
- **Ciaran Malik** – Structural Engineer, Ramboll UK
- **Sunand Prasad** – Senior Partner Penoyre & Prasad, Past President of the RIBA
- **Graham Watts** – Chief Executive, The Construction Industry Council (CIC)

Note: Records of the Commission hearings including Summaries of Evidence, Attendees and a Summary of all recommendations suggested to the Panel are available on the Edge website **www.edgedebate.com**.

Contact: contact@edgedebate.com

Full list of suggested recommendations to the Commission

1. Ethics and the Public Interest

1.1 Ethics

(1) Develop and standardise a national code of conduct/ethics across the built environment professions, building on shared experience in the UK and internationally...

(2) ...possibly using the Engineering Council Statement of Ethical Principles as a base document.

(3) Clarify, strengthen and support the responsibilities of individual professionals – eg in the form of a Hippocratic Oath.

(4) Take a lead in raising the awareness of members to a shared understanding of ethical issues, creating guidance (rather than prescription), and monitoring both individuals and practices.

(5) Raise the bar for member performance on key issues in their shared code of conduct.

(6) ... benchmarking (and "ferociously patrolling") the conduct of members.

(7) ... for example on project outcomes, employment practice, health and safety etc.

(8) Amend the definition of professional skill to include the obligation to engage with and appreciate the mutual influences of adjacent professional fields.

(9) ... and omit the historical presumption that the definition of a professional is limited to a particular narrow technical field - as currently applied by institutions' ethics committees.

1.2 The public interest

(1)   Understand what we are doing beyond compliance with regulation and policy, within a broad context of the principles of environmental, social and economic sustainability.

(2)   Define and harmonise the commitment to the public interest at institutional, practice and individual level, again raising awareness and creating guidance.

(3)   Provide a home for debate re thorny social issues; how environmental interests are safeguarded; and the importance of the built environment as long-term social capital that adds value in the public interest.

(4)   Seek ways to engage the public in the debate, aiming for inclusivity rather than exclusivity.

1.3 Sanction

(1)   Make public and clear the procedures for complaint and the institution's sanctioning process, the details of members who have been sanctioned, and the grounds for doing so.

2. Education and recruitment/membership

(1)   Increase the amount of common/inter-disciplinary education for construction industry professionals, certainly at post-graduate level.

(2)   ... and ideally at foundation year level.

(3)   ... but at the lowest level establish a working group of directors of education from the Institutions.

(4)   ... and commit to a cross disciplinary review of the siloed nature of the education system, to see how the institutes can use their badging to encourage greater integration.

(5)   In particular, collaborate on shared platform modules for design skills relating to climate change response and low energy building.

(6) ... and investigate the scope for reaching across to courses (particularly science-based courses) beyond the traditional bounds of built environment professions to increase understanding of the basic science and the rigour of approach.

(7) Collectively promote the built environment as a career path of choice, demonstrating the relevance of the institutions (and membership thereof) in a way that engages current and future generations.

(8) ...and not just for younger/entry-level people.

(9) Specifically, establish (through the CIC?) a common platform for drawing school leavers into the industry.

(10) Provide access to young members by accepting a donation of time in return for a lower subscription.

(11) Implement a coordinated, cross disciplinary initiative to review and then encourage inclusivity and diversity ...

(12) ... particularly at the senior levels in member organisations.

(13) Provide the means of allowing and encouraging greater movement between professions during a career, to promote inter-disciplinarity, with appropriate examination/test regime, CPD etc – e.g. establish a joint designation of 'Chartered Construction and Property Professional (CCPP)' available to all relevant chartered members of the ICE, IStructE, RIBA, RICS, LI, RTPI and CIOB ...

(14) ...with a means for CCPPs to qualify for full membership of sister institutions, whether by conversion course, submitted projects, examination, peer review etc.

(15) Promote inter-disciplinary CPD.

(16) See also above re ethics and the public interest.

3. Competence/quality of service

(1) Improve the 'guarantee' of a particular quality of individual ...

(2) ... for example by benchmarking the expertise of members, pushing forward the boundaries.

(3) ... and regular testing of up-to-date competencies and best practice (for example in the requirements and impact of Part L changes).

(4) Become agents for disclosure as guardians of quality – eg a Tripadvisor type public feedback system for individual/practice performance.

(5) Promote a duty to innovate ...

(6) ... and to capture and disseminate lessons learnt.

4. Body of knowledge, standards

(1) Place knowledge-sharing at the heart of institutional practice, especially on issues such as building performance, near misses etc.

(2) Process and re-circulate knowledge to allow practice to be based on good evidence and so develop and improve.

(3) Follow the joint institutional work on BIM as a model for institutional leadership on the provision of tools for members that allow them to rise above their competitors.

(4) As learned societies, engage with and disseminate research and best practice, including agenda setting; pulling together some of the knowledge coherently for members; reviewing how as institutions they themselves should respond to emerging evidence from research and practice; and adjusting requirements for membership, practice and education accordingly.

(5) Disseminate and provide members with access to relevant (post-processed) academic research.

(6) Change the attitude to learning and the cycle time of knowledge, to speed feedback into the design process (calls for a different relationship with academia by the professional bodies).

(7) More effective research (more co-ordination, less duplication or waste).

(8) Establish a joint think tank that could pool the resources of the Institutions to conduct research and develop policy for the industry – a King's Fund for the built environment …

(9) … funded by a research levy on the construction industry.

(10) … or by the Institutions jointly committing a percentage of their annual membership fees.

(11) Agree a common standard for construction industry knowledge, probably linked to BIM standards (eg see DesigningBuildings Wiki proposal).

(12) Determine how the professions can support standards that link better across sectors internationally - e.g. Financial > Accounting > Valuation > Measurement > Ethics > Environment etc.

(13) (For architects) reclaim the post-contract role, requiring specialist technical knowledge of construction innovation, and a willingness to take on risk and responsibility.

5. Institutional structures/practice/professions generally

(1) Pool resources and share functions wherever possible to ensure more efficient and effective modes of working.

(2) Co-habitation of institutions to achieve better alignment for "back office".

(3) Set and maintain joint standards in order to keep level the playing fields on which members compete.

(4) Enhance the role of the umbrella bodies.

(5) <u>Develop and empower the CIC as a shared outlet for joint initiatives and announcements, lobbying, campaigning etc.</u>

(6) ... or initiate more fundamental structural change of the CIC around funding, membership and function – closer to the HK model.

(7) ... in particular as the forum for developing cross-discipline thinking.

(8) ... but thinking beyond technical matters and the perceived needs of institution members to consider society's needs.

(9) Built environment professions to pool their government relations activity, stop trying to compete for the government's attention for their special interest, and communicate some clear and simple messages with one voice.

(10) Institutes to bind themselves for a fixed period (say 1-2 years) to lobby and represent themselves only through the CIC except where there is a clear over-riding reason not to do so.

(11) ... and CIC to be geared up for 6 hour response to ensure it is able to respond to (all) media enquiries.

(12) Combine all institution information portals into single portal with public free access, to replace the current duplication and partial portal of the many institutions.

(13) Establish an Institute of Building Performance Be more explicit, particularly to Government about the benefits of professionalism to wider society.

6. Collaboration, inter-disciplinarity

Set up a cross-institute working party (through the CIC?), committed to reporting back within 6 months, that actively seeks a number of key issues (those that are too big for any one institution) upon which joint action is necessary to progress beneficial reform or make a powerful point to Government. Possible subject areas for debate or action would be:-

(1) Establishing a shared vision as to structural reform of the industry that would improve the its offer to clients and society.

(2) Procurement practice.

(3) ... and the definition of 'value for money'.

(4) HS2 and transport for society.

(5) Stance and action re climate change mitigation and adaptation (see 7 below).

(6) Building performance (see 8 below).

(7) Smart buildings – and what they are ("Not just throwing electronics at it").

(8) What defines a successful building?

(9) A cross-disciplinary suite of Awards, badged by all the major institutes.

(10) Better use of the buildings we already have.

(11) Embodied carbon, the circular economy and a future using significantly less materials (our finite planet and emerging countries' buying power).

(12) Demographic pressures, limits to growth and the steady state economy.

(13) Building density and the car in smaller cities and towns.

(14) High rise buildings.

(15) Housing standards.

(16) Housing provision for all, including young professionals, and why the housing market does not work.

(17) New towns.

(18) Smart cities – and what they are.

(19) Planning for social integration, public space and community ownership/management of energy and water.

(20) A vision for a built environment in which we might survive.

(21) Threats to biodiversity.

(22) Modern day slavery.

(23) Joint manifesto proposals for the 2015 election.

(24) The need for more knowledgeable/interested Government, not less Government.

(25) See also other categories of recommendations – e.g. re. code of ethics/public interest, shared education, research.

7. Specifically re climate change

(1) Set environmental matters high on the professional portfolio both collectively and individually, with action and measurement.

(2) Establish a joint institutional position re the right response to the impact of the built environment on climate change (mitigation).

(3) ... and the impact of climate change on the built environment (adaptation).

(4) Publish cross-disciplinary recommended behaviours for members re designing for climate change.

(5) Educate more clients in the realties and science of climate change and the consequential urgent need for a transition to a low carbon economy.

8. Specifically re building performance

(1) Take responsibility for the whole-life of projects, by getting involved from the start and remaining involved beyond project delivery to monitor performance through post-occupancy evaluation.

(2) Develop and maintain joint codes and standards/ key performance metrics so that all construction professionals are working from a shared understanding of (building) performance.

(3) Agree cross-disciplinary recommended behaviours for members re holistic post occupancy evaluation of projects …

(4) … and an integrated system for publishing this information.

(5) … against which members should be obliged to report annually.

(6) Develop the awards system to be a truer reflection of the performance of buildings, with the ultimate accolade being reserved for a building that after 10 years of use out-performs others.

Note from the Edge

The Edge was established in 1995-96 as the result of an initiative by Jack Zunz, then Chair of The Ove Arup Foundation, with the intention of better connecting the professional institutions working in the construction industry. Starting with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), the institutions the Edge formally works with have expanded to include the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE), the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), the Society for the Environment (SocEnv) and the Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE), and new links are developing with the Landscape Institute (LI), the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), the Association for Project Management (APM) and the British Institute of Facilities Management (BIFM). The Edge is also an Associate Member of the Construction Industry Council (CIC) and is supported by The Building Centre and the UCL Energy Institute.

The Edge works on issues that cut across the many disciplines in the industry including the impact of construction on the environment, city planning, health and wellbeing – and, in particular, professionalism. Over the last two years we have held three events that immediately preceded the work of the Commission on the subject of professionalism and the construction industry institutions (Debates 46, 54 and 58) and supported a Special Issue of Building Research and Information on New Professionalism (January 2013). These events prepared and readied us to launch the Edge Commission itself.

So, on the verge of become twenty, the Edge is very pleased to bring this issue of professionalism to a head by revisiting our roots and engaging with all of our partner institutions, again with the critical involvement of The Ove Arup Foundation, to conduct an inquiry into the collective future of the institutions and how they could be working together to ensure a better built environment in the decades ahead. But this landmark report is not an 'Edge' view, if such a thing exists: it is a report from an independent expert panel which has taken an in-depth look at the state of the industry's professions and made a series of cogent and essential recommendations for the professional institutions to work together on in the immediate future.

The Edge Commission on Future Professionalism was chaired by Paul Morrell, formerly Senior Partner of Davis Langdon and Government Chief Construction Adviser from 2009 to 2012. He was joined by Jenny Baster, the Group Legal Director at Arup, Tony Burton, Senior Partner Gardiner & Theobold and Chair of the CIC, Isabel McAllister of MACE, Alan Penn, the Dean of the Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment, and Karen Rogers, formerly Design Leader Heathrow Airports and Honorary Treasurer of the RIBA. Denise Chevin acted as rapporteur to the panel. The Edge is very grateful to all of them for the time they have put into participating in the inquiry and into preparing and commenting on this report.

The Edge would also like to thank all the speakers who addressed the four evidence-taking sessions and the audience members who contributed to the discussion. Full details of the sessions are available on the Edge's website **www.edgedebate.com**. Thanks are also due to the institutions, their presidents and executive teams who have worked extensively with us on this project.

The Edge sees the publication of *Collaboration for Change* as only the beginning of its work with its broad family of institutions and will be encouraging them to take up and champion the recommendations made in the report. We look forward to both collaboration and change in the months and years ahead.

The Edge
April 2015

Collaboration for Change:
The Edge Commission Report on the Future of Professionalism

In 2014 the Edge invited Paul Morrell to chair a Commission of Inquiry into the future of professionalism in the built environment/construction industry. He was assisted by a multi-disciplinary Commission Panel of five professionals who debated the issues with ten leading industry institutions. His report explores the key issues facing professionals and their institutions at this 'moment for change', a moment arising from globalisation, agglomeration, the ageing industry and a degree of disaffection from the newly qualified. In the report Paul Morrell proposes a series of recommendations, including a small number of key projects for groups of institutions to develop collaboratively in the public interest.

The initial Commission sessions were held at The Building Centre with support from Rehau. The report and its dissemination have been generously supported by The Ove Arup Foundation.

The 2nd Edition of Collaboration for Change is published at a time when the construction industry institutions are collaborating more than ever, but also at a time when their collaboration on issues including building safety, climate change, ethics, project procurement and industry modernisation is more necessary than ever.

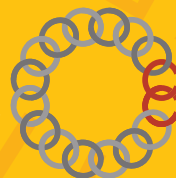This 2020 edition has been published with support from ACO Technologies plc.

"We read Collaboration for Change as a call to arms; a direct challenge to cross-institutional groups such as ourselves to embrace our cross-disciplinary nature, join forces and lead from the front." CIC BIM 2050 Group, 2015

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