



RIAS

The Royal Incorporation
of Architects in Scotland

**The Role of the Built Environment in
Creating Social, Economic and
Environmentally Sustainable Places**

RIAS Policy Statement and Implementation Strategy

The RIAS Practice Department is pleased to assist with any questions arising from this leaflet. Please contact:

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Mission Statement

Maximum Architectural Value.

Minimum Environmental Harm.

Background

This environmental statement was first prepared in 1997. It is intended to:

- encourage recognition of the holistic influence that the built environment has on individuals and communities, and
- promote awareness of responsibilities and appropriate responses by members of the RIAS.

The original context for the environmental statement was the Agenda 21 Agreement signed following the 1992 UN Summit on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, commonly known as the *Earth Summit*. Agenda 21 committed the signatories to promote “Sustainable Development”.

The original environmental statement also made reference to policies produced by national and international architectural and associated professional bodies.

It was always intended that the environmental statement be reviewed and revised periodically in order to maintain its relevance in the face of changing national and international policy. The last revision took place in 2004.

This latest update acknowledges the many international, European, national and professional

initiatives that have taken place in the intervening period, which impact on policy, regulation, legislation and the roles and responsibilities of architects. This includes:

- International policy as encapsulated in **The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, officially known as Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹
- **The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** to which the UK is a signatory.²
- The Precautionary Principle, the application of which has been made a statutory requirement in some areas of EU law.
- Scottish Government Policy commitment to sustainable development.³
- The Declaration of Interdependence for a Sustainable Future established at the International Union of Architects (UIA) World Congress in June 1993 and reinforced by subsequent UIA declarations and communications.⁴

The underpinning mission statement retains the same intent. It encourages interventions in the built environment to improve the social, environmental and economic well-being of those directly involved, wider society and support sustainable development internationally.

¹ *The Goals are contained in paragraph 54 United Nations Resolution A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015.*

² *Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)*

³ *Scottish Government Policy commitment to sustainable development*

⁴ *Declaration of Interdependence for a Sustainable Future*

Policy

In recognition of the significant influence that architects, the construction industry, associated professionals, clients and other stakeholders have in shaping the indoor, local and global environment, The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS) adopts the following policy:

The RIAS promotes a whole life approach to the design, construction, maintenance, adaptation and eventual disposal of buildings and their constituent parts. A whole life approach should endanger neither environmental nor personal health.

The RIAS promotes placemaking that minimises environmental harm, and respects, sustains and promotes cultural value, biodiversity, inter-generational and intra-generational responsibility and social equity.

The RIAS supports the objectives incorporated in the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Precautionary Principle, international action to mitigate climate change, the UIA Declaration of Interdependence for a Sustainable Future and subsequent UIA declarations and communications on sustainable development.⁵

The RIAS also fully endorses Scottish Government policy to achieve sustainable development.

The RIAS commits itself to implementing appropriate actions to support the architectural profession to contribute to sustainable buildings, sustainable places and sustainable communities nationally and internationally.

The RIAS will communicate this policy to its members, the wider construction industry, clients, contractors, policy makers and end-users.

5 *Declaration of Interdependence for a Sustainable Future*

Key Issues

The RIAS recognises six strategic considerations that are at the core of delivering responsible interventions in the built environment:

Use resources effectively – ensure buildings do not consume a disproportionate amount of money, energy, water, materials or land during construction, use or demolition.

Minimise pollution – minimise future risks and liabilities by creating manageable buildings, minimising dependence on polluting energy and transport and taking a precautionary approach to products and materials that may be difficult or expensive to dispose of.

Create healthy environments – enhance living, leisure and work environments; do not endanger the health of the builders or users, or others, through exposure to pollutants or toxic materials or harmful organisms.

Support communities – identify and meet the real needs, requirements and aspirations of stakeholders and involve them in key decisions;

Enhance biodiversity – use materials that do not threaten species or environments. Improve natural habitats where possible through appropriate planting and water use and avoidance of chemicals;

Manage the process – use process tools to from briefing through to Post Occupancy Evaluation (PoE) as appropriate. It is vital that sustainable buildings are recognised as part of a process, rather than simply a product at handover.

These were first identified in the *Green Guide to the Architects' Job Book* (Halliday 2000, 2007) and have now been incorporated into further professional guidance.⁶

⁶ Sustainability: RIBA Plan of Work 2013 Guide (*Halliday, Atkins 2016*)

Objectives

The RIAS will promote actions which address these issues and which uphold the freedom of the design professions to intervene in order to maximise environmental quality and accountability. In particular it will seek to support and promote:-

- improved briefing to include an environmentally sound approach from the outset of projects;
- interdisciplinary working from an early stage to encompass design and management aspects;
- a life-cycle approach to design from inception, reuse and adaptation, to ultimate demolition;
- appropriate life-cycle costing, including environmental costing;
- the continual development of professional standards and personal development of Members to include environmental issues as a norm. This includes the continued commitment to, and promotion of, the **RIAS Accreditation in Sustainable Architecture**, the first such Scheme established by a Professional Institute anywhere in the world;
- appropriate changes to building standards, as exemplified by the inclusion of *Section 7 – Sustainability in the Scottish Technical Standards*;
- the demand for and production of relevant high quality information and guidance;
- the means by which the integrity of information can be relied upon;
- sustainable urban and rural planning and associated land use and transport policies;
- the use of Post Occupancy Evaluation (PoE) to learn lessons from individual projects in order to optimise performance and to feed forward into improved design;
- publication of analysis-rich, best-practice case studies;
- a greater understanding of social responsibility as identified in the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**.

Implementation

In pursuance of the above the RIAS will actively promote the production of relevant and focused positional papers, guidance, technical information and CPD materials and commits to regularly review update these. This policy will be reviewed periodically and not later than March 2019.

Resources and Further Reading

[RIAS](#) for up-to-date info on RIAS Policy and the sustainable design accreditation scheme.

[Scottish Ecological Design Association \(SEDA\)](#) for a network of contacts and events around relevant themes.

[Useable Buildings Trust](#) for feedback on buildings in use.

[Architecture & Design Scotland](#) especially for information on place making and for the [library of materials](#).

[Green Building Press](#) for current affairs

[GreenSpec](#) for info on green building design and products for sustainable construction

Publications

Sustainability: RIBA Plan of Work 2013 Guide
(Halliday, Atkins 2016)

Sustainable Construction - covers the topics of materials to urban design looking at cost and history on the way with an extensive range of references

Eco-minimalism – A short sharp guide by a leading proponent of sustainable building design

Tales Of A Sustainability Champion – real life experiences related by two sustainability champions. Publication due autumn 2016

The Ecology of Building Materials – the bible on materials.

The SEDA Guides - three important guides to design detailing covering:

- deconstruction
- air tightness and
- minimising building toxicity



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