

MCM.

MCM Insights.

Social Purpose -
Sustainability and the
Environment.

MCM ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION.
Q1 2020.





In February 2020, MCM hosted a roundtable discussion with a group of real estate, facilities management and sustainability professionals:

- Georgia Elliott-Smith, Director – Element 4.
- Lorna Hayes, SHE Advisor – Anglo American De Beers.
- Richard Morris – Building Consultancy Director, CBRE.
- Rob Lodge, Facilities Director – Swiss Re.
- Steve Harris, Global Corporate Real Estate Director – Diageo.
- Julia Giannini, Senior Manager, Social Purpose – ITV.
- Craig Frost, Head of Project Management – Knight Frank.
- Bradley Baker, Director – CO-RE.
- Ian Reay, Director Corporate Operations – Wellington Management International.

The hosts from MCM were:

- Ken Giannini - Director.
- Deepak Parmar - Design Director.
- Barnaby Bugden - Project Director.

Our intention was to cover many aspects of social purpose – health & wellbeing, diversity & inclusion and giving back to the community. Ultimately, the session remained heavily focused on the

Climate Change is not up for debate.
It is already happening and actions are
needed now.

Social Purpose.

Sustainability – it's time for action.

Just a few months ago, RIBA launched its 2030 Climate Challenge and the construction industry is at last waking up to its environmental responsibilities. With sustainability being such a hot topic, it was perhaps inevitable that this would dominate our conversation.

MCM's guests represented various points of view. Our panel included architects; a property developer; an environmental and wellbeing consultant; real estate, facilities and operations leaders and an environmental activist.

Not only was the discussion intense, there were many positive and practical ideas presented, that when put into action, will help make the change our planet desperately needs.



Why Now?

As the group gathered, it was pointed out that if we'd suggested this particular roundtable discussion just 5 years ago, we'd have been talking to an empty room.

But things have moved on. You would have to be living in a bubble not to realise that the world is changing. And the worlds of property development and real estate have to change with it.

We have a duty to make things better for everyone. And it doesn't only make environmental sense. As one member of the group put it, "the focus on sustainability, being environmentally responsible, is essential in today's war for talent".

People's opinions on the environment and sustainability are driving the choices they make.

They want to work for organisations that have a purpose; organisations whose values resonate with their own.

The buildings that we work in have a huge part to play in delivering this environmentally conscious message to our workforces.

Customers are also demanding an ethical approach to business. You only have to look at the phenomenal growth in socially responsible brands to see the direction that we all have to head.

People want to do business with companies that fulfill their social obligations. "It makes good business sense to be purposeful and responsible. Ethics and profit are not mutually exclusive."





Communication is Key.

The conversation turned to the role that the media and corporate communications have to play.

With so much media choice, there's a danger of overload. And of course, the use of fake news has only helped to perpetuate the 'myth' of global warming. On the one hand, the media has sent out mixed and often very confusing messages. Playing fiddle while Rome burns, as it were.

On the other hand, the media plays a vital role in educating and influencing good behaviours. "Whether its David Attenborough talking about global warming or Love Island contestants using refillable water bottles; program makers are having a positive impact."

Climate Change is a scientific fact. It is happening now. And along with the media, we can use our positions of influence to do something about it.

All of the organisations in the room use their websites and social media platforms to communicate stories about sustainability and social purpose. A perfect example is the Diageo website. Their environmental campaign 'grain to glass' clearly demonstrates how the company has reduced their carbon footprint and water impact.

We all agreed that shouting about our successes, adds to the underlying message of change for good.

Are We Too Late?

With such a big subject, it's easy to think in statistics and lose sight of the real issues. Our planet. All of its inhabitants. Mankind's survival.

We talked about two stories that had moved us. One of the group's children recently asked, "Why should I bother going to school if you don't listen to the scientists?" We're all in this together and we ignore the arguments of the younger generations at our peril.

Another person brought up the subject of Kiribati. It would be hard to imagine a more patent indication of the situation we are creating for ourselves. Kiribati is an archipelago of 33 islands in the Pacific Ocean. With just a couple of meters between sea level and its highest point, Kiribati's 100,000 inhabitants are preparing for the worst. As ocean levels rise, storm damage and saline pollution of their fresh water supplies will force them to flee, long before the islands disappear beneath the waves. Their only hope now is the status that Fiji has recently granted them as 'Climate Change Refugees'.

However, according to the experts in the room, all is not lost for our vulnerable little planet. We are not too late, but scientists have made it clear that the time for action is now. We have to reduce carbon emissions dramatically. Along with energy production, transport and agriculture, the construction industry is one of the biggest producers of greenhouse gas emissions. The world is looking to us to do something – now.

Although political and legislative changes are needed, it appears that governments are reluctant to take the initiative. We need to use our corporate influence to force change to happen – at the micro and macro levels.

Through our own companies and our representative organisations, such as RICS or RIBA, we can put pressure on our MPs and persuade others to do their bit.



“One the most powerful things we can do is to be role models.”

Large or small, every action counts.

With the conversation turning to ‘actions, not words’, we shared the policies and programs that our organisations have put in place. It was inspiring to find out about the small actions, as well as the big wins:

- Making climate change awareness training compulsory for all staff;
- Reducing the carbon footprint of digital production;
- Investing in environmental and sustainable production methods;
- Influencing the carbon footprint of the supply chain;
- Investing in socially responsible funds;
- Pro-actively lobbying local MPs;
- Using sustainable methods in mining and production of building materials;
- Making carbon footprint data and targets available to the public;
- Adopting a Thermal Coal Policy;
- Joining the Task Force on Climate Related Financial Disclosure;
- Installing water meters on all - floors of multi-tenanted buildings;
- Purchasing 100% renewable energy;
- Advising clients on reducing environmental impact;
- Specifying ethical products with low carbon footprints;
- Basing business plans on future climate change impacts;
- Putting ethical benefits before commercial gain
- Adopting whatever measures necessary to become carbon neutral.





The Bottom Line.

We left the discussion armed with tangible actions that we, as corporate organisations, can use to transform our everyday business behaviours. These are the salient points from our session:

Climate Change is not up for debate. It is already happening and actions are needed now.

Every small act counts, but corporations have to do more of the big things.

We have a duty to not only run our businesses responsibly, but to influence others – MPs, membership organisations, clients, shareholders, investors, families and friends.

Ethical, environmentally responsible businesses will win the war for talent.

Being ethical and sustainable is good for the planet and good for business.

If you want to know more, please get in touch.






Ken Giannini
Director – RIBA

DDI +44 (0)20 7902 0903
ken.giannini@mcm-uk.com

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MCM.

71 Hopton Street, London,
SE1 9LR, UK
T +44 (0)20 7902 0900
www.mcm-uk.com
hello@mcm-uk.com

 @mcm_uk
 @mcm-uk
 @designedbymcm

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