



The Edge Commission Report
On the Future of Professionalism

P R E S S R E L E A S E

In 2014 the Edge invited Paul Morrell, Government Chief Construction Advisor from 2009-2012, to chair a Commission of Inquiry into the future of professionalism in the built environment/construction industry. The resulting report explores the key issues facing professionals and their institutions at this potential 'moment for change'.

The Commission heard evidence from chief executives, presidents and other senior representatives from some of the key professional institutions in the construction industry including; CIBSE, CIOB, ICE, IStructE, LI, RAEng, RIBA, RICS, RTPI and SocEnv, as well as, in a collective capacity, the CIC and a range of other informed parties.

The report analyses some of the threats and pressures for change that the professional institutions and their members face, which "*if not yet existential, are real and profound, and demand change*" and makes a series of recommendations to the institutions on actions on "*which it is both necessary and realistic to collaborate*". These include:

- **Ethics and the public interest:** Develop and standardise a national code of conduct/ethics across the built environment professions, building on shared experience in the UK and internationally.
- **Education and competence:** The built environment institutions to commit to a cross-disciplinary review of the silo nature of the education system
- **Research and a body of knowledge:** 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.
- **Collaboration on major challenges;** including industry reform in the interests of a better offer to clients, climate change and building performance

The report will be launched at Arup, 8 Fitzroy Street, W1T 4BJ at 6.00 pm on the 18th May 2015, with a Press Conference at 5.00pm. It will be available to download from the edge website www.edgedebate.com from that time along with supplementary material from the evidence sessions.

The Edge is a multi-disciplinary think tank that works on issues that impact on the built environment as a whole, including its professions and institutions, promoting collaboration.

Email: contact@edgedebate.com

Endorsements of the Edge Commission Report on the Future of Professionalism

From the Institutions

Chris Blythe, Chief Executive CIOB

“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.”

Sean Tompkins CEO RICS

“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.

“The core themes of this report - ethics and the public interest; education and competence; research and a body of knowledge, and collaboration on major challenges are all issues that are high on RICS’ agenda. We therefore look forward to working with fellow professionals as we develop international technical and ethics standards, and as we seek to build global professional capacity for the public good.”

Stephen Matthews, Chief Executive CIBSE

CIBSE welcomes the Morrell Report and thanks not only the EDGE but also the many contributors to this important Report. Relevance is an important issue for all the professional bodies and especially in the Construction Sector where old practices are being swept away and engineering in the built environment faces significant challenges. While we are all products of the past we must face the future with a real determination to embrace change. The issues around urbanisation, fuel poverty, food production and fossil fuel depletion against the impact of climate change are stark enough. CIBSE looks forward to the challenge and hopes, with others, we can adapt and change to serve society and provide the tools for our members.

From some young professionals

Richard Boyd, structural engineer at Arup Associates

I chose to become a built environment professional as I saw it as the best place from which to tackle the big challenge facing our society, namely the social, economic and environmental unsustainability of our current model for resource consumption...

Collaboration for Change, however, gives me hope. The panel have produced a tour de force, which with great eloquence and clarity identifies the causes of this shortfall and identifies solutions. The recommendations are succinct, reasonable and achievable, and will help the industry do what it current does not: focus its energy outwards to the needs of society, rather than inwards to the needs of itself.

Gwenaël Jerrett, architect at Cullinan Studio:

I am massively impressed that the heads of the institutions have so engaged thus far and it would be a shame for them not to take the next step and start the process for change, collaboratively.... It's certain that in architecture, while we young certainly still aspire to become professionals, we do increasingly question our institutions' actual role and relevance.

Tom Dollard, Head of Sustainable Design at PTE:

Building performance is a key issue the industry needs to tackle, not just in terms of energy, but the wider functionality of the end product.

From some senior practitioners and clients

Chris Brown, Chief Executive Igloo Regeneration:

The relevance of the built environment professions in the future will be founded on a shared mission to make great places for people and the planet.

Advancing specialist expertise will be important and the ability to work collaboratively with others for a shared purpose for public good will be what attracts the best people, achieves the best outcomes and guarantees the future.

Paul King, Managing Director of Sustainability, Lend Lease Europe:

There is much that is uncertain about the future, but what we can be sure of is that built environment professionals will need to be far more agile, responsive and adaptable. Lines will be blurred, disciplines will overlap, new actors will enter our markets and linear relationships will increasingly be replaced by collaborative and circular ones. It follows that our professional institutions should be at the forefront of change not resisting it, championing innovation rather than perpetuating historical silos.

Ben Derbyshire Managing Partner HTA Design:

I believe the RIBA must begin a process of redefining the covenant between the profession and society. At a time when society is re-evaluating the role of professionals we must redefine what the profession offers, raising standards and improving value. For someone, as I am, wrestling with these issues on RIBA Council, 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.

Tim Chapman, Arup director and lead of Infrastructure Design Group in London:

This report is a valuable reminder for our whole industry of the need to adapt in rapidly changing times, and that our institutions especially need to keep up. While all of them are doing many good things, this report provides a unique overview on the challenges to be faced and how to do so in a concerted way that should carry most weight with government and broader society. In particular the call for institutional collaboration to address the threat of climate change resonates most strongly with me.