

Built environment professionals in the UK: 40 years back, 40 years on?

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World Sustainable Building Conference



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THE PAST



Decade by decade (± 5 years): *Some UK and wider context*

1960s

Ambition

1970s

Disillusionment

1980s

Reorientation

1990s

Outsourcing

2000s

Paradox

Decade by decade (± 5 years): *UK and wider context*

1960s	<i>Social, technological, rationalist optimism.</i>
Ambition	<i>Major projects: redevelopment, universities.</i>
1970s	<i>Technical and social failures of big projects.</i>
Disillusionment	<i>Oil crises, social and industrial unrest.</i>
1980s	<i>Individualism, free markets. Big Bang.</i>
Reorientation	<i>North Sea gas and oil in full swing.</i>
1990s	<i>Capitalist triumphalism. Privatisation. Loss</i>
Outsourcing	<i>of technical skills in government (e.g. BRE).</i>
2000s	<i>Big ambitions, “wow factor”, big borrowing.</i>
Paradox	<i>Big constraints incl. peak N Sea oil and gas.</i>

Decade by decade (± 5 years): *Some effects on building professionals*

1960s Ambition	<i>Faith in professions and rational design. Relatively young people trusted.</i>
1970s Disillusionment	<i>Beliefs questioned. Continuity of work evaporates with government programmes.</i>
1980s Reorientation	<i>Deregulation, competition, limited liability. Professions seen as just another business.</i>
1990s Outsourcing	<i>Reliance on market + voluntary measures to achieve policy goals. Focus on construction.</i>
2000s Paradox	<i>More regulation. Less scope for discretion. More tick boxes, more unintended outcomes.</i>

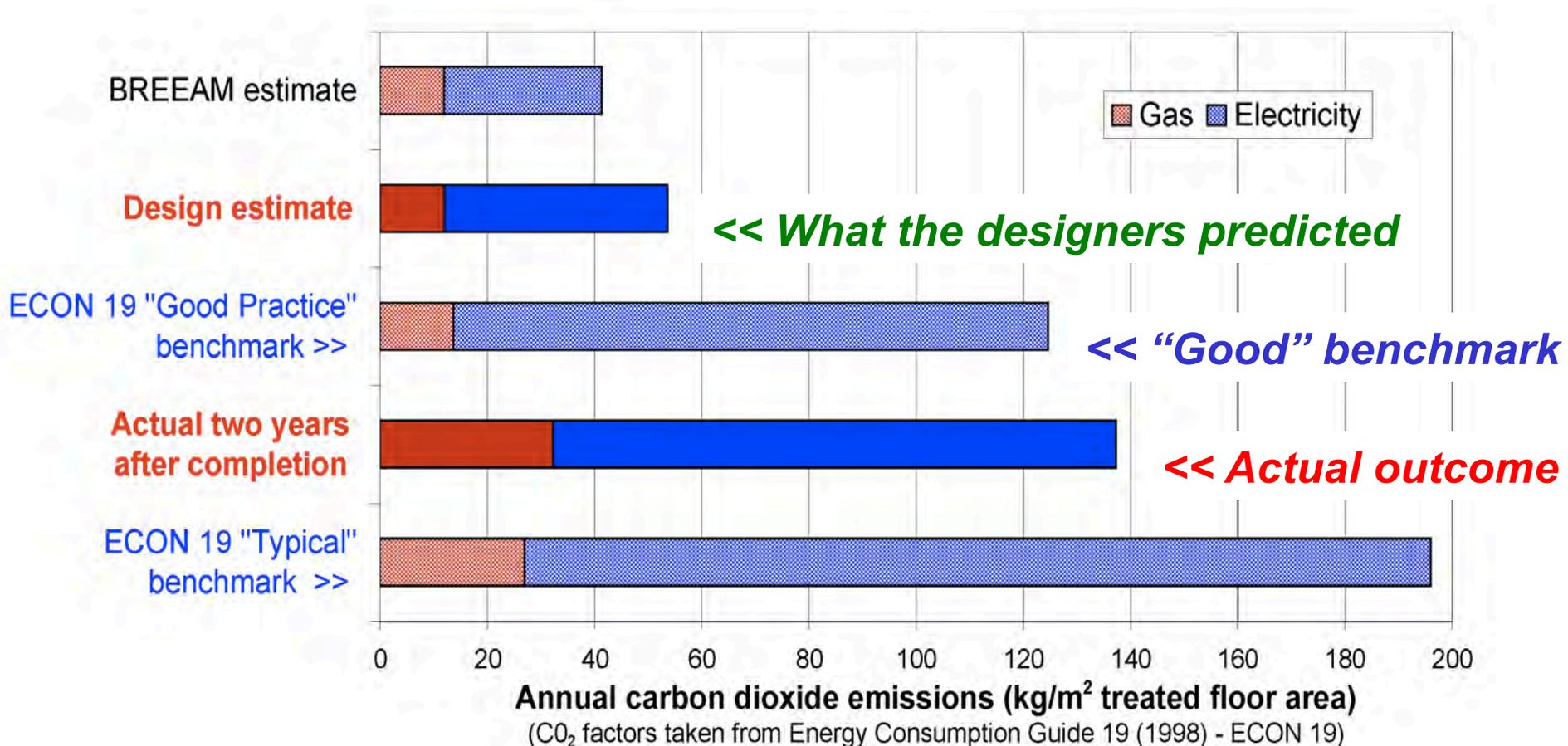
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**WHERE ARE
WE NOW?**



The Design - Performance Gap at the time of SB98: Sadly, not much has changed

Data from the winner of a Green Building of the Year Award

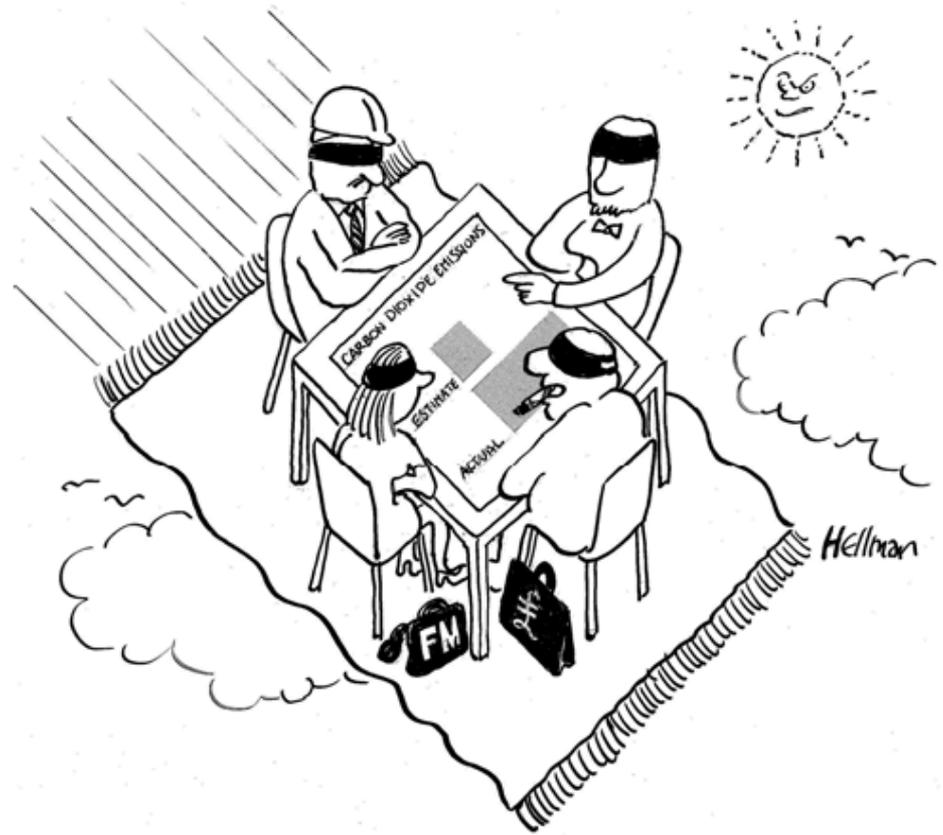


For most of the construction industry, *building performance in use is another planet ...*

*“in theory, theory and practice
are the same,
in practice they aren’t.”*
SANTA FE INSTITUTE

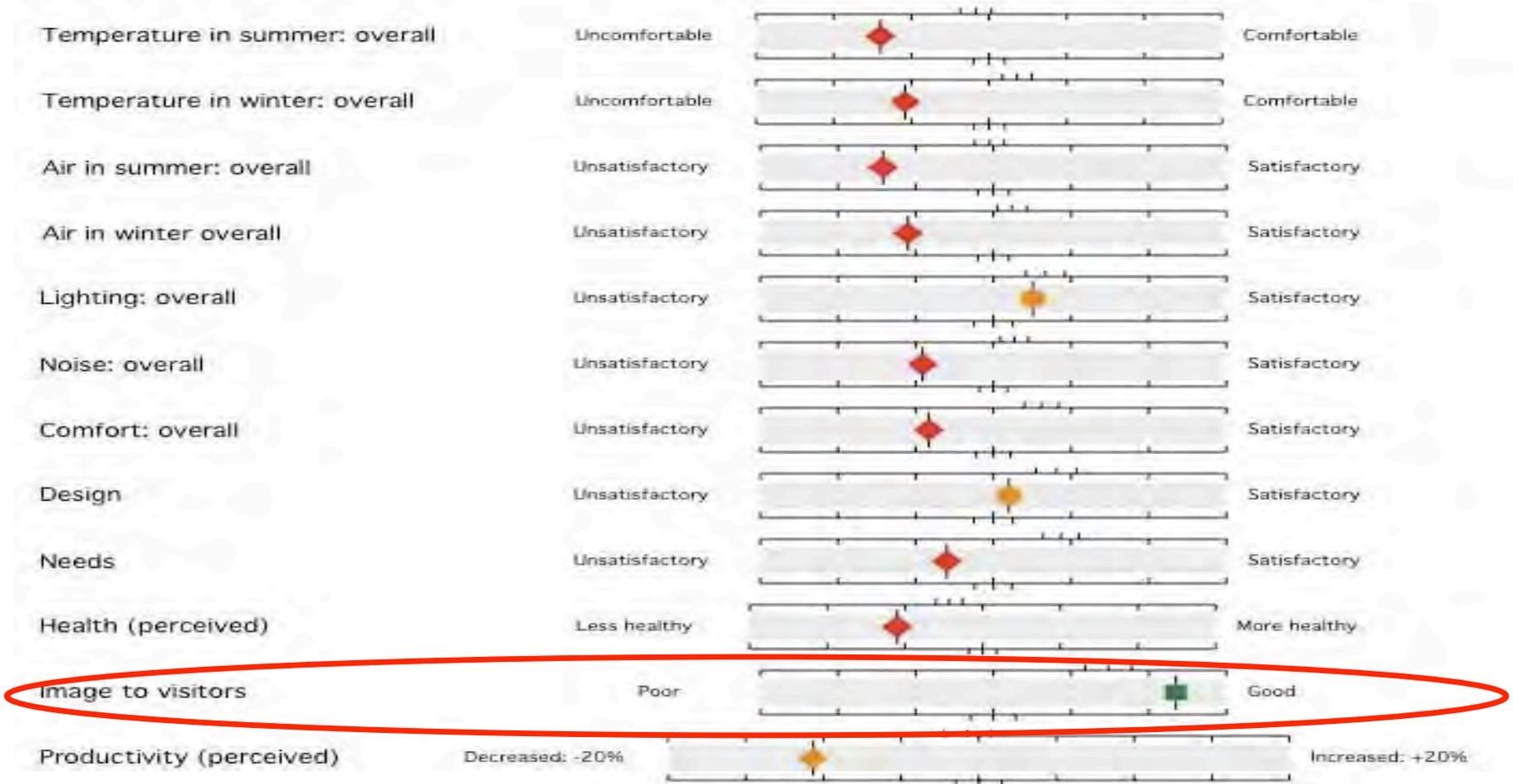
*“designers seldom get
feedback, and only notice
problems when asked to
investigate a failure.”*
ALASTAIR BLYTH
CRISP Commission 00/02

*“I’ve seen many low-carbon
designs, but hardly any low-
carbon buildings”* **ANDY**
SHEPPARD Arup, 2009



Credibility gaps: Occupant satisfaction

Occupant survey, award-winning educational building, 2009

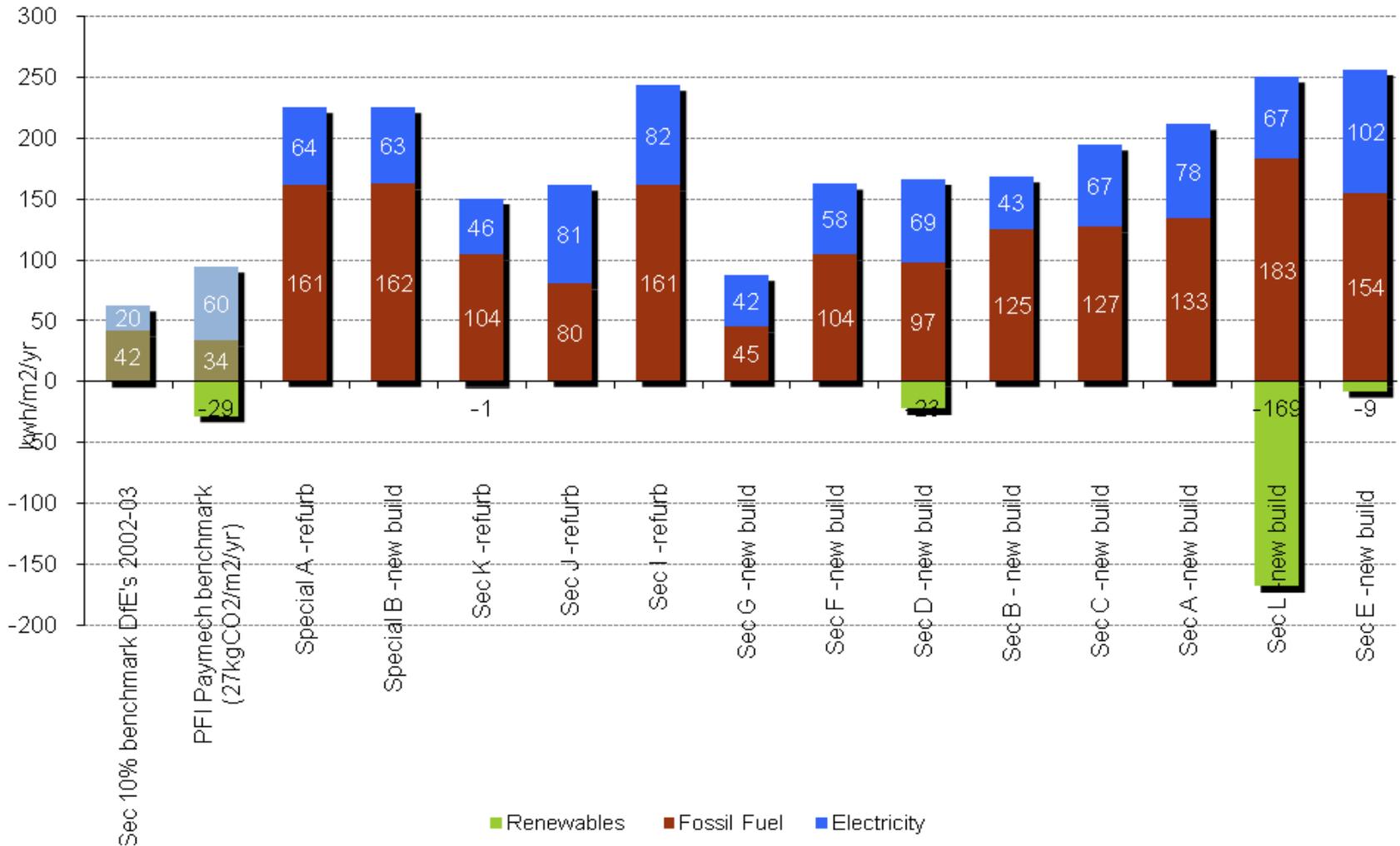


What impresses the judges may not impress the users!

Recently-completed buildings: *What do we still tend to find?*

- Unmanageable complication is the enemy of good performance. *So why are we being forced to make buildings more complicated in the name of sustainability, when we can't yet get all the simple things right?*
 - Design intent is not communicated well to managers and users. Buildings are seldom tuned-up properly and controls are poor. *If we have more to do, what chance do we have?*
 - Modern procurement systems make it difficult to attend to critical detail. *Not a good idea when promoting innovation.*
 - FM services leave a lot to be desired: *they prefer to help clients buy new things than to operate their buildings better.*
 - **Hardly fit-for-purpose for the required step-change in performance of existing as well as new buildings!**
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Energy use in new secondary schools ... *the more renewable energy, the less efficient?*



SOURCE: Private communication, 2011

Why don't we take more account of *the evidence under our noses?*

“... unlike medicine, the professions in construction have not developed a tradition of practice-based user research ...

Plentiful data about design performance are out there, in the field ... Our shame is that we don't make anything like enough use of it“

*FRANK DUFFY, past president of the RIBA
Building Research & Information, 2008*

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**WHERE NEXT:
A NEW PROFESSIONALISM?**

**Improving process,
product and performance**

Changing the way we do things

- Construction-related institutions require their members to understand and practice sustainable development.
- How can members do this unless they understand the consequences of their actions?

SO HOW ABOUT?

- Changing attitudes to the nature of the job.
 - Re-defining perceptions of the professional's role, to follow-through properly and to engage with outcomes.
 - Closing the feedback loop – rapidly and efficiently.
 - Making much more immediate, direct and effective links between research, practice and policymaking.
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Why do we need a new professionalism?

What has changed?

- The urgent need to reduce the environmental impact of existing and new buildings: *we must now find ways to do this quickly and reliably.*
 - Shortages of financial and material resources: *we can no longer afford to “invest” in the wrong things, but we can take time to do things more carefully.*
 - Rapid technological, social and economic change: *professionals need to keep ahead of the game.*
 - **Increasing (often unnecessary) complication** of requirements, process and product: *we need to find what really works well and how to do it better.*
 - **Outsourcing of technical and operational skills**, research and feedback by government: *we need to replace this lost practical expertise.*
 - **Excessive reliance on economics**, contracts and markets: *we need to go beyond the specification and the profit motive.*
 - **Virtualisation of education, practice and regulation**: *professionals need to confront the consequences of their actions, learn from them and share results.*
 - **30 years of professionalism being regarded as anti-competitive or elitist**: *but how else can those we trust also have the wider interests at heart?*
 - **Destruction of professional judgment by PR**, *reinforcing received wisdom.*
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Getting more sense into procurement

Soft Landings may be able to help

- 1. Inception and Briefing**
*Appropriate processes, better relationships.
Assigned responsibilities, including client.
Well-informed targets related to outcomes.*
- 2. Design and construction**
Including expectations management.
- 3. Preparation for handover**
Better operational readiness.
- 4. Initial aftercare**
*Information, troubleshooting, liaison,
fine tuning, training.*
- 5. Longer-term aftercare**
*monitoring, review, independent POE,
feedback and feedforward.*

Runs alongside any construction process

Downloadable free

*from www.usablebuildings.co.uk
and www.softlandings.org.uk*

***BSRIA is hosting a UK industry group.
You can hear more about it on Thursday.***



the **SOFT LANDINGS FRAMEWORK**

for better briefing, design, handover and building performance in-use



Why the role of the construction professional needs re-defining

- There's a big job to do, *in making new and existing buildings more sustainable.*
 - We're short of money:
we can't afford to spend it on the wrong things.
 - Our current procurement systems are not fit for purpose:
we need to do things very differently.
 - We can't change everything tomorrow ...
but we can change our attitudes to what we do.
 - It's not a question of whether we can afford to do it:
We can't afford not to !
 - **WHEN DO WE START?**
IMMEDIATELY. We can't wait until 2050!
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