

Questions and answers arising from the Why Bother workshops

WORKSHOP 2

Introduction

In the beginning, there was energy efficiency, followed by Green issues which architects were happy to design for. Then came climate change and global warming. But how much do we really want to make a difference to the environment, or are we more interested in material possessions than wind turbines? The expenses incurred in the pursuit of sustainability could feed a third world nation! Our resources are running out, therefore we must continue to evolve and find alternatives.

Do we make a start or wait for legislation?

Scottish Executive must legislate.

It makes good business sense to become sustainable – increases productivity; reduces sick-building syndrome; boosts local economy and increases supply; reduces the burden on the NHS.

Some building materials may no longer be suitable for wetter weather, due to global warming.

What are the barriers to progress?

When building for the future, incorporate sustainable design early on.

Consider slide of Finland showing the clear atmosphere of Helsinki, compared to Leningrad, where there is much pollution and smog.

Think of the difference between talking and delivering.

A renewable focus group in Glasgow created a fantasy property game with the help of a marketing agency – nobody went for sustainability.

Do consumers know what sustainability is?

They are more interested in the bills.

Sustainability is unseen and not material – no interest in non-payback items.

We need to be able to sell it to use it and benefit from it.

How do we make sustainable energy accessible?

Most of the government grants went to builders and not to private householders.

Architects do not have enough understanding of renewables to incorporate new features into buildings, therefore continue to incorporate traditional methods that will sell.

We need to get over the hurdle of initial expense of renewables.

There is not uniformity in LAs and planners for allowing renewable systems.

We must encourage builders and planners to include sustainability in building plans.

Architects must comply with legislation but are also driven by clients wishes.

How do we make sustainability happen?

If you really want to – you can.

The main issues are money and time.

Housing Associations have funding issues and grants may lead to cuts in other areas.

Another barrier is the act of moving people out of their comfort zone.
We are guided by limits on our capital and also by fashion. But one day, photovoltaics may become the norm.

The majority of the population will not convert, therefore, it is necessary to educate schools by installing measures like wind turbines.

There are differences within the generations, with those older being less inclined to change.

A number of case studies will be shown in the presentation this afternoon.

Q Is there an issue of the culture of blaming others?

A All of those here today are self-motivated.

WORKSHOP 3

Introduction

We are moving from energy efficiency to energy conservation and going forward with the green agenda. This has aroused interest in some of the bigger architects. We are looking at global warming and climate change issues. However, the money associated with sustainability is not going to the right places.

If we do not bother, will it make a difference?

Current resources are scarce and are being used up by construction which, in turn, causes pollution.

We need to change the way in which we use resources to make improvements for the future.

Why should we make a difference?

As fuel becomes more scarce it makes sense to adopt other methods.

People are becoming more aware of escalating costs.

We are now starting to re-cycle more.

LAs should be giving out more wheelie bins.

What are the barriers?

Where should the push come from – LAs or HAs, etc?

A combination of both and also Communities Scotland.

Building standards require changing.

Also, changes to legislation.

SAP should be increased to over 90%

The Germans are ‘doing it’ - regardless of legislation!

We are not good at promoting ourselves.

There have been some good case studies on sustainability from architects.

Everyone has their own ideas, which could be good, but we still need legislation for uniformity.

Sustainability is becoming a very wide field.
Energy efficiency is now about how everything integrates with the community – eg, Germany and Scandinavia.

Are the Scandinavians further ahead?

They are of a different mind-set. At the Helsinki sustainability conference, there were sociologists, economists – discussing theories and concepts. These are the political drivers. Thirty years ago, Finland was like us, but now it is one of the most sustainable countries in the world. All development integrates with the environment and the community.

Highland Council is advanced.

It has developed over the years.

Do we make excuses?

In the Scottish borders, local architects did some work with heat pumps, straw houses, which attracted interest from London.

The Glasgow architects tend to give their clients what they want.

We need legislation to develop sustainable designs in building.

House builders are keen to do better, but still give people what they want.

Do they know what is sustainable?

No.

Energy use is greater from existing housing stock than from new builds.

The German level of renovation would be difficult and expensive for us to implement.

Energy Efficiency was introduced into the SHQS, which is like to identify other sustainable methods.

Is the SHQS result in refurbishment or demolition?

Houses more than 60 years old are not cost-effective.

According to the NHCS, 70% of homes are under private ownership, which raises issues of maintenance and other problems.

Why bother?

There is a positive feeling about the whole issue of waste and re-cycling, which should mean minimal use of land for landfill.