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**A NEW WAY OF BUILDING**  
**IN A TIME OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY TRANSITION**

memorandum

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## A NEW WAY OF BUILDING in a time of Climate Change and Energy Transition

Humanity has now affected the environment to such an extent that it is endangering the very viability of our civilisation. The buildings and cities that we design and build affect not only our immediate surroundings, but also, and critically, the living conditions of our home planet; now and for future generations.

It is specifically within this context that responsibility should be recognised, and assumed, by all those engaged within the construction of the built environment. We call for a NEW WAY OF BUILDING, a way that enables a multitude of convivial living standards in harmony with the environment.

**The culture of building** represents the self-expression of different societies through a dynamic balance of aesthetics and functionality. This ranges through varied contexts, from dense urban areas to small rural communities, and also over vast scales, from entire cities to individual construction details. The scale and context we are yet to incorporate is a global one.

Architecture can become self-interested and immediate, focusing on an isolated design challenge for a single client or group. However, our creativity and design response also forms an important and indivisible connection with the living world. The materials we select are extracted from the earth, and the energy required, in both during construction and in use, affects the whole climate. A NEW WAY OF BUILDING presents the opportunity and challenge for buildings, and those who build them, to take on a global responsibility.

The **reduction of energy use** is the foundation of a NEW WAY OF BUILDING. The Passivhaus standard offers an ideal solution as it is: applicable in different climates; open to all construction types and building materials; not limited by a single manufacturer; and possible with a range of building services.

Nevertheless, we recognize the limits of universally applying a single standard of energy performance. Of notable example are historical buildings where cultural identity and character can be lost. There are also occasions where certain important projects would simply be unfeasible if built to Passivhaus standard. Whilst taking into account these exceptions, we should always be focused on reducing energy consumption to the greatest possible extent.

This NEW WAY OF BUILDING should fully utilise on-site **renewable energy**. Nevertheless, the potential of micro-generation should not replace the prioritisation of first minimising energy demand. The use of biomass energy sources can also play an important role, yet their use should not detrimentally infringe on global land use and associated livelihoods.

**Land use and urban footprints** should be reduced to the necessary size and the non-essential use of hard landscaping should be avoided. Recreational green spaces, which are both close to nature and part of an urban eco-system, should be protected and expanded. In addition to the psychological and social qualities of these areas they also improve both micro and urban climates.



Every human being on earth has the right to clean drinking water. Responsible **water use** should be integrated into the design of this NEW WAY OF BUILDING.

The **choice of building materials** should consider a holistic range of aspects including: production energy requirements; transport distances; the conditions at the point of extraction; healthy and non-harmful; considered within the entire life cycle of the material and building; with the potential for re-use designed-in. Furthermore, the optimal use of renewable building materials form a vital part of this NEW WAY OF BUILDING.

**Socio-economic considerations** are an essential part of the NEW WAY OF BUILDING. All members of the global society must be able to afford to build in a comfortable and ecologically responsible way - an environmentally just way of building must also be a socially just way of building.

A robust **Certification System** is integral to this NEW WAY OF BUILDING. This system should be promoted as it allows for clear design and construction standards, in addition to accredited construction products and materials. Nevertheless, we are wary and highly critical of commercial interests trying to water-down certification, using it as a means to sell buildings or products. This has the potential to misappropriate and undermine the original aim.

**Pro-active worldwide advocacy** is necessary. We want the knowledge and skills for this NEW WAY OF BUILDING to be open and accessible to all. We call for all parties and professionals involved to collaborate and share ideas and information.

As people participating in building we are committed to taking responsibility for this NEW WAY OF BUILDING. We will take the necessary steps, even before any regulations or statutes demand it. We are not waiting for the easy path, or for society to shift first; we will actively make this happen, now.

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