



Pre debate article: Energy efficiency v. Wellbeing

The big question – what is sustainability? Amongst all the various definitions, I think the majority of people would agree that sustainability is about reducing the systematic negative impacts of our actions and increasing our positive ones, but importantly should account for both environmental and social factors. So, when we consider the net impact of the built environment from our homes to the workplace and the space in between, the sustainability challenge is striking. For the pertinent industry the environmental impact has historically been the focus, but there is a growing awareness of the significant effect building design has on the social element of sustainability. The focus on environmental sustainability has morphed into a more holistic movement, and in doing so revealed a hole – consideration for people – that the industry is now starting to fill.

As a consequence, health and wellbeing seems to be the current industry focus for tackling the sustainability challenge in the built environment. The detrimental impact space can have on

human health due to poor air quality, poor lighting, and VOCs is increasingly documented in academic literature and industry case studies. With initiatives such as the Well Building Standard, finding ways to measure and quantify the impact of building features on the health and wellbeing of occupants is becoming more prevalent.

Many professionals working in the built environment, however, perceive the primary focus of sustainability to be energy efficiency. The construction and operation of buildings is responsible for a significant percentage of global CO₂ emissions and is a sector which can make dramatic reductions. Improving energy efficiency in buildings therefore is integral to minimising the negative effects of climate change on both the environment and people. Without reducing carbon there won't be a habitable planet for people to live and prosper on in the future. Therefore, in the long run reducing CO₂ should improve people's well-being.

We're bringing together influential voices in the sector

to debate the sustainability of the built environment. We are discussing if the human and social elements are overlooked or if energy efficiency in the built environment is an all-encompassing metric and should continue to be the main focus of our considerations and efforts.

Join us for an exciting debate - Energy Efficiency V. Wellbeing in the built environment, part of our Built Environment Exchange debate series on the 30th June at London South Bank University. The panel debate will draw on the opinions and expertise of a cross-section of professionals in the building industry. Experts for Energy Efficiency include Prof. Andy Ford, LSBU and Tom Taylor of the BRE. Arguing for Wellbeing is Prof. Derek Clements-Croome, Reading University and Carine Guenand of Skanska. The debate will be chaired by Jon Bootland, Director of The Sustainable Development Foundation.

Official Partners: London South Bank University, CIBSE and All-Party Parliamentary Sustainable Built Environment Group