



# **Jersey Construction Council (JeCC)**

## **Submission to the Climate Assembly**

### **March 2021**

## **Construction**

### **1. Introduction**

The JeCC occupies a unique role within the Jersey construction industry. The breadth and depth of its membership means that JeCC is the only body able to speak with authority on the diverse issues connected with construction without being constrained by the self-interest of any particular sector of the industry. We have established a JeCC Sustainability sub-committee to address the islands and industries needs and representations.

At sector level the local construction industry employs over 6,000 people, 93% of whom are locally qualified, and generates 7% of the total GVA of the economy. We are the fourth most important industry in Jersey with around 1 person in every 10 of the working population depending on construction for their livelihood.

### **2. Will sustainable building drive up the cost of a new home?**

Building a 'sustainable' home will cost more to deliver, in terms of £ spent, than building to the current standards. We also have to acknowledge that 85% of the housing that will be here in 2050 is already built.

Improvements we make to the buildings we already occupy, or not yet built, must take two factors into account. How much will it cost to deliver the building/improvement, and what will the return be on that cost over it's lifetime.

What we do with buildings that are already built is the real challenge. Currently, if you live in a thermally inefficient home heated by fossil fuels, there is no requirement for you to make any improvements to lower the emissions from your home.

It is our collective responsibility to invest in improving our existing built environment, if we are going to achieve our carbon reduction targets. Making our existing buildings thermally efficient, climate ready and eliminating fossil fuel reliance, will require initial capital outlay but this will be recovered through reduced operating costs over the lifetime of the buildings.

### **3. We are looking to the industry to lead the way and build low energy homes; how will they do this.**

Building low energy homes has two key component parts or phases:

The design phase will take account of planning laws, building byelaws and the general regulations and codes that apply at the time. We have to be aware of conflicts within these regulations and ensure that they deliver a joined-up solution. Building Bye laws will only ever achieve a minimum standard so Planning Legislation may need to promote and encourage designing beyond the minimum.

The construction phase will generally follow the design however the industry has a responsibility to deliver innovative construction methods that will drive efficiencies and help lower costs. This is also a key consideration when looking forward to the likely maintenance costs of the building.

A collaborative approach across the industry and indeed the general public is required, which balances our collective responsibility. We must challenge established building techniques, innovate, minimise wastage and utilise materials arising from the demolition of existing buildings.

Jersey is such a small 'rock' with a secure low-carbon power supply and therefore ideally suited to become all-electric in transport terms. Investment in the public transport system would reduce the reliance on individual car journeys/ownership and with the rollout of EV Car Clubs, reduce the parking requirements for new developments.

#### **4. Why don't you use local or recycled materials as much as possible?**

Firstly, we must accept that we live on an island with limited resources. Having said that, we have, for many years, used what we readily have to hand as a part of the construction process. We must do better and work with suppliers to drive efficiencies. Client's, designers and builders all have a role to play in the sourcing of materials; buying local, recycled, low carbon products should be the preferred route where possible.

Could using recycled materials be the answer? Current building regulations and certification systems do not generally deal with reclaimed materials and where the element's performance is not a crucial issue, aesthetics and commercial desirability often prevail. Consequently, even if a building material or element is capable of being dismantled from a technical and economic point of view, it still may not be reused or even recycled due to the lack of demand for uncertified products or those of lesser aesthetic appeal.

#### **5. Does the industry have the skills to meet the challenge?**

The on island designers are upskilling to meet the challenge by training on passivhaus design and retrofit principles. The knowledge base for low carbon technologies is much more accessible and the designers are more than able to include this in design, but there is a process of educating clients, understanding pros and cons on island such that inclusion of this becomes desirable.

#### **6. How do we ensure the skills are available locally?**

Upskilling the local workforce has never been easier through technology, but the demand will drive the training. There may be lag in this availability and possible quality issues initially, but that will need to be monitored and exemplars installed for review and research to aid this.

The JeCC works with many local educational and training organisations. Within the last 18 months we have successfully introduced Design, Engineer, Construct (DEC!), a STEM based learning programme onto the full-time curricular in five of the nine secondary schools, which includes sustainability and the environment at its core. In March 2020 there were 388 school children studying DEC! and we are launching the Level 3 course at both Hautlieu and Highlands College from September 2021.

DEC! has allowed the built environment to offer career pathways here in Jersey right from primary school through to attaining degrees at Highlands College in surveying, engineering, architecture and construction providing an 'earn while you learn' alternative to the more traditional educational routes.

The JeCC and Skills Jersey will be working together in 2021 to update the current Construction Skills Strategy. This will involve extensive stakeholder consultations to ensure the strategy meets our Islands

requirements in both government policy and development needs and ensure we have a strategic vision to meet the skills challenge.

Our industry has a fantastic opportunity to work with government and the Our Hospital Project team in delivering a truly sustainable hospital for Jersey and to use these learning on other future projects with a wide range of clients.

## **7. Will this create more local jobs?**

Our track record is already strong with over 93% of our industry already locally qualified, and we aim to recruit locally at every opportunity. We continue to invest in training and apprenticeships to reskill in energy efficiency, heat pumps, boiler replacements, renewables, solar PV and passive construction techniques.

## **8. What is the industry already doing?**

Whilst the previous sections of this paper have focussed on the challenges to improving how we as an industry deliver homes and buildings, predominantly from a design and construction perspective, there are things that the industry is already delivering:

### a) Transport

Using low carbon alternatives to petrol and diesel such as Biodiesel and electric vehicles and solar powered site equipment are already reducing the emissions from this area of our operations.

### b) Technology

As well as Investing in modern methods of construction (MMC) – less waste, higher productivity, we have invested in skills for digital construction; it's possible to monitor work from home without having to travel to remote sites.

### c) Materials

The industry has invested in research, development and technology to:

- recycle construction waste, helping to reduce the islands landfill,
- produce low carbon concrete products, using cement alternatives,
- use fibre reinforced concrete for ground slabs, removing the requirement for steel mesh and resulting in lower CO<sub>2</sub> foundations.

### d) Exemplar local projects which have used cutting edge design and construction methods

- Ogier building - an outstanding building and landmark for St Helier. Ogier House has a “very good” BREEAM rating and was the first office in Jersey to be built to the BREEAM specification, which sets the standard for best practice in sustainable design.
- IFC5 - 100% of occupiers can be located within 7 metres of a window thereby providing every user of the building high levels of natural light. IFC 5 achieves the BREEAM Excellent credits for ‘natural light’ and ‘views out’.
- Andium Homes have improved their housing stock – meaning all its homes now meet the Decent Homes Standard – a target reached five years earlier than originally promised.

## 9. Conclusion

The Jersey construction industry is ready to meet whatever challenges sustainability puts its way. The Jersey government will play a key role in setting minimum standards, encouraging innovation and, if required, implement the necessary fiscal measures to ensure a positive legacy for future generations.

This challenge may cost more in the short term but will deliver measurable benefits over the long term. If we were to treat climate change as a safety related issue, we wouldn't be discussing it, we'd just be doing it!

