

Architecture must change beyond recognition to meet the climate challenge, says new RIBA Horizons 2034 programme

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The [Royal Institute of British Architects \(RIBA\)](#) has launched a new [horizon-scanning programme](#) with a set of scans that identify the most pertinent environmental issues facing the built environment over the next ten years.

Developed by leading academics, [The Environmental Challenge themed horizon scans](#) provide foresight into the most significant actions architects can take to help mitigate the worst impacts of climate change, adapt buildings to withstand weather extremes, promote biodiversity and scale up engagement and activism. Key themes across the scans include:

- The importance of understanding the diversity of different global regions, including in culture, population, existing building stock, climate and materials, to ensure solutions that contribute to a sustainable future for all
- The need for significant financial support for poorer global regions to ensure sustainable and low carbon urban development for rapidly urbanising and growing populations
- Within Europe and older building stocks, the importance of retrofit, and the need to prioritise that over demolition and newbuild
- The increasing importance of designing with inherently low carbon and biobased materials, and of assessing the whole life carbon implications of all design decisions
- The critical role of nature-based solutions in working with and for nature, and of a nature-first approach to design that promotes biodiversity
- The need for inclusion of the whole community in the design process, to ensure socially appropriate

development and to avoid green gentrification

- The understanding of the role that building design can play in influencing climate adaptive behaviours
- The need to embrace new attitudes and mindsets, and to work as activists and collaborators to find solutions that work for people and planet

The Environmental Challenge themed horizon scans are the first in a series on the four global megatrends that will shape society, the built environment, and the architectural profession over the next ten years. Scans relating to economics, population change, and technological innovation will follow over the coming months.

RIBA President Muyiwa Oki said:

“As an architect, I know how busy we all are day to day. It can be difficult to get into the headspace to look to the future. But we need to pay attention to what’s coming. The environment, the economy, the global population and technology are all changing.

While none of the individual issues or actions in these horizon scans come as a surprise, together they indicate the true scale and speed of climate change – and just how much we need to do within the next ten years to mitigate and adapt to its devastating effects.

We must challenge the status quo and keep engaging and debating. We must think global, act local – recognising the impact of individual actions. We must all become agents of change.

I urge the profession to see The Environmental Challenge themed scans as a foundation for action.”

Editor of [RIBA Horizons 2034: The Environmental Challenge](#), Professor Alice Moncaster, who is Professor of Sustainable Construction at the University of West of England and Visiting Academic Fellow at the University of Cambridge, said:

“The next ten years will be key in our fight against climate change and its worst impacts. We need to radically reduce the impact of our built environment, while ensuring that it is resilient to changing climates and fit for future generations.

The experts who have written these horizon scans are not talking about simple add-ons to business as usual, but about fundamental paradigm shifts.

This needs to change every aspect of what we do as architects and building professionals.”

[Read RIBA Horizons 2034: The Environmental Challenge.](#)

[Read an introduction to the RIBA Horizons 2034 programme.](#)