9 November 2026

Rt Hon Miatta Fahnbulleh MP
Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

Dear Secretary of State,

On behalf of organisations and businesses in the built environment sector, we are writing during the 31st United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP31) to urge the Government to champion policies that will help to accelerate the decarbonisation of the built environment, while also driving economic growth.

We recommend that the Government commits to:

- Delivering a long-term national retrofit programme.
- Supporting international collaboration on retrofit delivery, skills development and financing at COP31.
- Strengthening international commitments that promote whole-life carbon assessment, consistent reporting methodologies, greater transparency throughout construction supply chains and increased adoption of low-carbon materials and circular economy principles.

We welcome the UK's longstanding commitment to climate action and the leadership that has been shown on the international stage. However, greater ambition is required if we are to significantly improve the sustainability and performance of the built environment and meaningfully address the climate crisis.

The built environment is a significant contributor to the climate emergency but also one of the greatest opportunities for emissions reductions. With building and construction accounting for around 37% of global energy-related emissions, lowering these has the potential to not only help the UK reach its climate goals, but help the economy thrive.

The greenest building is often the one that already exists. We urge the Government to deliver a long-term national retrofit programme and to support international collaboration on retrofit delivery, skills development and financing at COP31.

The economic case for retrofit is compelling. Research from Citizens Advice shows that upgrading all homes to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band C would deliver around £40 billion in benefits to the UK economy in the period to 2030. Over the following decade, this could be up to £100 billion in further benefits. Beyond reducing emissions, retrofit can lower energy bills, reduce fuel poverty, improve health outcomes and ease pressure on public services.

Energy use is only one part of a building’s carbon emissions across its lifecycle. Significant carbon emissions are embodied in the materials used for construction, operation,

maintenance and eventual demolition of buildings. To reach net zero, we need consistent assessment and reporting of whole life carbon, supported by clear reduction targets.

Putting whole life carbon at the centre of climate action would help drive economic growth by creating demand for innovation, investment and new skills across the construction sector. Clear and consistent carbon assessment and reporting standards give businesses greater certainty, encouraging investment in low-carbon products, manufacturing and technologies. This can strengthen UK supply chains, support the growth of domestic industries producing low-carbon materials, and create skilled jobs across the country.

At COP31, the UK should therefore support international commitments that promote whole-life carbon assessment, consistent reporting methodologies, greater transparency throughout construction supply chains and increased adoption of low-carbon materials and circular economy principles.

By investing in the low-carbon, climate-resilient buildings and places the country needs, we can address the climate emergency and help the economy flourish. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these priorities with you.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Williamson, President, Royal Institute of British Architects
Usman Yaqub, President, Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists
Saul Humphrey, President, Chartered Institute of Building
Dr Anastasia Mylona, Technical Director, Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers
Simon Hamlyn, Chief Executive Officer, Chartered Institution of Civil Engineering Surveyors
Cat Drew, Chief Design Officer, Design Council
Linda Hausmanis, Chief Executive Officer, Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management
Nicholas Maclean OBE, President, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Scott O'Connell, President, The Institute of Clerks of Works and Construction Inspectorate of GB Inc (ICWCI)

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Jonathan Allwood, Director, Barr Gazetas
Jay Morton, Director, Bell Phillips Architects
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