

November 2024:

Thursday 21 November 2024 Actiu showroom

Core Team:

Harsha Kotak, WOD; Joanna Knight, WOD

Collective Members:

Ella Fathi, IOR Group; Rebecca Poll / Harriet Jacobs, Grimshaw; Asif Din, Perkins & Will; May Fawzy, MF Studio / BIID; Lucy Bagshaw, TP Bennett; Emily King / Magda Iwanska, BDP; Gurvinder Khurana, M Moser; Sameeha Joshi, Peldon Rose; Astrid Hugo, Gensler; Ana Rita Martins / Deepak Parmar, MCM; Nigel Tresise, Align; Jennie GreenWalker, MAA Architects; Dom Pegram, Salt & Pegram; Phil Towle / Alex Webb, The Furniture Practice; Anja Schellenbauer, John Robertson Architects; Fiona Edwards, JPA Workspaces; Sarah Audsley, Knight Frank; Alison Grant, HLW; Joanne Sanger, Woodalls; Claire Owens / Ruth Marsh, Sheppard Robson; Lydia Randall, BDG A+D; Sam Allen, M Moser; Deborah Allen, DouglasJane Studio; Jenna Monteith / Ilaria Baldini, Unispace; Mathew Freeman, Freeman Studio; Joe Croft / Zoe Glander, Overbury; Valerio D'Angelantonio, Make Architects; Robert Atkinson, Interior Architects; Roseanna Hart, Cast Interiors; Laura Wardrope, JLL; Caroline Pontifex, Savills; Jane Goodman, Think iDEA.

Purpose:

A 'think tank' group committed to acting as a collective within the workplace design community to identify developments and 'best practice' relating to sustainability.
This report highlights some of the points raised during the discussion.

Discussion Topic: The importance of passporting Led by: Asif Din, Perkins and Will

Why do we need building and product passports?

Do we need regulations?

How will the EU's ESPR legislation impact?

Overview:

There has been much discussion about the need for building and product passports.

Building passports potentially contain all relevant information relating to construction as well as M&E, HVAC and FF&E incorporating materials, manufacturer, supplier and supply chain. A complete inventory enables buildings to become Material Banks – repositories of valuable products and materials that can be reused.

A digital product passport (DPP) is a digital identity card for products, components, and materials, which will store relevant information to support product transparency, traceability and sustainability credentials and ultimately, promote greater circularity.

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A similar concept to an individual's passport, each passport should be unique with an individual identifier code and 'accompany' the building or product on its lifecycle and updated to reflect changes.



Digital Product Passports are included as a requirement of the EU's new legislation, Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulations (ESPR). The requirement is to consolidate data from material sourcing through production, sale, in-use, re-use, remanufacturing, to end-of-life recycling. Each unique DPP is permanently affixed to the product using a 'carrier' such as an NFC chip, QR code, or RFID tag and typically verified by blockchain for data immutability.

The first product group to be mandated by the EU is batteries by 2027. Whilst the timeline is yet to be determined, additional categories will be added including furniture.

Rachel Hoolahan from ORMS Architects provided an overview of the approach to Building Passports at the Sustainable Design Forum in April.

Orms has undertaken considerable research in this area. The company hosts a series of downloadable documents and tools on its web site, providing an overview of a practical approach to producing a passport for existing and new buildings. Since January 2022, the company has hosted a UK Materials Passports Working Group comprising of multiple stakeholders across the built environment within the UK, and further beyond.

Comments during the discussion:

"There should also be a link to condition audits providing a regular assessment of reuse potential or maintenance requirements."

"The issue of warranties still needs to be resolved. The warranty for many products is invalid once a product is sold or donated."

"Passports can be constructed to incorporate multiple 'hierarchy' passports. For example, a sofa's frame, which may be reused as part of remanufacturing, can have its own passport."

"Passports are not just about the circular economy but also traceability along the supply chain. Buyers can be reassured about ethical sourcing as well as material content."

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Discussion Topic: Social Value

Led by: Nigel Tresise, Align

How should designers be structuring their customer proposition to ensure the addition of true social value?

How can we help meet individual corporate ambitions?

“Considerations relating to social value is now integral to the bidding process.”

“Proposals should be specific. What are the steps that we are, as a practice, going to implement and how do they align to the client’s and project’s values.”

“It is recognised that during the ‘pitch’ phase, the proposals tend to be aspirational but once a project is awarded, we can identify routes to make them ‘real’.”

“Locality is difficult. Everywhere in the world being local to someone. In most cases, supply chains are global so we need to be careful how we consider locality.”



“There’s an interesting co-working space in Warsaw where the landlord has allocated space specifically for community projects. This is a way developers and landlords can create true, localised social value.”

“Mentoring and volunteering schemes, as well as apprenticeships, are other opportunities to really contribute to society.”

“Increasingly, companies are recognising the financial value of social value.”

“Design issues are more difficult to measure – such as design for neurodiversity and greater inclusion.”

“Questionnaires are frequently used as an assessment tool but they are often only completed by those with extreme views and don’t necessarily give a balanced measurement of outcomes.”

“Social Value is most established and well-defined in residential regenerations projects, where the local community is the direct project benefactor. Office design does not benefit from the same direct relationship between development and community. Typically, there is a complete disconnect between the office occupier and the local community.”

Actiu:

Jonathan Peace provided an update from Actiu. The Company has now Level certification for 52 products with Level 2 certificates. The Level scheme is based on the FEMB Sustainability Standard and includes four impact areas: Materials, Energy & Atmosphere, Management of Chemicals, and Social Responsibility.

Actiu’s approach is based on ‘Life Friendly Spaces’. It is about creating more life-friendly environments, where well-being, inclusion, flexibility and sustainability are the fundamental pillars.

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OTHER ACTIVITIES:

SD Magazine:

As part of its mission is to work collaboratively to share knowledge and 'best practice' to inspire and influence the workplace design sector, SDC has launched a digital publication. The ambition is to provide a platform for views, opinions, and projects within the office workplace sector.

SD Academy:

SDC is launching the first of a series of online courses specifically designed for designers working within the workplace environment.

SDC Forum and Awards:

The second forum and awards was held on 25th April 2024: an interactive event for workplace designers, manufacturers, and suppliers to share knowledge and learn about efforts towards greater sustainability.

FOOTNOTE:

The Sustainable Design Collective meets every two months. Each meeting addresses different initiatives designed to tackle the impact on our environment. A summary document will be published after each meeting which is hosted on the Sustainable Design Collective's web site – an example of knowledge sharing.

We welcome comment and contributions from the office design sector.