Using design as a force for change.

Contents

Foreword

Every day at Design Council, we see how design is now being used as a force for change, enabling us to tackle some of the toughest economic, societal and environmental challenges.

Through commissioning our pioneering, evidence-based research, developing ground-breaking programmes and using insights from these in our ongoing influencing and policy work, Design Council demonstrates the power of design and how it impacts three key areas of the economy: business innovation, places and public services.

For decades we've been a trusted partner to public, private and third sector organisations in the UK and abroad, bringing together non-designers and designers alike, sharing with them our design expertise to transform the way they work.

We are publishing this strategy at a critical point in our 75-year history. Our world is changing rapidly, bringing to the fore national and global issues that we all must urgently address. The need for us to innovate and find new solutions is critical.

Design has a key role to play. Against this background we have set out three key priorities for the next four years. However, as an agile organisation we will review these on a regular basis and always be alert to shifting the emphasis of this strategy when required, depending on the changing environment.

Our priorities are: to improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities; to enable sustainable living and help the UK reach its stated net zero targets; and to intensify our market making work for design, helping people access, understand and learn essential design skills to respond to these and other major challenges. We are choosing to act in these areas because we are uniquely placed to do so. The issues we are focusing on are complex; they require more than one answer from people across a broad range of disciplines and sectors, from grassroots to government.

Unlike commercial design agencies, we convene and empower organisations across businesses, public services and the built environment. We help them work together to find solutions and we open up markets for designers to contribute their talents. We pave the way, pass on the skills and enable others to follow.

We hope that in reading this document, you will be inspired by our approach and feel positive about the future, despite the disruption brought by COVID-19. For us, this is a future where more people's voices are heard and more communities have real influence over their neighbourhoods and services; where more businesses create profitable products and services but don't harm the planet; and where more people are equipped with the design skills needed to solve complex problems and bring about economic prosperity.

There is much that can and must be done. But we cannot do this alone. At Design Council we will continue to work with colleagues and partners across the country to meet these challenges. By coming together and using the power of design, we can all look forward to a healthier, more sustainable and prosperous society.

Sarah Weir OBE
Chief Executive, Design Council

Terry Tyrrell
Chair, Design Council

The role and value of design

What is design?

A mindset and skillset.
Critical thinking and creativity combined.
Much more than aesthetics.

Head
Problem solving

The ability to visualise and
conceptualise the intangible.

Heart
Humanity centred

The passion and curiosity to design solutions
that are right for people and planet.

Hand
Practical skills

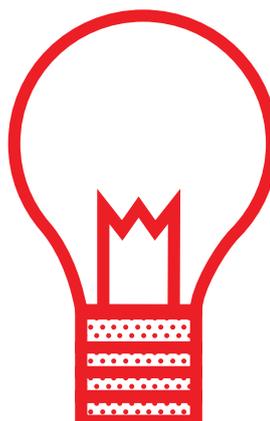The technical abilities to enable
the end goal to be reached.

3H

Design helps us identify and respond to economic, societal and environmental challenges.

Design is firmly linked with innovation, productivity and business resilience.[1]

Design generates substantial revenue for the UK.[2]

About us

Set up in 1944 by Churchill's war cabinet to support Britain's economic recovery after World War II, the Council of Industrial Design, as we were then known, had the founding purpose of promoting 'by all practical means the improvement of design in the products of British industry'.

75 years later, our work has evolved and we have a unique offer, bringing our skills and knowledge together to benefit three major areas of the economy: business innovation, place and public services. We draw on our unrivalled network of more than 450 experts from all kinds of design disciplines to make life better by design.

What we offer

We publish pioneering, evidence-based research on the value of design, commissioning and gathering this together to show the need and make the case for its use.

We provide independent advice for clients, stakeholders and partners, based on evidence, insights and expertise. This enables them to develop relevant policies and find design-led solutions to their current and future challenges.

We develop and run major design-led programmes in the UK and abroad that evidence the value of design, helping clients discover for themselves what works.

We evaluate all we do, providing evidence and stories to influence local and national governments in the UK and abroad, inspiring others to act, endorse and promote design as a force for change.

We influence policy and communicate our work widely, passing on our knowledge, skills, expertise and insights, and pressing for change where needed.

What we stand for

Our vision and mission

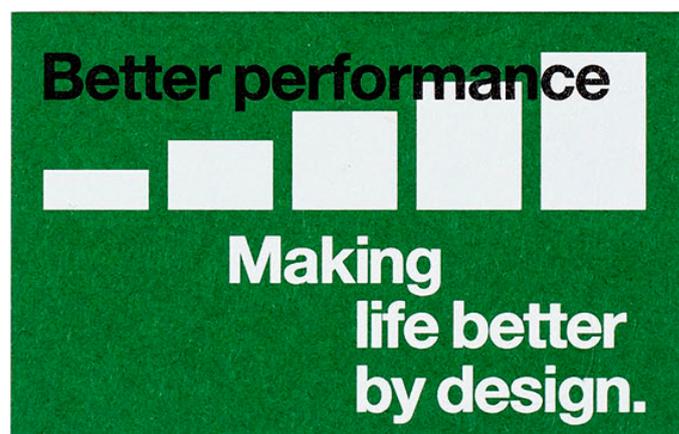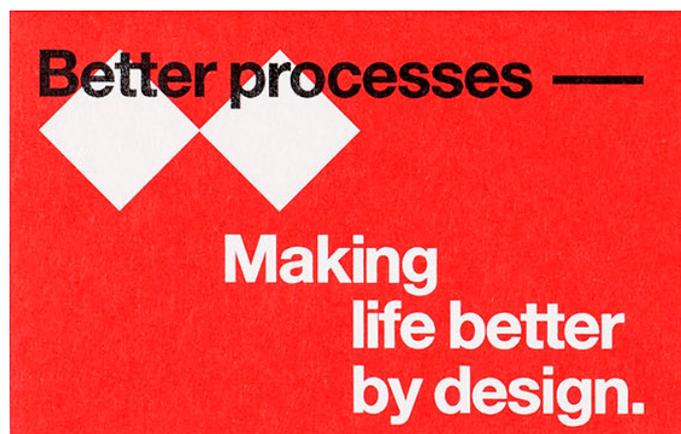Our vision is a world where design, as a force for change, makes lives better for all.

Our mission is to make life better by design, working with people to create better places, better products and better processes, all of which lead to better performance.

Our values

We are ambitious and aspire to reduce inequalities and include everyone. We are bold and courageous in how we work and we never intentionally leave anyone behind.

We are agile, meaning we are not attached to old ways of working. We do not ignore or shut down opinions different to our own. We spend time building trust with partners collaboratively. We are flexible and open to new opportunities.

We are not afraid to take risks, experimenting to find out what will work in the future, using our specialist knowledge of design to research possibilities. We stay up to date, knowledgeable and learn by doing. We make, test, learn and reflect.

Better places — Making life better by design.

Better products — Making life better by design.

Better processes — Making life better by design.

Better performance Making life better by design.

Our design principles

Design deeply.

We understand the root of the problem and its wider context so together we tackle the cause, not the symptom.

Design disruptively.

We are bold, provocative and reimagine the status quo, rather than just making a better version of what already exists.

Design collaboratively.

We recognise that one solution is not going to fix a problem, so we team up with others who are also working on the same goals.

Design democratically.

We shift power to communities by helping them to develop their own design skills to bring about positive change in their lives.

Our strategic priorities

Over the next four years, we will use our wealth of research, evidence, experience and expertise to help tackle challenges around three key areas: health and wellbeing, sustainable living and design skills.

Improving health and wellbeing

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, we were in the midst of a health crisis. Findings from the recently published *Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review* show that life expectancy has stalled for the first time in over a century, and for our nation's poorest women, it has actually fallen.[3] And it is not only gender or income disparity that we need to worry about. The UK has the highest levels of interregional inequality than any other large wealthy country.

Our health inequalities are being driven by diminishing levels of national wellbeing: mortality rates for those aged 45-49 are increasing, more than one in five children are living in poverty and many people have too little money to live healthily. An on-going housing crisis is exacerbating unhealthy and poorly-design homes and driving the rise in homelessness. Poor quality housing costs the NHS an estimated £2.5 billion per year, while the cost to public services of a single person sleeping rough in the UK for 12 months is estimated at £20,128.[4,5]

Poor wellbeing also affects our lifestyles and habits. Some 29% of adults and 20% of children aged 11-12 are now classified as obese, with figures are set to rise. The impact on the NHS is not inconsiderable: 711,000 hospital admissions in 2018/19 were due, in part, to obesity – an increase of 15% on the previous year.[6] As a nation, we are not just getting bigger, we are also getting older. By 2040, nearly one in seven people is projected to be aged over 75, leading to increased health and social care costs to help people manage complex multiple conditions, disability, dementia and loneliness.[7]

Design has a vital role to play in addressing these challenges, enabling us to consider carefully the wider set of issues that determine our health – the social, cultural, political, economic, commercial and environment factors. Through the development of better places, products and processes that all work for people, we will seek to create new markets which bring about substantial change.

The UK has the highest levels of interregional inequality than any other large wealthy country.

The design economy
was worth

73%

of the financial services and
insurance industry in 2016.[9]
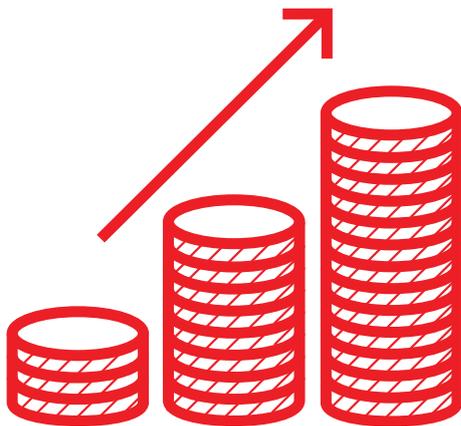
The value of the
design economy grew

52%

between 2009 and 2016.[8]

Case study

Increasing uptake of health checks in Southwark

In 2018, Design Council supported Southwark Council to increase the uptake of its free NHS health check – designed to spot early signs of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, type 2 diabetes or dementia. At the time, around half of those invited for the check did not attend. As a part of our Design in the Public Sector programme with the Local Government Association, we helped the council look into the reasons behind this and engage people in different ways. The following year, Southwark became the first local authority to offer a digital version of the check, saving people the need to book face-to-face appointments. Since the trial launched in January 2019, over 300 people who had not taken up a face-to-face check went on to complete the digital version. Some 10% of participants were found to be at high risk of cardiovascular disease and have since been advised to contact their GPs.

Case study

Helping reinvent Amble

Design Council worked with the community of Amble after it lost the last of its major employers in 2010. With help from one of our experienced Design Associates starting in 2012, residents worked together to redesign their existing services and reinvent the fishing port as a major tourist destination, creating new jobs and opportunities. In 2015 Amble won the High Street of the Year award (Coastal Community Category) and in 2019 it was listed in the *Sunday Times* as one of the top places to live by the sea. Today, more than £8m has been invested in Amble's regeneration with a further £10m earmarked for future projects.

Our strategic priorities

Enabling sustainable living

There is now grave concern among individuals, communities, businesses and the government about the future of our planet. The UN's 17 sustainable development goals provide a framework for how best to preserve and protect our planet, its inhabitants and resources, and we have identified one of these goals, climate action, as our primary focus for encouraging and supporting sustainable living.[10] It is notable that in November 2019 the term 'climate emergency' was chosen as the Oxford Dictionary's word of the year after its usage increased 100-fold within 12 months.[11] The need to act on the climate crisis is clear.

Human activities such as burning fossil fuels, agriculture and land-use have become the leading causes of climate change.[12,13,14] Depending on the degree of global warming, our homes and neighbourhoods, services and urban systems, wildlife and all of our ecosystems will continue to be severely impacted by several simultaneous changes, including hotter summers, droughts and forest fires, heavy rainfall and flooding, extreme storms and rapid sea level rise.[15]

In July 2019 the UK Met Office confirmed the highest temperature ever recorded in the UK -- 38.7°C.[16] And if greenhouse gases continue to be released into the atmosphere at the same or similar rate as today, temperatures in the UK could rise by 6-10°C on the hottest summer days in the next three to four decades[17,18], affecting our health, wellbeing and infrastructure including transport and utilities.[19,20]
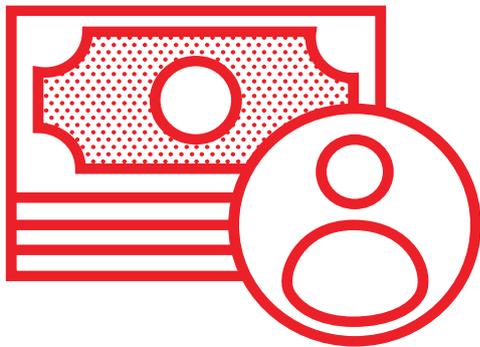
Implementing stronger environmental regulation, redesigning our city systems and infrastructure, and shifting our behaviours to cut greenhouse gas emissions are the only ways we can move forward safely and sustainably. Design plays a crucial role in enabling meaningful change. We want to support a wide range of stakeholders to design places, products and processes that help reduce CO_2 emissions and support the most innovative mitigation and adaptation strategies.

It is also important that we embrace sustainability in all its complexity to ensure it is embedded meaningfully into what we do. Social sustainability should be integral to the way we approach our environment, services and products, especially as the climate emergency will only exacerbate existing issues of inequality, locally and globally.

We must embrace sustainability in all its complexity to ensure it is embedded meaningfully into what we do. Social sustainability should be integral to the way we approach our environment, services and products, especially as the climate emergency will exacerbate existing issues of inequality.
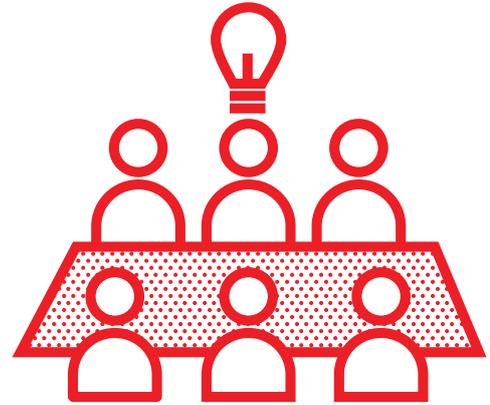
People using design skills in their job are

47%

more productive than the average UK worker, delivering almost £10 extra per hour in Gross Value Added (GVA).[22]

Workers with design skills contribute

£209bn

to the economy and their value is growing at a faster rate than the wider UK economy.[21]

Our strategic priorities

Increasing design skills

Design has been recognised as one of the industries of tomorrow, playing a key role in both the UK and internationally.[23] Design skills are also clearly linked to innovation: some 43% of people working across the economy using these skills are in jobs that generate innovation, creative thinking and problem-solving. This compares to just 6% for the wider workforce.[24]

People skilled in design are vital to strengthening our economy as they enable us to make money. Our evidence also shows that people with design skills help create a more resilient and productive workforce.[25]

Despite this, there is a worrying skills gap in our existing workforce, which is costing the economy some £5.9bn per year.[26] Indeed, one in eight design employers say that they have staff who are not fully proficient in their current roles.[27]

Ensuring that people have these design skills is vitally important. We want focus on communities that have the most economic and social inequalities and businesses that do not currently use design. And we want to use our evidence and influence so that all those using design skills across the economy maximise their potential and use their talent to tackle some of society's biggest challenges, including health and wellbeing and sustainable living.

People with design skills create a more innovative, resilient and productive workforce.

Case study

Helping a business to blossom

Naylor Industries' Yorkshire Flowerpots range was launched in 2006. The company wanted to diversify from manufacturing clay sewer pipes. This was a significant challenge. Naylor Industries were entering into a market where British manufactured products had been largely displaced by poor-quality pots from cheap-labour countries. Design Council supported the company on its new venture, helping them turn a fledgling product range of flowerpots into a key part of their business. With our help, flowerpot sales rose from £500,000 to an impressive £6m in four years. "The success of our Yorkshire Flowerpots business, developed with Design Council support, has offset much of the downturn in our traditional construction markets," explains Edward Naylor, Chief Executive, Naylor Industries. Making around 300,000 pots a year in 2019, Yorkshire Flowerpots are now Britain's largest manufacturer of clay pots.

What success looks like

Improving health and wellbeing

By 2024 we will have increased design skills within communities and organisations in at least four local areas experiencing some of the worst health inequalities in the UK. In doing so, we will help people better understand the issues that can influence their health. We will also have empowered them to develop, test and put in place their own solutions to live healthier lives. We will build on our existing programmes to:

– work with partners and deliver major place-based programmes in these areas

– support businesses to improve health and wellbeing of their staff

– have a particular focus on homelessness.

Enabling sustainable living

By 2024 we will have added to the wider global knowledge on new, more environmentally sustainable practices. We will have also increased the work we do to support people to design places, products and processes which are more sustainable and help the UK meet its stated net zero targets. We will further extend our work by:

– developing sustainable infrastructure models with our clients

– leading public sector innovation to mitigate the climate change crisis

– focusing particularly on air quality.

Increasing design skills

By 2024 we will have helped close the skills gap across the UK through our design skills-led approach. We will build on our existing programmes to reach another 500 businesses, 5,000 community members, and 2,500 public servants and their stakeholders who will be enabled to use design skills. We will continue our work with central and local government to help their younger and older learners to unlock their full potential. They, in turn, can then pass these skills on to thousands of others. Building on our long history of success in this area we will:

– develop a package of support and training for community-led design and place-shaping

– provide an SME design skills programme to embed design as a critical enabler of performance

– create a new design skills programme for non-design trained leaders so they recognise the commercial impact of design

– share the latest social, environmental and systemic design practices so that designers can maximise their potential for humanity's good.

In addition, we will build on our well-established portfolio of work to include:

– A programme of research on the national value of design to the UK economy. Following the global success of our 2018 publication on the value of design and design skills across the economy, our research will demonstrate the economic, social and environmental value of design to the UK, and will promote the value of UK plc around the world. This will also be the blueprint for more countries developing their own successful design economies.[28] In addition, we will evaluate our work to show the impact we make in enabling others to tackle inequalities in our economy. This work will seek to measure both the financial benefit and potential social and environmental impact.

– Two new major partnerships in our focus areas: health and wellbeing, and sustainable living. Drawing on our previous experience with, for example, Transform Ageing and Network Rail, we will pass on valuable skills to our clients and partners through our training programmes and advice, using our extensive network of experts. We will also give wider access to designers and design skills in our two new partnerships.

– International networks that increase the impact of our work and our reach. We will build on our existing global contacts and our unique expertise to create markets which will increase the size, range and scale of our clients, partners and stakeholders around the world.

Our work will be underpinned by values that are used by staff, Built Environment Experts (BEEs) and Design Associates (DAs) as 'the way we do business round here'. We will focus on personal development and continuous improvement. We will constantly monitor the impact our values make to the financial and professional wellbeing of our clients, stakeholders, partners and staff.

End notes

1. Bonner, K, Hart, M, Heery L. (2017) *Design Council support and business survival and growth: a report prepared for the Design Council by the Enterprise Research Centre.* Available at www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/report/design-council-support-and-business-survival-and-growth-report [Accessed 20 February 2020]

2. Design Council. (2018) *The design economy 2018: the state of design in the UK.* Design Council, p.11.

3. Marmot M, Allen J, Boyce T, Goldblatt P, Morrison J. (2020) *Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On*. Institute of Health Equity.

4. Government Office for Science. (2016) *Future of an ageing population*. Government Office for Science, p.7.

5. Pleace, N. (2015) At what cost? An estimation of the financial costs of single homelessness in the UK. York: Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, p.vi.

6. NHS digital (2019) Statistics on obesity, physical activity and diet, England, 2019 [internet], London: NHS Digital. Available at: https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/statistics-on-obesity-physical-activity-and-diet/statistics-on-obesity-physical-activity-and-diet-england-2019 [Accessed 20 February 2020]

7. Government Office for Science. (2016) *Future of an ageing population*: Government Office for Science, p.6.

8. Design Council. (2018) *The design economy 2018: the state of design in the UK.* Design Council, p.6.

9. *ibid,* p.40.

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (2020). Available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300

11. Oxford Dictionaries declares 'climate emergency' the word of 2019. *The Guardian*. Published on 21 November 2019. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/nov/21/oxford-dictionaries-declares-climate-emergency-the-word-of-2019 [Accessed 20 February 2020]

12. Osborne, H. (2007) Fossil fuel and land use behind CO2 rise. Environment Column. The Guardian. Published on 2 February 2007. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/science/2007/feb/02/greenpolitics.climatechange

13. NASA Global Climate Change (2020) Available at: https://climate.nasa.gov/faq/

14. Met Office (2020) Causes of Climate Change. Available at: https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/climate-change/causes-of-climate-change

15. IPCC (2018) Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty [Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, H.-O. Pörtner, D. Roberts, J. Skea, P.R. Shukla, A. Pirani, W. Moufouma-Okia, C. Péan, R. Pidcock, S. Connors, J.B.R. Matthews, Y. Chen, X. Zhou, M.I. Gomis, E. Lonnoy, T. Maycock, M. Tignor, and T. Waterfield (eds.)]. In Press.

16. Met Office News (2019) New official highest temperature in UK confirmed. Published on 29 July 2019. Press Office. Available at: https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/press-office/news/weather-and-climate/2019/new-official-highest-temperature-in-uk-confirmed

17. McGrath, M. (2018) Climate change: UK summers could be over 5°C warmer by 2070. Posted on 26 November 2018. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-46343103

18. BBC News (2019) Climate change: How hot cities could be in 2050. Posted on 11 July 2019. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-48947573

19. IPCC Synthesis Report (2020) Topic 2: Future changes, risks and impacts — IPCC. Available at: https://ar5-syr.ipcc.ch/topic_futurechanges.php

20. Nemry, F. & Demirel, H. (2012) Impacts of Climate Change on Transport: A focus on road and rail transport infrastructures. EUR - Scientific and Technical Research Reports. Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/impacts-climate-change-transport-focus-road-and-rail-transport-infrastructures

21. Design Council. (2017) *Designing a future economy: developing design skills for productivity and innovation*. Design Council, p.9.

22. ibid, p.6.

23. Conservative and Unionist Party. (2019) *The conservative and unionist party manifesto 2019*

24. Design Council. (2017) *Designing a future economy: developing design skills for productivity and innovation*. Design Council, p.8.

25. *ibid*

26. *ibid*, p.62.

27. *ibid*, p.50.

28. For example, in 2019 we formed part of the international Design Declaration Summit Metrics Project, sharing learning from our Design Economy methodology on how global metrics on the value of design could be developed.