

NFB Arms the Construction Industry with the Tools to Decarbonise

Submitted by: MacLean Communications

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The National Federation of Builders' (NFB)

(<https://www.builders.org.uk/policy/carbon-report/carbon-report-2020/>) Major Contractors Group (MCG) is arming the construction industry with practical tools for main contractors to start or accelerate their journey towards achieving net zero carbon with a new decarbonisation handbook. Launched by Mark Wakeford, Chair of the MCG, at the NFB's Large Contractors Forum on 2 December, 'Transforming Construction: Delivering a Low Carbon Future' (<https://www.builders.org.uk/policy/carbon-report/carbon-report-2020/>) contains practical actions that main contractors can adopt and implement in their own businesses. Featuring a foreword by Gillian Keegan MP, Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills, the keynote speaker at the launch event, this landmark handbook is designed to help main contractors all over the UK to step up to the plate and deliver the country's net zero carbon ambitions.

The handbook's launch is timely being published ahead of the UK hosting the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) next year. It is also timely since it meets the current demand for low carbon transformation that is being driven directly by the construction industry. Recent research by the NFB, reveals over 80% of main contractors surveyed actively want to take on the journey to net zero having either produced a business decarbonisation strategy, or are planning to do so. Interestingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has not dulled the industry's commitment to a low carbon future with the survey also revealing nearly half of businesses thought it was more important than ever, and none thought it was now less important. This drive is in line with the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) who in response to the COVID-19 crisis put together an industry recovery plan setting out a three phased approach to recovery, recommitting the sector to the net zero agenda.

Building on the MCG's own landmark report, 'Transforming Construction for a Low Carbon Future', published in November 2019, the new MCG handbook offers a clear practical route map to help deliver this low carbon future. Commenting, Mark Wakeford Joint Managing Director of Stepnell Ltd and Chair of the NFB MCG said: "While COVID-19 undoubtedly presents a significant immediate risk to us all, few would argue about the momentous threat that climate change presents to all our futures. With our new handbook we set to arm our colleagues with the tools they need to start or accelerate their decarbonisation journey. To deliver our country's net zero ambitions, we must help each other to do so. This handbook is designed to do just that. It focuses on steps that we ultimately all need to take, but does so in a way that should allow any business, at whatever stage of their decarbonisation journey, to be able to apply."

Commenting in the report, Minister Keegan said: "When I first became aware of the Major Contractors Group, I was struck by the frank conversations that were taking place about how the industry and Government can work together to reduce emissions. This is going to be vital if we are to be the first generation to tackle climate change and reach our net zero target. This report is a welcome step in the right direction, acting as a handbook for main contractors on how to decarbonise their businesses and their supply chains. As we look ahead to the UK co-hosting the Climate Ambition Summit for world leaders at COP26 next year, I encourage everyone to engage with this report as they travel on their own decarbonisation journeys."

Designed to help the industry collaborate on delivering the UK's net zero ambitions the handbook

presents staged actions and measures for contractors to adopt and implement to work towards the ultimate goal of net zero while being affordable and fitting with each business' vision. The report covers multiple areas where changes can be made to help decarbonise including:

- developing teams to lead change
- reducing the carbon footprint of staff and corporate
- recording, accounting and reducing emissions associated with construction projects
- reducing embodied carbon
- reducing carbon emissions through building performance
- reducing carbon through procurement

The report contains a range of useful practical tools to help contractors decarbonise. This includes details of how to implement management systems that assign responsibility and ensure a thorough process in environmental sustainability management, such as appointing a carbon-change maker at a senior level to drive the agenda. Employee and business carbon footprint transformation are other powerful steps in decarbonisation which are covered in the handbook, which suggests helpful possible measures to reduce carbon, such as investment in greener company vehicles or flexible working practices among many others. Other vital areas to consider which are covered in detail in the handbook include tackling carbon emissions from the construction process, as well as embodied carbon, improving a building's operational performance over its lifetime, and low carbon procurement.

In addition, the handbook also features case studies from a range of businesses helping contractors identify an example which fits with their own stage of decarbonisation. These illustrate the measures that others in the industry are taking and provide an honest and open assessment of how implementing a decarbonisation agenda through business strategy has differed across businesses. For example, the Woodhead Group has started its decarbonisation commitment with an ambition in their business plan to become a 'climate positive contractor'. The Group explains it is in the process of developing measurable targets to achieve this as well as a Climate Action Plan Framework, which will take a themed approach to sustainable business practices, product delivery, corporate responsibility and individual employee responsibility.

Meanwhile, another case study from Skanska illustrates a company that is further down the line to decarbonization showing how it has implemented full carbon accounting and are certified to PAS 2080, a standard for whole-life carbon management in infrastructure. Skanska can accurately assess the amount of CO₂ equivalent gases emitted for each £1 million of Skanska UK's revenue. This has reduced from 351 tonnes of CO₂e per £1m in 2010 to 215 tonnes of CO₂e per £1m by 2018, with the aim to reduce to 130 per £1m by 2030 and 0 by 2045.

In August 2020, the NFB became the first trade body representing main contractors to sign up to the #ConstructionDeclares movement. Signing up to this global petition that is 'uniting all strands of construction and the built environment' is a commitment to take positive action in response to climate breakdown and biodiversity collapse. This handbook signifies the MCG's intent to deliver on that pledge. Find out more and sign up at: uk.buildersdeclare.com.

To find out more about the NFB and MCG, and to download a copy of 'Transforming Construction: Delivering a Low Carbon Future' visit <https://www.builders.org.uk/policy/carbon-report/carbon-report-2020/>

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Notes to editors:

1. The MCG was established in 2019 and is the division of the NFB representing main contractors with an annual turnover of £40m and above. Currently, the group has a membership of over 30 main contractors and aims to share intelligence, improve governmental understanding of larger construction businesses and find solutions to current barriers to house building and infrastructure.
2. NFB is the longest standing and most representative construction trade body representing 21,000 employees and 6.6bn turnover (FY 2020)
3. The NFB represents builders, contractors and house builders across England and Wales. Founded in 1896 its members range from the sole trader to large, billion pound construction companies, with turnover ranging from below £500,000 to £1.1 billion. The NFB provides advice, training and business services to ensure members stay up to date.
4. The NFB campaigns on the issues that affect the construction industry such as procurement, skills, sustainability and funding. It represents the industry to government and industry forums and is an active media commentator and policy influencer.
5. For further information and images please contact Sara MacLean, MacLean Communications, on 07976 782817 or email macleancomms@gmail.com