

Platforms

Orms Sustainability Group, July 2019

On May 1st, the UK became the first national government to declare a climate emergency. Although the proposal does not legally compel the government to take any direct action, it does demonstrate the intention and will of the House of Commons to approach such a topical issue. The decision was taken by parliament following a recent visit to the UK by activist Greta Thunberg. This also coincided with numerous UK towns and cities announcing their own declarations of climate emergency, and prompted eleven days of protests across the country. Parliament's decision to declare the emergency is a reminder of urgent action that needs to be taken. Although there is no definitive summary of what this means, it is a step that sparked widespread attention and awareness amongst the British population.

There is a well documented direct correlation between the quantity of carbon emissions and the extent of global warming. With the Paris Agreement, governments agreed to cap global temperatures rising by more than 2 degrees Celsius. In response to this, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) provided an independent report for the UK government which set the target to achieve net zero greenhouse gases and emissions by 2050. However, there is concern over how seriously this target is being acted upon and how realistic it is in the present day. A recently released report by C40 Cities, shows that UK government commitments will only close this gap by a third.

We are reminded through our news cycle, of reports covering extreme climate related natural disasters, hottest temperatures ever recorded in multiple countries, and alarmingly increasing numbers of animals being declared endangered or extinct. This presses the viewpoint that climate change and global warming are still issues which need urgent attention if we are to improve and even reverse the effects already being seen worldwide.

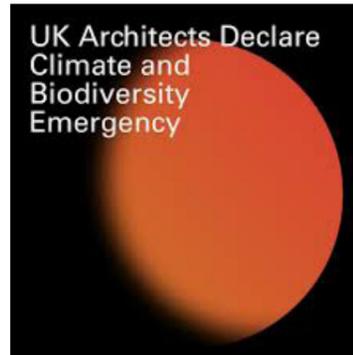
This topic has gathered national and international attention from the press, initiated public protests and government responses over the past few months. It has raised the question of how individual choices and large corporation policies and procedures can realistically be altered. This is necessary to prevent any further irreversible damage to the planet.

At Orms we have been looking at how the impact of our actions can start to make a difference both in our office life and the architecture that we produce.

At Orms, we are committed to...

We have joined the [UK Architects Declare Climate and Biodiversity Emergency](#) and are proud members of the [UK Green Building Council](#).

"For everyone working in the construction industry, meeting the needs of our society without breaching the earth's ecological boundaries will demand a paradigm shift in our behaviour" - Architects Declare



Architecture in Schools

Orms participated in this year's Architecture in Schools programme, collaborating with Culloden Primary School in Poplar to design a 'Smart City'.



At the first workshop, the children began brainstorming ideas for their 'smart city'. Amongst the circuses and skate parks, a strong sustainability agenda emerged, with proposals for pedestrianisation and cycle lanes in a car free city with ample tree filled parks to improve air quality.

This should hardly come as a surprise, as school children are becoming increasingly engaged and eloquent advocates for climate change policies. In Tower Hamlets, where Culloden Primary School is located, two ten year olds helped present the petition to (successfully) declare a Climate Emergency and committing to reduce emissions from the council to net zero by 2025.

Orms seized the opportunity to sign up to the [UK Architects Declare Climate and Biodiversity Emergency](#). We have committed to raise awareness on the climate and biodiversity emergencies, and the urgent need for action amongst our clients and supply chains.

We were delighted to have the opportunity to share our knowledge from our own research into both indoor and outdoor air quality, to help the children explore the possibilities of a fresh air city.

Terrace Wildlife

Local bees have been enjoying our terrace garden as much as we have, especially our blossoming oregano!



What We're Watching

- [Hugh's War on plastic](#)
- [The Surprising thing I learnt sailing around the world - TED talk by Dame Ellen MacArthur](#)

World Overshoot Day

This year world overshoot day fell on the 29th of July, 2 days early than last year. World Overshoot day is the day when humanities demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year. However the UK reached its overshoot day on the 17th of May.

The world economic forum estimate that in order to consume in line with what the earth can provide, we need to move that date back by 5 days every year until 2050.

To calculate your personal footprint and find out what changes you could make check out this website.

<http://www.footprintcalculator.org/>



What We're Reading

- [Hungry City by Carolyn Steel](#)
- [Resilient Cities, Resilient Lives by 100 Resilient Cities](#)
- [Net Zero Carbon Buildings by UKGBC](#)
- [The Future of Urban Consumption in a 1.5 degree World by C40](#)

Events

The team attended a number of interesting events and talks as part of [London Climate Action Week](#) earlier this month.

Arup hosted a Net Zero London event, which introduced 'The Future of Urban Consumption in a 1.5 degree World'.

Feilden Clegg Bradley and Bioregional presented the One Planet Living framework, developed from studying BedZed.

UCL organised 'Managing embodied emissions to improve global climate governance'

Pinsent Masons with Turley Sustainability presented the legal polices and challenges surrounding climate change.

Waste

Although DEFRA statistics show the rate of recycling is slowly increasing (45.7% in 2017), each person in the UK still generates a little over 400kg of household waste per year. We looked at cosmetic products, to try and find some eco friendly alternatives.

Wet Wipes

Baby wipes, make up removal wipes, kitchen wipes... The list goes on. These are inherently single use, and 90% of them contain plastic, which often is not disclosed on the (plastic) packaging as it's not an ingredient. Swap these out for reusable cloths made from natural fibres.

Soap

Switch from liquid soaps and gels to solid soap bars. Usually packaged in paper or cardboard, a natural soap bar takes 5 times less energy to produce, has a 25% smaller carbon footprint and up to 20 times less packaging. There is some debate regarding the sustainability of the fats and oils within solid soaps, so look for products without palm oil.

Orms Sustainability group are:
Alisha Gould, Anna Fiejtek, Carlos Espejo, Colin McColl, Ellen Hickman, Evie Summerhayes, James Gardener, Kathryn Knowles, Nick Botterill, Rachel Hoolahan, Rosie Bard & Sasha Greig