Limiting global warming to 1.5°C would require ‘rapid and far-reaching’ transitions in land, energy, industry, buildings, transport, and cities.
1. Introduction & Executive Summary

In response to the global climate crisis, the RIAI has updated its Policy on Sustainability. The RIAI Strategy 2018-2022 sets out the objectives of the RIAI to empower and support registered Architects in their role as industry leaders and to provide public benefit arising from members’ unique ability to synthesise complex and competing criteria and to lead in the design, delivery and management of the built environment. This policy is set in the context of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015. (see https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld)

Additionally, in recognition of the unique challenges that we now face, the five presidents of the architecture institutes of England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland committed, in October 2018, to drive forward five shared principles to strengthen and safeguard the future of the profession including a specific commitment to: “Lead the profession in the fight for a more sustainable built environment by placing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as a key guiding principle in all they do.”

Architecture interacts with each of the 17 goals, not just on an aspirational level or as future potential, but through realised buildings, settlements and cities all over the world.

A report published in October 2018 by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which integrated over 42,000 expert and government review comments, finds that:

“Limiting global warming to 1.5°C would require ‘rapid and far-reaching’ transitions in land, energy, industry, buildings, transport, and cities. Global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) would need to fall by about 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching ‘net zero’ around 2050.”

It has been estimated that the extraction, processing and transport of building materials, construction and the energy-in-use of buildings, when combined, account for almost 50% of annual energy use, 40% of greenhouse gas emissions, half of all raw material extraction and a third of all water use. In this context there is an overwhelming moral and professional obligation on Architects to take a leading role in tackling climate change in the built environment and on large-scale master planning projects to mitigate related environmental damage.

This review and update of the RIAI Policy on Sustainability supports the objectives of the RIAI Strategy 2018-2022 and the commitments made by the RIAI to place the UN Sustainable Development goals at the core of architectural practice and sets out clear and measurable objectives for
both the RIAI and practicing Architects to become industry leaders in developing a sustainable future for all. In order to ensure the alignment of this policy with any future transposition of EU directives, future amendments to this policy, or associated or referenced metrics, will be informed by the EU “Level(s)”, a sustainability standard, developed by CEN, which provides a set of indicators and common metrics for measuring the performance of buildings along their life cycle.

**Michael Goan, MRIAI**  
Chair, RIAI Sustainability Task Force, 2017 - 2018

**Natalie Walsh, MRIAI**  
Chair, RIAI Sustainability Task Force 2019

**Sustainability Task Force Members 2017-2019:**

Pat Barry  
Matt Carroll  
Susan Cogan  
Bobby Conroy  
Michael Goan (Chair 2017 - 2018)  
Simon Keogh  
Pat Kirwin  
Darragh Lynch  
Sarah O’Dwyer  
David Power  
Noel Quinn  
Bill Scott  
Sally Starbuck  
Dara Stewart  
Natalie Walsh (Chair 2019)
Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”
"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

(The 1987 Brundtland Report)

The development and operation of the built environment has a significant impact on the sustainability of global ecological and social systems and Architects play the leading role in affecting these impacts. The RIAI shall support, promote and foster sustainability as a core professional responsibility of Architects and Architectural Technologists to ensure that the design of sustainable buildings and places is a principle of practice. In order to achieve this the RIAI shall promote the following principles:
5 Principles

1. Commit

Commit to promote environmental, social, economic and ecological sustainability as a fundamental principle of education and practice.

Actions

The RIAI and its Members will:

1.1 Make sustainability in the built environment a core objective of its work.
1.2 Provide leadership to the industry in the theory and practical application of sustainability in the built environment.
1.3 Promote values, knowledge and practices throughout the profession towards the delivery of a sustainable built environment.
1.4 Base its policies on sustainability on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2. Lead

Lead in the public and the private sectors to ensure that sustainability becomes, and remains, normal practice.

Actions

The RIAI will support members to take a leadership role in:

2.1 Delivering projects that exhibit exemplar performance through the adoption of appropriate and ambitious building performance standards, encompassing the broad interpretations of sustainability and best practice.
2.2 Establishing policies and procedures to ensure that sustainable design becomes a fundamental driver of practice.
2.3 Working to influence government regulations and policies to ensure that they support and promote sustainability while maintaining high levels of creativity and innovation in design.
3. Develop

Develop and support policies, regulations and practices that facilitate the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and IPCC Climate Change Report recommendations.

**Actions**

**The RIAI will:**

3.1 Develop and improve policies, procedures, CPD and services relating to sustainable design in alignment with national and global objectives.

3.2 Develop collaborations with other professional organisations nationally and across the EU to share policy objectives and goals.

3.3 Adopt as appropriate, policies and practices developed by other organisations.

3.4 Consider the EU “Level(s)” sustainability standard in any future development of this policy, or associated metrics.

4. Educate

The RIAI will work to educate members, students, clients, the building industry and the public about the critical importance, substantial opportunities and benefits of sustainability.

**Actions**

**The RIAI will:**

4.1 Use its role under the Building Control Act 2007 to support educational institutions delivering RIAI accredited programmes in Architecture and Architectural Technology to incorporate sustainable design throughout the relevant sections of course content to comply with the RIAI Standard of Knowledge, Skill and Competence for Practice as an Architect* and the RIAI Standard of Knowledge, Skill and Competence for Practice as an Architectural Technologist.

*Article 46 of Directive 2005/36/EC: adequate knowledge of physical problems and technologies and of the function of buildings so as to provide them with internal conditions of comfort and protection against the climate, in the framework of sustainable development

4.2 Research, support and promote external products, curricula, services and standards that support its members and their staff to implement sustainable practices, ensuring that a level of skill which enables informed decision making on sustainability is developed and maintained.

4.3 Support members in educating their clients in the public and private sectors on the critical importance and substantial opportunities of sustainable design in new build, retrofit and refurbishment projects and in the planning of our villages, towns and cities.
5. Implement

The RIAI will work to support its Members to implement and continually improve sustainability in the design, resourcing, construction, use and reuse of buildings, and the planning and development of the built environment.

Actions

The RIAI will encourage its Members to:

5.1 Progressively bring existing and future elements of the built environment up to best practice sustainable design standards in their design, production, use and eventual reuse.

5.2 Plan for the recording and dissemination of monitoring results for the performance of the buildings and their publication as a demonstration of best practice.

5.3 Give holistic consideration to the range of environmental impacts arising from the planning, construction, use and reuse of buildings and their infrastructures.

5.4 Consider the effects, from the local to the global, on ecosystems over the entire components and building life cycle. This should be done in isolation and as part of assembled systems, from short to long-term, looking at the circular economy and ensuring that our building stock is capable of adaptive re-use for people of all ages.
Lead in the public and the private sectors to ensure that sustainability becomes and remains, normal practice.
Bibliography & Further Reading

UN Sustainable Development Goals
Information about the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals

https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/sustainable-development-goals/about-sustainable-development-goals

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development


An Architecture Guide to the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals

The Brundtland Report 1987
Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future, also known as The Brundtland Report, was published in 1987 and is available in the following link:

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf

The RIAI Standard of Knowledge, Skill and Competence for Practice as an Architect


The RIAI Standard of Knowledge, Skill and Competence for Practice as an Architectural Technologist


EU Level(s) Framework
The EU Level(s) Framework Building Sustainability Performance can be accessed at:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/buildings.htm
The RIAI will work to educate members, students, clients, the building industry and the public about the critical importance, substantial opportunities and benefits of sustainability.