

Responsibly sourced

Responsible sourcing in the construction industry is an increasingly important issue for architects and their clients. The concrete industry believes that it is well placed to deliver a responsibly sourced construction material that is local, has short supply chains, regulated management systems and offers real, long-term sustainability



The Concrete Centre™

Customers, clients and stakeholders are increasingly demanding that responsible sourcing is embedded within the supply chain. They want to know where materials and products come from, how the workers in the supply chain are treated and be assured that the environmental impacts of the materials are being actively managed and minimised.

As a key part of the strategy, the concrete industry published its first sustainability report in March 2009. 'The Concrete Industry Sustainability Report' is the vehicle for demonstrating active sustainable management across the concrete industry and its supply chain.

Of the Report, Jonathan Porritt, Founder Director of Forum for the Future said: "I am genuinely impressed at the progress that has been made and the quality of the leadership shown. The industry is to be congratulated upon the journey that it is taking".

Forum for the Future has been working with the concrete industry to develop and implement a sustainability strategy that the whole sector can sign up to. The publication of the first industry-wide Performance Report marked a milestone for the concrete industry. It examines the challenges being faced, the targets to be reached and provides a statement of achievement. Importantly, the Report provides industry data across 14 performance indicators

against which the concrete sector has committed to be benchmarked against and to improve upon.

The Report will be followed up on an annual basis so that ongoing sustainability improvements can be measured.

LOCALLY SOURCED – LOCALLY REGULATED

Unlike other construction materials, concrete and its constituents can be 100 per cent sourced from the UK. Other construction materials such as timber and the iron ore for steel are imported from thousands of miles away.

In addition to the increased CO₂ impact resulting from international transportation - annual CO₂ emissions from shipping represents 5% of the global total, double than those of aviation - by operating predominantly within the UK all activities within the concrete supply chain have to conform to some of the most stringent global environmental legislation. Being locally sourced also enables the establishment of a raw material inventory management system which is also known as the 'chain of custody'. Certification to recognised management systems and performance reporting helps ensure that consistent values are present along the supply chain.

The legislative framework within the EU contains a Social Charter which provides legal protection against ethical and social exploitation. Such legislation is not common outside of the EU and organisations need to ensure that their supply chain

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operates to the standards recommended by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in order to demonstrate responsible sourcing.

The concrete industry provides employment opportunities and skill development to its employees throughout the UK. Responsible sourcing also requires the demonstration of active health and safety programmes within the supply chain. Working together with the Health and Safety Executive, the concrete industry has made significant improvements over the last decade towards its target of zero incidents.

THE PRODUCT

Concrete provides a built-environment that provides real long-term holistic sustainability that, in addition to meeting economic and social demands, provides inherent thermal mass that can reduce heating and cooling energy requirements, a high level of resilience and robustness that is able to withstand the expected extreme weather conditions resulting from climate change, future proof flexibility and full end-of-life recyclability.

The sustainability strategies and management schemes being implemented by the concrete industry together with the material's built-in performance benefits mean that it is well-placed to deliver a responsibly sourced built environment.