



Are Employers Seeking Sustainability Literate Graduates?

A pilot study of Surveying employers

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**The Sustainability in Practice Conference
6-7 September 2007
Kingston, London**



Background

- Some twenty years old since the Brundtland definition of sustainability
- Triple bottom line principles are beginning to work through into language of business
- Property and construction professionals are in the front line in the need to incorporate sustainability skills and knowledge

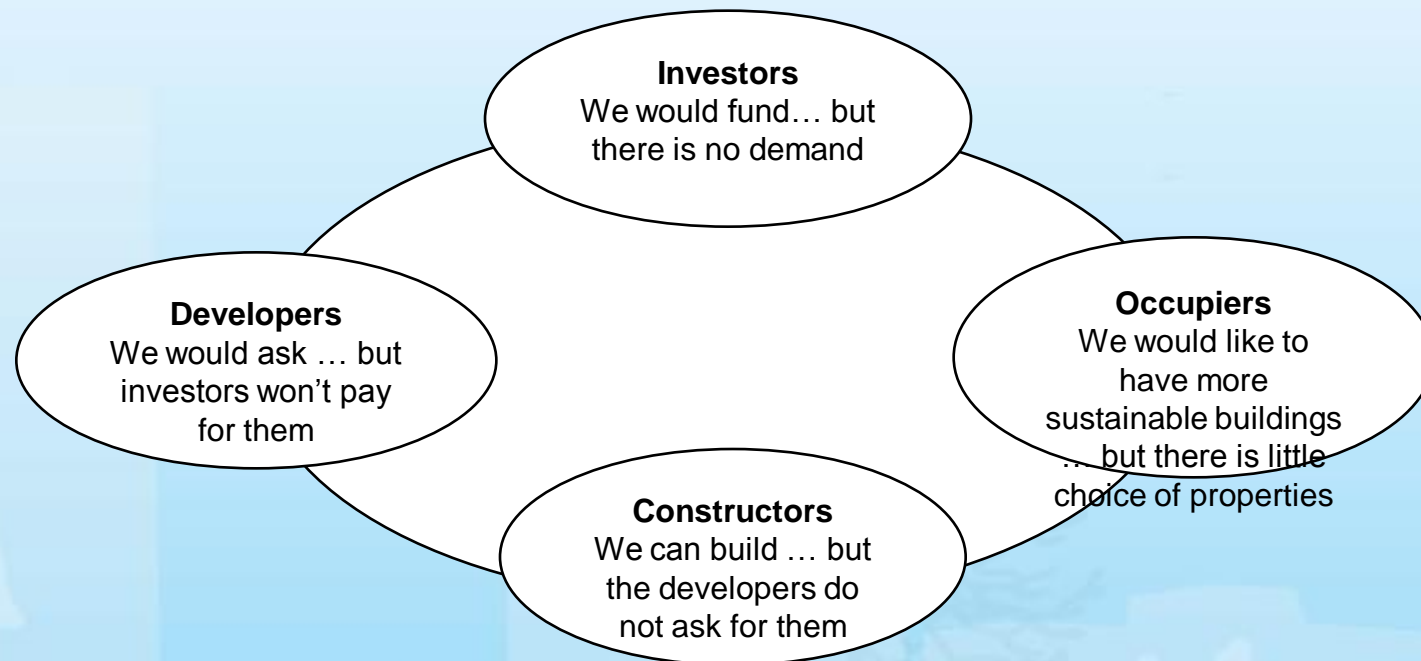
Built Environment Context

- Buildings are responsible for some 50% of carbon emissions
- In developed economies buildings are the locus for economic activity and contribute significantly, positively or negatively to well-being
- Issue one of legacy more than new build

Where we were: the Circle of Blame

- Identified barriers to embedment of sustainability principles
 - Focus has been on environmental performance and technological solutions
 - Perceived high price tag
 - Lack of communication between stakeholders involved to integrate triple bottom line into the lifecycle of buildings

Where we were: the Circle of Blame



Source: Sustainable Construction Task Group (2000[a])

The Rise of Legislation





Drivers of Change: Industry Dynamics and Market Transformation

- Growth in professional press coverage
- CSR – the speedy growth in attitudes
- Surveyors interact with all stages of the building life cycle
- Major firms service a major industry



A Professional Issue?

- RICS is lead body
- Controls entry and continuing education
- Attendance at sustainability related CPD events – a major shift
- Professional body awareness
- Grant Funding
- Client pressure?



C-SCAIBE The RICS Position

- 2004 Peter Fall sets up sustainability commission
- 2006: RICS officially adopts sustainability policy
- 2006: new competency introduced to APC
- March 2007: RICS enters Vancouver Valuation Accord to drive sustainability into valuation work
- June 2007: Commission completes work – issues *Surveying Sustainability: a short guide for the property professional*





Professional Body Response

- A core RICS qualification requirement for graduates from 2006:
“demonstrate knowledge and understanding of why and how sustainability seeks to balance economic, environmental and social objectives at global, national and local levels in the context of land, property and the built environment.”

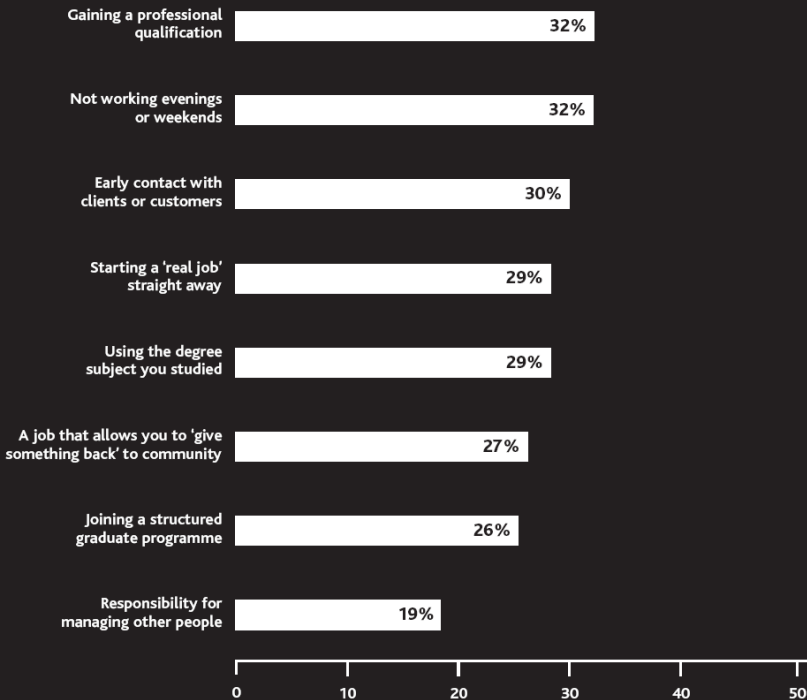


Educational Response

- Is higher education failing to equip future leaders with the relevant skills?
- HEFCE made the embedding of sustainability their Objective 1 in 2002
- The goal of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014, DESD), for which UNESCO is the lead agency, is to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning.
- Initiatives amongst universities to encourage students to develop sustainability skills is still localised

Graduate Aspirations

Chart 2.9 Elements of First Employment that Job Hunters thought were 'Very Important'



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 17,170 final year students

Percentage of job hunters who said aspect was 'very important'

- *The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2007* gives employers an insight into graduates career expectations
- Based on some 17,000 face to face interviews with finalists from 30 UK Universities
- 27% of respondents think that 'giving something back to the community' is very important
- Compared with other elements such as gaining a professional qualification (32%) and starting a real job (29%)

Source: <http://www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk/documents/GradSurveySummary07.pdf>



C-SCAIPE So what about recruitment?

Student Aspirations

Client Needs



Recruitment Policy?

Has the changing context changed employer requirements?



A Question of Knowledge? Skills? And When?

- Graduate employability/generic skills across the board e.g. communication, team working, problem solving, organisation and planning, professionalism
- For surveying graduates...technical skills come into play as well
- Is sustainability a technical requirement?
- Professional development and graduates' integration into organisations, at what point, if at all, are sustainability skills required?



Aims of Survey

- Pilot of Surveying organisations
- How far is sustainability knowledge is a requisite graduate skill?
- Fore-runner to exploring other built environment professions, e.g. town planners, architects etc.



What we Did

- Targeted some 100 employers
- Chosen on size and known propensity to recruit significant numbers of graduates from surveying degrees/ postgraduates
- Postal surveyed senior people
- Follow up telephone interviews

The Questionnaire

- The organisation: ***values, policies***
- From policy to practice (i.e. organisational measures –e.g. green travel plans)
- Their ***drivers for change***
- Resultant ***skill and knowledge set changes:***
 - CPD
 - Recruitment

Results

CSR Policy

Yes	10	53%
No	7	37%
Don't know	2	10%
Total	19	100%

Environmental policy

Yes	12	63%
No	6	32%
Don't know	1	5%
Total	19	100%

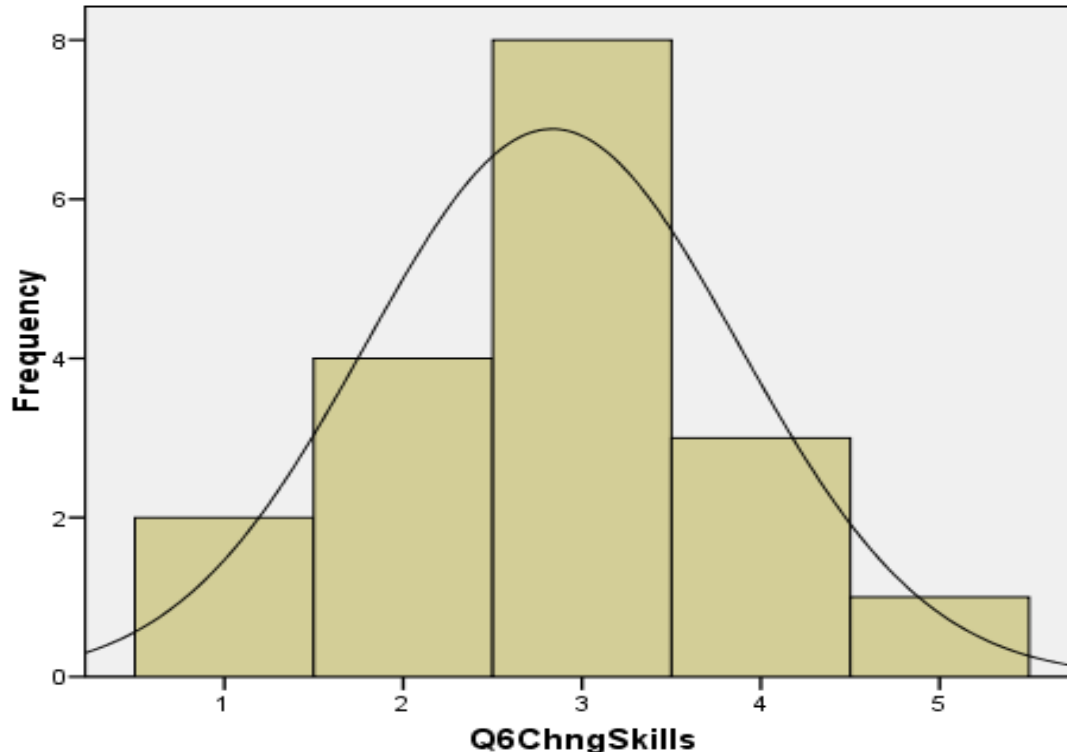
Results suggest that organisations that have explicit policies (CSR, Environmental) tend to be more likely to have taken positive action e.g. encouraging employer awareness, green travel plans, environmental office practices



Skills requirements

To what degree has the sustainability agenda affected your business in terms of changing skills requirements?

Histogram



Min score 1
Max score 5

Mean =2.83
Std. Dev. =1.043
N =18

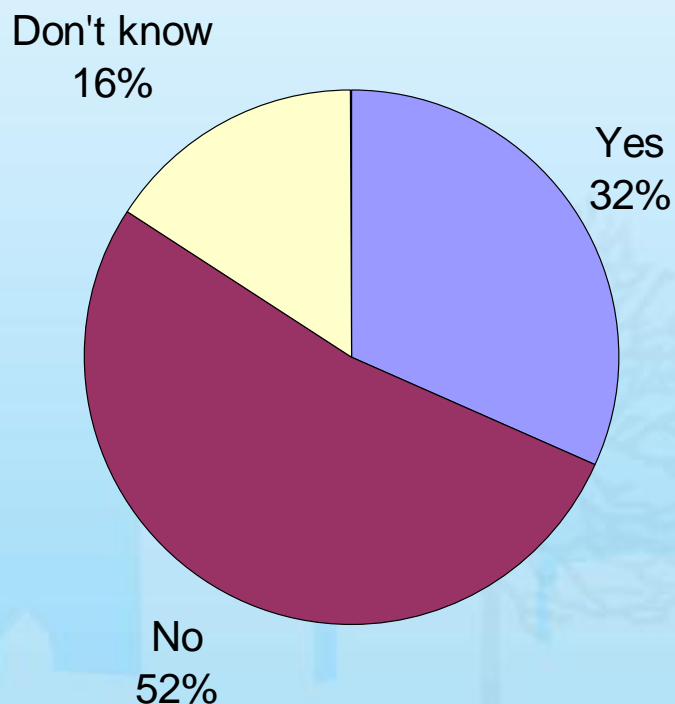


Results

- More than half recognised a need for CPD in the area (52%)
- Top identified drivers for taking sustainability were; *market transformation, legislation and better informed clients*

Results

- Do they require graduates to have sustainability knowledge



Results

- Six organisations said that they required graduates to have sustainability knowledge.
- These organisations showed overall a strong commitment to sustainability issues
- *General awareness* tends to be explored at interview
- ...but six of the organisations that do *not* require graduates to have sustainability knowledge also showed a strong commitment to sustainability
- The remainder were less interested in the concept altogether



Interpretation

- 4 levels of engagement:
 - Policy
 - Practice (organisational)
 - CPD
 - Recruitment



Interpretation

- Levels of engagement with the concept noticeable
- Those with policies in place tend to be those who have taken significant steps to change organisational practice
- This also applies to the need to up-skill and CPD
- Few drive to 4th level



Interpretation

Embedment of sustainability in organisations follow a top down approach



C-SCAIBE Questions raised

- Have employment policies not been adapted in light of perceived market transformation (i.e. – is it a step process)?
- Do employers worry about narrowing their employee pool? Are they just seeking bright people?
- Learning on the job, APC and CPD seen as sufficient means of up-skilling workforce?
- As survey will be refined on a year by year basis these issues will be monitored