



JERICHO

Frameworks to Build a Better Britain

Executive Summary

A nationwide conversation, convening and curating a vibrant community of expertise and influence among those interested in building a better Britain. A two-year long, in-depth project on behalf of Building Research Establishment (BRE Group) which sought to provide answers to the many shortcomings that face the UK's built environment and culminated after seven important events in a series of policy recommendations, co-produced with nearly 300 key individuals in the sector. BRE was thus placed in a more prominent and authoritative position within a critical national debate.

The Starting Point

With the built environment under the microscope, Britain's buildings are front and centre of national attention. Many of the

significant and diverse social and societal challenges the UK comes up against relate to the places and spaces in which people live, work and spend their lives. There is, first and foremost, a housing crisis. Much of this was thrown into sharp focus by the events at Grenfell Tower in June 2017 and its aftermath, as referenced by BRE Group CEO Niall Trafford (see below).

BBC Newsnight's comment was and remains a salutary reminder.

“Accepted professional practice has systematically reduced the fire resistance of our tall buildings”

– BBC Newsnight, June 2017

As an expert organisation, BRE was drawn into national news coverage after the Grenfell fire.

Since its foundation nearly 100 years ago, BRE has been committed to making a positive difference in the UK's (and increasingly global) built environment. As a world-leading, multi-disciplinary, building science centre - with a mission to improve buildings and infrastructure, through research and knowledge generation - being below the radar of many historically meant that a renewed and positive programme of engagement was needed. A higher profile among key stakeholders and decision-makers was essential, not least if BRE and its Trust was to be instrumental in delivering its mission and effecting positive change.

Collaboration

BRE, in collaboration with Jericho Chambers, therefore sought to build a coalition/community of experts and influence from which new policy recommendations for the whole of the built environment could emerge.

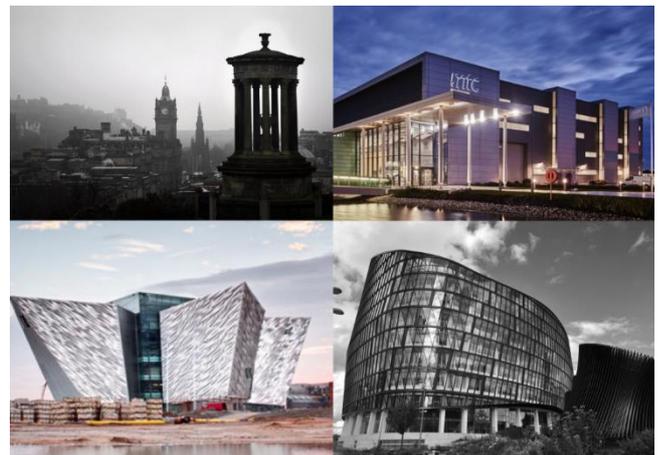
This community was designed as a deliberately a broad church – rarely found around the table and under the same roof - spanning elected politicians, civil servants, NGOs, academics, experts, architects, developers, SMEs and financiers. All potential solutions could thus be developed and stress-tested by the community as a whole. The project was based on the Jericho organising principles for the trusted, future organisation – activism, participation, accountability and dissent.

Convening and Informing

The initial community comprised 16 individuals, brought together to help answer the question [“What Kind of Britain are we building?”](#) The aim was to kick-start a conversation about the new directions Britain should be taking in the context of the Built Environment; what (bigger) questions we should be asking; and who should

be involved in the process when it comes to actually building a better Britain – which has been BRE's aim across a century of research and critical knowledge-generation. BRE are unashamedly experts who deal in data and scientific facts.

This was by necessity a nationwide conversation, created to build a truly UK-wide community and programme of events through focussing on key local built environment issues, including the [industrial strategy in Edinburgh](#), [social exclusion in Manchester](#), [advanced manufacturing in Coventry](#), [sustainable development in Swansea](#), and [regeneration in Belfast](#). Each event was carefully researched and developed in line with this strategic approach – with insights and Best practice then shared on a national level.



The community grew peer-to-peer and organically (though carefully curated by Jericho) to a “wise crowd” of over 300 expert contributors – and then percolated through the entire organisation of BRE, providing engagement, profile and also media opportunities for a number of BRE executives.

Rich and diverse content – written, audio and film – was deployed across the project, engaging more built environment professionals and wider stakeholders beyond the “wise crowd 300”, in order to establish new connections, further elevating BRE's profile and driving the conversation beyond the set piece events.

Re-grouping and making sense *So Far, So What?*

Returning to London, a concluding event in early summer 2019 brought together a range of critical stakeholders to help shape the findings into concrete proposals to take forward to government and other bodies. This final roundtable in the series included representatives from two Government Ministries and the office of the Mayor of London.



Key elements of the proposals included:

- **A New Deal** for social housing in the UK. Possibly, a new National Agency For Housing.
- **A new regulatory framework** fit for 21st century Britain. Not only certification for the built environment but also a recognition that the rolling back of standards since deregulation in the 1980s has produced adverse effects, not just in safety.
- **Value-based procurement.** An end to the race to the bottom on price when tendering for construction projects – a recognition that if something is worth doing it is worth doing well.
- **Localism and consultation.** Homes, not units, with sustainability at the front and centre.
- **Skills.** This has been highlighted as a problem for decades. There remains a profound lack of properly trained and

qualified people to create a better built environment in the UK.

- **Productivity.** A step change in the efficiency with which we build. The Industrial Strategy needs to redouble its efforts as it seeks to construct buildings 50% faster, 33% cheaper and with half the lifetime carbon emissions.
- **Social Value.** A new metric to measure social value across the lifetime of buildings that goes beyond construction cost.

These [published and discussed proposals](#) are currently undergoing further consideration within BRE Group, with working groups looking at how each can be brought to life, both inside and outside the organisation.

The programme outcome was that BRE emerged in a more connected, authoritative, leadership position in the critical national debate surrounding the built environment – especially housing. A new Community of Influence is now able and willing to further develop thinking and policies – frameworks to build a better Britain.

View from the client

In the Spring of 2018 I embarked on a journey with Robert Phillips and Matthew Gwyther of Jericho Chambers to ask and learn about “What kind of Britain are we building?”. At the time, I was leading BRE as Group CEO and the built environment had suffered one of its greatest jolts in the guise of the Grenfell Tower fire. On top of this there had been much talk in Government and the Industry about reducing the requirement for regulations in order to remove barriers to speed and progress. Back in 2015 The Code for Sustainable Homes had been scrapped, removing any formal requirement for housebuilding or homes to be Sustainable.

I wanted to know if I or we at BRE were alone in our desire for quality in a safe and sustainable world. We could, of course, have continued to state and pursue our view. It seemed the right

time to get out of our London bubble and ask the wide range of Built Environment professionals and stakeholders “What kind of Britain are we building?” But more importantly “What kind of Britain should we be building?”

We had been working with Jericho Chambers for some months on another project around effective communications and this question largely flowed from that project. They not only helped me to answer our initial challenge but pushed us to demand and ask more.



It seemed natural for Jericho to help us shape and deliver a countrywide stakeholder engagement programme. They then provided a perfect mix of developing the programme and delivering it with us at BRE. Importantly the delivery was expertly moderated and captured by Matthew. His skill in interviewing and listening allowed us to see and build a story that can be seen in this case study and the further imperative to act upon it. I have been privileged to meet and work alongside Robert and Matthew and believe it will be an enduring professional and personal relationship.

Niall Trafford, CEO BRE Group, 2018-2019

Jericho Chambers

October 2019