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Executive Summary

Holmes Miller responds proactively to the climate emergency and the UK government’s commitment to achieve Net Zero by 2050. Given that buildings contribute nearly 40% of all carbon emissions, we require to act now.

This updated Sustainability Charter outlines our refreshed philosophy, principles, and working practices to focus on measurable outcomes for continual improvement.

Our goal is to operate sustainably and collaborate with clients, contractors, and designers to craft buildings that are ecologically sound, ethically driven, and efficiently executed.

Our commitment to sustainability will be reflected in continued annual reviews of this charter, where ongoing targets will be set and updated.

Current work & commitments to date include;

- Signed up to RIBA 2030 Challenge
- Delivering public buildings to NZPSBS/LETI
- Alignment of targets with the above
- Partial adoption of Living Building Challenge metrics.
- Passion for fabric first approach and design beyond compliance as key to achieving NET Zero commitments
- Continuously evolving a positive work environment at Holmes Miller offices

Our Charter

Our Sustainability Charter is founded upon a detailed roadmap, that will guide our practice towards a zero-carbon future, focussing on three key areas;

- The way we work; Assessing the impact of our working practices, studio culture, and the daily impact on the environment through the operation of our business.
- The way we create; Challenging our approach to the design and procurement of buildings, and collaborating with like-minded clients, to achieve a built environment that delivers net zero target emissions.
- The words we speak; Sharing knowledge, investing in research and development, and raising awareness as ambassadors in the advocacy of change.

We are addressing each of these key areas through our assessment of Climate, Wellbeing and Resilience, to allow us to focus on the multiple challenges that are faced in creating a sustainable environment for our communities.

These key themes are outlined within this document, with our commitment to explore, research and address each element through our annual review, to drive continual change through our industry and business.

The evolution of our practice will be translated through our Business Management Systems, to bring surety and consistency in delivery, positively reinforced and promoted by our architects, designers and directors.



A vision to craft architecture that creates only positive impact to the community and the environment

Vision

Climate

Whole Life Carbon

- Promote Fabric First Approach above Building standards levels (PH)
- Promote buildings with net zero operational carbon (NZPSBS/UKNZCBS)
- Promote refurbishment & retrofit over new build (Retrofit)
- Track + continually reduce embodied carbon in designs (RIBA 2030)
- All Holmes Miller studios and activities assessed as carbon neutral (Carbon Footprint)
- Promote Post-Occupancy Evaluation on projects (RIBA Plan for Use)

Circularity

- Design with only renewable or recyclable materials (NZPSBS/UKNZCBS)
- Design to reduce the demand for raw materials (NZPSBS/UKNZCBS)
- Design to extract maximum value from any raw materials used (NZPSBS/UKNZCBS)
- Design for change of use, disassembly and circularity (NZPSBS/UKNZCBS)
- Work with contractors to monitor and record waste (NZPSBS/UKNZCBS)

Travel

- Optimise accessibility through design, reducing inequalities
- Promote cleaner + greener choices in development appraisals
- Promotion of active travel + healthy choices through design
- De-carbonise all Holmes Miller studio travel minimising domestic flights (ACAN)

Wellbeing

Environmental

- Assess all projects against the impact + protection of the natural environment (Living Building Challenge)
- Derive positive impact through Environmental Impact Assessments
- Enhance biodiversity through buildings and landscape
- Design to mitigate air, water and noise pollution

Physical Wellbeing

- Designing buildings that offer the optimum environmental conditions for users (RIBA Sustainability Outcomes Guide)
- Ensure inclusive design throughout our projects (RIBA Access Audits)
- Design for neurological differences and create an inclusive working environment
- Understanding our end users + learning from our experiences on all projects (RIBA Plan for Use)
- Repurpose car park in Holmes Miller studios, to provide quality external green space, cycle parking and EV car sharing areas (Living Building Challenge)

Social Wellbeing

- Focussing on & promoting clients that are developing socially inclusive + community led projects.
- Designing spaces that promote social interaction, connection and positive user engagement
- Investment in 'non-profit' activities and projects to enhance the local community surrounding Holmes Miller studios
- Promote an active, engaging culture of support across Holmes Miller studios

Mental Wellbeing

- Develop specific end user key performance indicators (KPIs) and Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE) assessments in line with RIBA Plan for Use, to ensure positive impact on community wellbeing
- Promote biophilic design & renewable natural materials in all projects
- Promotion of enhanced landscaping across Holmes Miller projects
- Establish a flexible working policy for all staff
- Promote digital conferencing as the primary option for meetings + engagement

Transitional Risk

- Identifying and designing to suit the ongoing shift to a low carbon economy (Just Transition)
- Design for changing energy sources and on-site generation.
- Designing for flexibility and occupancy adaptation.
- Working beyond the legislative and regulatory minimums to future proof investments (PH)

Resilience

Physical Risk

- Designing for climate change and working to mitigate the impact of shock / stresses around flooding, overheating, and environmental impacts (AD Practice Guide)

Economic Risk

- Active promotion of solutions that offer best long term economic and sustainable value
- Designing to protect against economic risk and safeguard investment
- Working with clients and frameworks to promote ethical and sustainable investment in the built environment



Changing the way we work, to create
a sustainable environment for our staff
and a positive influence on the planet

Achievements

We have been developing and enhancing our working practices since our first charter launched in 2019, challenging the way we work to determine if a more sustainable approach could be taken, whilst enhancing the social and cultural outlook of our studios.

Climate

- Practice signed up to RIBA 2030 Challenge
- Implementation of a flexible working policy, that mitigates the need for staff to commute at rush hour periods
- Dedicated 'car free' days across each week and increased cycle parking provision to mitigate the dependency on car use
- EV charging provision installed & EV pool car purchased
- Completion and continued promotion of Passivhaus projects
- Development of Retrofit knowledge and workload
- Creation of internal embodied carbon assessment tool

Wellbeing

- Office scheme implemented to encourage transition to electric vehicles
- Office internal environment monitoring and adaptable systems installed to ensure air quality and minimise overheating
- Staff events and visits reinstated post Covid to help foster a positive studio culture
- 9DF policy implemented to monitor staff wellbeing impacts
- Staff working group created to ensure staff participation and discussion on practice policies and culture

Resilience

- Office monitoring and assessment undertaken to see what improvements to climate adaptability and on-site generation can be made

Our approach to the design and development of architecture is focussed on the creation of sustainable buildings, with our studio teams striving to ensure the optimum solution for our clients, bringing long term value both economically and ecologically;

Climate

- Development and implementation of Holmes Miller Performance Standards across all projects, aligning with leading guidance from RIBA, UKGBC and LETI
- Scotland's first Passivhaus community leisure centre (broken ground)
- Completion of first phase of MSIP site redevelopment, delivering an exciting programme of renewable technology innovation, design and manufacturing

Wellbeing

- Development of a unique project for East Dunbartonshire Council, focussing on the delivery of an adult learning centre, linked to a new leisure complex, bringing dementia care, autism and inclusive design together
- Working directly with Care Home operators to develop bespoke solutions to allow better connection between residents and their families, particularly during pandemic events

Resilience

- Working with clients ahead of new project procurement, to allow an understanding of the key changes in energy use and supply, along with key factors in controlling 'in-use' energy through their estates

Working collaboratively on the development of the brief, we can ensure spaces are optimised, efficiency increased, and valuable community assets crafted



Targets

Building on our achievements, we have set the following ambitious targets for the forthcoming 12 months;

Climate

- Integrate Embodied Carbon assessment tool in all projects.
- Develop Sustainability Checklist as part of our Project Quality/ Environmental Plan (PQEP) project assessments, reviewed at every stage to help monitor progress and development.
- Incorporation of PHPP on all projects regardless of PH target.
- Work with clients to obtain and monitor in-use energy across our projects, to allow assessment and continual reduction towards zero carbon and to inform design development to optimise building operation

Wellbeing

- Integrate RIBA Sustainability Outcomes Guide, Plan for Use and Access Audits into each project to ensure suitable pre, and post-occupancy evaluation services that offers tailored soft-landings / RIBA 7 solutions, and ensures our buildings respond to unique project key performance indicators.
- Implement additional staff reviews and wellbeing programmes to monitor and improve staff development and wellbeing.

Resilience

- Active tracking of COP outcomes and other industry events, advocating change in the built environment, and providing commentary and commenting on vital events surrounding this summit
- Review The Living Building Challenge with a view to integrate as many targets as possible into our own targets and projects.





Material selection is crucial, to control embodied carbon use, and the benefits of naturally sourced, VOC-free specification, leads to interior spaces that regulate heart rate, control anxiety and promote positive social interaction

Roadmap Explained

The following roadmap is a shortened version of our full document. The aim is to give a broad summary of the key areas we are targeting, why we are focusing on them and how we are updating the way we work to address them.

Our full roadmap can be provided on request and breaks the illustrated sections down further, providing more detail on the what, why, how and when; from now to 2030.

Our full roadmap is intended to be used as a working document, setting tangible targets that we can track and report on internally and develop our working practices for future projects and iterations of this charter.



1.0 - Climate

Collaborating with enlightened clients, designing sustainably, specifying ethically and delivering intelligently



1.0 - Climate

1.1 - Whole Life Carbon

1.1.1 Fabric First

Increasing fabric performance is the cheapest, easiest and most long lasting way to reducing energy use as it uses relatively inexpensive materials that passively improve the building performance. We will promote this through the adoption of Passivhaus and AECB low energy design.

1.1.3 Retrofit & Refurbishment

80% of all buildings that will be around in 2050 already exist. If we are to meet 2050 climate goals it is essential that retrofit is understood and a skills & knowledge base is developed within the profession. We will train in, adopt and promote Retrofit, following PAS2030 among other retrofit standards.

1.1.5 Office Operational Carbon

The UK government has legally binding climate targets for 2050. HM is signed up to Carbon Footprint since 2020 and as part of the scheme HM monitors and reports on operational energy use through its metering. We are reviewing our office fabric to develop a retrofit plan which will be implemented over the coming years.

1.1.7 Post Occupancy Evaluation

To improve our practices and better promote low carbon design it is essential to understand their effect in the real world. HM aim to implement the RIBA Plan for Use workflow in all projects over the next 5 years.

1.1.2 Operational Carbon

In order to help get the UK to NET Zero it is essential that we reduce energy use as well as move to zero and low carbon energy. We will promote this through low energy design, zero carbon energy sources and on site renewable generation.

1.1.4 Embodied Carbon

As energy use in buildings is reduced, embodied energy presents a greater proportion of energy use for the whole life of a building. It is therefore increasingly important to address this area and monitor upfront and whole life carbon. We will track embodied carbon internally and formally report figures using certified systems for RIBA 2030 challenge when part of our scope.

1.1.6 Travel

We have the biggest impact on carbon reduction through the projects we work on but it is still important to do as much as possible to help meet our goals. As such HM will continue to monitor the Carbon Footprint of activities using recognised tools and advice, promoting virtual meetings and eliminating domestic flights.

1.2 - Circularity

1.2.1 Reduce / Reuse / Recycle

Using less and creating less wastage ensures that we are reducing our wider impact on the planet whilst also saving money. This makes both environmental and economic sense. We are requiring EPDs for all of our specified products with targets for recycled content and removing oil derivatives where possible.

1.2.3 Site Waste

UK construction generated approximately 35m tonnes of material to landfill in 2018. Whilst rates fluctuate each year it is imperative to work towards reduction. For Embodied Carbon Calculations A4-A5 represents transport and site waste. The NZPSBS includes advice on monitoring and reporting on these stages and we will be providing advice on this within our competency.

1.2.2 Change of Use / Disassembly / Circularity

We need to ensure we consider use, disassembly, and circularity from the outset. This area of design is in its infancy. Where we have the opportunity we will advocate for the introduction of a national framework to regulate and create uniformity in data requirements as well as promoting methodologies on our projects.

1.2.4 Office Recycling

The world's natural resources are finite, and some are in very short supply. We can do our part by reducing, reusing and recycling in the office and lead by example to influence people's behaviour at home.

1.3 - Access & Development

1.3.1 Accessibility

It is important to recognise that it is usually the most vulnerable who are most affected by climate change. The RIBA have developed a framework for implementing greater inclusivity in projects with the publication of the RIBA Access Audit. We will be implementing this on all projects over the coming years going beyond legal minimum standards.

1.3.3 Active Travel

Energy use impacts all walks of our life including our health. By promoting active travel, we can reduce our energy use whilst also improving health and wellbeing outcomes for all. Moving forward we will promote pedestrian movement and accessibility over vehicular access in designs and our own office, aiming to go beyond the mandatory standards.

1.3.2 Greener Development

The best opportunity to influence design is at the early stages. By promoting cleaner and greener choices during early development appraisals it is more likely to ensure that they are taken on board and implemented, embedding the decisions within the fabric of the design. We will be promoting Retrofit options in feasibility studies and developing enhanced biodiversity & green space options.

1.4 - Environmental

1.4.1 Biodiversity & Pollution

Protection of the planet is not limited to global warming but also concerns biodiversity and ecological preservation. We believe The Living Building Challenge currently provides the most comprehensive approach to addressing ecological impacts for construction projects. By adopting this standard, integrating it over time, we aim to reduce and even reverse the ecological impact of our work.

A bright, modern playroom with a high wooden ceiling, large windows, and a child sitting on a window seat. The room features a mix of natural wood, light green, and dark blue wall colors. A large wicker teepee is a central feature, surrounded by baskets and a circular rug. In the background, children are playing with wooden toys. The overall atmosphere is warm and inviting.

Designing **uplifting, dynamic + inclusive** settings for users and the community, focussed around the creation of spaces that enhance **health + wellbeing**

2.0 - Wellbeing

2.1 - Physical Wellbeing

2.1.1 Internal Environment

Focusing on occupants' health and wellbeing will ensure reduced levels of dissatisfaction and discomfort and increased levels of productivity and happiness in building users. By meeting key health and wellbeing metrics set out in the RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge, unintended consequences of poor health and wellbeing can be avoided.

2.1.3 Neurodiversity

Because of neurological differences, a significant number of people find certain aspects of the built environment uncomfortable or distressing. Over the coming years HM aim to implement PAS6463:2022 guidance on how to create a sensory-inclusive environment and appointing a champion to ensure its adoption.

2.1.5 Office Car park

Active travel is a cost-effective way to integrate physical activity into daily routines while reducing carbon footprint. Biking or walking to work has been associated with lower rates of diabetes, hypertension and obesity. By improving provision for cycle racks, showers, changing rooms and external landscaping both in projects and at our office we can better promote these active alternatives. We are actively moving towards this. See 1.3.3.

2.1.2 Inclusivity

Inclusive design is not an afterthought or an add-on to the design process. The RIBA Plan of Work states that 'The sooner that inclusion is considered, the more effective and cost-effective it becomes.' We aim to assess all designs beyond minimum standards, adopting the RIBA Access Audit as well as other guidance. See also 1.3.1. Accessibility.

2.1.4 Understanding Users

POE can reveal how occupant behaviour impacts on building performance and occupant health. This is essential when delivering low energy new build or retrofit where problems can arise quickly if typical occupant use is not understood. We will be adopting RIBA 'Plan for Use', ensuring systems are designed around users and soft landings implemented. See also 1.1.7.

2.2 - Social Wellbeing

2.2.1 Social Responsibility

When designing architecture, we are designing the framework for community interaction, be it where we live, work or play. For architecture to last it has to be loved and for it to be loved it has to be embraced by the community and users it serves. HM will be developing and continually improving our community engagement for projects and our office.

2.2.3 Positive Culture

The work environment impacts employees' mood, drive, mental health and performance. Creating a positive work environment is therefore critical to our company's success, helping to better promote our climate response and improve lives. We have updated internal process and setup staff working groups to allow for better communication between various disciplines. This feedback will help us better monitor the office and our work impact.

2.2.2 Charitable Activity

Participating in charitable events can directly help our communities who are most likely to be affected by climate change. We will be looking to improve our CSR over the coming years, expanding our engagement and actively promoting ways to better adapt to the changing environment.

2.3 - Mental Wellbeing

2.3.1 KPI & POE

There are both qualitative and quantitative reasons to adopt POE. From lower energy bills to reductions in carbon emissions, a culture of continuous improvement can deliver huge returns on investment for clients, our end users and us. Where instructed and commissioned, we will develop specific end user KPIs and POE assessments in line with RIBA Plan for Use, to ensure positive impact on community wellbeing. We will be adopting our own POE for continued design feedback.

2.3.3 Enhanced Landscaping

Exposure to views and images of nature can help to speed up healing and recovery time, boost positive feelings and reduce negative ones. HM will promote the Living Building Challenge and NZPSBS Objective 6 in all projects with improved % targets for inclusion up to 2030.

2.3.5 Going Digital

Online meetings/conferences not only provide time, costs and carbon emissions savings for travel but also create more opportunities for individuals to collaborate and learn. We look to balance this with the recognised impact of feelings of isolation with in-person discussions and team activities. In so doing we look to promote the digital revolution and ensure access and inclusivity for all.

2.3.2 Biophilic Design

Biophilia, or the idea that humans have an affinity towards the natural world aims to address our psychological need to be around life and life-like processes is important for mental health. We will promote biophilic design in all projects as described in the Living Building Challenge and WELL Standard, ensuring implementation on a minimum of 10% of projects with a view to expand over the coming years. We will always aim for a betterment of this target.

2.3.4 Flexible Working

Flexible working arrangements enable a good work life balance. HM continually reviews the needs of staff and has agreed a range of flexible working arrangements amongst staff, including: working from home, part time and compressed hours. We believe in giving back and promoting better practices to improve wellbeing.

3.0 - Resilience

Every **Holmes Miller** building is unique, addressing context, community + stakeholders ambitions, and delivering with passion + energy



3.0 - Resilience

3.1 - Transitional Risk

3.1.1 Low Carbon Economy

Our buildings must go through a radical change to meet Net Zero targets and mitigate the worst of the Climate Crisis. Only by future proofing our designs can we manage this transitional risk. We are therefore looking to design beyond compliance, promoting low energy criteria set by PH, AECB, LETI and NZPSBS but also ensure retrofits follow PAS2030 and develop step by step models that do not inhibit further improvements.

3.1.3 Flexibility & Adaptability

To ensure that our buildings last as long as possible it is important to understand how they might change or be used differently over time by different users. We are working to stress test designs in modelling, measuring against future climate data and different user profiles. This will be recorded as part of our QA processes.

3.1.2 Changing Economy

To meet our legally binding climate goals we have to follow a steep progression of improvement in our urban fabric, however we must recognise that not every project will be able to meet the highest fabric efficiency targets, particularly retrofit projects. As such we need to ensure that we are compensating in other ways, on-site generation should be part of this whilst balancing against embodied carbon impacts. We have set targets for improving percentages of on-site generation from now to 2030 whilst pushing for better targets in new build to help balance against potential short falls in Retrofit.

3.1.4 Beyond Minimum Standards

We know that to meet the current commitments to NET Zero by 2050 that the improvements required in our urban fabric need to be in line with Passivhaus standards for all new buildings. It is imperative therefore that we ensure we push for the highest possible standard achievable for the project rather than the minimal you can get away with. HM have set targets for improved performance as well as developing improved visualisation tools to better illustrate these issues for clients. See 1.1.1 - 1.1.4, 3.1.2 and 3.3.1.

3.2 - Physical Risk

3.2.1 Climate Extremes

Negative impacts of climate change can include higher wind speeds, extreme cold, overheating, flooding and more frequent extreme weather events. These impacts require assessment, mitigation and adaptation measures for the built environment and our society. We are looking to include stress testing in models, follow climate change adaptation strategies and advice as well as expand on The Living Building Challenge land and water use categories to better prepare for more extreme events. We are looking to introduce greater tolerance in design for less predictable weather and use patterns.

3.3 - Economic Risk

3.3.1 Value & Sustainable Investment

Climate change represents the single biggest risk for future development locally, nationally and internationally. Protecting your assets against the risks posed by climate change is therefore imperative from both a personal and business perspective. We will promote Whole Life Cycle Assessments, stress testing and POE for improved resilience to future changes.

See all other sections.



Challenging our approach,
refining our delivery and positively
addressing the climate agenda

