

Press release

London risks losing its crown as the global capital for design and construction skills, says report

A new study from New London Architecture (NLA), the capital's centre for the built environment, has revealed the international scale of London's built environment professions and warns of the dangers the sector faces as the government negotiates the UK's exit from the EU. The report sets out a series of key recommendations for the UK Government and Greater London Authority (GLA) to ensure resilience in the sector.

London: Design Capital, presents four recommendations to the Government and Mayor of London in order to support and maintain the international status and export value of London's built environment. The recommendations call on these bodies to:

- Continue to attract and retain access to international talent
- Recognise and promote London's built environment organisations as a specific sector to the export market
- Make London an attractive and affordable place to live and work in the long-term
- Create and reinforce London's links with other cities and provide a better voice for the profession

The research involved a survey of the NLA's membership, consisting of over 500 organisations from across the built environment profession; roundtables, viewpoints and industry interviews; and a call for international projects that brought together over 220 schemes currently being carried out by London-based practices in 65 countries across the world.

From masterplans through to individual schemes, this showcase of international projects illustrates the breadth and scale of London's global reach across six continents. Large-scale cultural projects such as Adjaye Associates' new Smithsonian in Washington DC, major new landmarks including Heatherwick Studio's Hudson Yard's Vessel in New York, new towers in China designed by Farrells and Zaha Hadid Architects, and city-wide masterplans such as Msheireb Downtown Doha by Allies and Morrison, sit alongside

smaller schemes which respond directly to community needs, such as The Shelter for Victims of Domestic Violence in Israel by Amos Goldreich Architecture.

According to latest research by the GLA, the value of London's construction industry is £16.9 billion, higher than Shanghai (£16.5b), Hong Kong (£11.9b) and Dubai (£7.7b). NLA's survey of its membership revealed ongoing concerns across the built environment sector about the potential impact of Brexit on its ability to maintain London's position as the global capital of design and construction services. Restrictions on freedom of movement, access to skills, research in innovation, and the international talent pool could pose a serious risk to the industry and its value to the UK economy.

Reinforcing other industry concerns, like those highlighted in a [recent open letter to The Guardian](#) signed by some of the UK's leading architects, including Lord Richard Rogers and David Chipperfield, the NLA's study highlights the three key areas for ensuring London is able to retain its status as the world's leading design capital:

- Brexit negotiations:
 - Findings from the survey reveal 86% of the NLA membership said they were concerned about the impact of any restriction for built environment professionals from EU. The international diversity of London-based practices is a marked feature and strength of the industry – staff originally from the EU account for between 25-50% of employees at 37% of companies surveyed. These employees not only bring specialist skills and expertise that support projects at a practical level, but also provide alternative world views and perspectives, a value of which cannot be underestimated.

- London's ability to attract new talent:
 - Stricter UK visa regulations already make it more difficult to recruit from outside of the EU, and there is a pressing skills shortage, especially within the construction and engineering sectors – it is estimated that, in construction, 200,000 additional workers will be needed to meet demand over the next 10 years; within the engineering profession, many disciplines,

including civil, mechanical, electrical and IT systems engineering, are listed on the official government 'shortage occupation list'.

The NLA follows The London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) in recommending that: London be designated a 'Targeted Migration Area' in order to manage the capital's need for skills and labour; a separate 'Shortage Occupation List for London' be implemented to attract those with skills and talent the city needs; and explore the potential for a dedicated 'Capital Work Permits System' to provide controlled access for future migrant workers and to meet London employers' need for skilled labour.

- Protecting the UK's international alumni:
 - Underpinning London's reputation as a global design capital has been the strength and diversity of its educational offer, attracting the best talent from around the world. Research by Deloitte in 2016 showed that London's executive alumni have reached 134 countries, 12% more than New York and 24% more than Paris providing vital informal support to London's global networks through connections back to skills, markets, clients and knowledge at a local level overseas.

Peter Murray, Chairman of New London Architecture said: "London is the world's leading exporter of built environment expertise, and home to many of the world's leading and most innovative built environment businesses. Built environment professionals alone bring huge value to London's GDP and to UK PLC, therefore it is vital that the industry works together to ensure we are not overtaken by other global cities. The NLA are calling for the Mayor of London to advocate more strongly for London's built environment industries overseas, highlighting its size, unique mix and depth of expertise that can be applied in cities around the world, and for the Government to ensure that the industry retains access to talent. This is not just a case of training more local talent, it means protecting the hugely rich and diverse mix of cultures and skills that London currently enjoys"

#LDNDesignCapital @nlalondon

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Notes to editors

London: Design Capital is part of the NLA's International Dialogues programme. The programme offers a forum to discuss how cities can and should grow, sharing best practice with cities around the world – from New York to Copenhagen, Berlin and Hong Kong – and fostering cross-city dialogue and learning.

The programme underlines the strength and importance of architecture, engineering, urban design and construction, highlighting London both as a global centre of excellence and as a significant exporter of services within the creative industries sector.

Publication

Download a copy of the publication [here](#)

Events

NLA will host a series of events further exploring the key themes to come out of the research. For more details visit www.newlondonarchitecture.org/LDNDC

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New London Architecture

New London Architecture (NLA) is London's centre for discussion, debate and information about architecture, planning, development and construction in the capital. Our mission is to bring people together to shape a better city.

A year-round programme of events, research, exhibitions and awards examines all issues affecting London's built environment and invites all those with a stake in the future of the city to have their say – built environment professionals, politicians and the public.



**NEW LONDON
ARCHITECTURE**

NLA has established itself over the last decade as a broker between all those involved in planning and designing the future of London and as an independent champion for the capital's built environment.

Our work is supported by a growing membership of some 500 organisations from across the public and private sectors. The NLA galleries at The Building Centre in WC1, centred around our giant interactive model of central London, are free to visit six days a week.

www.newlondonarchitecture.org

For further information or to request a copy of the NLA's London: Design Capital report, contact Sophie Lewis at ING Media – sophie@ing-media.com – 020 7247 8334.