

# The Good Design Plan

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## Since the last plan

The Design Council published its last strategic plan, the Practical Power of Design, in 2004.

Here are our top five results.

- One thousand UK firms benefited from a new national business support programme called Designing Demand.
- In the North East two thousand people were involved in designing sustainable solutions for their region as part of Designs of the time (Dott 07).
- National policies on design have been agreed and progressed with government in the areas of UK competitiveness, enterprise, innovation and the creative economy.
- Multi-disciplinary university centres have been launched to help connect business, science and design for tomorrow's leaders and creative specialists.
- Design industry employers have drawn up their first UK skills plan linking design education in schools and colleges with workplace development.

These are some of the firm foundations we aim to build on over the next three years.

## Foreword

Good design solves problems. The Victorians understood this when they established design schools in response to growing industrial competition. And the Churchill government understood it when they established the Design Council to help kick-start the economy after the war.

Now in the 21st century the UK, alongside all other nations, faces even more thorny challenges. Solutions frequently seem elusive or at odds with each other. For example, addressing the business challenges of intensified global competition must be reconciled with pressure on natural resources and the threat of climate change. Equally, the universal provision of essential services, such as healthcare, must take account of an ageing population, rising levels of chronic disease and limited resources.

I have no doubt that design has a role to play in tackling all these challenges. Not only in designing and styling the objects and the physical world around us but in helping us conceive the systems behind them. Now, perhaps more than at any other time in history, we need to tap the creativity, the skills and the ingenuity of our world-class design community. The UK's design track record is exceptional by any standard. We now need to nurture and support the talents that are available to us, and put them at the disposal of the nation's business and public service managers.

This sets the context for today's design agenda. Design's traditional strengths – such as adding value to business in the global marketplace – are more important than ever. But design's proven ability to help ideas and innovation flourish can also help us create better public services and exploit our strengths in science and technology. Overall design can improve our everyday lives, help create a more sustainable society and make us more competitive.

That's why this three-year national strategy for design is important.

**Sir Michael Bichard**  
Chairman

# What do we mean by good design?

## **Good design is sustainable design.**

It results in objects, systems or services that work aesthetically, functionally and commercially, improving people's lives and making the smallest possible impact on the planet.

## **It is a process...**

Good design is a verb, not just a noun. It is a sequence of steps that defines problems, discovers solutions and makes them real.

## **...joining creativity and innovation...**

Creativity generates ideas and innovation exploits them. Good design connects the two. It links ideas to markets, shaping them to become practical and attractive propositions for customers or users.

## **...and delivering value.**

Good design is a quantifiable benefit, not a cost. Its value can be measured economically, socially and environmentally.

## **And it's the work of good designers (and good clients)**

Everything man-made is designed, so a lot of design happens without professional designers. But good design is most likely to happen when a good designer's training, skills and experience come together with a client who knows how to use them.

## The plan — summary

We are the national strategic body for design.

Our mission is to inspire and enable the best use of design to make the UK a more competitive, creative and sustainable nation.

We run practical programmes for business, the public sector, design and education and use our knowledge and evidence to influence national policies.

We have five objectives.

**Objective 1: Build the UK's capacity to innovate and deliver world-class brands, products and services by supporting the effective use of design in business and the public sector.**

Our targets are based on rolling out our national business support programme Designing Demand to 6,500 firms and applying it within the public sector.

**Objective 2: Drive the development of new solutions to UK social and economic challenges and involve communities in designing local services.**

Our target is to build on the success of Dott 07 (Designs of the time), which successfully engaged 200,000 people and left lasting legacies in the North East.

**Objective 3: Boost high-level skills in design to support a competitive creative economy and a thriving UK design sector.**

Our target is to support the industry-led national design skills plan and help schools, colleges and employers to implement its recommendations.

**Objective 4: Champion the value of good design and its importance to social and economic success.**

Our targets are to drive forward our national policy work supported by a growing research programme, while also staging events and awareness-raising activities to inspire and support good design.

**Objective 5: Be recognised as an exemplar design institution for our influence, impact and enterprise.**

Our target is to be a leader in our field, running an effective and entrepreneurial organisation and providing a working environment that attracts and retains a highly talented team.

## Business and public service innovation

**Objective:** Build the UK's capacity to innovate and deliver world-class brands, products and services by supporting the effective use of design in business and the public sector.

### What we do:

Designing Demand is our programme of transformational business innovation services that works directly with the leadership teams of UK firms. The services use mentoring and peer-to-peer support to help management teams build organisation-wide design capability and deploy it strategically to improve business performance. Our role is design enabler rather than design consultant. Organisations identify design opportunities to help them perform better and they develop the confidence, capability and processes to take forward their design projects.

### Why we do it:

Our internationally recognised research and evidence shows that companies that value design as a core strategic and business process perform better. For instance 83 per cent of companies which say design is integral have reported market share increases, compared to the UK average of 46 per cent. Also, 82 per cent of design-led businesses have opened up new markets through the use of design in the last three years, compared to only 42 per cent of businesses overall. We believe there is scope for similar improvements in competitiveness and performance across business and the public sector.

### What is our track record:

Over the last four years we have supported more than 1000 firms. We have proven, codified methods and processes that are constantly being evaluated and improved. We also have a growing national resource of more than 50 Design Associates with extensive expertise in management and design who provide front-line mentoring to business leaders. External evaluation has provided consistent evidence of bottom line impact across all services.

### Who are our partners:

We depend on a wide range of private and public sector partners for the funding and delivery of Designing Demand. In particular this includes all the English Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) who are central to providing Designing Demand direct to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as one of a simplified suite of national business support programmes.

### Target 1: Extend Designing Demand to benefit business across the UK.

We will work to increase UK business growth, performance and skills by making Designing Demand available nationally, helping the government to deliver its innovation and enterprise strategies. We will do this by working with RDAs, national administrations, business schools and other business organisations to ensure the programme has lasting impact.

We will also continue to develop the Designing Demand model to make sure it is sustainable in the long term, beyond the Cox Review targets.

#### We will:

- Extend national roll-out, aiming to reach the Cox target of 6,500 SMEs, in partnership with the nine English RDAs, ensuring alignment with the government's wider Business Support Simplification Programme (BSSP).
- Work with the nations to make the programme available in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- Work with business organisations, business schools and big business to maximise impact and increase access to the programme.
- Establish a business club of alumni and designers to

promote the bottom-line benefits of good design within business circles.

### Target 2: Develop a specialised version of the Designing Demand Innovate service for universities to enable technology transfer.

We will deliver a tailored Designing Demand service for university technology transfer offices. This will help universities to commercialise research and IP and increase their ability to attract investment, minimise risk and develop products and services with market potential.

#### We will:

- Build on the success of pilots with ISIS Innovation, the Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and UCL Ventures to develop a version of the Designing Demand Innovate service for technology transfer offices.
- Work with the RDAs and others to implement the recommendation in Lord Sainsbury's report The Race to The Top to provide specialist design support for higher education institutions within key technology clusters.
- Build the design knowledge and capability of staff working within UK technology transfer offices, through a collaboration with the sector's national training body, Praxis.

### Target 3: Develop a transformational programme to support public service innovation.

We will create a design-led innovation programme to fast track new ideas and approaches for public sector service delivery. This will build on the tools, methods and approaches developed in the Designing Demand programme for the private sector.

#### We will:

- Pilot and evaluate a design-led innovation service to support public service managers.
- Establish partnerships with national agencies such as the NHS and Home Office, Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), and in local government.
- Work closely with Department for Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS) and its delivery partners, such as NESTA and the Technology Strategy Board, to ensure a co-ordinated approach to delivering design and innovation support.

## Public and community engagement

**Objective:** Drive the development of new solutions to UK social and economic challenges and involve communities in designing local services.

### What we do:

We co-ordinate a programme called Designs of the time (Dott). Dott challenges communities to design and develop innovative new approaches to local issues that are also nationally relevant and support sustainable living in the UK. Dott provides the design support and facilitation allowing community representatives to devise prototype concepts for healthcare, education, transport, crime prevention and other services. The involvement of local and national partners ensures local impact and national take-up. The programme includes design education outreach involving schools and colleges as well as public showcasing and events.

### Why we do it:

Dott provides tangible, lasting benefits for local communities and national partners including innovative new services designed around the needs of users. It also acts as a training and demonstration ground for social entrepreneurs and service designers. In addition, it raises public awareness of the role of design.

### What is our track record:

The first Dott venture was organised in the North East over a two year period from 2005 culminating in a festival event called Dott 07. Eight community innovation projects achieved results including prototype services which are being taken forward in full or in part. For instance, a project to design an improved sexual health service engaged 1000 members of the local community and has provided a blueprint which is being taken up by three Primary Healthcare Trusts. A programme of skills development was supported by an Explorers Club which ensured lessons and approaches to innovation were shared across the region. 200,000 members of the public, including 15,000 schoolchildren were engaged in Dott 07.

### Who are our partners:

Dott depends on a wide array of public and private partners. Dott 07 attracted £7m of (mostly local) funding, primarily from the RDA One NorthEast as well as other public bodies such as the Arts Council and NESTA.

**Target 4: Ensure that Designs of the time (Dott) has local and national impact and legacy.**

We will capitalise on Dott as a platform for community-led innovation and public engagement in matters such as healthcare provision, crime prevention and sustainability, in the UK regions and nations.

We will work with host bodies to bring the public, designers and stakeholder organisations together through events, educational initiatives and local projects to trial innovative new services and approaches to improving people's everyday lives and creating sustainable communities.

**We will:**

- Promote the importance of design and designers in improving everyday life through public engagement programmes, projects and educational initiatives.
- Work closely with the RDAs, national governments and other organisations to secure future Dott locations.
- Work with existing partners such as the RSA and NESTA to develop new partnerships such as the Technology Strategy Board, CABE and Arts Council to ensure that Dott provides an effective national platform for design and innovation strategy.
- Work with other organisations to explore more opportunities for applying the Dott approach to promoting community-led innovation.

## Design skills development

**Objective:** Boost high-level skills in design to support a competitive creative economy and a thriving UK design sector.

### What we do:

We will help to implement a national, industry-led design skills plan collaborating with professional bodies, schools and universities. Our role is to provide funding, research and central administration. We will support a Design Skills Alliance of industry and education to raise funds and take forward the plan's nine practical recommendations across education and the workplace. These activities include a Design Mark for Schools and the development and promotion of training programmes for young designers.

### Why we do it:

The UK's design industry is internationally renowned and sought after, and it is a powerful contributor to national competitiveness. But to preserve its lead over rapidly strengthening international competition and remain a global centre of design excellence, UK design must fill key skills gaps.

In particular, designers must develop new capabilities to meet the need for sustainable products and services, as well as new requirements for working in multi-disciplinary teams. To meet the needs of a fast-changing business environment, there will need to be stronger links between design education and professional practice, and more commitment to continuous professional development.

### What is our track record:

We have played a key strategic role in co-ordinating the research and consultation exercise and delivering the resulting design skills plan, 'High Level Skills for Higher Value'. Alongside this, we have designed and delivered new courses and curricula including a mentoring programme for future design leaders and new modules for universities. We have supported the development of new university centres in collaboration with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and provided the industry with forums to debate developments in design practice.

### Who are our partners:

Our work in skills and education is co-ordinated with government departments and agencies including Creative & Cultural Skills (C&CS), the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), DIUS, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), HEFCE and professional and educational institutions such as the Design and Technology Association (D&TA), the Council for Higher Education in Art & Design (CHEAD); and the Design Business Association (DBA), as well as many individual design employers, schools, universities and client businesses.

## Target 5: Launch a national Design Skills Alliance in collaboration with Creative & Cultural Skills and the design sector.

We are dedicated to ensuring the UK is a step ahead of international rivals in global markets. This means bringing the design industry and education together in a Design Skills Alliance – the UK’s centre of excellence for design skills – to promote professional standards and build the skills needed to meet international demand.

The Alliance will link existing projects and organisations and work across schools, universities and the industry. Initiatives include a Design Mark recognising schools with excellent design teaching, a scheme for designers to

work directly with schools, and training and career development programmes for professional designers.

### We will:

- Work to support and implement the nine recommendations in the national design skills plan. This will include work on professional practice and development, and design and creativity curriculum development in schools and higher education.
- Provide financial, staffing and administrative resources to the Design Skills Alliance to help build key partnerships and secure ongoing funding for the initiative.
- Sponsor ongoing research on future trends in the design industry and design education.

## Design policy and promotion

### Objective: Champion the value of good design and its importance to social and economic success.

#### What we do:

We advise, lobby and campaign on issues where design has a bearing on national priorities, including sustainability, innovation and the quality of our public services. Insights and evidence are drawn from our programmes, supported by internationally networked research. Policy positions and new thinking are developed through knowledge-sharing, publications, events and forums.

#### Why we do it:

This work keeps design on the national policy agenda and advances co-ordinated strategies that are practical, backed by solid evidence and in tune with the needs of government, industry, design and education.

#### What is our track record:

In recent years, we have helped shape national policies and commitments on competitiveness, crime, innovation, enterprise, the creative economy and sustainable schools. Through the Cox Review to the Treasury, we have been closely involved in originating and implementing a range of proposals including new university centres linking design, business and technology.

#### Who are our partners:

We work with a wide range of public and private sector partners as well as government departments and agencies, business organisations, universities and the design community. In support of our policy work, we sponsor the all-party Group for Design and Innovation.

**Target 6: Deliver an annual review of existing and new design policy.**

As part of the government's Annual Innovation Report, we will deliver a yearly assessment of design policy, including recommendations related to national priorities and international issues.

**We will:**

- Maintain momentum and assess the impact of existing policy initiatives such as the Cox Review and Sainsbury Review, the Creative Economy programme and the design skills and education agenda.
- Build opportunities and alliances to create new design policies in areas such as public service transformation and sustainability.
- Work with government departments and other organisations to maximise impact of, and alignment with, cross-governmental policy initiatives such as the enterprise agenda (BERR), innovation and skills policy (DIUS) and the creative sector (DCMS).

**Target 7: Raise awareness of sustainable 'good' design through a public promotion programme.**

We aim to promote a step-change in the good design of products and services in the UK. We will work with the design community and others to develop an

award scheme across design disciplines to inspire and define design for the 21st century. The intention is to raise awareness of good design and change consumer behaviour in relation to sustainability.

**We will:**

- Raise awareness of sustainable design among consumers and businesses through a high profile award scheme, run in conjunction with partner organisations.
- Establish a steering committee of industry experts to advise on and oversee the award scheme.
- Explore synergies and opportunities for the award with partners such as the London Development Agency, British Standards Institute and the Cultural Olympiad, and we will link into the government's sustainable development agenda.

**Target 8: Expand our research and knowledge programme, including a national research forum.**

We will work with national organisations to develop and disseminate evidence on design industry trends and the use of design. We will also provide expert knowledge, practical resources and information services through a variety of channels to ensure the UK remains a leading source of world class design research and knowledge.

**We will:**

- Work with universities, research councils and other research organisations to develop a model for a national design research forum.
- Strengthen our knowledge base of qualitative and quantitative research on the use of design by business and the public sector.
- Continue to build information and evidence on issues and trends that affect the design industry, design education and skills development in partnership with the Design Skills Alliance.

**Target 9: Support the design industry and promote design awareness by launching an annual series of international conferences and seminars.**

We will stimulate the exchange of design knowledge and ideas by bringing together leading global thinkers and practitioners at a series of events and conferences. We will also work with partners and sponsors to facilitate debates and networking between key communities of interest in business, education, government and design.

**We will:**

- Develop a strategy to capitalise on our connections, knowledge, assets and impact at an international level.

- Work closely with the design community to stage a programme of major design conferences and events to share home-grown best practice and bring the best international examples to the UK.
- Provide co-ordination between the major UK organisations and services that represent and promote design.
- Work closely with DCMS to support its World Creative Business Conference and with RDAs on developing the network of design centres as recommended by the Cox Review.
- Make the most of existing opportunities to promote design awareness including our website and magazine (DCM).

## Organisation and operation

**Objective:** Be recognised as an exemplar design institution for our influence, impact and enterprise.

### What we do:

We operate as a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) funded through an annual grant from the Department for Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS), with co-sponsorship from the Department for Culture Media & Sport (DCMS). We have a Royal Charter and charitable status and employ approximately 60 people, including specialists in design, business change management, education, research, public affairs and communications.

### Why we do it:

Our business model is to stay small and lean, working to achieve our results with others. As a small strategic body our aspirations can only be achieved through a collaborative and entrepreneurial approach, leveraging funds to amplify our impact.

### What is our track record:

Over the period of our last strategic plan, we succeeded in multiplying our income eight-fold (for every £1 of grant in aid, we raised £8 of further funding for our programmes). We achieved a four-fold increase in the number of businesses we worked with, and a near four-fold increase in the number of people engaged in our activities.

### Who are our partners:

We collaborate with and advise other international organisations and governments on design policy. We benchmark ourselves against our partners and work with external agencies to improve our performance. For example, Forum for the Future carried out our environmental audits, which we implemented. We are also an Investor in People.

**Target 10: Build our reputation as a leader in our field across design, business, government and education at home and abroad.**

We aim to communicate our value through the sum total of our activities. We will instigate a biennial survey and benchmark ourselves against design and public bodies at home and abroad.

**Target 11: Operate as an efficient, effective and environmentally responsible public body providing good value for money to the tax payer and a positive working environment for our team.**

Over the period of this plan, we will maintain a programme of constant business improvement, including new IT and financial management systems, and an enhanced training and development programme. We will also achieve Value for Money savings and implement a further environmental audit.

**Target 12: Multiply our grant-in-aid support from DIUS through an entrepreneurial approach that attracts additional public and private funds.**

We will maintain and strengthen existing partnerships while also building our new activities, such as a version of Designing Demand for the public sector, with a robust commercial approach. In support of this we will appoint a new Deputy Chief Executive and also establish a new Design Development team.

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# Measuring success

We measure performance through our direct impact on the people, businesses and organisations we work with, as well as our wider impact on whole sectors. For instance in the last year, 2007–08, our evaluation recorded 500 jobs created or safeguarded through Designing Demand. In a more general sense, our business survey registered that 31 per cent of businesses invested more in design over a three year period. During the period of this plan we aim to measure quantitative and qualitative outcomes for each objective, as listed below.

Key performance indicators (KPIs) are developed annually, at an operational and programme level, to specify in more detail what we will achieve each year and how it will be measured. The KPIs are monitored on a monthly basis by the Executive Board and quarterly by Council and our government sponsors.

Some outcomes depend on funding and delivery by partners, and so may be subject to change. Risks around external dependencies have been identified, and appropriate mitigations and actions put in place, monitored in the organisation's risk register.

## Business and public service innovation

### Objective

Build the UK's capacity to innovate and deliver world-class brands, products and services by supporting the effective use of design in business and the public sector.

### Targets

Target 1: Extend Designing Demand to benefit business across the UK.

Target 2: Develop a specialised version of the Designing Demand Innovate service for universities to enable technology transfer.

Target 3: Develop a transformational programme to support public service innovation.

### Outcome measures for 2011

Improved performance among companies and organisations engaged in Designing Demand and our public services programme.

- The number of companies and managers participating. Jobs and turnover created or safeguarded for SMEs participating in Designing Demand (actual and forecast).
- The number and usage of case studies generated through the programmes with clear evidence of how design has helped in the private and public sector.

## Public and community engagement

### Objective

Drive the development of new solutions to UK social and economic challenges and involve communities in designing local services.

### Targets

Target 4: Ensure that Designs of the time (Dott) has local and national impact and legacy.

### Outcome measures for 2011

- Enhanced local services for the communities we work with.
- Solutions and ideas identified through the Dott Public Design Commissions continue to be developed and realised.
- The number of people engaged through Dott and the increase in understanding of good design.
- The number and usage of case studies generated through Dott with clear evidence of how design has helped find solutions to local problems.

## Design skills development

### Objective

Boost high-level skills in design to support a competitive creative economy and a thriving UK design sector.

### Targets

Target 5: Launch a national Design Skills Alliance in collaboration with Creative & Cultural Skills and the design sector.

### Outcome measures for 2011

Improved design skills for business, designers, higher education students and school children.

- Numbers of people and organisations engaged through Design Skills Alliance programmes.
- The level of design skills among those supported on programmes, focusing on the priorities identified in the UK Design Skills Blueprint such as sustainability and leadership.

## Design policy and promotion

### Objective

Champion the value of good design and its importance to social and economic success.

### Targets

Target 6: Deliver an annual review of existing and new design policy.

Target 7: Raise awareness of sustainable good design through a public promotional programme.

Target 8: Expand our research and knowledge programme, including a national research forum.

Target 9: Support the design industry and promote design awareness by launching an annual series of international conferences and seminars.

### Outcome measures for 2011

Increased awareness of the value of good design and its link with sustainability, and social and economic success.

- Perceptions of design as important to business, public services and sustainability (in quantitative and qualitative audience research).
- The number of opinion formers in government, business, design and education personally briefed on design and engaged through other channels.
- The overall number of visitors and frequency of access to our content online, including our design research and case studies.
- Activity by others at a national or local policy level generated or inspired by our work.

## Organisation and operation

### Objective

Be recognised as an exemplar design institution for our influence, impact and enterprise.

### Targets

Target 10: Build our reputation across design, business, government and education at home and abroad.

Target 11: Operate as an efficient, effective and environmentally responsible public body providing good value for money to the tax payer and a positive working environment for our team.

Target 12: Multiply our grant-in-aid support from DIUS through an entrepreneurial approach that attracts additional public and private funds.

### Outcome measures for 2011

Increased influence on our audiences.

- The awareness and perceived value of our programmes (in quantitative and qualitative audience research)
- Perception by audiences as leading, influential, innovative and effective organisation that is good to work with (in quantitative and qualitative research)
- The number of partners and the level of funds committed by partners to our programmes and initiatives.

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