

PRESS RELEASE

(EMBARGOED until 21 June 2024)

Design Council to lead a mission to upskill 1 million designers for the green transition



The Design Council have announced a mission to upskill 1 million British designers in green design skills by 2030.

Their ambition is to harness hosting the 2025 World Design Congress, as a catalytic moment with a lasting impact for the UK, with a mass upskilling legacy.

Over the next 12 months, the Design Council will be convening education and training stakeholders and designers themselves to co-design what these green skills are and what the upskilling programme needs to look like.

As children around England complete their design and technology GCSE exams, and in a first step towards the mission, the Design Council have partnered with 20 leading design and education organisations to launch a set of policy recommendations for a crucial revision of the Design and Technology GCSE course.

The [World Design Congress](#) will gather members of the global design community at London's iconic Barbican Centre in September 2025 to propel the Design Council's mission in harnessing design's power to tackle the climate crisis. To leave a lasting legacy impact from the prestigious event, of which the theme will be Design for Planet, the Design Council have announced a mission to help upskill 1 million designers in green design skills by 2030.

In the face of twin climate and biodiversity crises, and ambitious government targets for decarbonisation by 2030, the UK has the opportunity to ensure that its 2 million strong design industry has the necessary skills to address the climate emergency.

There is currently a significant skills gap. The Design Council's [recently published research](#) shows that while 66% of designers have worked on environmental projects in the last 12 months, and 73% of them think the demand for environmental design is going to grow, only 43% think they have the capability to do so. Skills and knowledge are critical enablers of change, yet only 50% of the UK's designers believe their education has equipped them to design for planet.

The aim of this new mission is to equip designers to use their skills to fuel the green transition and position the UK as the global leader in designing for planet. Design is a 'frontline' green skill in the way it creates products, buildings and places that use fewer resources, reuses them or even grows them, as well as being a 'hearts and minds' green skill in the way it makes sustainable living the easy and desirable choice.

This mission will include the weight of bid partners such as the Design Museum, Creative Industries Council, DBA, AHRC, Innovate UK, and leading universities that are World Design Organisation members, RCA, Westminster University and the University of Greenwich.

Key to the mission will be a cross-industry alliance made up of those working in schools, further and higher education, industry, business, government and philanthropic funding.

The Design Council aims to develop curriculum from the classroom to the c-suite, and drive government support and private sector funding.

The path to 1 million starts in schools. The Design Council have partnered with 20 design and education organisations including the Design and Technology Association and National Society for Education in Art and Design, exam boards AQA, Pearson, OCR, engineering bodies IET and EngineeringUK, and creative bodies RIBA, Crafts Council and Design Business Association to publish a blueprint for the renewal of the design and technology (D&T) GCSE course to advise government on an essential curriculum change.

Currently the creative industries talent pipeline is blocked: fewer and fewer children can access a great design education. Over the last decade, British D&T GCSE entries have fallen by 68%, and the number of D&T teachers has more than halved. At the same time

industry is crying out for people with creative problem-solving skills, critical thinking, adaptability and resilience.

Design and technology (D&T) is one of the few spaces in the school curriculum where science and creativity meet, and students are asked to solve real-world problems in innovative ways. The subject risks falling into the margins of the curriculum at the very time it is most needed. The Blueprint for Renewal unites 20 design and education organisations behind a shared set of recommendations to put design at the heart of a regenerative and creative curriculum.

Today the Design Council and Design and Technology Association have launched the [Blueprint for Renewal: Design and Technology Education](#) as a guide for government. The paper outlines recommendations for how to overhaul the current GCSE course which has been in decline since 2010 (67% drop since 2010). This is the first step in the plan to create the channels and environment for achieving 1 million upskilled designers for the future.

Minnie Moll, CEO of the Design Council said:

“The World Design Congress in 2025 provides a rare opportunity for the UK government and design industry to show global leadership in harnessing the power of design for the green transition. Design is a core green skill. That is both ‘frontline’ design skills of using, and re-using, natural resources more efficiently, and indeed replenishing them, and ‘hearts and minds’ design skills, making regenerative lifestyles the easier, attractive and inclusive option.”

Tony Ryan Chief Executive Officer – Design & Technology Association said:

“We were the first nation worldwide to recognise the importance of design and technology education as part of a forward-thinking curriculum. While we have allowed teacher numbers and exam entries to fall in recent years, countries worldwide have taken our lead and built upon it. I welcome this paper and its content and fully endorse the role that a high-quality design and technology education can play in equipping our young people to step confidently into society and to play a positive role across the design workforce.

Our young people recognise the potentially catastrophic consequences of the climate crisis we all face; design and technology enables them to take an active role in being part of a considered solution.”

Lord Jo Johnson of Marylebone, PC said:

“Design education is a foundational skill which, if supported effectively within a cross-curricular framework, will enhance the British education system and prepare young people for future progression into further and higher education and for productive roles within society and the economy. Embedding design at the heart of a reformed broad, balanced and creative curriculum is critically important for addressing future skills needs and the rapid transition to a resilient green and digital economy.”

Sandra Booth Director of Policy and External Relations, Council for Higher Education Art and Design, and Council Member Creative UK said:

“The decline in design education over the last 20 years has been shocking. We and many other small organisations have felt the need to plug the growing gap in the provision of creative education for young people around the country, as fewer and fewer of them are getting the opportunities that they deserve. Our hands on place making and design & build projects provide young people with a unique opportunity within their education to develop skills such as creative problem solving, collaboration and critical thinking. The curriculum desperately needs to be rehailed to emphasise the value of these skills to students’ development and future career opportunities.”

Ed Almond, Chief Executive and Secretary of the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) said:

“The intersection of design, engineering & technology is vital to delivering the creative problem-solving skills required both now and in the future. The launch of “A blueprint for renewal Design and Technology education” signifies that real changes are needed in the curriculum, which is something we have been working hard to promote in our own work through our Engineering Kids’ Futures report. We believe every student deserves to have the opportunity to study a full and balanced curriculum allowing them to explore different career paths”.

Muyiwa Oki, President of RIBA said:

“Boosting design education in schools is essential for achieving our net zero goals. We need to elevate Design and Technology as a core subject in our curriculum. Investing in design and creative skills today will pave the way for the green transition, helping us create sustainable, high-quality places and communities for future generations.”

Michael Turner, AQA Executive Director of Customer and Product, said:

“Design and Technology is an important subject that empowers young people with the skills they need to be critical thinkers, problem solvers and conscious consumers. It can provide the subject knowledge, skills and experience to encourage students to pursue a wide range of careers that improve the environment and make a real difference to people’s lives. Students have the opportunity to get to grips with new and emerging technologies, ecological and social footprint, and the impact of new materials. As an education charity, and the leading exam board for this subject, we were proud to contribute towards this report and the discussion about how this subject can help set up young people for future challenges and opportunities.”

Andrew Freeman, Vice President, Product, Pearson said:

“Over the last two years we have worked tirelessly with schools, teachers, students and professionals to create a collective vision for the future of design education. This focuses on how responsible design and innovation in schools can develop the human capabilities needed to solve important challenges facing society now and in the future. We have proudly contributed to the Design Council’s work and welcome its mission to upskill British designers in green design skills.”

Matthew Springett and Fiona MacDonald, Co-Directors of award-winning built environment education social enterprise MATT+FIONA said:

“We need you to be part of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform an entire sector with the skills to design the future.”

- ENDS -

Notes to Editor:

IMAGES

[Blueprint for Renewal: Design and Technology Education](#)

For further information please contact:

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World Design Congress:

For the first time in over 50 years, London will play host city for the World Design Organization (WDO)®’s World Design Congress – putting London at the heart of the global design community. The UK Design Council led the bid that will bring the prestigious event to the capital in September 2025, with support from UKRI, the Greater London Authority, the Mayor of London, DCMS and many leading design institutions. The 2025 theme, Design for Planet, is inspired by the Design Council’s mission to place planetary needs at the heart of design and will showcase some of the most innovative design solutions from British designers. Last hosted in London in 1969 and attended by H.R.H. Princess Margaret, the return of the congress highlights London as a key player in the global design community. The bid for 2025 was supported by a collective of key design-focused organisations including London Design Festival, the Design Museum, Design Business Association, the Creative Industries Council, the Royal College of Art, University of Greenwich, as well as government support from UKRI, the Greater London Authority, the Mayor of London and DCMS.

Read more about World Design Congress London 2025 [here](#).

About the Design Council

The Design Council is the UK's national strategic advisor for design, championing design and its ability to make life better for all. It is an independent and not for profit organisation incorporated by Royal Charter. The Design Council uniquely works across all design sectors and delivers programmes with business, government, public bodies and the third sector. Their work encompasses thought leadership, tools and resources, showcasing excellence, and research to evidence the value of design and influence policy. Their Design for Planet mission was introduced in 2021 to galvanise and support the 1.97 million people who work in the UK's design economy to help achieve net zero and beyond.

#DesignForPlanet

www.designcouncil.org.uk