**Can your business use the United Nation’s sustainable development goals to drive better performance?**

**By Dr Paul Toyne, Chair of Constructing Excellence Sustainability Theme Group**

The answer to the title’s question is an un-equivocal yes! The how is not so easy to explain, as its more than just a tick box exercise of saying that because the business works on an issue it is delivering on a particular goal. This is because this is not just about doing things a bit better, we need true transformational change to deliver the 17 goals and their 169 objectives, and much of this is aimed at governments.

That said, I believe the interest in business in the goals are two-fold. First, they provide a framework for many of the issues that previously have been lost in complicated rating schemes or siloed some in the company’s corporate sustainability report. Secondly business needs the Earth to be healthy and functioning, and it needs people to be consumers enjoying their goods and services. A breakdown in ecosystems services and poverty are not good for future business. Furthermore, few people are attracted to work for companies that don’t have a purpose that is meaningful and relates to improving peoples’ lives. Demonstrating how a business contributes to the bigger picture is a positive. This is especially true in construction whose image does not attract the talent it requires.

Businesses in other sectors are collaborating to share best practice and learn from each other. For example, in the retail sector the British Retail Consortium has over 50 signatories of companies signed up to the UNSDGs. In construction, the sustainability theme group of Constructing Excellence agreed to explore how through new delivery models we can drive sustainability and deliver SDGs.  To make it manageable one SDG was selected. The group will consider how Industry 4.0 - the world of digitalisation, standardisation, new manufacturing techniques and data - can realise SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production. This is relevant for the whole construction value chain from clients to product manufacturers.

I am really excited by this new work programme, as the work could inspire many companies to use modernise and embrace Industry 4.0 and, in doing so drive exemplar performance that delivers the SDGs as well as first class construction!

We are planning webinars in the late autumn and a workshop in January. The workshop will explore what SDG 12 is; where are there good examples of existing practice; what role for data and technology; how to ensure against perverse outcomes; and agree what support is required for companies to deliver. For example, ‘a how to guide’ and other helpful tools. If successful we would then plan to explore another SDG.

Do get in touch with Alison Nicholls (alison.nicholls@bregroup.com) at CE if you want be involved.

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Originally published on Constructing Excellence website http://constructingexcellence.org.uk/ September 2018