

The Building Sustainably Podcast

Episode 6: How the Construction Industry Is Adapting to Net Zero with Mike Leonard of BCU

Host: Ben Stockdale, Director – Project Management, RPS

Guests: Mike Leonard, CEO, Building Alliance CIC and Visiting Professor at Birmingham City University

Intro - 00:00:05: Welcome to The Building Sustainably podcast by RPS. Sustainable, resilient development demands a new approach to how we plan, design, and build. We invite you to join us as we explore real-life case studies and offer practical guidance. Here's your host, Ben Stockdale.

Ben - 00:00:26: Hi, good afternoon. My name is Ben Stockdale. I'm a director of the project and cost management team in Birmingham for RPS. And I've got the pleasure today of being joined by Mike Leonard from BCU to talk about transitioning to net zero as part of the wider RPS Building Sustainably podcast series. So, first of all, I'd just like to introduce Mike and give you the opportunity to introduce yourself and say a little bit about what you're doing at the university and in the wider industry.

Mike - 00:00:57: Thanks, Ben, and thank you for the opportunity. So, Mike Leonard, I'm a visiting professor in construction and manufacturing at Birmingham City University and also run an organisation called the Building Alliance, which works collaboratively with industry in the sector and the house building sector in particular to support what is one of our biggest countrywide challenges, and that's the transition to net zero, but also in that journey to be very mindful of the fact that building safety has to be a priority. So we start from a first principle, having seen the tragedy of Grenfell in 2017, which was in effect a retrofit project, a project where we intervened to change the physics of a building to achieve our environmental objectives, but unfortunately left that building susceptible to fire, and tragically 72 people lost their lives. So, it's in that context that we're working at the Centre for Future Homes.

Ben - 00:01:56: In terms of the importance of that transition to net zero, where do you see that within the industry in terms of the number of challenges that the industry is facing? Do you see that as the number one challenge for us as a construction industry?

Mike - 00:02:10: So, I think we've got probably four very distinct challenges. Climate change is the country's biggest challenge. I've already mentioned building safety, but we've also got an under-delivery of housing in particular, so we need to build more homes. And finally, we've got underlying skill shortages as well. So, I think those four challenges, all interrelated, are all very, very important to the next part of the journey for the built environment. But also signalling, I think, just how central the built environment is to everything that we do and our reliance on the built environment to ensure that we remain safe and resilient as we transition to a very different climatic condition where we might see temperatures of 40 degrees in summers and the fear of weather events, some of which we've experienced a little bit of in recent weeks.

Ben - 00:03:02: So, in terms of your lived experience of the transition, and I suppose in particular, one that we're finding quite a lot in the developments that we're working on is that move from reliance on gas to heat our homes. A number of our developments are coming forward with zero gas or moving to electric. Do you see that as a key part of the challenge?

Mike - 00:03:24: It is indeed. We are moving away from the use of fossil fuels in everything we do, whether it's driving our cars, making things in factories, or living in our homes. But yes, it's a big, big part of the journey. And it's one where we have to be very mindful of the fact that we're asking consumers to come on that journey with us and to make a profound difference in the way that they cook and the way that they heat their homes. So yes, we have to make sure that in that transition we are presenting options to customers that they can understand and live with. It's a different type of heating when we move to electric heating. We're going to run it efficiently, particularly if we're going to use heat pumps, for instance, as a primary driver. And we need to use technology to help us because electricity is significantly more expensive than gas. And we're

in a cost-of-living crisis. And so, it's clear that consumers want solutions that don't cost them a lot more money. So, something like the heat pump for the efficiency and performance can close the gap between the price of gas and the price of electricity. And that's really important. But we have to operate it very differently. You know, we have to work on ambient heat rather than the boom and bust that we've been used to with gas, whereas we need to keep constant temperatures. And that's the way to get an efficient outcome from these sorts of technologies. So, a lot to teach, a lot to answer, that she would understand. But it's all very doable, provided that we work through and bring people with us on that journey.

Ben - 00:05:08: Just from my personal experience working on sort of new build developments and comparing it to what I've got in my Victorian house, just the level of technology is just totally different, and it's very much about the education piece of the occupant, but also acknowledging that it's their home at the end of the day and they should have that choice, and we should be able to give them that choice, but also educate them about how the systems are used best so that all that good work has gone into planning actually comes to fruition and we just don't have people hitting the switch because it doesn't seem to be working and trying to apply some of the things that we're used to using with the gas boiler to the new systems.

Mike - 00:05:44: Absolutely, and I think we're now dealing with homes that are going to be more complex than previously, and a lot of the work we've done, just consumers don't get enough information to make decisions, and the decisions they make will have a profound difference to the outcome. So we've done a lot of work on how you design and build homes to the future standard, for instance, but then if we commission and hand those products over to customers and they use them in a way that we hadn't intended, we will get quite poor outcomes, actually, and costs will not be cheaper and they'll be more expensive to run. So, there's a definite challenge back to everybody in the supply chain, industry, and everything else to help us on this transition. And I think it's important that we recognize that technology in itself is not a solution. Technology is part of the facilitator, if you like. So, unless we engage some minds and educate and train people, and that includes the supply chain, by the way, Ben, because it's one thing training people, for instance, to install heat pumps. It's quite another to teach them the soft skills to explain how that heat pump works properly. And as an industry, perhaps we haven't been that good at that soft skills piece. Yeah, we haven't trained for it, but particularly if you think beyond new builds and into retrofit, and we have 26 million homes to retrofit, you're quite right, Ben. We're now going and interfering in people's lives and have to do that with empathy and be very conscious of their needs, their desires, rather than just imposing what we want to do over the top and assuming that that will be acceptable. It won't. It won't work.

Ben - 00:07:33: No, it needs to be, you know, we need to be showing and demonstrating the benefits to those customers and those residents of the existing stock of houses. You could probably find that, you know, where it's a new build and somebody's bought into that ethos of a net-zero home and they've chosen, come on to it a little bit later about net-zero neighbourhoods. But if the people are buying into that ethos, that's sometimes a lot easier. They're already partway through the journey, but that existing house and start going and retrofitting. That's very much where we need to focus on education and ensuring the benefit that ultimately it should bring to those residents.

Mike - 00:08:07: Yeah, and I think we need to step back one as well, Ben, because there's an assumption that everybody in our industry is saying, "Oh, the journey," and the fact is they're not. And there are huge sectors of the industry that alone, the public, that don't understand what heat pumps are or how they operate or work, for instance, don't understand fully the concept of proper ventilation, which is critical if we're going to seal buildings up more tightly, etc. So, we've got a huge learning role to undertake within the sector. And one of the things we've done at the Centre for Future Homes at Birmingham City University, is we've created some physical space where we've actually now got a learning hub, but actually it's got all the kits in, all the things that are a part of this journey to show people what a 150 wall looks like. So, fabric is always the most important thing because that's the bit that's going to be there for 150 years, shall we say. But then what the heat pumps are, the hot water cylinders are now, have come back into play because we need to store hot water. The use of PV, the use of underfloor heating, which is quite an efficient option when used with a heat pump, and then onto that ventilation. So, we've got all that kit displayed alongside all the research and the case studies that we've been involved with. And next year, we will be running some STEAM challenges, our brand-new STEAM house building in the centre of our campus, around subcontractors. Because what's often

forgotten in this discussion is that in new-built housing, subcontractors build them, not the developers. And in the retrofits arena, its subcontractors again. If we don't involve our subcontractors and get them on board and give them the skills, both the soft and functional skills that they need, then this project will fail. This project will result in people having poor quality installations, the change process not being a smooth one. And before you know where you are, we'll have the Daily Mail moments, if you like, when our industry is pulled over the coals for something that clearly isn't right, isn't performing. We can't afford that. If I'm honest, we've got to make sure that we do this job right, particularly after Grenfell.

Ben - 00:10:11: Yeah, I think the industry owes it to itself to do it properly and almost put its best foot forward. Obviously, with the likes of BCU and other universities, we've done that research, we've got the technology. We need to make sure that it gets applied and installed correctly so that we don't have the headlines of, you know, the construction industry has done something else wrong and... trying to impose...

Mike - 00:10:32: I'd say this really, Ben, applies to a lot of things, unfortunately, but trust and confidence is a pretty rare commodity these days, and you sacrifice it at your peril. We've got to work really hard to build confidence back in our industry. We're going to have safeguards in place to make sure that those people who are unscrupulous, they would wish to exploit the opportunities that are coming up on our land's desert. And it is a concern to me that almost anybody could set up as a pumping stall tomorrow with no regulatory control to stop them. And that's maybe something alongside that transition where we had Gas Safe, for instance, which is a very good methodology to stop people doing just that. We probably need to be just as robust.

Ben - 00:11:14: Yeah, and building that confidence, especially as we said, when it comes to somebody's home, we want to make sure we get it right and people trust that we're going to get it right and they can see the value of what they're doing. And I just wanted to pick up, we touched briefly on it in terms of net-zero neighbourhoods or moving outside of just the individual homes or apartments and creating those neighbourhoods. I know we're involved in a couple of schemes where that's the ethos, but just wondered if that was something that we could just pick up on.

Mike - 00:11:43: It might be worth stepping back to say what we've done already, if that's okay. And so, we engaged very early in this process with Midland Heart Housing Association to develop 24 homes in Edgbaston and Handsworth areas of Birmingham. And the background to that was quite simple. Having been involved, as I have, in numerous changes of the regulations, particularly power hell over quite a long period of years, we'd never had the opportunity to model that properly and build it prior to implementation. So, what the industry tends to do is wait for the regulation to come in and then try and catch up with that as part of the process. We determined with Midland Heart that given the level of change that's required here, and bear in mind that the homes we're delivering both on the Project 80 and the Keepmoat project, which I'll talk about in a moment, have delivered over 80% and 91% respective carbon reductions. It's a massive, massive step change in what we're doing. But because of that step change, because of that transition away from gas, which is the heat of choice for most of us over our lifetimes, we felt it really important to build it, to understand it, and then get people to live in it. And so, we can report on the whole journey. So, we've done those 24 homes, they were for social occupation, they'd been lived in and out for two years. And we've followed that through with a project with Keepmoat, a top 15 house provider, on a site in Nottingham. It's full of coal mine. And that was 33 homes for private occupation. And that's a mixture between owner occupation and private rental sector homes. And we've learned a massive amount of information from that whole journey, both in the build and subcontractor process, the complexities of dealing with lots of subcontractors delivering one system, if you like, to keep heating. But also, then how people have understood how it's being commissioned, how it's being sold even in the private sector here. And then the living data. So that data is helping us to inform policymakers. We've taken civil servants around the site from all the four government departments that deal with housing. So, they've understood it in real terms, which has been great. Where do we go next with that? So, we're in the second year of monitoring the Keepmoat project, gathering more and more information. We're working with the banks because they're interested from a financial perspective. And we're working with Homes England, obviously, at the headline level. So where do we take it next? Well, we believe now that net-zero neighbourhoods are the next big step that we should make in the new build. So, recognition that so far today, we've been principally involved in the functional part of delivering future home standard of the building, if you like. What I've increasingly recognized, and we as a research team recognize,

is that it's about place. It's about the whole place. It's about if we're really going to get to net zero, then we have to have the right transportation links in. We have to have the right level of biodiversity in natural environments that are going to balance out the functional stuff that we do. So, a lot of what we've got wrong in the past, I suppose, and we've kind of concreted over areas of natural water flows and all those sorts of things. We've cut down trees to put developments in. And as I said, as a result, we don't have that natural carbon sink that was protecting us. And also shade. I've talked about where we're going in terms of what's our planet like in 40 years' time. Is it truly resilient? Because I watch the news, as you do, and I see houses floating down roads. That can't be right, can it? And equally, I see fire destroying neighbourhoods in Paradise in California the year after Grenfell, a bigger loss of life, relatively, than at Grenfell in one town, a flat town. So, it's not high-rise here, it's flat. And the fire just wiped that town out. And that's unfortunately going to be part of the future if we don't build resilience into our model. So, our content here is to build this net-zero neighbourhood, 100 homes in Birmingham. The detail I can't disclose at the moment because we're going through a couple of 30-day planning processes with it, but it's coming to this channel soon, really. And from my perspective, it's really, really important that we look holistically at giving people a better experience of housing and living and transportation and everything else that adds into that equation.

Ben - 00:16:01: Yeah, and I think just acknowledging the point before where you said having a net-zero home, but if the sustainable travel links aren't there, if the other things that wrap around that person's home aren't there, then we're undoing a lot of the good work that we're doing for their home in the way they get to work or commute or whatever it may be and given those opportunities. You mentioned a couple of projects there, just in particular, you mentioned Project 80. Can we just touch on that in a little bit more detail?

Mike - 00:16:31: So, what we did on Project 80 was because we had that opportunity to trial things, we decided to do three different things on the site, really, three different specifications, I suppose. They were all nationally built, so brick-and-block construction and sourced from local suppliers. That was important to us as well, to get that resilience piece in. And we built through COVID, so I was able to take civil servants to the site afterwards and explain to them that those homes wouldn't have been built if they'd been gas. Because we weren't reliant on ships from Taiwan or wherever it might have been, we were able to build from local supply chains. So essentially the construction industry managed to keep going through COVID, which is probably get the lights on properly. It's a very important thing. So, we looked at different levels of air tightness right down to a level of two. We looked at different heat pump systems. So, we used a backseat heat pump, and we used a valiant heat pump, a clean heat pump. On one of the homes, we used a hot water heat pump with electric panel radiators. So, we used different things on different sites and managed to get a range of research outputs, if you like, from the physical build, which then translates into how people live in them. In terms of how people lived in them, we had a fantastic mix of ethnicity and diversity and cultures within the site. We probably couldn't have designed it any other way. It was brilliant. And then the number of different cultures we had. And so, we saw different behaviours coming out of that. People, for instance, who like cooking six hours a day. People who like living at 25 degrees night and day. And they didn't like it because as well as having data coming out of these homes, we carried out regular interviews because the insights are as important as the data. And people perhaps come from a damp, wet, mouldy home to a home where they can eat 25 degrees. And they love it. So, it's not quite what I wanted. But again, with all respect, this is about me coming up on the journey. Every one of our homes, they open the windows in the winter. Everyone. Isn't that interesting? Because I want fresh air. So, you know, there's people who want design items where you seal the windows up, like we do at hotels or whatever. But actually, the consumer's saying, no, no, no, I want my choice. And we've got to live with that. We've got to roll with that because otherwise we'll set ourselves against the people who are living in the homes. And that's wrong.

Ben - 00:18:45: Continue to butt heads if you like. Yeah, the window opening is just natural that people want to be able to do. And to be in your own home and having that level of restriction just doesn't feel natural, does it? It needs to be able to operate and live in their home as they want to. And the technology should respond to that. And obviously data, like you talked about, and the specific insight to different people actually living in there is invaluable in feeding that back into the research.

Mike - 00:19:12: Absolutely, and yeah, we always have to recognize that we're a very diverse nation and so on that basis people will have different needs and different requirements, you know, and if, for instance, you live in a hot country most of your life, you're actually quite used to living at hot temperatures and don't

respect those things. It's really important that we do so we can do so much to make our homes efficient and give people information. One of the things that we believe going forward as a research centre is that we should think about putting sensors and data into every home, into every new home eventually because the diagnostics available on your home are significantly less than they are in your car. That's a bit odd really, that, yeah, because we spend most of our time in our home, it's not a car. So, on that basis, we should have more connected homes and more information coming out and more opportunity to identify things that are not performing to their optimum rather than react to them breaking more, which is what we do at the moment. So, at the moment, most of our home management is distress management. Yeah, it's when something's gone wrong we do something about it.

Ben - 00:20:17: Yeah. You don't tend to, as a homeowner, look if everything's running as it should do, kind of just leave it to it until, yeah, you've got something that you wake up one morning your heating's not on or something drastic happens and invaluable data being lost, isn't there?

Mike - 00:20:31: And that leads me on to maintenance really as well, Ben. You know, so maintenance is critical. It's critical in everything we do, isn't it? You know, if we don't maintain something, we've got a problem. So, I genuinely think that we should be starting to move on its journey towards an annual service of your home. So not just, might do the boiler if we're lucky now, but the home should be serviced. Yeah, we should be looking at what's working, what isn't working, etc. We do it for a car, so why wouldn't we do it for a house? It's my quote.

Ben - 00:20:58: And I think obviously that particular project, it sounds like they probably could do a whole episode on that just on its own. But I think there are some links that we'll share when the episode goes out that people can use and click on to get some more information because there's probably a lot more detail than we've been able to go through on here.

Mike - 00:21:15: So, the Keepmoat project is very different in the sense it's built for private. So, you've got all the complexity of the commercial element to it rather than the social housing element. The project itself was backed by Lloyds Bank and Leeds Building Society because they want to understand the economics around all this and whether future home standard houses attract a premium or whether that leads to existing values or existing housing stock. Unfortunately, what we have to recognize is that housing in the UK is actually a lot of bad money. There's a lot of money locked into the house. It's all about the value of UK PLC is secured in that stock. So, it's important for them. And because we're selling the homes, I spent a lot of time out to train the sales staff. I've trained the customer care teams as well. So, they understand the sort of questions they're going to get from people moving into those homes. A lot of time commissioning, working with the contractual systems are commissioned correctly. Handed over to the consumer and then working as we are now in the sort of second phase of that project on understanding the customer. And the customer is going to be two different types of customers. It'll be the customer who owns the home and the customer who is renting it for probably a relatively short period, maybe six to 12 months or beyond. But a home that's going to have a lot of churns. There are some real challenges coming out of that in terms of the amount of attention to detail, particularly in the second part, where perhaps when we're renting our homes to people, there's a big chunk of the housing market in the UK that is rented. Then how much time do we spend making sure that the people in those homes now operate them properly? And I would suggest it's very little. But that's another part of the journey that's been identified. And an early output from the Keepmoat project is a case to really of the research, we've seen a significant overuse of immersion heaters. And we think that at the moment, we can't confirm it because we're still working on it, but we think it's just habit. We think that that's the way in which they used to operate in their old home. They don't need to do it now. Hot water is available to them, but they're flicking on the immersion heater. I need to have a shower; I need to have a bath. I'll put the immersion heater on. And of course, immersion heaters are a very expensive way of heating hot water.

Ben - 00:23:29: And with the private for sale properties, in terms of having access to the data from those homes, was that something that the people sort of bought into from the very beginning in terms of being open? Because obviously, I'm guessing that's a little bit more difficult when it's private for sale, maybe compared to a social landlord or even a private landlord. Did they sort of buy into the whole ethos of you were part of a research project?

Mike - 00:23:54: So, we'd be lucky they did, but we worked hard on that, if I'm honest, to make sure. And the people buying into those homes were early adopters, really. And I think we're quite excited about the fact that they were living in a home that's got all the new technology and is future-proof next year, which is the way in which we sold them, really, because they weren't that expensive. They were probably about 15% more expensive than the same plots just down the road built by the same builder. So, it was a real choice. It was a real choice to buy into the technology. Part of the sale, of course, is that you won't be retrofitting that in 40 years' time. And putting a heat pump into an existing property isn't just about putting a heat pump in at the boiler house. It's about new pipes. It's about new radiators. So, it's a very disruptive and expensive process. So, part of the sale was that they stood themselves ahead of the game, if you like. We did give them two years' free high-speed Wi-Fi. Part of it is as a thank you. So, we made sure that our data coming out was secure. Because, again, if I go back to my connected house, then that's also part of the transition we're on at the moment, isn't it? Lives changed enormously for most of us. People work from home more than they've ever worked. Having good connections at every point is critical to it.

Ben - 00:25:04: Just moving on and picking up on some of the challenges that we're facing. We've obviously talked quite a lot about the challenge of educating people. But I think at the start, you mentioned about the skills gap. And there's been some recent correspondence in the news about how we're obviously aiming to deliver a certain number of homes. And the skills just aren't there to deliver it. And I suppose that's emphasized in particular around what we've talked about here, the specific skills that are needed for this new technology. So, what do we think we can do about that?

Mike - 00:25:34: First and foremost, it's an opportunity, not a threat. We have to embrace this as a massive opportunity for everybody in the sector. And I do mean everybody because linked to this process is a lot of upskilling as well. Of course, we start to bring new entrants in. Let's think about the people who are resisting in the industry. We need to transition and come with us on the journey. So that's a really important part of it. And again, we have to be empathetic to their work, their patterns, etc. So as a principle, I'm involved in delivering a heating systems college, they call it, rather than a heat pump college in Stratford-Upon-Avon. And our intention is to run night schools and weekend courses and all those sorts of things because if I'm dealing with a workforce that is principally self-employed contractors, why would they give up their time to transition to learn new skills because it's costing them money? So, a bit of understanding and empathy in that area is really important. Similarly, it's our sensitivity. It's a few terms. Learning how we're going to be delivering a big program of CPD next year. Yep. So, drilling into all these different areas. And it's not just heating, it's everything. So, we're going to be delivering a lot of CPD around it. Then the opportunity really to bring those new people into the sector. We've got one of the most exciting and interesting sectors available to anybody. And those of us who have been around the building environment for a long time, we're all testing it. It's only the commentators who haven't been in our industry say where you want to go into construction. They haven't understood it. And, yeah, the first principle for me is pride. It's an industry where you get involved in delivering tangible, real projects that last a very long time. And you can point to them, and you can ask your own side, and you can take your kids around and show them and they get very bored. But I did that.

Ben - 00:27:17: Oh, I built that. I think most of the people I talked to, that was certainly why I got involved. And a lot of people got involved. They can see, you know, they can see something that's going to be there for 50, 60, maybe 100 years.

Mike - 00:27:30: Yeah. And it's exciting, isn't it? And there's a lot of team ethos around bringing things together. You work your teams. You don't work in the same place, you know, necessarily. Having said that, the construction sector is a very wide sector. And a lot of the debate I've read in the press, and everything always defaults to baseline skills, bricklayers, plumbers, carpenters, whatever, which are fantastic jobs. And, you know, a bricklayer can earn 50,000 a year very easily because they're a very good bricklayer. But equally, there's masses of jobs around that we also need to recruit into, whether it be building engineers or whether it be working in the regulatory side, building control, planning, all those areas. So, there's lots of jobs. It's extremely inclusive. And the other thing I'd say about our sector is that it's the one industry I know of where there's no establishment attached to it. If you're good at your job and you work hard, whatever your background, wherever you came from, whatever you want to go, you can go there. It's the art of the possible. And there are many people who started this industry at 16 years old, who are now chief executives. And

that's one of the few industries where that applies. So, we've got an exciting proposition today. I'm personally going to be chairing Birmingham Housing Week for 2025, and we'll be holding that in November. And it's all about me, about getting those skilled jobs understood by people and then connecting them to the right training and then connecting them to the right employer. It's as simple as that. So, it's that closing the gap. It's between the fact that I talk to young people who say they'd love to get into construction but can't get in, can't find a route in. And I talk to employers who say we'd love to take on young people, but I can't find any. And there's something in the middle of all that that says we have an opportunity to give people a fantastic career and deliver the homes and the other buildings and the infrastructure and things that we need desperately to grow UK PLC. So, I'm also personally responsible in 2008 for launching the Get Britain Building campaign. That had a big skill. I've been in the business for a long time. And I've also talked about a program called I Built It, which is all about that pride. It's about getting people in and connecting people back to the job. So, it works its face, but my view is we've got a mayor in Richard Parker for the West Midlands who's very, very keen on housing and skills. He likes buses as well, but I'm better at housing skills. And by connecting those things up, we have a real opportunity, particularly for those disadvantaged communities in this area where we've seen youth unemployment levels are completely unacceptable, even though we've got a level of opportunity we've got. So, opportunity, not threat. Let's get on with it is my view.

Ben - 00:30:08: That's great. Yeah, it's certainly something that RPS really focuses on that, you know, bringing, whether it be apprentices or graduates or bringing them into the team early on and just showing them what the industry has to offer. And as you say, it's so wide-ranging that there's certainly something for anyone and everyone, I think. And I think that's been a really interesting discussion and just wanted to sort of wrap up and see if there was anything in particular, Mike, just in terms of key takeaways. If there were people listening to this, those key takeaways that you want people to take away and really think about.

Mike - 00:30:41: Thank you. So, I'll think back, if I may, to the work we're doing in the sense of future homes. It's all about providing the data and the insights to allow evidence-based decision making. So, I think we've been led too often by misinformation, by people not doing the proper gathering of evidence to make decisions. So, we haven't put that right. And in doing so to avoid unintended consequences. So, again, our industry over the years has been littered with unintended consequences. So, it's really important that we avoid those wherever possible. And it's also really important that we embrace the challenges that I mentioned right at the outset of this discussion and deal with them head-on. You know, whether that be climate change, whether it be building safety. Clearly, the opportunities around skilled employment was just at the we've just talked about are fantastic. And if we can connect those things up, we create better places for everybody. And that impacts, you know, aren't everything crime? Everything is related to whether people feel included, whether they feel useful. And it's my submission that if they spend a good day working in our industry, they'll be too tired to be crying. It is a world full of opportunity for us still. And the fact is this industry can lead UK PLC. One of the reasons I started Get Britain Building back in 2008, a big crash was the multiplier effect to construction. That says for every pound that you invest, you get a £2.84 return. And that's a phenomenal return. And it's because principally we've made the stuff here. About 80% of what went into Project 80 and the Keepmoat site were made in the UK. There's no other industry that can quite have those statistics out here. And, you know, in fact, on the Keepmoat site, for instance, the bricks came six miles, and the blocks came 18 miles. And we should be very proud of those statistics, given that we're about to spend Christmas opening presents that almost all will have been made in China.

Ben - 00:32:42: Any construction project, you know, it's got the opportunity to enhance that local economy, isn't it? Whether it be everything from local manufacturers all the way down to the cafe that's down the road that's going to have additional people wanting a builder's breakfast. You know, it all adds to that investment.

Mike - 00:32:59: All added value. You're absolutely right, Ben. And the final piece I'll just leave you with, back to my discussion earlier about resilience. Let's look over the hill and make sure that what we're building today is going to be fit for purpose in, of course, 50 years' time. Because that's the legacy that we create. We won't be around, Sid, perhaps, but it's the legacy that we create and therefore a responsibility to make sure that our homes are fit for purpose in different climatic conditions to the one that we are currently living in.

Ben - 00:33:27: Couldn't agree more. I'd just like to thank you for your time this afternoon, Mike. I think there were probably a couple of topics that we could probably follow on with a second episode in particular, the

next project you're working on when you're able to talk about it in a bit more detail. I'd like to invite you back to do that. Just leave me to say thank you again and enjoy the rest of your day.

Mike - 00:33:46: Thanks very much.

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