

I-Lab

INNOVATION LAB

The UK Green Building Council (UK-GBC) has announced the launch of its first Innovation Lab, a radical new approach to innovation in the built environment. The Lead Partners for this new “Open Innovation” programme are: Canary Wharf Group, Land Securities and Marks & Spencer.

The Innovation Lab is a structured programme designed to tackle some of the issues connected with the built environment. It will identify and address systemic challenges facing businesses within the sector, and co-create innovative and highly sustainable solutions. It will enable the cooperation and collaborative working between the participating organisations to deliver innovative and practical solutions towards the sustainable built environment.

Driving innovation in the construction sector might be a slow process. Head of Leadership and Innovation at UK-GBC, Cat Hirst, said: “Research and Development levels across our industry are painfully low; the UK currently only spends £43m on construction R&D. The risks to a single company of investing in developing a solution for such a high-cost industry is often seen as prohibitive. But we desperately need to find ways of working together to achieve radical change if we are to challenge business as usual and transition to a sustainable way of working”.



"At UK-GBC we're seeking to catalyse this change by using our unique position to convene our member organisations to work together to address the issues our industry faces. We want to ensure there is the time, space, and structure for open innovation to occur for the built environment".

"The Innovation Lab is not just about finding one solution to one problem, it's about fostering a more open and collaborative approach to problem solving as an industry. We need to build the capacity of our industry to innovate and find the right approach to being creative and collaborative within a commercial setting."

The Innovation Lab began in December 2016 with a workshop to identify the 'breakthrough challenge' which will form the focus of a 9-month programme of work. In order to arrive at the chal-

lenge, UK-GBC is working with the Lead Partners and thought leaders from the wider UK-GBC membership to explore future trends for the built environment as well as key environmental and social challenges, and pain points for business. The initial workshop highlighted key industry challenges around climate change resilience, resource use, shifting demographics, technological advancement and health and wellbeing. Over the coming weeks, the breakthrough challenge will be refined in consultation with the Lead Partners. The next workshop will be on 1 February, where Innovation Lab participants will begin to respond to this challenge by mapping existing innovations and, where a gap is identified, generating new innovative solutions to solve the challenge. The Innovation Lab is being delivered in collaboration with Switch On Worldwide.

The key steps of the process are:

1. Phase one - Breakthrough challenge (December 2017)- a review of major problems in the built environment now and in 2050, choosing the issue to tackle
2. Phase two- Innovation lab (January 2017)- structured innovation framework and workshops, explore the solutions
3. Phase three- Business model incubation (April 2017)- develop potential business model concepts and create the plan how to implement the plan to take this product/service into live projects and real buildings.
4. Phase four- Implementation (July 2017 onwards)- At this phase we will actively encourage the innovations identified and developed through the i-Lab initiative to be implemented on live projects by UK-GBC members, and we will track the impact of these in terms of key sustainability metrics (e.g. kWh energy reduced as a result of implementing the technology).

"We are delighted to be at the forefront of this innovation process which brings exciting potential to work collaboratively with our peers and our Level39 community, and build upon our status as one of the most forward-looking business and retail districts in the world. Above all, we look forward to driving improvements from which we can all benefit." Martin Gettings, Group Sustainability Manager, Canary Wharf Group

"The Innovation Lab will provide us with an exciting opportunity to work and collaborate with businesses in the property industry, to explore innovative sustainable solutions. Most importantly we want to see how sustainability can help to break through some of the challenges our sector is currently facing." Caroline Hill, Head of Sustainability, Land Securities

"It's vital that businesses come together to find and develop solutions to common problems and challenges for the industry. At M&S we recognise that we can maximise the impact of our actions by sharing and supporting others on their journey to a more sustainable built environment, as well as continually improving our own development practices." Lydia Hopton, Plan A Project Manager, Marks & Spencer

(Source: UK-Green Building Council)

