

Designing a better Britain



“
Design is not
just what it
looks like and
feels like. Design
is how it works.”

Steve Jobs

Former Co-founder, Chairman, and CEO of Apple Inc.

Foreword



John Mathers
CEO, Design Council

Today, more than ever, we need to tap into our creative resources to design a better Britain.

For 70 years, Design Council has been working across the broad spectrum of design, from product to service in the public and private sectors. Strengthened further by our recent merger with the world-renowned Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), our work supports policy priorities including future-proofing British industry, delivering local and city-led growth, and enabling social innovation and public sector reform.

Now, more than ever, there is an opportunity for Britain to lead the way in designing a future economy.

- Our economy must be innovative in order to grow and succeed against global competition.
- Our knowledge base must be exploited and new ideas taken to market.
- Places across the country must have the homes and infrastructure in place to provide the foundations for sustainable growth.
- Our resourcefulness must be turned towards transforming our public services.

Britain has world-renowned design capabilities, which, when harnessed by businesses, put to work in tackling knotty social issues or used to transform public services, deliver a solid return on investment. Design Council has been working at the forefront of design and innovation since our inception in 1944, and we have learned valuable lessons about how to harness the power of design. We believe this knowledge is worth sharing and invite you to read more in this booklet about the difference design can make. If you want to discuss further, we'd love to speak to you.

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The UK must grow its innovation economy

Innovation is the most important driver of long-term prosperity. Innovative businesses create more jobs and grow faster. Yet, despite a return to economic growth, UK business spending on innovation has been falling in recent years, according to research undertaken by Nesta. Are we at risk of falling behind just as we begin to recover?

Design supports innovation

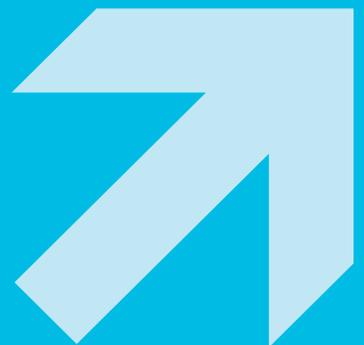
The UK's world-class design sector supports business innovation at home, delivering much-needed economic growth and supporting our international competitiveness. Design helps businesses turn their innovative ideas into profitable offerings that meet consumer needs and can compete on the world stage. Design focuses on the user, and ensures that new ideas are transformed into products and services that appeal and succeed. Design can help established businesses to diversify, enter new markets and grow their share in existing markets.

Design Council has been on the ground, supporting businesses large and small, for 70 years. Our work helps businesses in all sectors to think strategically, identify new opportunities, innovate and grow. We have worked with hundreds of SMEs and know that every £1 invested in strategic design delivers over £4 in net profit. Large businesses such as Rolls Royce Aerospace choose to work with us to drive innovation in their core business and in their supply chains.

63%

**Innovation delivered 63%
of UK economic growth
between 2000-2008**

Plan I, The Case for Innovation-led Growth, Nesta



Design helps entrepreneurs realise the value of their ideas

Owlstone Nanotech in Cambridge was a technology start-up in 2004, with a great asset – a chemical detector 100 times smaller and 1,000 times cheaper than previous technology. The big challenge for the company was the task of explaining its ground-breaking technology effectively to potential partners and end users, to identify applications for technology and find routes to market.

Owlstone worked with Design Council to develop intermediate products and services that would generate income more quickly and build confidence amongst investors, by building simple product models. Alongside this, work was undertaken to create the Owlstone brand identity, website and marketing materials. Ten years on, Owlstone Nanotech is at the cutting edge of micro and nanofabrication technology, with five products on the market.

\$15m

raised from investors since launch

“Without the support we had from Design Council we would have missed a big opportunity [and] would have been a lot slower in getting to where we are today.”

Billy Boyle
Co-founder, Owlstone Nanotech

What we need



Government support for businesses that invest in design talent must be continued and expanded, if the UK is to keep ahead of international competition.



A new, supply-chain approach should be rolled out across key industrial sectors, working with prime customers to embed design-led innovation in supply chain businesses.

We must maximise value from our world-class research base

The UK has a world-class science and technology research base that underpins our most important industrial sectors. However, we lag behind in bringing that research to market in the form of new products and services.

Making research and technology work for the end user

To compete in the global economy, the UK must strengthen its ability to commercialise science and technology research. Greater diversity of skills is needed in these sectors, drawing on other areas of UK global leadership such as design. Design helps shape technology until it is useful, usable and desirable for consumer adoption. Design is used to generate new insights for market applications, to communicate these clearly to non-experts and to plan routes to market.

Design Council works with research teams to help them turn their research into commercially viable offerings. We have extensive experience in knowledge-intensive industries, where we run a range of programmes to support critical stages of commercialisation, from blue sky research through to near-to-market application – design adds value at all of these stages.



Design is a powerful tool to commercialise research

The University of Nottingham is a research-intensive institution with 40,000 students spread across sites in three countries: the UK, Malaysia and China. One of its core activities is developing commercial opportunities around the new technologies and technology applications its researchers develop. Commercial development is conducted by Nottingham's in-house Technology Transfer Office which to date has established 26 spin-out companies and licenses up to 15 new technologies each year.

In 2010, Nottingham became one of the first British universities to access support from Design Council, focusing on a platform technology offering a new way to measure a person's heartbeat. The product concept was a small light-based device which, when placed on the forehead, bounced light through the skin to measure blood volume and extrapolate from this heart and breathing rates. The design input helped the team to identify and communicate a number of potential market applications for the technology, securing the interest of a number of investors.

“The journey a new idea, technology or product makes from concept to market is often long and difficult. Projects can flounder because they are too far developed to attract research funding but not developed enough to secure real market interest.”

Dr George Rice

University of Nottingham's Technology Transfer Office

What we need



Public investment in research and new technologies must be complemented by access to design support for commercialisation, to maximise the value from our publicly-funded research base. In addition, science and technology researchers and students need training in commercialisation techniques.

We must urgently deliver housing and infrastructure

The design and planning of our towns and cities has a long-lasting impact. A city's built environment can either facilitate or hinder local growth. To deliver sustainable prosperous places across the country we need to tackle major housing and infrastructure constraints. Design can help create the right foundations for growth while creating good quality places where people want to live, work and visit.

Good planning and design delivers

High-quality, well-designed places create both the physical and social conditions for sustainable economic growth.

Proactive planning coupled with robust and effective design processes that enable effective dialogue can support the delivery of housing, infrastructure and commercial development that is of the right quality, in the right place and at the right time.

Design Council offers independent, multi-disciplinary support and advice to help local government, the private sector and all those involved in development and construction to bring forward good quality schemes and create vibrant prosperous places. Cabe at Design Council has worked with nearly every local authority in the country and has a track record of successful projects at every scale, from communities delivering their neighbourhood plans to Nationally Significant projects including London 2012, Crossrail and the new Thames Tideway Tunnel.

73% of people would support the building of more homes if well-designed and in keeping with their local area.

National Housing and Planning Advisory Unit, 2010



Good design is indivisible from good planning

Oxford City Council

Oxford is home to one of the world's leading universities¹ and, as a centre for technology research, is a key part of the UK's knowledge economy. There are 1,500 high-tech firms in Oxfordshire, employing 43,000 people.² The city is also famous for its rich heritage and built environment.

The City Deal recognised the area has great potential currently constrained by insufficient public transport, an at-capacity road network and a lack of affordable housing, pricing employees and businesses out of the market.³ The City Deal therefore identified transport improvements and the provision of high-quality housing as fundamental to the delivery of innovation-led growth.⁴

To help meet these challenges, Oxford City Council commissioned Caba at Design Council to provide design support services across the city to blend world-class expertise and local knowledge and bring forward necessary development faster to support local innovation and stimulate local economic growth.



“We want to ensure that we have the best quality of design for our future buildings that works within the demands of the historic city, but also can move with the times.”

Michael Crofton-Briggs

Head of City Development, Oxford City Council

1 Times Higher Education (2014) World University Rankings 2013-2014
2 SQW (2013) The Oxford Innovation Centre
3 The Oxford Innovation Engine: Realising the Growth Potential (October 2013)
4 Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal (February, 2014)

What we need



In the short-term, the next government should create a kickstarter “Prosperous Places Fund” to support towns and cities to bring about necessary development sooner.



A long-term National Spatial Strategy is urgently needed to address major spatial decisions including housing growth, flooding and energy and transport infrastructure delivery to create sustainable and prosperous places.

Our public services must be transformed for the modern age

Our public services were designed for another time. Recent changes in resources and demand mean that local authorities fear they will be unable to meet the costs of even statutory services in the future, whilst the NHS is struggling to maintain and improve its offer. Crucially, the public sector needs to understand and meet citizen needs by tying policy decisions better to implementation and knowing how to harness the power of technology.

Working with citizens to design and deliver change

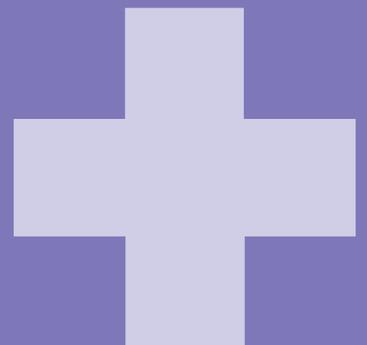
Transformation does not happen easily - it requires the bravery to create whole-system change by cutting services that are not working and developing different models with citizens. In the context of current challenges new approaches are needed if we are to increase the scale and pace of change. Design offers different ways to develop services around people's needs, to work openly and collaboratively and to reduce risk through continual testing and improvement.

“We genuinely believe that public sector leaders need to acquire design skills if they are to stand a reasonable chance of reshaping and refashioning the services for which they are responsible.”

Barry Quirk CBE
CEO, Lewisham Council, London

Design Council has worked extensively on service and policy challenges in government and public bodies. Our aim is to build design capabilities in the public sector by introducing new tools into policy development and creating more effective, people-centred services.

More than 30 UK public bodies have been through our programmes that help staff frame problems and develop practical solutions in areas ranging from homelessness to youth employment. Design Council also delivers training in design methods and has worked with more than 400 people in central government in the past 18 months.



Saving the NHS money by cutting the cost of A&E violence

The Department of Health and Design Council worked together to reduce crime and aggression in Accident & Emergency. Through the project, staff training, a best practice toolkit and clearer signage were developed. Excellent results were achieved, with 75% of patients reporting that the improved signage reduced their frustration during waiting times. Threatening body language and aggressive behaviour fell by 50% post-implementation, and the project saved £3 for every £1 invested.

3:1
return on investment

What we need



A wide-spread programme of support embedding design skills at the core of civil service competencies is needed, particularly for those in leadership and commissioning roles.

Design Council champions great design. For us that means design which improves lives and makes things better. As an enterprising charity, our work places design at the heart of creating value by stimulating innovation in business and public services, improving our built environment and tackling complex social issues such as ageing and obesity. We inspire new design thinking, encourage public debate and inform government policy to improve everyday life and help meet tomorrow's challenges today.



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