Austin·Smith:Lord

Practice

Corporate and Social Responsibility Policy

Our Corporate and Social Responsibilities

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a business approach that contributes to sustainable development by delivering economic, social and environmental benefits for all stakeholders.

At Austin-Smith:Lord our corporate and social responsibilities are enshrined in the way we work, the work we do and our collective mission, vision and values. In line with the ethos of our founding partners we seek to make a positive contribution to the built environment and society; creating buildings and places enriching the lives of our clients, collaborators and communities with whom we work.

We are committed to the advancement of our professions and actively seek to conduct our business ethically, responsibly and sustainably.

In practical terms these corporate and social responsibilities are illustrated by;

- Our Approach
- Our Work
- Our Actions

The following statements outline evidence of how we discharge our corporate and social responsibilities. Additional information is available upon request.

Our Approach

- **Environmental Sustainability**

  Austin-Smith:Lord have been attuned to the need to minimise our impact on the environment for a long time. We have championed low-carbon buildings and places, applying reliable common-sense design principles with contemporary technologies to reduce energy consumption, tackle fuel poverty and use finite resources efficiently. We take care to specify environmentally responsible materials.

  We have completed many BREEAM 'Excellent' and several 'Outstanding' rated projects and received recognition for our work with low-carbon and sustainable design awards. We have in-house 'Advanced' level RIAS Sustainability, Eco Homes and Passivhaus accredited expertise.

  Austin-Smith:Lord are also accredited to ISO 14001 for our Environmental Management Systems. In designing low-carbon buildings and places we also seek to work in an environmentally responsible manner, to reduce our consumption of resources, work towards a paperless office regime and ultimately to reduce our environmental footprint.

- **Health and Safety**

  The well-being, health and safety of our staff and those whom construct, maintain and use our built projects is of paramount importance. Austin-Smith:Lord therefore obtain expert advice on health and safety from external consultants, Vita Safety. Our practice is accredited under the Contractors Health and Safety Assessment Scheme (CHAS).

  We regular audit our workplaces for Health and Safety and actively discharge our responsibilities under current Health and Safety and Construction and Design Management legislation, including regular training updates to staff with respect to current best practice.

- **Integrated Management Systems**

  Austin-Smith:Lord has been Quality Assurance certified for a considerable period of time. We continue to be ISO 9001 certified and therefore committed to continuing improvement in our internal systems and quality of service. Moreover, as one of the founding members of the Wren Insurance, we have been a contributing member of a highly respected mutual organisation for architects that has pioneered best practice with respect to Risk Management.

  This way of working aligns with a long-standing tradition of developing and applying clear, robust project management systems in our methodology. Mike and Innette Austin-Smith were instrumental in the development of the first RIBA Plan of Work and this focus on project management and contract administration persists today.

- **Information Technology**

  Austin-Smith:Lord were at the vanguard of incorporating IT into architectural practice, adopting Computer Aided Design (CAD) over three decades ago. Austin-Smith:Lord are now actively adopting Building Information Modelling (BIM), and have a programme of investment in hardware, software and staff training to ensure all technical staff become BIM literate.

- **Collaboration + Client Focussed**

  Austin-Smith:Lord enjoy collaborating with an array of renowned experts with whom we regularly work. As part of our Integrated Management Systems we ensure that the quality of service provided by all members of our team is coordinated and is of a consistently high standard.

We pride ourselves in our ability to develop an understanding and empathy of our client's and the end user needs for buildings and places we are designing. We work very closely with clients, end users and other stakeholders to seek to deliver designs that positively contribute to our environment.

Our Work

- **Design Quality**

  As members of various design professions we understand our responsibility to seek to execute high quality designs to better our environment. We take great satisfaction in the persistently positive feedback we receive from clients and end users on our completed projects. We undertake post occupancy, hindsight reviews with stakeholders to assess the quality and efficiency of our buildings and places in use. Moreover we assess the quality of service to our clients.

  We are consistently assessing our work and seeking to improve and learn lessons for future projects.

- **Our Awards**

  Whilst client and end-user satisfaction is of paramount importance we also take pride in the level of national recognition that our work receives via numerous design awards. This independent measure of our successful working relationship with clients and the communities with which we work is a useful benchmark against which we assess our performance.

  We have won over a hundred design awards and our work continues to secure recognition in high profile, prestigious national and local awards.

Our Actions

- **Engaging with Communities**

  We continually seek to engage with local communities within which we work. We have extensive experience of collaborating and engaging with end users, local communities and stakeholders through formal and informal activities. We have developed a range of techniques with which to engage, seeking to move away from outmoded 'predict and provide' ways of working towards adopting a 'debate and decide' approach to design.

  We have undertaken numerous design charrettes, embedding our design teams into the community within which we are actively working in and for. We also utilise conventional and new techniques to engage beyond the 'usual suspects' to ensure wider community participation and gain a more authentic understanding of the key issues and opportunities.

- **Promoting Our Cities**

  We are proud to be active the in each of the cities within which we are located. Senior members of staff in each studio are actively involved in the civic, charitable and business activities of the cities in which they are based.

  This includes membership of local Chambers of Commerce, Business Partnerships and Networks, board membership of Housing Associations, Charities and Community Councils.

  We are active participants in our local business communities and seek to engage in civic society to promote sustainable development of our respective cities.

- **Advancing our Professions**

  Austin-Smith:Lord has a long tradition of actively supporting our respective design professions. Several of our team have held high office and contributed to council's and committee within our national and local professional institutes. Moreover we also continue to provide professional examiners involved in assessing the capability of incoming members of our professions.

  We are a Chartered Practice of the RIBA and Landscape Institute.

  Several of our team regularly contribute to the public debate and advocacy of good design via the media, conferences and symposia. One of our Partners is currently the Deputy Chair of a non-departmental public body responsible as a national champion for architecture and design.

  Our individual and practice memberships include;

  Academy of Urbanism; Architects Accredited in Building Conservation (AABC); Architects Registration Board (ARB); British Standards Institution; Cardiff Business Club; Chartered Institute of Housing; Constructing Excellent South West; Forum for the Built Environment; Frank Matcham Society; Glasgow Chamber of Commerce; Landscape Institute; Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS); Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA); Royal Society of Architects in Wales (RSAW); Royal Town Planning Institute; Shakespeare North.

- **Encouraging Young People**

  We are committed to nurturing new talent and promoting our professions. We have a long-standing commitment to enabling practical training to talented undergraduate and graduate architects and landscape architects. We also assist in the training of students with several staff providing design tutoring at local Universities.

We also sponsor the Cardiff School of Art and Design – Student Design Award, have sponsored the Liverpool John Moore University Degree Show and organised high profile public lectures with University of Strathclyde in Glasgow.

We regularly facilitate work experience for school pupils. As part of our community engagement we regularly assist in facilitating design workshops with school and college pupils.

Several of our projects in the education sector have been utilised as 'learning tools' and we have undertaken presentations and shared our design information to enable young people to gain an insight into design and construction as part of their curriculum.

- **Improving Skills and Training**

  We are fully committed to ensuring all of our staff have Personal Development Plans that align with their specific individual needs and the overarching requirements of the practice. These training plans meet and exceed minimum standards required by our respective professional CPD. We consistently seek to achieve continuous improvement by enabling training. We allocate a minimum of 1% of turnover to staff training budgets and are actively seeking to increase this allocation year on year

- **Knowledge Management, Research and Development**

  We have adopted Knowledge Management as a means of collating and sharing our collective expertise in the design and construction of buildings and places. This resource enables us to share and learn as a creative collective.

  We have undertaken several pieces of Government commissioned research into architecture, design and planning. We are committed to Knowledge Exchange programmes with Universities within the cities we are based. We continue to seek opportunities to collaborate with academia, industry and our professions to advance our collective knowledge of our disciplines through research and development.

- **Living Wage**

  In recognition of our responsibilities to our staff we are committed to ensuring all our staff are paid a Living Wage, as defined by the Real Living Wage, for which we have accreditation.

- **Our Charitable Work**

  Individually and collectively the Austin-Smith:Lord team support numerous local and national charities. We have a senior member of staff that is a trustee of a national charity. We undertake group fundraising for adopted charities involving challenging and endurance activities. We also participate in numerous industry charity events and contribute to other fundraising.

Charities whom we've recently supported include; Operation Christmas Child UK, Red Nose Day, Multiple Sclerosis Society and Cancer Care Scotland.

Charity Days

We have a "pool" of charity days in each studio, based on staff numbers, which can be applied for by staff to undertake charitable or community activities.

Activities could include, for example:

- Working with a local charity (e.g. working in homeless centre or food bank, helping the infirm, disabled or terminally ill)
- Working with underprivileged or disabled children or the elderly – assisting with days out or activities
- Fundraising activities/initiatives for charities; collecting donations
- Assisting with local community/charity projects – improving the local environment by volunteering to garden, maintain facilities, etc
- Helping raise awareness of architecture/landscape/design in local schools or youth groups through participation in stewardship of local environment.

We support and encourage our staff to apply on a collective or individual basis.



Graham Ross
Chief Executive Officer
Executive Director
For Austin-Smith:Lord Ltd

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