

BOOK REVIEW

RED MAN GREEN MAN

by Jayne Cox, David Fell and Mark Thurstain-Goodwin

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Red Man Green Man is a beautifully written and presented publication available from the RICS Foundation. It concerns indicators of urban sustainability, and the title and imagery are derivative of pedestrian signals that guide and warn people about their journey decisions. While the authors make it clear that sustainability means different things to different people in different places, there is a general conclusion that the construction and property industries need to engage in the sustainable development debate if they hope to effectively influence the setting of policies and targets rather than have a vision of urban sustainability thrust upon them.

The structure of the publication is to look first at contextual issues, then review existing urban sustainability indicators, and finally discuss issues and implications for practice. The simple structure is logical and contains examples and links for the reader to pursue independently if required. However, if the reader is interested in finding detailed information about existing urban sustainability indicators then s/he would be disappointed. This is not the intention of the publication anyway.

While the target audience is stated as being "interested general readers", it seems to focus too much on high level strategies and

philosophies, and insofar as it is trying to make a case for a more active role by our industry, it may in fact fail to encourage it by its lack of "ready to use" solutions. Nevertheless it is an interesting account of how the basic triple bottom line approach informs and frames the development of performance indicators. An important point is that these indicators are more likely to identify trends over time for particular locations than calculate specific benchmarks that can be compared globally. Sustainability is perhaps more about making things better than reaching set goals.

While the topic is obviously global, the discussion does suffer slightly from a UK-centric outlook, which could have been more readily concealed. However it is an important and timely contribution to a debate that is ongoing and a problem that is arguably never-ending. It forms a useful platform for further studies into specific indicators, their relevance, how they work, what they measure and how they relate to practice, and hopefully this publication will be the start of a series by the RICS Foundation into this topical and critical field.

The price of the publication is £17.99 and details can be found at <http://www.rics-foundation.org> or from the RICS.