

Why and how

Better Public Buildings

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), created by this Government, is charged, among other things, with promoting good design in public sector building projects. This is largely carried out via 'project enabling', where a CABE commissioner or representative works with a client team to help in areas including selection of consultants, brief writing, advice on competitions, and improvement of procurement procedures. CABE is available to provide help and advice, on design and design procurement, for government departments, other public organisations and private sector clients. It is also promoting quality through committees covering design review, regions, education and technology.

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For example CABE is working with the Sure Start team to provide advice and encouragement to local clients, so that each Sure Start centre carries a message of excellence and encouragement. CABE is also working with the Courts Service on projects in Exeter, Bristol, Cambridge and Ipswich to ensure that new courts built under the PFI have design excellence as a priority from the outset.

The priority in the future must be for the public sector to become a smarter client. To achieve that government and other public bodies should:

Continue:

- Acknowledging the fundamental importance of design leadership as a key function within an integrated project team to provide best value for the client.
- Encouraging high expectations in respect of the design standards expected for all public realm developments.
- Working with CABE and other bodies to promote the importance of design.
- Implementing the recommendations of the Construction Task Force and Achieving Excellence programme to improve quality and value for money in construction.
- Developing key performance indicators for design quality within construction programmes.
- Promoting the civic ethos which is crucial to improved built environments nation-wide.
- Encouraging the creation of regional architecture centres to promote good design and community involvement systematically throughout the country.
- Introducing procurement arrangements that enable specialist suppliers to contribute to the design development from the outset.
- Demanding buildings on time, in line with their original budget and without defects.

Opposite: The Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh has shown how new architecture can work successfully in an historic setting. **Architect:** Benson & Forsyth.



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Stop:

- Regarding good design as an optional extra.
- Treating lowest cost as best value.
- Valuing initial capital cost as more important than whole-life cost.
- Treating buildings as purely functional plant without civic significance.
- Imagining that effectiveness and efficiency are divorced from design.
- Being frightened to take calculated risks.
- Assuming that the public does not care.

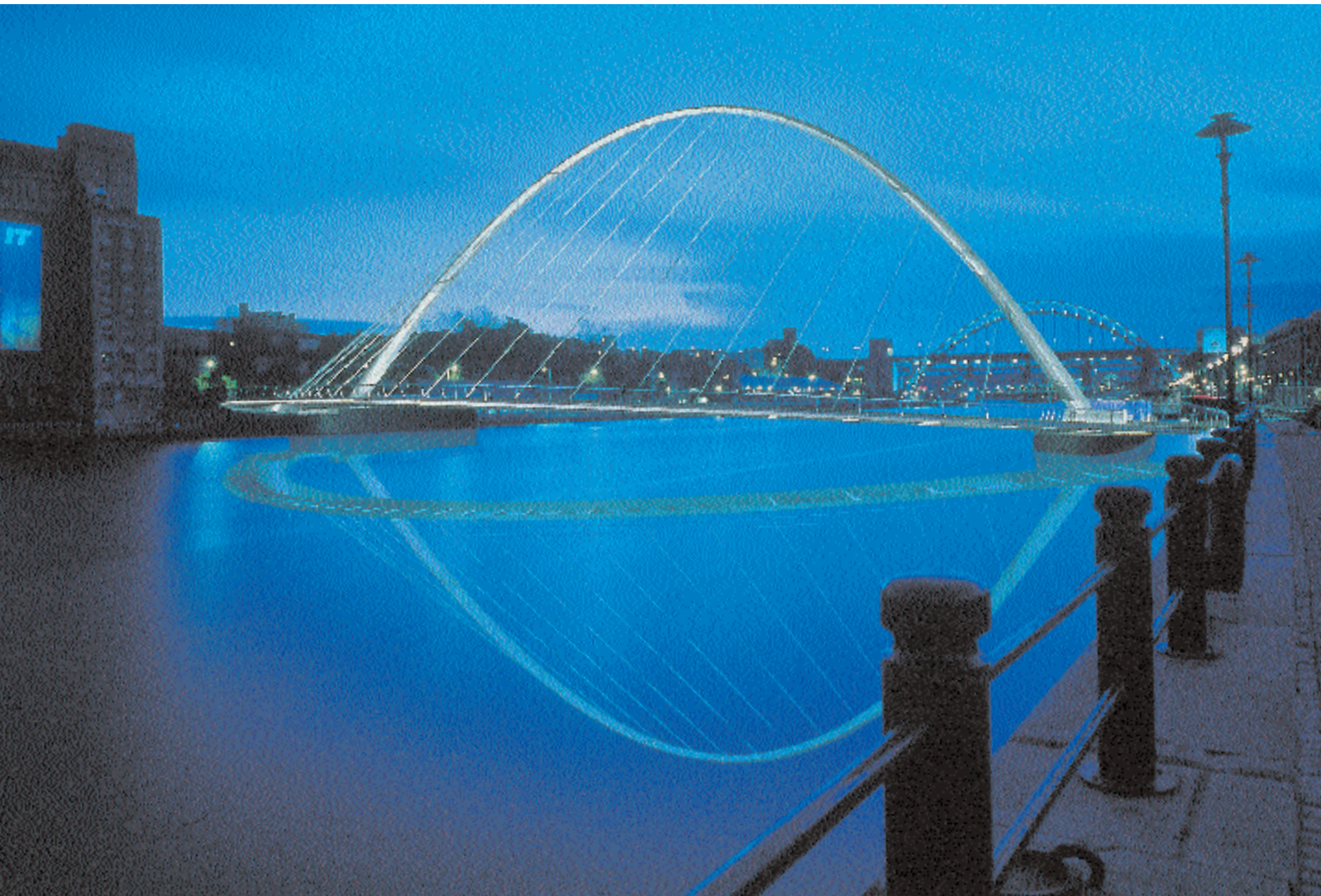
Start:

- Identifying the high-level post which should incorporate the role of 'design champion' within government departments and other public bodies.
- Insisting that measures to ensure the appointment of good designers are reviewed by the design champion.
- Promoting high-quality design on PFI projects in line with Treasury Note 7.
- Supporting local authorities who apply good architectural and urban design standards, particularly to public sector projects.
- Encouraging planning authorities to insist on appropriately high design standards for public projects.
- Allowing enough design time for projects of real quality to emerge.
- Measuring efficiency and waste in construction.
- Appointing integrated teams focussing on the whole life impact and performance of a development.
- Encouraging longer-term relationships with integrated project teams as part of long-term programmes, always subject to rigorous performance review.
- Using whole-life costing in the value-for-money assessment of buildings.
- Ensuring there is single-point client responsibility for any given project, with authority.

Conclusion

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If these principles are followed we will be rewarded with attractive, aesthetically pleasing buildings which are fit for purpose and represent good value for money. Our public building stock, and the public realm which surrounds it, will be better appreciated, will last longer, will work better, and will better represent our civic aspirations.



Above: The design of the Millennium Bridge in Gateshead shows how the ordinary can through design become extraordinary. **Architect:** Wilkinson Eyre Architects. **Photographer:** Positive Image.