

UK BIM FRAMEWORK

Where Change Matters:

At the heart of the UK BIM Framework¹ is a very simple premise – that we need to improve how we use information to support better decision making across the whole life of the built and natural environment. Fundamentally, this requires us to know how to identify, develop and use purpose-driven data to support better outcomes for the environment, the economy and society at large.

On the face of it, this should be enabled by four simple steps as shown in the first part of the international standard (ISO 19650 series) on which the Framework is based. Most of the principles within the UK BIM Framework were developed over 10 years ago in the UK through the original BIM Levels and UK Government’s 2016 BIM Mandate². But our understanding and approach has evolved and matured as lessons have been learnt, the principles tested, and our journey along what were originally defined as levels has progressed. The UK BIM Framework has been able to take on board this greater understanding and experience. It ensures that the scope encompasses all the built and natural environment and covers whole life. It also provides the foundations for and assists wider digitalisation, including adoption of information interoperability and the exploitation of the information through digital twins.

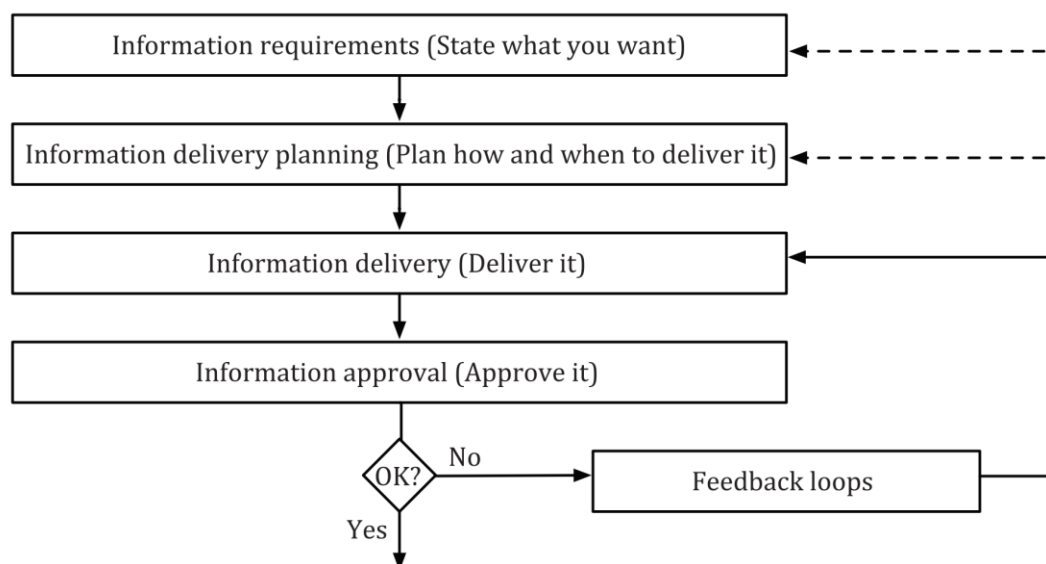


Figure 4 — Generic specification and planning for information delivery

(From BS EN ISO 19650:1)

The debate around “BIM” and the emphasis on “Better Information Management” and Information Management through whole life is discussed in another thought leadership piece “BIM to IM”³. Suffice to say, this is one reason why as the UK BIM Alliance⁴ strategy expands beyond just BIM, its current name creates a misconception that needs correcting.

¹ [UK BIM Framework – BIM Standards, Guides & Resources](#)

² [Building information modelling \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

³ [BIM to IM - Digital Construction Week](#)

⁴ [UK BIM Alliance](#)

What I would like to focus on here is who are, and should be, the players: the industries across the built environment where change needs to occur, or the technical “IM” experts. For me the emphasis should be on the former – the people and organisations where change needs to occur - and that is why over the next few months the UK BIM Alliance will be working hard to engage with a far greater range of those industries, and the people and the organisations involved. The Alliance was always intended to be open across the width and breadth of the built environment - no exceptions. For this reason, we wanted to avoid the need for membership or “club” status. The Alliance always was and still is literally open to all – whether that be an individual, or an organisation, but without needing to become “a member”. Whether public or private sector. Whether professional or academic. Whether a commercial company, an institution or a trade association.

It is clear however, that this is not understood – quite the opposite. The blunt feedback we are hearing is that the Alliance is seen as a group of technical experts which is difficult to break into. And this probably applies to the Exec team as well. We could try to deny that. Or we could take that feedback on board and do something about it. And that is just what we are going to do.

It is perhaps worth reflecting why we are at this point, to understand how to change. Firstly, we have tried to minimise the effort taken to run the organisation so that the vast majority of effort is spent on the activities which serve the built environment as a whole i.e. engagement with industry and enabling implementation. Secondly, a huge amount of effort has gone into standards development both for the original UK 1192 series, and the subsequent ISO 19650 series, under the auspices of the BSI. The Guidance, which forms a key part of the UK BIM Framework, is testament to the huge effort and dedication of the sector in supporting the shift to a better approach to managing information through the whole life of the built environment. We estimate that something in the order of 4000 days of pro bono/voluntary effort has been spent developing the Guidance, with representation across the built environment sector, from clients through to manufacturers and operators. This has been facilitated by the UK BIM Alliance.

The difficulty we face is that whilst the force behind development of the Guidance has been as an alliance bringing people together to work “for industry, by industry”, it has become too closely associated with all the baggage that the acronym “BIM” engenders. Ironically, by forming a guidance team, the Alliance seems to have been seen increasingly as a closed group which was largely inward looking. Furthermore, by taking a rigorous approach to developing guidance within the context of closely following the ISO 19650 series, the Alliance has then developed something of a reputation as “the BIM Police”.

This is far from the intent and vision of the organisation. Firstly, our focus is on improving the overall management of information through whole life, by enabling a practical implementation of the ISO 19650 series within a UK context. It is only right and proper that the governance of the UK BIM Framework supports the IM Mandate⁵ which has developed out of the Infrastructure and Project Agency (IPA)’s Transforming Infrastructure Performance (TIP): Roadmap to 2030⁶, as well as the call for its use in the CLC’s Construction Playbook⁷. But the target audience for the Framework, and where change needs to happen, is not the IM specialists, but the people and the organisations who are involved with the wider sector of the built environment. As such the Framework needs to land with a non-technical audience – and this needs to be the main drive for the Alliance.

⁵ [The UK BIM Alliance responds to the publishing of the Information Mandate \(IM\) – UK BIM Alliance](#)

⁶ [IPA TIP Roadmap to 2030 v6_1 .pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

⁷ [The Construction Playbook » Construction Leadership Council](#)

It is fair to say that we are by no means complacent as to the extent to which the job has been achieved. We have a long way to go to make the Framework compelling, accessible and comprehensible to a greater number and broader range of industry. And we need to understand how best to do this.

As I write I am watching a woodpecker desperately clinging onto a bird feeder during Storm Erwen – while the food is perfect for him, the receptacle most certainly isn't and he's in danger of flying off in a huff and not coming back. Yep – off he goes.

In similar vein, the content of the ISO 19650 series is incredibly valuable to the built environment sector at large. But is useless if it cannot be served up to different audiences and users in a way which can be easily consumed in a compelling and practicable manner.

It is this therefore that we want to focus on in the coming months. Firstly, to ensure we are speaking to our intended audience and not simply talking to ourselves. Secondly, that we focus now on making the Framework accessible and comprehensible to a far wider audience. They may not be able or wish to know the intricacies of what goes on behind the scenes so to speak. And neither do they need to. But they do need to understand the importance and value of the information concerning their aspect of the built or natural environment. And they do need to know in simple terms what they need to do from their own perspective to ensure that the right information is available at the right time, to the right people and in the right, secure way.

One of our challenges is how we ensure that this whole activity serves the sector as a whole – acting as an enabler rather than any change seeming to be “done to them”. This is where I think we need a major change in how the UK BIM Alliance is perceived. Being incorrectly perceived as “for industry” using a technical clique of which it is hard to become a part is so far from our intention. The vast majority of our activity should be focused on the how and who, and actively involve those who will affect the change i.e., focus on “by industry” as shown in figure one. The Alliance is not about membership of a group of overbearing experts – the reality is quite the opposite. Experienced practitioners remain important and serve the needs of industry: they are, however, a small part of the Alliance. The larger part should be a coming together of those striving to understand or to affect the change required in their organisation.

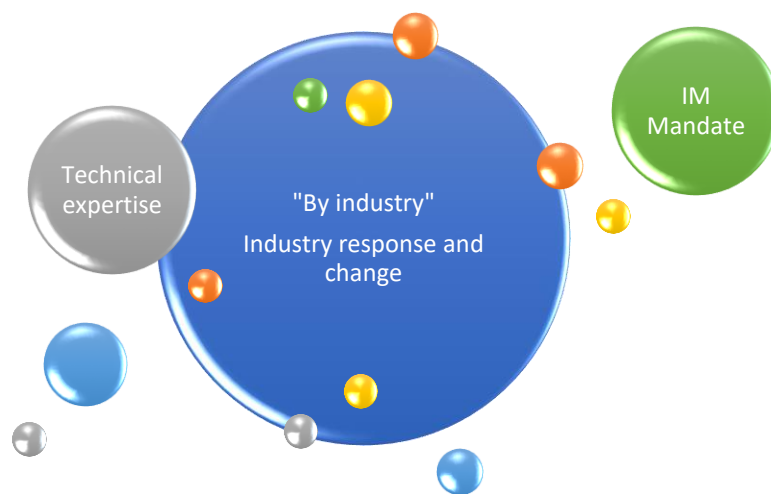


Figure One: The priorities and drive for the organisation going forward.

The IM Mandate and the UK BIM Framework communicate the “why” and the “what”. As previously discussed, much energy has been spent over the past 10 years on helping to define the “what” through standards development and more recently the Guidance. That effort has been so valuable, and everyone involved should be wholeheartedly thanked for doing this. Some of that work will continue. But that effort needs to be put into good effect. The larger part of the energy and involvement now needs to swing to activity within and across the whole of the built environment sector, to affect the change. This will likely involve sharing understanding of why and how to respond to the IM Mandate, and converting the UK BIM Framework into practical steps forward, through sharing experience - the frustrations and blockers - alongside strategies, methods and tools which have been established, are being discovered, or can jointly be developed to help the majority move forward. And there will be others who will be able and want to help on that journey – and the Alliance is keen to build on and strengthen relations across the sector with all those who have a role to play.

Managing information for its own sake is pointless. Remembering and demonstrating how digital information management can be an enabler for solving real-world challenges and regulatory requirements is key. Making sure that we help all those involved in the built environment – and indeed its interface with the natural world - to transform through exploiting purpose driven data is our vision and our commitment.

If the Alliance is to fulfil its vision, it needs to provide the means for a coming together of people and organisations wanting help – with this being the larger proportion of our energy and focus, with a smaller coming together of technical expertise serving the needs of the wider sector. This then is the driving principle behind our refreshed strategy and the incentive behind changing our name.

Dr Anne Kemp OBE, Chair UK BIM Alliance and Co-Chair of the UK BIM Framework Strategy Board