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with our new Head of Sustainability

This year saw the appointment of Richard Quartermaine as the Head of Sustainability at U&C. We posed some questions to him to get his insights into this new position for the business and the journey ahead.

Q. After a number of years working in the commercial sector, why did you decide to work in the residential sector?

A. I switched sectors because I am passionate about the need to build good quality homes and communities that are also sustainable environmentally, socially and economically. It is essential to do this if we want to meet global and national climate goals and the needs of society. I therefore wanted to apply my skills and experience to make a difference in this sector.

Q. What attracted you to join U&C?

A. U&C are the leading master developer and have demonstrated an impressive record to date of delivering long-term sustainable developments. With the formulation of the Sustainability Framework and Toolkits and bold future commitments, it was a great opportunity to lead the realisation of these ambitions with the backing of a business dedicated to doing the right thing.

Q. What key challenges and opportunities does the sustainability agenda present to U&C?

A. U&C have already identified the universal challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and the health and wellbeing crisis as being material risks to the business, the residential industry and wider society.

There are also future challenges we need to be cognisant of such as water availability and climate resilience, which we are addressing and mitigating their potential impacts. Our approach to sustainability is another way we can demonstrate our commitment to delivering high quality

places and this in turn adds value to what we do at a number of levels. In addition, our approach to low carbon design and resource efficiency does offer us the opportunity to help rationalise infrastructure provision and reduce energy demands meaning there is a financial advantage too.

Q. What are the key aspects of your role?

A. U&C have already put sustainability firmly on their agenda and developed an ambitious long term strategy. It's now about delivering sustainable residential development based upon the corner stones the business have already put in place. Although I will be directing and leading the delivery against the U&C commitments, everyone in the business will be required to contribute and my role is to support this from a technical, behavioural and cultural perspective. In addition, horizon scanning for new industry best practice and disseminating it across U&C is also key to ensure we are continuously stretching ourselves and being ambitious and innovative.

Q. How are you working with U&C's partners and housebuilders?

A. Engagement on sustainability is critical with our partners, local authorities, supply chain and housebuilders to deliver our committed outcomes. An example of this is working with our consultant teams and contractors to help develop our carbon management framework during the past year, because we recognise they will be a critical part of the implementation process and will provide the data we need to assess and report against our carbon footprint.

Working with housebuilders to understand mutual challenges and how we can work

together to achieve better outcomes is also important. We are therefore hosting a housebuilder sustainability forum every six months with some of our key housebuilding partners to understand progress being made and to explore how we can help them move faster on this agenda.

Q. What are your priorities for the year ahead?

A. U&C recognise the severity of the climate challenge and therefore we are developing a plan towards being a Net Zero business by 2040 (Scope 1, 2 and 3). This requires significant action to reduce our carbon emissions. We have undertaken a lot of work in the past year to measure our carbon footprint across all sites, set that benchmark and then determine how we can reduce it. We need to further embed this work in the business and ensure it's reflected in all decision making. This includes looking at how resilient U&C are to the physical and transitional risks posed by climate change on our sites and within the wider business strategy.

Another priority is to continually engage employees and our supply chain to develop the culture of sustainability so that it becomes second nature in everything we do, akin to our health and safety culture. We will do this through the establishment of sustainability champions across the business, regular performance updates and including sustainability in project business plans and business unit performance reviews.

Now that we have launched the Sustainability Framework we need to continue working towards our 2025 targets and that will be a focus for the year ahead.