



I A B S E

British Group

Future of Design

Cambridge, 2026

Welcome

Welcome to **Future of Design** Cambridge 2026, a conference for early career designers, engineers and architects.

Future of Design is an event that has been running for twenty-five years and the first conference also took place in Cambridge. As a student, I attended the second iteration and it inspired me to commit to a career in design and engineering—with speakers who spoke of the passion and excitement that comes from working in the challenging world of the built environment.

Since then, **Future of Design** has taken place all over the country, and now takes place twice a year. The mix of inspiration and communication has remained unchanged, and today we are excited to return to Cambridge for the first time in twenty years.

We are hosting a lineup of distinguished speakers who are thought leaders in their respective fields. With their profound insights and groundbreaking contributions, these speakers will share their expertise, discussing the changes that are driving the evolution of design and shaping the future of our built environment.

Today's conference has been organised by members of the IABSE British Group Executive Committee, with leadership from Daniel Dalton and assistance from the Cambridge University Engineering Department. Particular thanks goes to Dr. Jurgen Becque (Lecturer in Structural Engineering).

Enjoy the day; I hope it will be as inspiring for you as it continues to be for me!

David Knight

Chair, IABSE British Group



IABSE British Group

IABSE is the International Association for Bridge and Structural Engineering. We are engineers, architects and designers who are passionate about what we do. We create an environment in which discussion can flourish, young professionals can be inspired, and like-minded people can collaborate on the future of the built environment.

Spanning 100 countries worldwide, IABSE is dedicated to sharing and disseminating knowledge and expertise among its members.

The British Group (founded in 1930) represents those that currently live or work in the UK by organising inspirational lectures, site visits and conferences, as well as awarding annual prizes for excellence in design and communication.

IABSE facilitates international networking, collaboration and exchange of information among its members, and is the foremost international engineering Association supporting its members in a worldwide and productive collaboration regardless of linguistic, economic and political differences.



Programme

09:00	Opening and welcome	David Knight
09:15	Keynote 1	Simon Smith
10:00	Keynote 2	Niamh McCloskey
10:45	Coffee Break	CUED Canteen
11:05	Keynote 3	Anna Wendt
11:50	Panel discussion	Research into practice - how does the link between the two need to change in an age of climate emergency
12:30	Lunch	Lecture Theatre 11
13:15	Research and projects papers	Natalia Papadantonaki
13:30	Research and projects papers	David Hoyle
13:45	Research and projects papers	Manjola Caro
14:00	Keynote 4	Victoria Martin
14:45	Coffee Break	CUED Canteen
15:05	Keynote 5	Arianna Levantesi
15:50	Keynote 6	Chris Matthews
16:35	Summary and close	David Knight
16:45	Conference End	Panton Arms

Coffee will be available in the CUED Canteen (up one level from Lecture Room 6)

Lunch will be in Lecture Theatre 11 (see map) or in the courtyard if the weather is good.

After the conference, please feel free to join us for a social drink at the Panton Arms (43 Panton St, Cambridge CB2 1HL; <https://maps.app.goo.gl/nhzAJeYevCWt3Ase8>)

Speakers

Simon Smith (Smith and Wallwork)

Simon is a co-founder of Smith and Wallwork and a chartered structural engineer. He has worked on a huge variety of building projects ranging from small bespoke houses through to super-tall buildings. Simon works closely with clients and design teams from the very early stages of a project to get the optimum solution. Recently he has been focusing on reducing the environmental impact of construction and materials used. His work in the field was recognised by the 'Green Guru' engineering award from Building magazine. Past and recent projects include: The Forum in Norwich, The Berlin Stock Exchange, Milton Keynes Theatre and Art Gallery, and the re-modelling and refurbishment of the historic Somerset House Easy Wing.



Niamh McCloskey (Curtins)

Niamh is a chartered structural engineer and environmentalist with 10 years' experience, working as a Technical Associate in Sustainability at Curtins. Her structural background spans healthcare and education projects and complex refurbishment schemes, whilst her current role is as the technical lead for project and operational sustainability. Niamh's focus areas include embodied carbon, circular economy, and driving sustainable business practices across the organisation. Niamh sits on the IStructE Climate Emergency Task Group and also the Association of Consulting Engineers Climate Change Group.



Anna Wendt (Buro Happold)

Anna is a Partner and Global Discipline Director of Façade Engineering at Buro Happold and a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers. Her focus is on interdisciplinary project delivery, extending her deep technical façade expertise to bring together a range of highly specialist engineering disciplines. Anna is passionate and focused on maximising the opportunities within the building fabric to ensure an empathetic, climate conscious approach is taken to building design incorporating practical solutions to measuring embodied carbon and operational carbon ultimately aiming to deliver resilient net-zero solutions for the built environment.



Victoria Martin (BDP)

Victoria is an award-winning structural engineer and Fellow of the IStructE. She has led a wide range of complex projects and collaborated with internationally renowned architects including Ian Ritchie, Daniel Libeskind, Renzo Piano and Hopkins. Her portfolio includes major projects such as the Great Ormond Street Hospital Cancer Centre, the restoration of Leighton House Museum, and a new laboratory complex for the John Innes Centre. She is currently the civil



and structural lead on the Palace of Westminster Restoration and Renewal Programme. Victoria is actively involved in the wider profession, having served as a trustee of the IStructE and on the RIBA Awards jury. She also contributes to education and mentoring across the industry.



Arianna Levantesi (Knight Architects)

Arianna is a chartered architect with six years' experience in the design of bridges and infrastructure, working as Advanced Bridge Designer at Knight Architects. During this time, she has led projects ranging from complex international infrastructure programmes to specialised structures in highly sensitive contexts, including heritage sites. Her work focuses on developing refined, context-responsive designs that balance technical constraints with the needs of landscape, communities and users. Arianna is particularly interested in collaborative design processes and in using stakeholder engagement to shape infrastructure that creates a positive and responsible impact on its surroundings.



Christopher Matthews (Atelier One)

Christopher is an Associate Director at Atelier One. With projects spanning unique buildings, global stadium shows, and record-breaking art installations. Atelier One specializes in briefs that go beyond traditional practice. His portfolio includes the London 2012 Olympic Ceremonies, the UK's first concrete shell in 25 years (First Light Pavillion at Jodrell Bank), and the re-purposing of the SEE Monster oil platform. Passionate about the next generation of design, Christopher is a leading advocate for regenerative materials and geometrical optimization. He is currently championing the structural use of bamboo in the UK.

We have three research and project papers. These are:

Natalia Papadantonaki (Department of Architecture, University of Cambridge): *Preference Learning AI for the Selection of Fabrication-Efficient High-Curvature Extrusion Geometries*

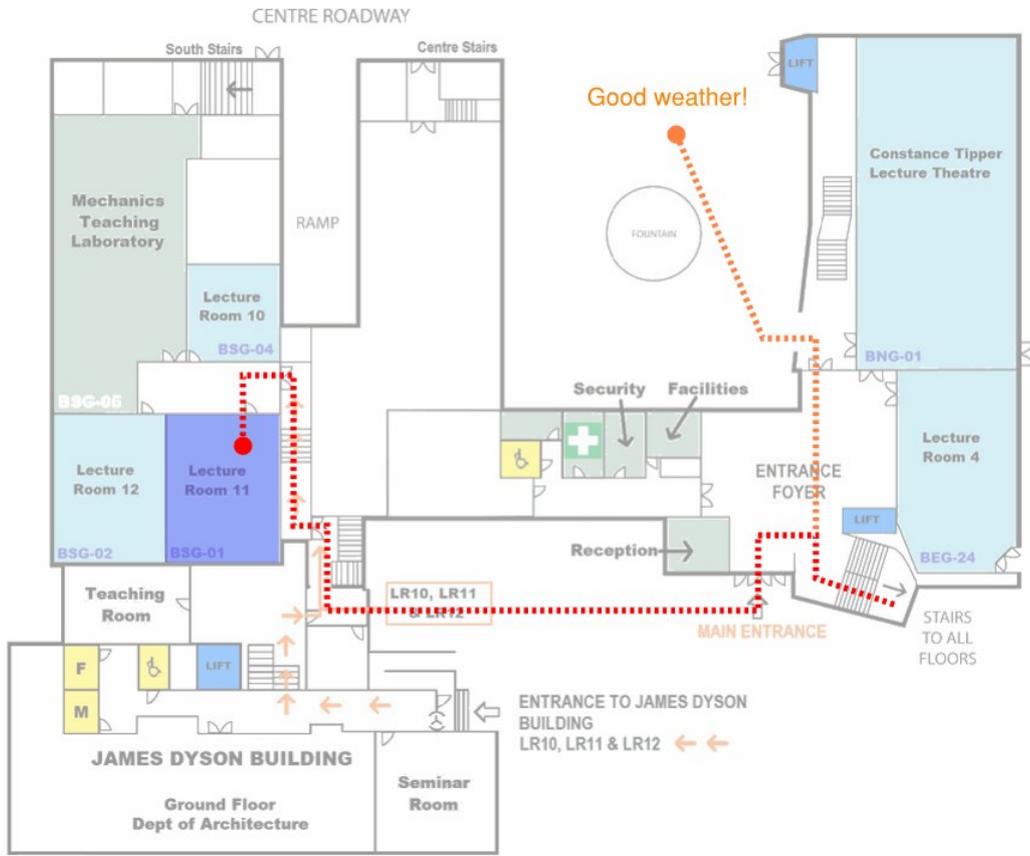
David Hoyle (Mott MacDonald): *Timber and stone bridges: will ancient materials become the Future of Design?*

Manjola Caro (University of Bristol): *Bond Performance of FRP Bars in Low-Carbon Geopolymer Concrete*

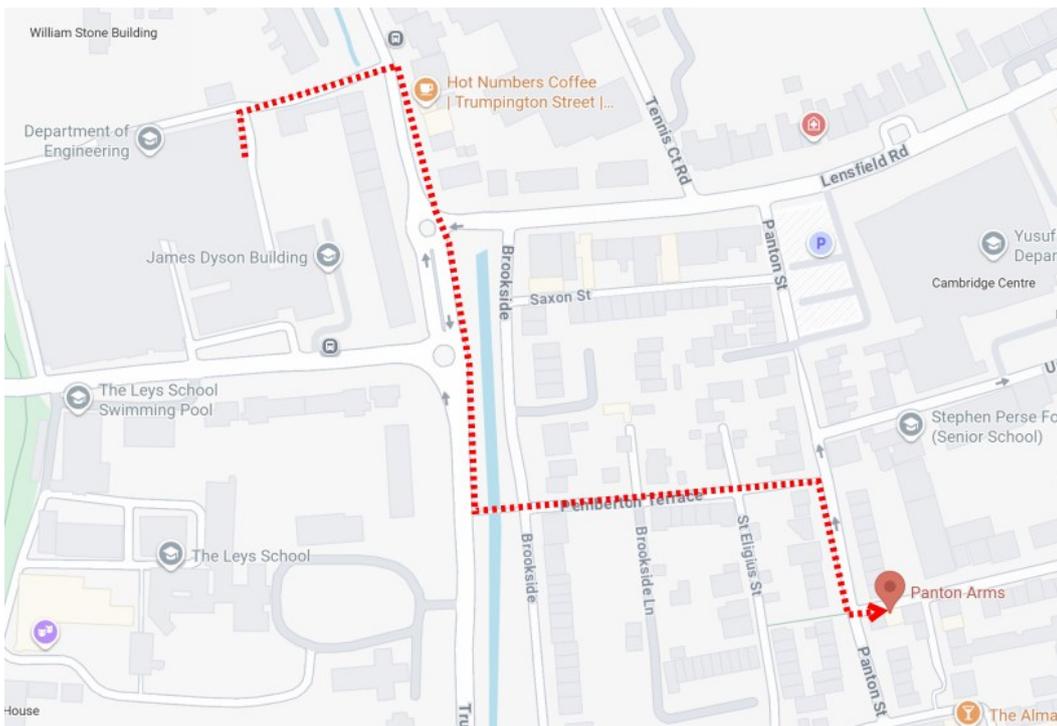
Full papers are available on the conference website:

<https://iabse.org.uk/future-of-design-cambridge-2026/>

Maps



Lunch



Post event