

Editorial 2  
 Chair's Report 3  
 Events 3  
 Review 7  
 Book Review 8

**PLANNING: What's going on?**

**4-5**

**Wastelands: Artists in Regeneration**

**7**



The official magazine of the Scottish Ecological Design Association, PO Box 14167, Tranent, East Lothian, EH33 2YG

# Sust.org Launched

by Fionn Stevenson

At first glance, the new site for Sustainable Design in Scotland ([www.Sust.org](http://www.Sust.org)), provided by The Lighthouse Centre for Architecture, looks slick and possibly light. But don't be deceived, underneath the minimalist design for this new website lies a wealth of useful information as a result of this year-long £600,000 project. Launched on April 1st 2004, with a quiet fanfare, the site hosts a variety of case studies, tools and project histories, all related to the Scottish context.

It has been confirmed that The Lighthouse will receive another £200,000 each year for the next three years from the Scottish Executive to promote sustainable design in Scotland. One key lesson to be learnt from the original Sust.org initiative is the need for continuity and the embedding of projects into ongoing development processes. The

Lighthouse will need to consult and plan more strategically this time if it is to ensure an increase in value of the initiative. There is now a real opportunity to plan activities which reinforce each other and build up a genuine synergy between different partners, thus avoiding any re-inventing of the green wheel.

SEDA is a lead partner for 2 new websites within Sust.org. The EcoDesign Gateway, hosts over 400 sites which you can select on a local, Scottish, European or Global basis while The Green Directory is a web-catalogue of Scottish products and services related to ecological design, which is again based on local sourcing.

Searching is easy; you can either select to browse through the Gateway and Directory by category, or region, or both. The sites are well worth

visiting, whether you are a "green" expert or not, as there are a number of unusual sites referenced (bog timber, anyone?) as well as the usual suspects. Possibly the most useful aspect of the Gateway site is that it provides a web-shorthand for busy people trying to find information in a hurry on a particular topic.

Plans are already underway to ensure that the Gateway and Directory sites are properly maintained through a continuing partnership between The Lighthouse and SEDA. In the meantime, we would very much like to encourage SEDA members to tell the SEDA administrator of their favourite websites or green Scottish Products - we can add these to the Gateway and Directory on an ongoing basis.

Go test drive [www.sust.org](http://www.sust.org) today and see what it can do for you.....

## RIAS Sustainable Accreditation Proceeds

by Sebastian Tombs

Latest news from the RIAS on the pilot project for sustainable design accreditation, undertaken over the last year, indicates that 13 architects have been accredited, and will shortly receive their certificates.

The assessors for the pilot were: Raymond Young (Chair), Fionn Stevenson and Lori McElroy, ensuring that existing practitioners received an objective view.

All levels of accreditation were submitted, and are represented in the list - including the "star" rating for innovation. The full list of those accredited is shown on page 6.

The assessors are meeting over the summer to refine the scheme in order to streamline the procedure in future, and an invited seminar is proposed for those involved in the first phase on the 9th of September, to consider how best to take the project forward. The aim will be to keep the scheme inclusive and encourage practitioners to "get on the ladder". Even applications with only one case study can be eligible, but the assessors are keen to see completed projects and hear from the users as to their efficacy.

The RIAS will be publishing the list alongside its set of conservation accredited architects in its forthcoming Directory, and will be providing information on both accreditation schemes to enquirers and potential clients.

... continued on page 6

## SEDA Wins Grant to Produce Green Detailing Guides!

In March SEDA submitted for a Sustainable Action Grant from the Scottish Executive to prepare 3 Detailing Guides. Confirmation was received in May that we were successful.

The Guides will target mainstream, commercial details and seek to offer 'green' alternatives based on the principles of Design for Deconstruction, Airtightness and Chemical Free products.

... continued on page 2

## Art and Place

In this edition we feature the work of three Artists with a particular interest in places and the effects and implications of places on people and the wider environment.



The images below, are taken by Dan Dubowitz, of whom more can be read on page 7. While on page 6 the work of Bruce McLean and Alastair Mack is previewed.



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# Editorial

by Chris Morgan



## Art and Place

"Place Matters". So says Margaret Curran in her introduction to the National Planning Framework for Scotland. She continues "We must of course embrace the challenges of the global economy but our people are rooted in our cities, towns and villages."

I'm not sure whether either of these two statements is true. Of course it is heresy to intimate that permanent economic growth is not always a good thing. But leaving that aside, are people really rooted in our cities, towns and villages? How much do we really belong, do we know our neighbours, the local traditions, stories, and even dialect, the immediate landscape and seasons, the local plants and wildlife, weather patterns and soil conditions and so on? In ways that mattered a great deal in the past, most of us are hopelessly ignorant of our places.

Many will argue that such things don't matter so much now, yet we do

appear to sense the loss. We like the old places and this is not just because they are old, but because they express much of the rootedness to place which we appear to have lost.

It is not overly contentious to say that the art of placemaking is largely dead and this is not surprising because our shared sense of place, our knowledge of place, our belief in the power of place to really contribute is also largely dead, or at least asleep. The formal guardians of our places are Planners and Politicians, the moral guardians of our places are often people who can exercise very little control over what becomes of the places they cherish. The greater involvement of people in the Planning process is something exercising the mind of the Scottish Executive at present and it can only be hoped that a meaningful platform can be created, and then used to its full, by the people who live in the places of Scotland.

Even the most graceless of placemaking still has to take some account of access, slope, views and fairly banal planning legislation. SEDA members probably agree that this can be taken a bit further: orientation and microclimate, local skills and materials matter, ground conditions are important not just because of foundation design and drainage, foliage more important than just decoration.

But what about the further and deeper realms of placemaking? Christopher Day maintained that the characteristic of places is that they have been formed by a stream of

(cultural and ecological) past events, an important dimension which rarely figures in our considerations. Many people do know their locale intimately, and there are those, like Day, Alexander (reviewed back page) and others who have investigated the art of placemaking at a greater depth of human responsiveness, but these investigations are seen as largely peripheral.

And yet, if Christian Norberg Schulz maintained that, "Human identity pre-supposes the identity of place." If this is true, then a more searching study of place is not peripheral, but of central importance.

SEDA has grappled with these more etheric questions in the past but it is interesting to note the success of the artists featured in this issue who appear to have found a fertile seam for such discussions and who are beginning to enable such serious questions to be asked, sometimes in the most unlikely places!

The theme of this issue of the journal is Art and Place. In it we take a look at the forthcoming changes in the Planning process which will have far reaching implications for all of us, and our places, and we throw the spotlight on three artists who have, in their own ways, but significantly through the medium of art, found ways of addressing the need to think more fundamentally about places and what they mean to us. In the grand tradition of previous SEDA magazines there is so much to include that the theme takes up less of the issue than we had anticipated, but nonetheless, I hope you enjoy it.

## New Members

We warmly welcome:

- Brian Hulton, PDQ Omis Ltd, Montrose
- John Brennan, School of Arts, Culture & Environment, University of Edinburgh
- Naomi Gibson, Newtown Stewart, Galloway
- Hugh Raven, Environmental Consultant, Argyll
- Oliver Chapman, Architect, Edinburgh
- Kim Pallas, Logie Solar, Dundee
- The Parr Partnership, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Gateshead and Birmingham
- Eddie Reid, Architect, Berwickshire
- Bobb Foggo, Architectural Policy Unit, Scottish Executive
- David Hamilton, CAD Technician, Edinburgh
- Marion Rose, Monimail Tower, Fife
- Alister Eden, Student, Glasgow School of Art
- Grace Troccoli, Chicago Center for Green Technology
- and Thomas Cook, Joulesave EMES Ltd., Grantham
- John Forster, Sustainable Development Consultant, Aberdeenshire
- Kirsty Maguire, Bennetts Associates, Edinburgh

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With a well-equipped facility and a sound knowledge of how to design in and work with wood, we can manufacture almost any specialist requirement in wood. From the outset we have specialised in the supply of and, where possible, we manufacture all of our products exclusively from Scottish timbers.

We are keen to continue our involvement in the prototype development, manufacturing and supply of new and innovative products

which make use of this important, local resource.

We make and supply Glulam Beams of up to 15m long, 900mm wide and 200mm thick and other examples of our more innovative products include a one-off pre-manufactured dwelling house for Loch Broom (developed in collaboration with Bernard Planterose of North Woods) and (the prototype for) the Timber Lighting Columns developed and supplied for Aviemore.

For further information on lighting columns or other products please contact NorBuild on (01309) 676865 or e-mail [norbuild@marcassie.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:norbuild@marcassie.fsnet.co.uk).

We also have a page on the ASHS website at [www.ashs.co.uk](http://www.ashs.co.uk).



Thanks to our sponsors **Norbuild** and to everyone who has contributed to this issue. If you have any views or letters you would like published please send them marked for the attention of the Editor to; SEDA, PO Box 14167, Tranent, East Lothian, EH33 2YG

The **SEDA Magazine** is put together by Steve Malone, Chris Morgan and Jim Johnson. While we hope you find the articles and features of interest we would point out that they do not always represent the opinions of SEDA or our sponsors.

## SEDA Wins Grant for Green Detailing Guides

... continued.

One Guide will be produced every year for the next three years and a major event will accompany the publication of the Guide in March.

The first will be on Design for Deconstruction, and an extract from this, along with a review of the Deconstruction event held in Glasgow earlier this year will be included in the next journal.

For more Info contact Gill or Fionn.



# Events

## SEDA Summer Events

Thursday, 15 July

### Krystyna Johnston Student Travel Award

Holyrood Park Education Centre  
Edinburgh, 6.00pm

An informal evening in Holyrood Park during which entries for the 2004 Krystyna Johnson Student Travel Award will be reviewed and the winner announced. Refreshments will be provided and speakers are being arranged. Full details to follow.

Wednesday, 25 August

### Mole Architects Talk

RIAS Headquarters, 15 Rutland Square, Edinburgh, 6.00 pm

Meredith Bowles will talk about the Black House (pictured, right) and others he has designed around Ely. He believes there is more interest in ecological design in Scotland than in England, and is looking forward to meeting members of SEDA.

<http://www.molearchitects.co.uk/>

### Review: SEDA Summer BBQ & Sitka Slab Presentations, Gogie House, near Dundee

About 40 SEDA members and others gathered on Sunday 19th June at the home of France and Clare Smoor.

France and his assistant Ian Morrison (pictured, with Mark Thomasson) explained the benefits of their sitka slab construction (featured in an earlier edition) and we were given an opportunity to investigate at first hand, leading to much debate about lime, shrinkage, dpcs and so on!

While some took a tour of the estate, a small group of members revisited the discussions held at Creetown in November last year. What follows is a quick summary of the agreements (full summary on the web, together with the previous Creetown Papers):

## Other Events

Friday - Saturday, 9-10 July

### AECB Annual Conference & AGM

The Weald and Downland Museum  
Surrey

Members' conference. Keynote speaker: Peter Harper, Head of Research and Innovation at the Centre for Alternative Technology. Peter was the originator of the term 'alternative technology' and is an old hand with an ever-fresh view on all things sustainable.

The Big Debate: Can green building materials significantly contribute to sustainability? Realistically, can we construct energy efficient buildings with conventional materials that will deliver the UK's CO2 reduction targets?

Contact: Ali Poole Tel 01285 841208.

Full details on the AECB web site: <http://www.aecb.net>



SEDA will continue to be visionary in its approach and stick to ethical and ecological principles.

We agreed to aim to have a four-fold approach to providing information for both members and those visiting our website:

1. An FAQs/Articles pages to help

Saturday, 21 August

### Launch Celebration for UK's first completed Earthship

Kinghorn, Fife, 12.00 - 5.00pm

A launch to celebrate the completion of the Earthship, the day will bring together people and businesses who are interested in "zero waste" and thank the many volunteers who have been involved.

There will be exhibits featuring eco-tourism, green building supplies, renewable energy cars, and many others along with refreshments and activities for children, and local groups will be providing the music.

For more information about the event, arrangements for exhibitors, or for volunteering, please contact SCE at Tel. 01592 891 884 or e-mail [info@sci-scotland.org.uk](mailto:info@sci-scotland.org.uk)

<http://www.sci-scotland.org.uk/>

October (Dates tbc)

### Tour of Schools and Sustainable Buildings in Germany

Starting in Dortmund and ending in Stuttgart.

A proposed international tour, aimed at all involved in procuring and delivering Schools. 30 places are available, with 14 from Scotland within a budget of less than £1200.

Notes of interest to be made to: Gaia Group, The Monastery, Hart Street Lane, Edinburgh, EH1 3RG  
Tel: 0131 557 9191  
[architects@gaiagroup.org](mailto:architects@gaiagroup.org)

newcomers and widen info exchange  
2. Links to other sites (Sust, AECB ...)  
3. A Bulletin Board for members to share and build knowledge  
4. A personal contact number for the SEDA administrator

It was proposed to reduce the bulletin board to titles only, with those interested directed to the full updated list on the website. A corresponding email list could also be arranged for those wanting more contact with the daily goings on of the organisation, including minutes of the Steering group meetings, to encourage more involvement.

It was agreed to hold a Think Tank / SEDA Futures session bi-annually with the next scheduled for Christmas.

Thanks are due to all who contributed to the splendid BBQ which followed but particularly to France and Clare for their hospitality.

## View from the Chair

by Fionn Stevenson



The UK government's Sustainable Buildings Task Group (SBTG) decided recently that "the construction, development and housing industries have not yet subscribed to the sustainability agenda and have not been persuaded of the long-term benefits", and promptly dropped their "radical new" targets. Ahem.

Did anyone mention the short-term benefits? Reducing fuel poverty, asthma rates, and daily species loss to name but a few.

It is easy to despair about the lack of the necessary initiatives from governments around the world to mitigate against Global Warming (or cooling?), but constant pressure from individuals and organisations is essential to counteract the globally damaging agenda of the vested interests in the above industries.

Bill Dunster's comment on the 35% reduction in carbon emissions now proposed by the SBTG is apposite - "That is pitiful". We need a 90% reduction, of course.

Fortunately there are also the usual green shoots, quietly growing away in our Scottish backyard. Welcome to ASHS, a great initiative to promote low-energy, environmentally friendly Scottish Hardwoods, and welcome also to the second round of funding for promoting sustainable design in Scotland through The Lighthouse for the next three years - lets make the most of them!

# Planning - What's Going On?

## The Planning System in Scotland

Five main sets of documents define planning in Scotland. Some are firm, some advisory, some are national, some are local.

First comes the law. The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 covers most aspects of planning in Scotland. This is the primary legislation and is approved by the Scottish Parliament. Some changes may be due over the next few years.

Starting at the national scale, the still new National Planning Framework aims to present a coherent and contextual view of planning in Scotland. It indicates the long term spatial thinking for the country and is set out in quite general terms and is not binding, but underlies all subsequent planning policy.

Then there is national policy. SPPs are statements of Scottish Planning Policy. They are a new series, of equivalent status to the former NPPGs (National Planning Policy Guidelines) many of which are still in force until

replaced. SPP1 sets out the main elements of the planning system in Scotland. Other SPPs deal with particular aspects like housing, town centres and natural heritage. Outside the series of SPPs and NPPGs are some important freestanding policy documents like Designing Places (the policy on design).

Nationally relevant Planning Advice Notes give advice on how best to deal with matters such as local planning, rural housing design, and improving small towns and town centres. These are not binding but set out good



practice for local authorities and users of the planning service.

These documents in total describe the national sense of planning, and set a framework of law, policy and advice within which more localised policy is drawn up by Scotland's local authorities in "development plans" for each area.

At present each development plan is made up of two parts - the structure plan and the local plan. Between them they show how much development may take place, where it will take place and where it is unlikely to be allowed. Development plans are the basis for decisions on planning applications.

The Structure Plan gives the overall strategic view for a wider area and though drawn up locally has to be approved centrally by Scottish Ministers. Structure plans identify general locations on a diagram rather

Scotland. The areas around Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh are covered by more than one local authority, and these would require City Region Plans to deal with the overall strategy for land development and infrastructure. Under the city region plans and across all other parts of Scotland, local plans would continue to provide the detailed background for decisions on development. But both local and city region plans are to be much more closely managed and action-oriented, setting down programmes to be regularly monitored and rolled forward.

The coming years may see some fundamental shifts in the way planning is undertaken. The Executive has said that the system needs to be made more streamlined and responsive. There are intentions to introduce local communities more purposefully into the decision making processes. Electronic service delivery is being introduced. The possibility of a Third Party Right of Appeal (not entertained as an option in England and Wales) is being currently consulted on.

*Chris Morgan and Roger Kelly*

## Progress toward a Planning Bill for Scotland

Following the completion of the Review of Strategic Planning in 2002, the Labour/Liberal Democrat Partnership Agreement for the new parliament in April 2003 confirmed Ministers' interest in improving the planning system within the current

## Planning into the New Millennium

In recent years, two key policy documents (SPPs) have been produced. The first publication, 'The Scottish Planning system,' bodes well by framing planning firmly with the purpose of promoting sustainable development. The second, however, 'Economic Development and Planning,' is a reminder of where the political priorities lie!

Recent Planning Advice Notes (PANs) which may be of interest to SEDA members include:

- PAN 45: Renewable Energy Technologies (2002)
- PAN 61: Planning and SUDS (2001)
- PAN 65: Planning and Open Space (2003), and forthcoming, Design for Communities (2004)

From a SEDA perspective the government has issued three very important documents in recent years:

- Policy on Architecture (1999)
- Designing Places (2001)
- Quality in Housing (2002)

and members are likely to be aware of the 2 areas to receive recent National Park status:

- Loch Lomond and Trossachs (2000)
- Cairngorms (2002)

Efforts are being made at the national and local level to try and increase an awareness and appreciation of urban design. For example, skills courses are now encouraged for Planning Committee Members, Planning Officials and integration as part of the Planning Schools' curriculum. The Executive and RTPI now also promote

than specific sites on a map. Local Plans are drawn up and approved locally, subject to the structure plan, and are map-based.

These development plans look set to change. A consultative paper "Making Development Plans Deliver" proposes to scrap the requirement for structure plans for all parts of

a Design Places award [won by a certain SEDA member last year!] and have finally supported Planning Aid Volunteers to roll out planning and design training seminars across Scotland (to local groups, such as Community Councils, Business Associations, amenity bodies and neighbourhood groups).

Various research, meanwhile, is being conducted at international, national and local level to try and improve planning and design practice. The Executive, for example, is particularly keen to improve design quality in private sector housing, drawing lessons from other countries.

In recent years, the Executive has also carried out extensive consultation in to the public's view on 'Getting Involved in Planning! This was in response to concern about public

apathy in some areas, NIMBYISM in others, and indifference elsewhere! It was also fostered by governmental desire to pursue key policy planks - Modernising Local Government, Best Value, Community Planning and Social Inclusion, to name but four.

Ideas emerging from this exercise include, amongst others:

- community based consultation forums
- more friendly and faster Planning Inquiries
- a Planning Helpline
- standard Planning Application forms
- streamlined neighbour notification process (with more info)
- more funding for Planning Aid

Changes to Come

The planning system in Scotland is an evolving process. The principal



session of parliament, which runs to March 2007.

In the 2002 Review, the Executive concluded that there was a need for a National Planning Framework as well as a change to the existing structure plan system. In 2003, Margaret Curran, Minister for Communities, announced the publication of the first National Planning Framework for Scotland to the parliament on 1 April this year.

The Executive has continued with a series of themed reviews with a view to possible legislation. This has so far included consultation on public participation in planning resulting in a 2003 white paper "Your Place Your Plan", modernising public inquiries and the current consultation documents on "Rights of Appeal in Planning" and "Making Development Plans Deliver".

While the Review of Strategic Planning provided a much needed wider framework for a more effective planning system, the subsequent themed reviews have clearly tried to tackle the growing crescendo of criticism of the system with regard to:

1. The lengthy process involved in preparing development plans which are then not kept up to date, and lead to delay and uncertainty in decision making, and
2. The need for more effective public participation in the process, especially in the light of expectations which have been raised by Community Planning.

The paper on Rights of Appeal in Planning fulfils a commitment to consult on a possible third party right of appeal in planning in Scotland.

Although not included for England and Wales in the recent Planning Bill at Westminster, environmental and civic organisations have pointed strongly to the experience of such a system in the Republic of Ireland while developers and the business community have strongly opposed the idea on the grounds of the added delays and bureaucracy. The Scottish



Executive offers four possible options in its consultation paper.

Under any circumstances, an effective system requires an effective framework of development plan policies to provide a basis for decision making. It is significant, therefore, that the Executive has published its consultation paper on

Making Development Plans Deliver at the same time. Indeed, some have suggested that our ineffective development plan system is the essential cause of the call for third party right of appeal. The Executive is much more forthright in this paper, than in that dealing with rights of appeal. It sets out a range of measures with a clear view to speed up the preparation and approval process for plans, engage individuals and agencies more effectively, making plans shorter and targeted on key issues, and focus them on

rolling out from local authorities, there is a stronger needs assessment to back up the policies of those planning authorities which seek to secure a contribution of affordable housing in new private developments. Planning agreements are used for this purpose but they are also increasingly used to secure contributions from developers towards the provision of local infrastructure, both utilities and social services, which they make necessary. The Executive is currently reviewing the use of planning agreements and it is likely that this will be a feature of the Planning Bill.

In the meantime, despite the devolved planning system, Scotland has gained new planning provisions courtesy of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which was passed recently at Westminster. Through the means of a Sewel motion, the Scottish Parliament agreed that provisions in this act which remove Crown immunity from planning control, should apply UK-wide.

Through its series of consultation papers over the last three years, the Scottish Executive has given itself every chance of smoothing the path of a bill through the Scottish Parliament, in marked contrast to the rough ride which the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill received.

*Graham U'ren, Director of the Royal Town Planning Institute in Scotland.*

debate will probably focus upon the perennial issue of 'speed versus quality.'

In one corner are the developers, businessman and industrialists who have a vested interest in a planning system which is flexible, but more certain and quicker. Not surprisingly this group is showing disquiet at the prospect of enhanced community rights in planning, such as extended consultation periods, the provision of additional information, to interested parties, and the introduction of Third Party Rights of Appeal. In the other corner are the environmentalists, the neighbours and others concerned with the nature of development. Somewhere in the middle are the planners, who have the social responsibility of achieving the 'best planning outcome.'

#### Implications for SEDA

##### Potential Positive Points

- National Planning Framework
- Sustainable development
- Local Planning (Masterplans & Development Briefs)
- National Parks
- Education, training and research
- Community Engagement

##### Potential Negative Points

- National Planning Framework
- SPP 2
- City – region focus
- Business lobby
- No PAN on eco-design?

The start to the new Millennium bodes well – the system has been increasingly plan-led, sustainable development has been established as planning's key goal, and design issues have been elevated in

importance. All SEDA members should be prepared to take advantage of this favourable climate and concertedly demonstrate to Scottish society the social, environmental, and economic benefits of ecological design.

The Association should also maintain a lobbying dimension and ensure that the quality of planning decisions is not sacrificed in favour of speed and efficiency.

Nick Brown



Are you interested in advertising in or sponsoring the SEDA Magazine? If so, please contact the Editor c/o [seda@freezone.co.uk](mailto:seda@freezone.co.uk) or at the address below for details of our rates

SEDA, PO Box 14167, Tranent, East Lothian, EH33 2YG.

CLASS 1

Evidence of significant application of at least 3 of the specified sustainable criteria in at least one domestic or other small design project (minimum 40 sq. metres habitable).

Gillian Hanley

Oliver Chapman Architects, 313 Cowgate, Edinburgh EH1 1NA

John Manning

John Manning Chartered Architects, Dirnanean, Enochdhu, Blairgowrie, Perthshire PH10 7PD

Tom Morton\*

Arc Architects, 69 Burnside, Auchtermuchty, Fife KY14 7AJ

Sue Thornley

Michael and Sue Thornley Architects, 51 St Vincent Cr., Glasgow G3 8NQ

CLASS 2

Evidence of holistic integration of sustainable design incorporating 5 or more of the specified criteria, in at least 2 in domestic or other small projects, with evidence of professional inter-disciplinary working.

Gordon Fleming

ARP Lorimer & Associates, 11 Wellington Square, Ayr KA7 1EN

Gokay Deveci\*

Binghill Blairs, South Deeside Road, Aberdeen AB12 5YQ

Nick Domminney

Gareth Hoskins Architects, Atlantic Chambers, 45 Hope St, G2 6AE

Jenny Humphreys\*

Simpson & Brown, St Ninian's Manse, Quayside St., Edinburgh EH6 6EJ

David Somerville

Balchraggan Studio, Abriachan, Inverness IV3 8LB

CLASS 3

Evidence of significant application of at least 5 of the specified criteria, appropriate for the context, and integration of sustainable design principles with other disciplines in 3 projects of moderate scale, using acknowledged and appropriate benchmarks and tools.

John Gilbert\*

John Gilbert Architects, 4C1 Templeton Business Centre, Templeton Street, Glasgow G40 1DA

Chris Morgan\*

Locate Architects, 4 Westbank Loan, Portobello, Edinburgh EH15 1UB

Roan Rutherford

Austin-Smith: Lord, 202 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4HW

# Primary Space - The Design of Dalry Primary School

by Jim Johnson

Since 1998 a team led by the artist **Bruce McLean** has been working with North Ayrshire Council to develop new designs for Primary schools, not to "decorate" them with artwork like a mural or sculpture, but to work at a conceptual level, fundamentally re-thinking school design. They are now working on their fourth project, a new community primary school in Dalry.

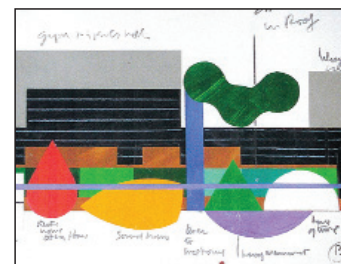
The design is based on the concept of "imbedded intelligence". Ideas, concepts and data will be projected through the fabric of the building – enabling the children to learn from the school itself as well as from their teachers. Routes will tell stories, layout will suggest systems of measurement, and specific spatial relationships will inform them about their local or global environment. Facts, figures, phrases and fables will be incorporated into the structure with historical "site specific" text and information.

The idea of imbedded intelligence

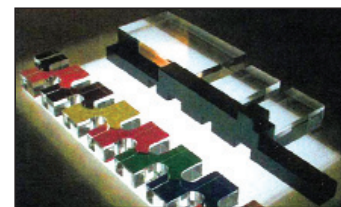
was first realised in the north wall of Lathorn primary (completed 2001) which was designed as a dynamic learning feature (nicknamed "Wonderwall"). The wall, calibrated like a giant ruler, was designed and decorated to express and celebrate the functions of the rooms behind.

Behind these developments lies a long process of careful research and consultation with a range of experts, from design and educational professionals to the children themselves. Extended workshops used drama, visual arts, film and discussion to explore how children use space, what their ideal school would look like and how it would work – ideas that have been incorporated into the new school.

These workshops are stimulated by the creative approach of McLean and his colleagues, his son William, an architect, and the writer Mel Gooding. Bruce McLean thinks and communicates through drawings and collages, Gooding in words and



wordplay. They draw on association and chance as well as logical argument. It is clear that the freedom this engenders has opened up new concepts outside the normal run of architect/educator discourse. Such creative freethinking by artists may have much to contribute in other fields of design – especially as we search for new answers to the challenges of sustainability.



## Alastair Mack and The Space You're In

Alastair Mack is an Edinburgh based Artist with a background in technology who mixes a creative take on the everyday world around him with a scientific understanding of the building blocks of life.

Mack recently produced a series of photographs overlaid with formulae and diagrams which at first glance offer little more than a curious juxtaposition of images, but on reflection describe a sort of biological and visual continuum and an understanding of life both as an experienced place, and as a known set of phenomenon.

In Carbon Cycle, a view of Mack's own back garden - "where my daughter plays" - is overlain with a carbon cycle diagram and Mack speaks engagingly of a sense of being part of a larger event, somehow

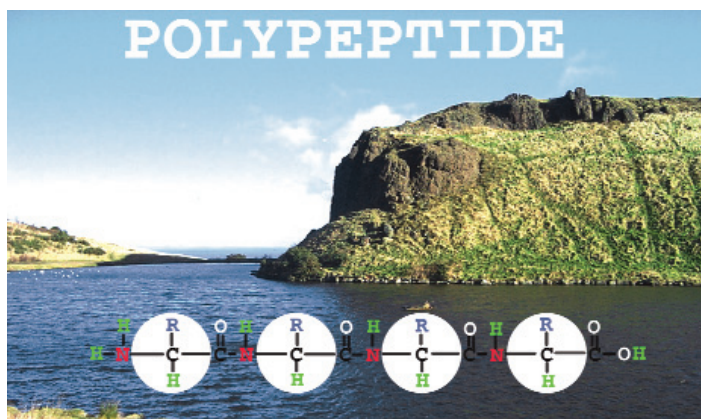
realised by this vision of the mundane.

In Polypeptide, below, the chemical symbol for polypeptide, part of the amino acid / protein make-up and of which water has an essential role, floats across a view of Dunsapie Loch

and the Forth estuary behind in an unbroken visual link of water, as obvious visually as the relationship of symbol to view is to Mack.

Scale drifts with ease and the world is revealed as a more interesting place in which to be part.

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CLASS 4

Evidence of holistic integration of sustainable construction principles involving financial, social and environmental considerations in 3 projects of a significant scale.

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# Scottish Timber Seminar



On Friday 14th May over 100 people, including many SEDA members converged on Perth for a seminar on using Scottish Timber as part of the Scottish Woodfair.

The seminar was jointly organised by Forestry Commission Scotland, ASHS (The Association of Scottish Hardwood Sawmillers) and SEDA, with support from the RIAS and RICS.

The main event was the launch and publicity for the new ASHS website ([www.ashs.co.uk](http://www.ashs.co.uk)) which can now claim to be the one stop shop for all enquiries related to the use of Scottish hardwood (and softwood) from furniture and sculpture to decking, cladding and even complete houses.

The seminar was chaired by Malcolm Taylor of Youngs Surveyors in Forfar and the introductory presentation given by Mark Ruskell, Green MSP for the area. Penny Edwards and Nick Marshall of ASHS then spoke about the organisation, the new website, and the ways in

which ASHS can help Architects, Builders and others to realise their ambitions using locally sourced timber.

This was followed by a talk from Sue Thornley and Michael Jarvis of MAST (Michael and Sue Thornley Architects) describing their recent new housing in Inverurie for Castlehill HA. (See picture, right) The project uses Scottish sourced heartwood of European Larch for the cladding but the Architects were unable to persuade their Clients to deviate much further from their ordinary material specifications.

Charley Brentnall of Carpenter Oak and Woodland then charmed the audience with an impressive sequence of slides of projects completed in recent years. From pretty ground-breaking carpentry-cum-on-site research and testing to make the awesome solar canopy at

the earth Centre, to the pods for the Castaway contestants on Taransay (which they took down and re-built elsewhere - except one which is waiting for a home!) to a wide range of exquisite homes in different styles.

Ivor Davies followed with an update on the work he is undertaking on establishing a coherent and co-ordinated hardwood visual grading scheme, which it is hoped will bear fruit next year, and Derek Nelson and Stuart Goodall of Forestry Commission Scotland completed the presentations with a look at the whole issue of specifying Scottish Softwood and the many ways in which this was now becoming easier.

The afternoon was rounded off by our very own Chair who summed up the many points raised and reminded everyone of the wider perspective of using Scottish timber for its overall social and environmental benefits.

# Wastelands: Artists in Regeneration

by Steve Malone

Dan Dubowitz is a crisis merchant, capturing buildings on the cusp, on the eve of radical transformation. His work as an artist and photographer focuses on areas of urban decay, drawing attention to spaces modern society has left behind.

So what is it about 'Wastelands' that Dan finds so fascinating? He concedes that his interest has been personal from the outset having first been drawn to them while working as an architect for Peter Eisenman in New York in the early '90's. As a result of Eisenman's aversion to allowing site visits Dan spent his days off scouring the city, exploring and photographing derelict sites. This curiosity stayed with him when he left to take up an artist in residency post in Slovenia and later when he returned to the UK to pursue teaching and research work.

In 1998 he formed Heisenberg CA with fellow artist and sculptor Matt Baker. 'Journeyman', their first project, brought the public into dialogue with wasteland spaces in and around Glasgow through a series of art installation pieces and Doors Open Days. Another project entitled 'The Gatekeeper' is featured above the entrance of a four-storey tenement block in the redeveloped area of the Gorbals and was the largest piece of public art ever to have been commissioned in Glasgow when it was built.



Above: 'Old Yard', Ancoats, Manchester. (Front cover: left - 'Roof Garden', Ancoats; right - 'Cell' Cardross)

## The Presence of Absence

Dan's work as a photographer is chronicled in an ongoing project entitled 'The Presence of Absence'. To date he has published two of the ten books in that series. The first examines Ancoats in Manchester, the world's first industrial suburb (pictured above). It contains interviews from the people who lived there together with powerful images that were seen by over 1 million

passengers in an installation piece in a Metrolink platform at Piccadilly underground station. His second book, entitled 'Three Sanctuaries', looks at derelict churches in Cardross, Gorton and San Gimignano. He is currently working on the third and fourth installments following recent visits to Ellis Island in New York and Havana Vieja (Old Havana) in Cuba. Due out in September these will be accompanied by two exhibitions and a tour of the work.

As the title suggests, Dan's photographs reveal a somewhat eerie sense of emptiness about a place that conjures up hidden stories from the past. His process is methodical, using wastelands as a sort of laboratory. During exposure times of up to twenty to thirty minutes he 'communes' with the space, soaking up every last drop of its energy. Some of the spaces he finds have been left undisturbed for 30 to 40 years. Others are recorded minutes before being torn down or changed forever.

## Urban Regeneration

In addition to his work as a traditional artist Dan is playing an equal role as part of a core team in the regeneration of Ancoats; working alongside archaeologists, engineers and master planners. His involvement is significant in ensuring that the narrative of the place is not lost in its rebuilding and that a continuity of culture is maintained. "Immuration" marks the second phase of his installation artwork in the area and will be encapsulated in an upcoming publication.

**Wastelands: The Presence Of Absence** is published by Civic Works Press, Glasgow, £12.

Visit [www.civicworks.net](http://www.civicworks.net) or e-mail Dan Dubowitz at [info@civicworks.net](mailto:info@civicworks.net) for more information.

Would Thomas Telford have been a member of SEDA? His design for a bridge over the River Dee at Tongland, near Kirkcudbright in 1805 certainly demonstrates how a design can incorporate benefits for biodiversity with no risk of structural damage, disfigurement, or even inconvenience. The stone ledge below the parapet provides perfect nesting sites for house martins and, with around 100 nesting pairs each year, the bridge is probably the biggest house martin colony in Dumfries and Galloway.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) committed the UK government to taking action for biodiversity. This resulted in the publication of Biodiversity Action Plans at UK, Scottish and local levels. As well as identifying the broad biodiversity targets required for sustainable development, the plans identify priority species and habitats and outline the measures required to protect and enhance them.

Most local authorities across Scotland

## Design for Biodiversity

have, or will soon launch, their Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs). The house martin *Delichon urbica* happens to be a priority species in the Dumfries and Galloway LBAP, not because it is rare or threatened, but because of its close link with human habitation, illustrated in both its common and scientific names.

This makes it a telling demonstration of the relationship between people and biodiversity. There are a few pairs nesting on natural sea cliffs, but the vast majority make use of built



structures, and are therefore almost entirely dependent on decisions taken by planners, engineers and architects. It is a high profile species which illustrates wider issues in the environment.

Of course, all built structures have an indirect impact on biodiversity, as SEDA members will be familiar, but what of the direct impact of design on biodiversity? The National Trust has produced a technical manual on Wildlife in Buildings (available at [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wildbuildi](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wildbuildi)

ngs ), but this concentrates on the repair and maintenance of existing buildings.

Although the requirements of many of the species concerned are well known, only for a few, such as barn owls, swifts and bats, are there publications that offer advice. There are relatively few examples of new structures that have provision for biodiversity designed into them and these have tended to result from close collaboration with individual ecologists.

No doubt Thomas Telford did not have house martins in mind when he designed the ledge but the result of his design has demonstrated what can be achieved. Deliberate design for biodiversity has the potential for much greater benefits.

Peter Norman

[On e publication which covers this subject is 'Building Green' by Jacklyn Johnston and John Newton published by the London Ecology Unit - Ed]

### The Nature of Order

Reviewed by Jed Pemberton

Available in 4 volumes subtitled: "The Phenomenon of Life"; "The Process of Creating Life"; "A Vision of a Living World", and "The Luminous Ground" Volumes 1 & 2 reviewed only.

Imagine that the word "aesthetics" stood for the ability to design life-nourishingly satisfying buildings and towns; that it is often evident in older, pre-architect, traditional processes; and that it has been largely overshadowed by the speedy, power-explicit, ungrounded plethora of modern design approaches that are image-inspired and technology-led rather than community-based.

A practicing architect in seeking to support the quality of his or her work with study, and to tick the boxes of CPD timetable requirements may feel justified in discarding such airy fairy and impractical notions as headline Alexander's explorations. I think they would be wrong. The subtitles of the four volumes, listed above, may not serve the author so well in that they point to the lofty nature of the path he seeks to tread without communicating his sleeves-rolled-up engagement with the design process, and with his view of the values, and

the value, of the visual arts. He really is concerned with the way a beam sits on a column, or the way a coloured tile pattern repeats.

So, 4 volumes, 27 years in the writing and by the author of the "Pattern Language" series of books, "The Nature of Order" is by an English architect who is now the Emeritus Professor in the Department of Architecture at the University of Berkeley, California. He is not about to set the bar too low, nor in the medium range in what he is attempting here. An architect and artist, a builder and a scientist, Alexander's aspiration for this work is sky high.

We may argue about the success or failure of his attempt, but that misses the point. There is something magnificent about the attempt; to take on 400 years of scientific theory of this universe and our perception of it; to talk about architecture and cosmology in the same breath; to break with the entire Western subject/object divorce as a basis for engaging with the natural world and our historical will to dominate it. The books' importance lies in its aspirations as much as in its achievements in proposing a new way of understanding the creative act of design.

The books are copiously illustrated with examples of images which exemplify the points that Alexander seeks to make. He uses illustrations of his own buildings, his own paintings other well-known buildings, obscure buildings, street scenes, landscapes, flowers, and all kinds of pictures in an attempt to capture what patterns, designs, creations have "life" and what patterns do not.

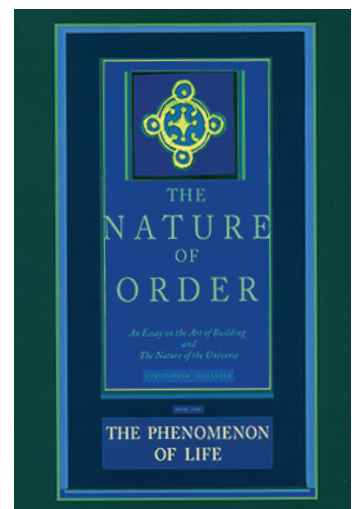
Alexander set out his stall in the Pattern Language books. "There is such a thing as objectively good design" he says. Here he seeks, at some length, to make clear what that means, and what is "bad" in so much of modern design. What is "good" is often, though not always, traditional.

He appreciates the way the process of making something is evident in the final result. He does not appreciate design for its own sake, in order to add interest to an object. I have to confess that I like his criteria and most of the examples he uses to illustrate them. Post-modernism (which seems to mean " . . . . . whatever . . . ." ) doesn't have the nourishing quality that all kinds of traditional designs do have.

But Christopher Alexander is not simply harking back to an imagined

and secure past, he is concerned to include what is best in our mechanized methods of production, but in a non-mechanical way.

It is not difficult to see how many of his examples can, and will, be interpreted differently, turned around, and his whole enterprise mocked, or else ignored in the salons of designers whose patrons are the powerful of this modern world. But here is someone who, even if his answers are not right, has the right questions. This is a rare and valuable thing; and his answers may just be right enough.



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