



The Scottish Ecological Design Association Magazine

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# SEDA Futures Issue

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## Join SEDA: Eco Renovation Network members offered SEDA membership

by Kat Jones

The Eco-renovation Network was launched five years ago with the aim of helping people make their homes more sustainable. The organisation is now winding up as the founders Kat Jones and Robert Swinfen have moved onto other projects. In this article Kat shares a little of what has been achieved and where the challenges still lie.

Its launch came from a frustration that discussion about creating new low-carbon homes to reduce climate emissions largely ignored the millions of existing homes with poor insulation and inefficient heating systems. Since then, the policy landscape has changed significantly; politicians of all persuasions are talking about insulation, renewable heat and efficiency. We feel that, in part, the work of eco-renovation network is no longer needed: retrofit is firmly on the political agenda and there are numerous strategies, action plans and initiatives being produced by government. But Eco-renovation Network was always less about communicating to decision makers, and more about trying to get action in people's homes. Here things are still frustratingly slow moving. Eco-renovators face a number of hurdles so an explanation of these could be useful to SEDA in planning our future activities.

### Knowing and doing

There is now specific advice to householders on how to reduce energy bills and emissions. This is the first step to improving the sustainability of our homes. However there is still a gulf between knowing and doing. My own experience, of retrofitting a wood burning stove and solar

system to provide hot water and space heating to our small terraced Glasgow home, has been very disruptive, slow, has had a huge number of technical issues. It is still not working properly six months after installation. This demonstrates two requirements; firstly the need for good information about contractors, builders and technicians who can do the kind of work eco-renovation demands; and secondly the need for more training and awareness raising among Scotland's trades and contractors.

It is here that SEDA may have a role in taking the baton from the Network and expanding its remit. Firstly by involving more builders and trades in SEDA, and then helping to network them, as well as designers and architects, with the people who need their services. And secondly in helping to provide training to, and sharing knowledge with, new entrants. Network

members can now continue its aims by joining SEDA for no subscription.

### SEDA and skills

The Scottish Government recognises that developing the skills needed for a low carbon economy can bring significant economic gain. Most of the discussions, so far, have been around the renewables industry but, November's Energy Efficiency Action Plan had a whole section on skills. and the Scottish Government has recently announced a fund for companies to train people in low carbon skills. This is an area ripe for action by SEDA.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/10/07142301/0>

Low Carbon Skills Fund:  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2010/10/19105359](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2010/10/19105359)

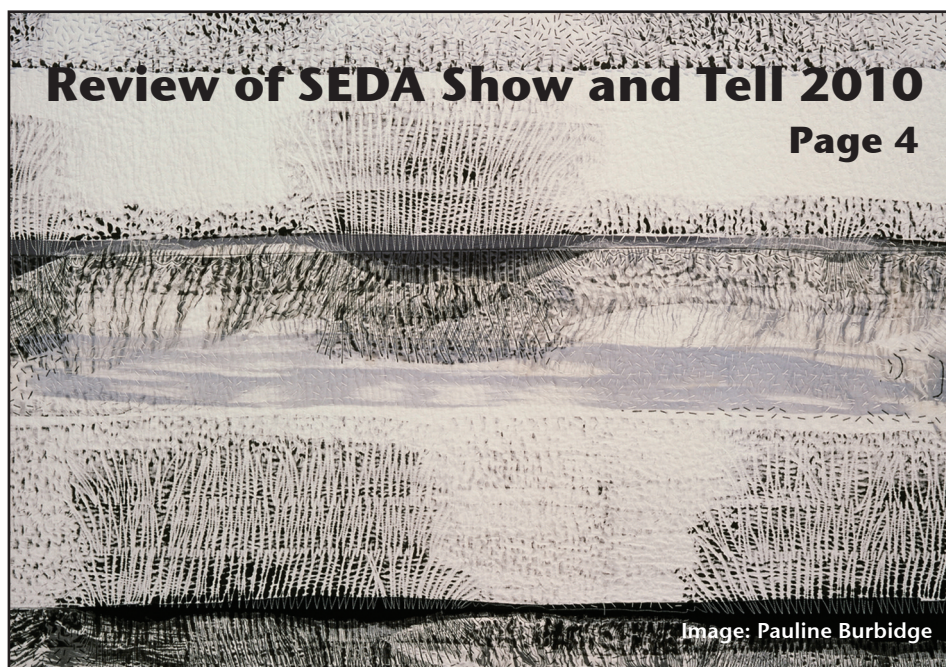


Image: Pauline Burbidge



# View from the Chair

by Robin Baker



## SEDA Incorporated

The SEDA Futures questionnaire and our Birnam discussion day produced useful information and recommendations for the steering group as we move into our 20th year. Although SEDA membership is dominated by built environment professionals, diversity is seen as essential. We should attract new members and form working partnerships with similar organisations. Other ideas include developing local regional groups, possibly working in partnership with the AECB where our interests overlap, while maintaining our independence.

## Web

We have launched our new website to bet-

ter serve members, promote SEDA activities and provide a useful source of best practice in ecological design. It includes a searchable members' directory with a standard entry and, for a modest additional fee, an enhanced entry with a practice profile. The aim is to add more links and content and to develop a Green Buildings Directory, demonstrating the best new build and refurbishment in Scotland. Next up is an ecological design directory including landscape, and other areas of design.

## AGM

May's AGM agreed to raise annual subscriptions to continue our key membership benefits of the e-bulletin, magazine and website because, in the current financial situation, it is difficult for charities like SEDA to get external funding. One way to raise funds is to trade, however, there are difficulties with SEDA trading in its current form. A common model for charities is a Company Limited by Guarantee with Charitable Status, a legal entity, separate from its members. The AGM agreed to convert SEDA into such a company. We aim to convert on 1st March 2011.

## Good company

The new company will be subject to the democratic control of its members as now. However existing SEDA members will have

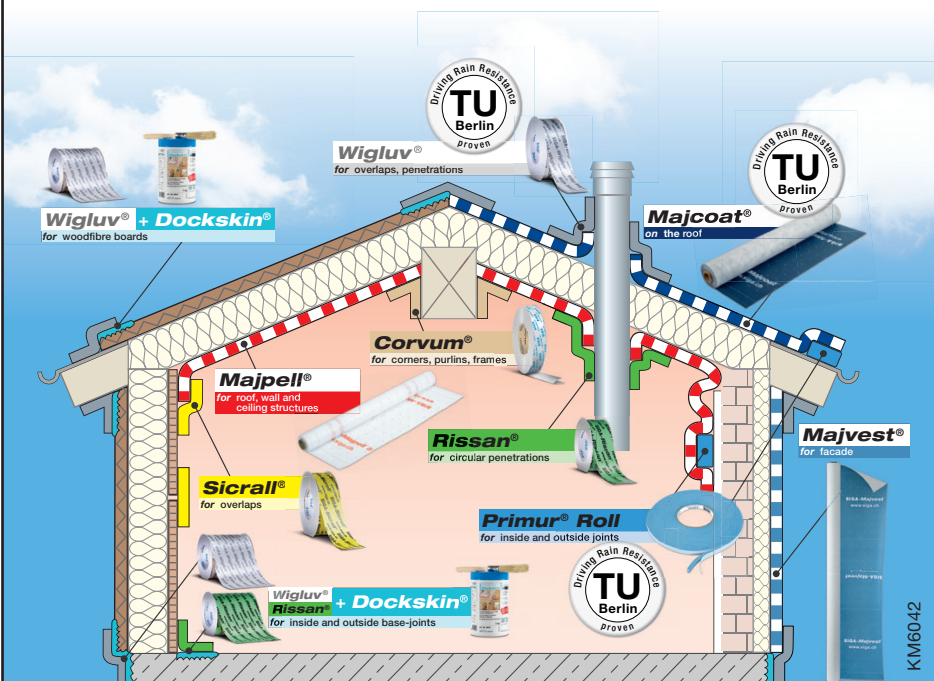
to reapply to become members of the new organisation. The present management committee will become its initial directors until the first AGM in May 2011. That meeting will elect seven directors who can co-opt others during the year and delegate to sub-committees comprising directors and other persons.

Incorporating SEDA also provides an opportunity to restructure the organisation in a more effective way. Forming three sub-groups, Communications, Events & Development, is a good start, and there is strong support for a policy group, who can represent SEDA in the media and lobby politicians.

SEDA must increase income to enable the employment of a key worker so our next task is to develop our business plan. We will soon hold another discussion day to consider income generation.

Despite the failure of governments to reach binding emissions agreements there is a momentum for action in communities and households towards a low carbon lifestyle. SEDA will continue to campaign, promote best practice and encourage initiatives that enable our members to influence change for the better.

# SIGA<sup>+</sup> house-tight toxin-free air and windtightness system



For more information contact SIGA: Jason Byrne, jbyrne@siga.ch

## SEDA Needs You: why join us

by Sydney Brogan

Members support the Association's aims to advance ecological design and environmental conservation and so benefit from its research and publishing around ecological design. Benefits also include:

- Connection with the main net work of Scottish eco-designers
- Visits, conferences, seminars & discussions
- Monthly ebulletins
- Three printed magazines per year
- Searchable Members Directory on website and option for enhanced listing profiling your business, product or service
- Use of SEDA logo on members' letterhead and website

To join SEDA email: [membership@seda.uk.net](mailto:membership@seda.uk.net)



## SEDA Futures: a founder's view

by Jim Johnson

SEDA was set up in 1991 at meeting in RIAS called by Howard Liddell and Sebastian Tombs, then formally launched in February 1993 by Lord James Douglas Hamilton, Minister for Housing and the Environment at the Scottish Office. The launch followed a day long event about the controversial question of health damage from electro-magnetism, with expert Roger Coghill linking clusters of illness to the proximity of high tension cables, transformers and such like.

The Minister handed out prizes to the winners of the first SEDA student eco-design competition and looked round an exhibition of members' work. There followed talks by Howard, showing how backward the UK was in this regard, followed by Ulrich Loening, then director of the Centre for Human Ecology. As always an ambitious day's programme!

### SEDA swimming

So SEDA was off and running, launching into a programme of talks and visits, plus a newsletter (produced by Gaia) later to become the current magazine. From the beginning SEDA took a broad view of ecological design – it was never focussed narrowly on energy reduction. I think it's important that we hold on to this breadth of interest. In 1991 we felt we were swim-

ming bravely against the tide. Now, in 2010, that tide has turned but it's bringing a lot of flotsam and jetsam with it: an obsession with lifetime carbon reduction whilst ignoring embodied energy, gimmicky micro-generation gadgets, oil-rich insulation products (with magic properties) and many more. A holistic view is sadly lacking from those who should know better – government and politicians in particular. But also through the media who drown the public in greenwash. Can SEDA find a role in countering this tide?

### SEDA's view

Looking back through past SEDA newsletters and magazines I was encouraged how we have held to our holistic viewpoint. Jed Pemberton brought "clown doctor" Patch Adams from the USA, to explain his search for "vital building syndrome" back in 1998 – a year before the film of the doctor's life was released. 1992 Newsletter 2 reported a visit to new "eco" student housing at Strathclyde University which used a German Trombe wall system to store solar heat, with controlled mechanical ventilation. The report went on: "The performance was being monitored from a thermal/energy perspective; but no attempt seems to be made to assess the students' reaction to living in this hermetically sealed box or the effects on their health. After 45 mins. SEDA members staggered out and took deep breaths of the damp but relatively fresh Glasgow air with a sense of relief." Am I wrong in seeing certain parallels with the current Passivhaus steamroller? SEDA's view?

## SEDA launched:

Founder member, Howard Liddell, in February 1993

From its launch, SEDA has not avoided controversy or airing views which stray from the narrow remit of energy saving or even the catchall of "sustainability". Here is a letter from Howard to the SEDA magazine about electro magnetism which demonstrates a reportage style and polemic which, some may feel we have lost over the intervening years.

*"The day was very interesting and decidedly a game of two halves. This was significant because we had 3 representatives from Scottish Power there. In the morning - when he was covering the science and evidential stuff - he had these guys worried and there was general eyes-wide open appreciation of the issues. However, somewhat emboldened by this evident interest he decided to go off-piste after lunch and launched into conjecture - including the fact that electro-magnetic fields were linked to cot deaths (still possible) and then AIDS (unlikely) and so on ... at which point he lost 90% of the audience, and raised smiles on the faces of the industry reps. We do not really seem to have re-visited this since, which is a great shame because it is an issue hardly ever dealt with in the UK. There is a very good publication in English called Electro Magnetic Man and this whole area has been well researched in Germany, Russia and the USA. The reason for the paucity of material in the UK is because the CEBG challenged or sat on all the stuff here and publicly humiliated Roger Coghill - who unfortunately did not help himself with his excursions away from hard evidence.*

## SEDA Surveyed: members' views by Mary Roslin

September's "Away Day" examined SEDA's predicament, crucially the absence of core funding for a development worker or co-ordinator. Without funding for such a post, the Association has to rely upon the Steering Group (SG) to undertake members' proposals. SEDA may, therefore, struggle to develop as the SG has limited time available.

The SG recognised that a coherent set of objectives, quantifiable outcomes and targets is needed to obtain funding from donors and charities and so initiated a business plan that shows SEDA moving away from dependency on grants. Part of this exercise involved a questionnaire which

was sent to all SEDA members. It proved a valuable basis for the business plan as well as providing some excellent background information to the discussions on the Away Day.

### Questions

The returned questionnaires established that, broadly speaking, the key issues for the organisation centred around the following:

- i) clarifying and simplifying the definition of SEDA's role and aims – on the website, in our leaflets/ literature to the general public and amongst the membership;
- ii) clarifying what it is that members

want SEDA to do and focusing on its remit and direction.

It was also clear that, for many, the most important issue for the organisation is the need for funding. Many respondents offered suggestions for SEDA's future direction and development as well as scope for creating income. Some of these included:

- providing information on best practice by offering training and educational services
- getting involved in research & publications
- producing a green building database (seen as a modest source of income)

There was almost unanimous agreement that SEDA's regular and varied programme of events was a great success and that this should be continued and extended.



## SEDA Away: members confer at Birnam

by Richard Atkins

A group of us met at the Birnam Institute on the 23rd October to discuss the issues arising out of the recent questionnaires, review of the SEDA business plan and the decision to become a not for profit company registered as a charity.

The last of these allows SEDA to undertake trade to further the aims of SEDA and produce an income to sustain SEDA. It also protects the office bearers through limited liability. So it seemed the right time to ask what are the aims of SEDA?

SEDA has done this roughly every 2 years for as long as I can remember. It may sound like self indulgent navel gazing, but each time we reaffirm the core values and aims of SEDA and look towards the future in terms of remaining at the cutting edge. I think this is a tribute to the vision of the founders and also a fantastic way of engaging with newer members.

The outcomes from an excellently facilitated session were reported back to the Steering Group at the beginning of November and these will feed into the work of the various sub-groups and the development of the Memorandum and Articles of the new company.

## Show and Tell: a view from the Mac

by Matt Bridgestock

Glasgow School of Art was delighted to host the 2010 SEDA Show and Tell, held in the historic Macintosh lecture theatre. The evening was an entertaining mix of ideas, art, furniture, initiatives and architecture. Chairperson, Robin Baker, welcomed 54 members of SEDA, AECB, Transition Town Glasgow and the late Eco-Renovation Network.

The variety of topics for discussion was vast, as always, from the detail of quilt and furniture making to urban regeneration projects. We heard research updates from a number of Glasgow's academics and a variety of community and self build projects. Food and wine was plentiful, with the Whitecross Sustainable Communities Competition entries providing a backdrop to the discussions. Live music at the State Bar rounded off an excellent evening.

Thanks to Mary Kelly and Sydney Brogan for their faultless organization, to MEARU at Glasgow School of Art for the venue and to the RIAS for the Competition boards. SEDA will be hosting further such events in the New Year so watch out!

## SEDA: Creating a Fruitful Scotland

by John Hancox

January might not seem the most fruitful time of year... But if you haven't made enough resolutions for 2011 – here's a nice easy one to actually act on. Plant some fruit trees. January is an ideal time to plant fruit trees (the best time is twenty years ago) and help create a fruitful Scotland.

The Commonwealth Orchard helps schools and communities to plant and maintain local orchards. While there has been a steady decline of commercial orchards decades – there is a resurgence of fruit growing in towns and cities, schools hospitals and in spare ground. We have planted with housing associations, and encouraged big developers' to include "edible landscaping" around their new build. Landscape architects have gradually taken to substituting lolly pop trees for fruit trees

–essentially as a no cost way of meeting demand for local food growing.

Commonwealth Orchard aims to create a healthy long term legacy from the Glasgow 2014 Games. To achieve this we need to engage all sorts of people: families and children to plant; planners and architects to design fruit growing into new developments; politicians and decision makers to this a priority. Planting urban orchards is a small step towards creating a more sustainable built environment – one that is easy for anyone to actually achieve. You can just plant one tree in your garden, or plan in 100 trees in a development. Either way you'll help Scotland Blossom.

**To find out more:** [www.commonwealthorchard.com](http://www.commonwealthorchard.com), or [www.scottishorchards.com](http://www.scottishorchards.com)

## Letter to the Editors:

Dear Editors

**SEDA, not C-DA**

*A wee contribution for our considerations about SEDA's future.*

*The word Ecological in our title is important. To stretch a metaphor - when trying to avoid not seeing "the woods for the trees" we should be able to see more in them than the carbon-fixing properties of 1.8kg of CO2 per 1 kg of wood or the insulation value of cellulose.*

*From time to time we have a crisis of conscience about the dominance of architects in the membership – which in itself should not be such a big deal, it's just the way it has worked out over the years. As long as we can stray awhile from the navel-gazing over construction, broaden our horizons and excite the interest of all Designers then there is much to grab our concern out there. For example - the UN released a statement recently that "species loss is now a greater threat to the world's human population than Climate Change". An illustration of this is serious concern about the dramatic worldwide decline in bees. A bit pointless getting all worked up about energy efficiency if we can't grow food any more because we poisoned the pollinators. And this is an ecological design issue - ask the Permaculturalists in our membership.*

*If anyone is interested, I would be happy to discuss a series of events running for 6 calendar months from our next birthday, where the C-word is outlawed. The objective is to end up with a series of learned papers for a publication entitled:- "C\*\*\*\*\* free discussions" (AECB eat your heart out.)*

*Any takers?*

*Happy 20th Birthday to SEDA on Mayday! Hope a mammoth party is in the offing.*

**Howard Liddell**  
[howard@gaiagroup.org](mailto:howard@gaiagroup.org)

**STOP PRESS!!**

There will be an article in the next issue on Greenwash – for all of you irritated by the message in every hotel about saving the planet by re-using your towel please feel free to send in your contributions to the above.

This Issue of the SEDA Magazine was put together by Nick Domminney, Sam Foster and Steve Malone. Sincere thanks to all who have contributed. 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.