



Network

News

January 2007

AECB Welcomes Government's Carbon Neutral Building Agenda

AECB: The sustainable building association – congratulates the government on its ambitious green agenda for new homes and the aim for zero carbon homes by 2016. The decision that the Code for Sustainable Homes will cover 'whole house' emissions, including the energy/carbon use for appliances in the home, is a necessary and fundamental step for which the AECB has long argued.

Chris Herring, AECB chair said: "Moving to a whole building CO2 target emissions rate acknowledges that, beyond getting the building fabric right, establishing how a building is used and what is used in it, is a further vital step in reducing total emissions. The AECB's Silver and Gold energy performance standards already incorporate this principle. Indeed, the AECB's Gold standard is the one that developers can use if they want to aim straight away for the highest level of the Code –zero carbon, level six."

"The Association's standards not only give home builders a CO2 target, but crucially, also help them understand how to achieve it with a cost effective balance between 'passive measures' and renewable technologies. New or refurbished buildings designed and constructed to the Gold standard will allow people to live comfortably and affordably - with a dramatically reduced carbon footprint" said Andy Simmonds, AECB Executive Officer. "Knowing the urgency with which we need to tackle climate change, the AECB is working as fast as possible to provide home builders with the detailed guidance they need to deliver radically improved energy and CO2 performance through its CarbonLite Programme."

Fifty AECB members are already building homes, schools and community centres to the standards. The Association is seeking partners to help it publish and deliver this guidance as soon as possible.

SEDA Appoints New Development Officer

The Scottish Ecological Design Association (SEDA) is a charity, set up in 1991 'to promote the design of communities, environments, projects, systems, services, materials and products which enhance the quality of life of, and are not harmful to, living species and planetary ecology'. Members include academics, architects, artists, builders, planners, students, ecologists, landscape designers, materials suppliers, woodworkers, and many more whose work or interest is concerned with design for a sustainable future.

One of SEDA's primary aims is to help people share knowledge, skills and experience. It does this through a magazine which is published 3 times a year and posted out to members (a sample magazine can be downloaded from the web-site in pdf format). Other activities include e-mail bulletins, a lively programme of events and site visits to projects which have an ecological approach to design and living. It also runs student competitions, sponsors an annual travel award for students of design who are studying in Scotland, commissions research projects, informs the public about ecological design and responds to government initiatives.

Since being set up SEDA has evolved to become the premier voice on ecological design in Scotland – often leading at the cutting edge while remaining true to eco-principles. It can be a difficult balancing act and SEDA is hoping to focus on developing strategies and targeting publicity in such a way as to break through into the mainstream consciousness.

In this it should be helped by last month's appointment of Mary Kelly as the new part-time Development Officer - a post funded for 3 years by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation. An architect with a long-standing interest in and commitment to ecological design principles, Mary has previous

development officer experience through her work with The Walter Segal Self Build Trust. She has also worked in practice in Scotland and England and any time not working with SEDA will be spent building (with partner and fellow architect, Duncan Roberts) the next phase of their own eco-house in Northumberland.

For more information visit www.seda2.org

Brown Wants Zero Carbon Homes Within Decade

Gordon Brown has served notice on UK house builders that the government wants to see all new homes built to zero carbon standards by 2016. His announcement in yesterday's Pre-Budget Report is the strongest government commitment yet to a progressive strengthening of Building Regulations to achieve the ultimate zero carbon goal.

To incentivise demand for such state-of-the-art homes, the Chancellor said that he will introduce a zero rate of stamp duty for the 'vast majority' of zero-carbon homes during 2007. This will be time limited and is seen as a pump-priming exercise to encourage the industry to modernise and innovate.

The Chancellor said that a new Code for Sustainable Homes will be issued in the near future by the DCLG. The government has already made it clear that the Code's hierarchy of standards will be used to alert the industry to future step changes in Building Regulations. This week's report added that the government intends to publish a consultative timetable for progressive strengthening of Regulations in England and Wales in advance of the new 2016 timetable.

Brown said the government plans to test even higher energy standards for new and refurbished schools in a bid to reduce their carbon emissions by up to 60% over existing standards, and in some cases up to carbon neutrality.

Brown's speech also revealed that the government has this week designated a series of development sites as brownfield in a bid to raise the number of new homes built on surplus land to 130,000. However no further details appeared to be available at the time of writing.

Full details at www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pre_budget_report/prebud_pbr06/prebud_pbr06_index.cfm

Source RIBA PRACTICE BULLETIN - No. 377 (7 December 2006)

Code for Sustainable Homes is Announced

The long awaited Code for Sustainable Homes was announced by Communities Secretary, Ruth Kelly MP on 13 December. The Code will replace the current EcoHomes standard and aims to drive a step-change in sustainable building practice. It establishes six star ratings for the sustainability of new homes (with six being the highest rating). Mandatory compliance will be required for all publicly funded homes from April 2008, meeting a minimum of the three star rating. The Housing Corporation will require the three star minimum rating for all developments accessing funding from their 2008-10 bid round, with extra rewards on offer for developers who achieve higher Code ratings. The Code is largely based on the EcoHomes standard, covering a similar range of issues, but key differences are mandatory levels of performance for energy efficiency, water efficiency, surface water management, site waste management, household waste management, and use of materials; a post-completion assessment; and the loss of the transport credits. As with EcoHomes, BRE will be responsible for administering the assessment of the Code, and are currently working up transfer arrangements.

For more information visit www.planningportal.gov.uk/england/professionals/en/1115314116927.html
Detailed technical guidance for Code compliance will be published in April 2007.

The Hunt Is On For Northwest Region's Green Business Champions

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) is calling on North West architects and builders with high environmental standards and green credentials to bring their achievements to a wider audience by entering the Northwest Business Environment Awards 2007. Established in 2001, the Awards is the only regional awards scheme celebrating the environmental achievements of businesses in England's Northwest, and now both small and large-scale companies are being invited to submit their entries before February 2nd 2007.

Following last year's record number of submissions, two new awards have been added to the list of categories to enable even more professions the chance to become a Northwest Business

Environment Award 2007 winner. The new categories are the Sustainable Procurement Awards, and the Built Environment Award, which will give recognition to both major developments and small-scale projects.

The winners of the hotly contested Awards will be announced at a prestigious event ceremony in Spring 2007, which will feature high-profile speakers from the business community and the environmental movement. Hosted by the Mersey Basin Campaign and the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA), with support from MIDAS, Environment Agency, ENWORKS, CBI, NWDA, Groundwork North West, The Mersey Basin Campaign, Envirolink North West, Institute of Directors (IoD) and Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), the awards are open to all companies based in England's Northwest. The Northwest Business Environment Awards 2007 categories are:

- Best Environmental Practice Award – Recognising exceptional improvements in business performance achieved through good environmental management.
- Built Environment – Two awards, one recognising environmental excellence and innovation in major development projects and the second rewarding excellence in smaller projects.
- Sustainable Procurement – Recognising commitment and excellence in sustainable procurement - green purchasing - and innovative supply chain management.
- Environmental Technology Award – Recognising innovation and excellence in environmental technologies and services.
- Environmental Champions – Two awards, one recognising leadership in the area of environmental improvements, sustainability and regeneration, and the second rewarding outstanding communications within the environmental sector.

Entry to the awards is free to all businesses based in England's North West by filling in a user-friendly document. For more information about the awards and entry details, visit www.merseybasin.org.uk email: f.bhatti@merseybasin.org.uk or phone 0161 242 8200.

FSC Reserves Judgement On Government Approach To Assure Legal And Sustainable Sources Of Timber

On Monday the Government announced that timber processed through five forest certification schemes now give satisfactory assurance of being legally logged from sustainably managed forests. Thus three more schemes have been added to the original two that were approved in 2004.

All candidate schemes were required to convince the Government that, to meet the sustainability criteria, they have procedures to ensure that environmental and social interest groups are involved in their standard-setting process and that consensus is achieved before decisions are taken. However, The Forest Stewardship Council, one of the original two schemes to gain approval in 2004, reserves judgement on how quickly and effectively the other three will be able to deliver on their sustainability commitments.

Charles Thwaites, Executive Director of FSC UK said: "We strongly believe that it is complete vindication of the FSC approach that other certification schemes have been asked to move towards the sort of standards we have been reaching for many years. It is surely to the continuing benefit of responsibly managed forests all around the world that only schemes demanding both the legal and sustainability criteria are being approved by governments. We welcome more schemes, if this means more responsibly managed forests, so long as the schemes themselves are robust and transparent."

"Having paper-based procedures on their own is simply not enough. It takes many years to make a system work at the level of the individual forest unit, especially one that includes sustainability considerations such as protection of biodiversity and the rights of indigenous peoples, to name but two. I worry that the Minister himself has admitted that the approval process has been just a desk-based assessment of these schemes and their procedures because the approval authority could not conduct forest-based assessments around the globe. We are all under the eye of the public and the NGOs, and it would be very damaging to the whole procurement process if any of the schemes fall below the standard now expected. We ourselves continue to believe that FSC standards are more demanding than all the rest, mainly because of the rigour with which we balance environmental and

social interests against the economic gain to be made from logging. For this reason we retain, unlike the others, the endorsement of the NGOs, as well as most of the paper, construction and timber supply businesses in the UK."

FSC International Centre's Policy And Standards Unit Today Released A New Draft Of Version 2 Of The FSC Chain Of Custody Certification (FSC-STD-40-004) For Public Consultation.

The standard specifies the management and production requirements for Chain of Custody control with respect to sourcing, labelling (where applicable) and sale of products as FSC (FSC Pure), controlled (FSC Controlled Wood), recycled (FSC Recycled), or - as certain combinations of these - mixed material (FSC Mixed), thereby providing a range of on-product labelling options. The options enable truth in labelling principles to be met whilst facilitating the expansion and reach of FSC-certified products in the marketplace.

This draft (2-0) standard version 2-0 has been developed following public consultation on draft 1-0 and advice provided on drafts 1-1, 1-2 and 1-3 by the FSC Technical Working Group on Chain of Custody. It considers the recommendations from the Technical Working Group agreed at their 2nd meeting in April 2006, which were based on public consultation of six major issues presented in the FSC discussion paper FSC-DIS-01-013 Review and Revision of the FSC Chain of Custody standard.

The changes to version 1-0 of FSC-STD-40-004 are summarized in the consultation document available on request.

FSC UK, 11-14 Great Oak Street, Llanidloes, Powys, SY18 6UB. Phone 01686 413 916 email: info@fsc-uk.org website: www.fsc-uk.org

Germany Sees Big Potential in Green Biomass Fuel

Large-scale production in Germany of green fuels using new generation biomass-to-liquid (BTL) technology is feasible and may fill around 20 percent of national fuel needs, the Agriculture Ministry said on Thursday. A study commissioned by Germany's government and published on Thursday concluded that sufficient quantities of the raw materials required were available.

Biofuels are currently largely produced from crops such as rapeseed, maize, soy or palm. Second generation BTL technology aims to produce biofuels such as biodiesel and gasoline from cheaper sources such as straw, grass, tree leaves, wood chips or low-grade crops.

"Germany has sufficient biomass available for large-scale BTL production which could cover 20 percent of today's fuel requirements," Clemens Neumann, head of the ministry's sustainable materials department, said in a statement. "By 2030 the technical potential could rise to over 30 percent."

The study, by research company Deutsche Energie-Agentur, said construction of a BTL production plant consuming around one million tonnes of biomass annually would be the next development stage to test technology for commercial-scale production. A smaller pilot plant is being built at Freiberg by German company Choren. This should produce around 13,000 tonnes of vehicle fuel annually from late 2007.

Choren said separately it was considering building a larger plant in cooperation with industrial partners. "We are seeking to undertake the next stage of the basic design package for a concrete location in the next quarter (year)," said Choren CEO Tom Baldes. But he said such a project would probably need state support, possibly in the form of financial guarantees.

Events

Consultation On Measures To Reduce Carbon Emissions In Large Non-Energy Intensive Business And Public Sector Organisations

The UK ETS team at Defra, in partnership with the devolved administrations will be holding five stakeholder workshops to discuss the Government's consultation on measures to reduce carbon emissions in the large non-energy intensive business and public sectors.

Alongside inviting views on other options, the consultation document (published on 8 November) puts forward two proposals for particular consideration:

- The Energy Performance Commitment (EPC) – a proposal for a new mandatory emissions trading scheme
- Voluntary Benchmarking and Reporting

The one day workshops are being held on 8 January (London), 10 January (Edinburgh), 12 January (Cardiff), 16 January (Manchester), and 18 January (Belfast).

Should you wish to register an interest in attending one of the workshops, please contact Brian Rapose, on: epc@defra.gsi.gov.uk (telephone 0207 082 8500), making clear which event you are interested in. Please note, however, that spaces at the workshops are very limited.

The consultation invites views on the combination of policy measures necessary to deliver 1.2 MtC (4.4 MtCO₂) / year carbon savings by 2020 from the large non-energy intensive business and public sectors. Given this context, the workshops aim to provide an opportunity for key industry, public sector and NGO stakeholders to:

- discuss the different policy options and ask questions
- give Defra feedback on how the policy proposals, if taken forward, could best be designed
- exchange thoughts with others on the proposals, in light of the overall policy context

The workshops will be professionally facilitated, and I am pleased to attach a draft agenda. Please note that the consultation document and further information is available at:

www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/carbon-emissions/index.htm

Strategies for Low Carbon Construction

Wednesday 24 January 2007 at The Genesis Centre, Somerset College of Arts and Technology, Taunton, Somerset, £149 + VAT (Locally sourced lunch included), registration : 9:30 am

Carbon and, in particular, the carbon dioxide emitted as a result of the construction and operation of buildings, has rapidly become the primary focus of governments across the globe in their attempts to stave off the threat of serious climate change. This, in turn, has led to a need for those working in, and associated with, the construction industry to develop an awareness of the strategies and practices that contribute to the release of carbon dioxide and the ones that assist us in delivering truly carbon neutral buildings.

This CPD offers an opportunity for those involved in commissioning, design and delivery of construction projects, and those concerned with construction education and training, to gain a better understanding of the issues that are driving the push for carbon reductions within the industry and the strategies that will successfully bring about these reductions, both in construction and operation.

Registration – for booking details and to register for this event please contact Gillian Hawkey or Lorraine Warren Tel: 01823 252934 email gmh@somerset.ac.uk. For programme enquiries, contact Tim Simmons Tel: 01823 366528 email tps@somerset.ac.uk

Reviewing Phase II NAPs And Preparing For Effective Emissions Trading Under EU ETS Phase II And Phase III 30 January 2007

Are you making the necessary preparations for EU ETS Phase II? Are you up to date on recent policy developments? What impact with the finalised NAP II's have on your operations?

The Ends Report are pleased to present their second annual Emissions Trading conference to be held 30 January 2006, The New Connaught Rooms, London. This unique conference will provide you with necessary information to update your understanding of recent policy developments, and maximise the potential of the current and future trading market.

Bringing together government and industry representatives from across Europe, topics to be discussed over this comprehensive day include:

Reviewing and comparing the Phase II National Allocation Plans in the UK and other member states

Learning from Phase I: gaining practical guidance on how to comply with the requirements for monitoring, reporting and verification

How both small and large installations can maintain competitiveness whilst achieving EU ETS compliance

Predictions and visions for Phase III: scope and implications.

Full details are at www.emissionstradingconference.com

Courses

Practical Course Using Lime In Renovation £70 Inc VAT And Meal

This covers; Pointing - Rendering - Plastering - Plastering on to lath - limewashing - repairing cob walls - rebuilding stone walls.

Dates; 16th March, 30th March, 13th April, 27th April. More dates will be added later in the year.

Practical course in polished plasters £117.50 inc VAT and meal

This shows how to create stunning finishes covering; Venetian plaster, Marmorino and Tadelakt using traditional environmentally friendly products.

Dates; 9th February, 2nd March, 20th April. More dates will be added later in the year.

Perhaps you would even be interested in attending one of courses or receiving a complimentary copy of our DVD or some limewash for a product review?

Mike Wye & Associates, Natural Building & Decorating Products

For more information visit www.mikewye.co.uk or phone 01409 281644

Low Impact Living Initiative (LILI) Courses for February.

Residential Weekend Course: heating with wood. Location: Low-impact Living Initiative, Redfield Community, Buckinghamshire. February 2nd to 4th 2007

Cost: high-waged £180 / waged £150 / unwaged £120. All food and accommodation included - plus free beers, wine, tea and biscuits! For more details, see: www.lowimpact.org/course_outline_heating_with_wood.htm

Residential Weekend Course: low-impact smallholding. Location: Low-impact Living Initiative, Redfield Community, Buckinghamshire. February 16-18 2007

Cost: high-waged £180 / waged £150 / unwaged £120. All food and accommodation included - plus free beers, wine, tea and biscuits! For more details, see: www.lowimpact.org/courseoutinelowimpactsmlholding.htm

Low-Impact Living Initiative (LILI) is dedicated to helping protect the global environment by promoting sustainable alternatives to various aspects of everyday life. Contact us to find out more about our courses, manuals, information sheets, products and presentations.

LILI, Redfield Community, Buckingham Road, Winslow, Bucks, MK18 3LZ. Phone 01296 714184 or visit: www.lowimpact.org

If you have any news, events or courses you would like to publicise in Network then please email details to network@aecb.net, phone 0845 456 1290, or post to Chris Lord-Smith, y Graig, Llidiart-y-Waen, Llanidloes, SY18 6JT.