



Network

News

November 2008

The Passivhaus Planning Package Can Help You Produce Low Energy Buildings

A clear understanding of the calculations and predictions involved in low-energy building relies upon the use of accurate modelling software. Based on dynamic thermal simulations validated by data gathered from hundreds of low-energy buildings, the German Passive House Planning Package (PHPP) is the software (with manual) used to calculate energy use and CO2 emissions. PHPP's level of sophistication enables it to take into account a wide range of variable characteristics which affect heat loss and subsequent energy use, allowing for a superior fit between predicted energy use and real-world performance. The AECB has been comparing PHPP and SAP with a view to helping to inform the development of SAP to make it appropriate for low energy dwelling design.

Suitable for both residential and many non-residential applications, PHPP is supported by the AECB's CarbonLite programme and regular training courses are available to help you get the most from the software. To purchase PHPP (£135.13 including VAT) and find details of the AECB's courses log onto www.carbonlite.org.uk

Hotels Make Huge Savings With Water-Efficient Technology

With businesses using 55% more water than they did 25 years ago, many hotels are beginning to recognise the financial advantages of being more water-efficient. Three South East hotels selected as water saving champions by Brighton-based environmental consultancy Ecosys, are discovering the cost benefits of being water-wise and enjoying savings of around £96,000 per annum between them. Each of the independently owned SME hotels were selected to receive a water efficiency audit in 2007 through the SEEDA funded hospitality H2O Project. This looked at a variety of factors and identified key action points, along with cost savings that were achievable.

Two of the hotels taking part in the project- Chatsworth Hotel in Worthing and Deans Place in Sussex- replaced a number of their existing toilets with ultra efficient 4.5 litre ES4 WCs from the Green Building Store as part of their water reduction strategy. Other water saving measures taken included installing sensor controls in the urinals and fitting flow restrictors to taps. In Deans Place Hotel it is estimated that the reduction in water usage will achieve savings of around 2,592m³ of water per annum, leading to a significant increase in profit.

For more information go to www.greenbuildingstore.co.uk

Hotel Extension – Made Of Straw

The owner of a 16th century coaching inn is building an extension - made of straw. The new buildings at Raleigh's Cross, in stunning isolation 1,300ft up on Exmoor in Somerset, are the first pair of strawbale two-storey semi-detached houses in the UK. They form part of owner Peter Rowan's plan to reduce the inn's carbon footprint, aiming ultimately to achieve carbon-neutral status.

The strawbale semis will provide accommodation for two staff families at the hotel. Foundations are finished and much of the external frame is in place. Building the structures is amazonails, a leading UK straw bale builder. The building method, developed with UK weather in mind, involves constructing the roof first in order to protect the strawbale walls as they are built. The roof is then lowered onto the walls, compressing the bales and forming a strong, load-bearing structure. The building will stand on low impact foundations of limecrete, local stone and recycled foam glass.

There is a book on straw bale building by Barbara Jones: 'Building with Straw Bales' is available from amazonails priced £10. Building with straw began in North America in the mid-1800s. Pioneers arriving on the Nebraska plains found they had no materials to build with so they used strawbales from the newly invented baling machine. Training courses with amazonails cost between from £25 and there are sometimes volunteering opportunities. For information on these, and on design and consultation services, go to: www.amazonails.org.uk

The Buckminster Fuller Challenge – Call For Entries

Deadline For Entries: November 7th, 2008

Each year a distinguished jury will award a \$100,000 prize to support the development and implementation of a strategy that has significant potential to solve humanity's most pressing problems.

Winning the Buckminster Fuller Challenge will require more than a great stand-alone innovation. If for example, your solution emphasizes a new design, material, process, service, tool, technology, or any combination, it is essential that it be part of an integrated strategy dealing with key social, economic, environmental, and cultural issues. Entries must present a bold, visionary, tangible initiative that is focused on a well-defined need of critical importance. They should be regionally specific yet globally applicable, and backed up by a solid plan and the capability to move the solution forward.

We're looking for entries that are:

- Comprehensive — addressing the interaction of key issues responsible for present conditions; aims to solve multiple problems without creating new ones;
- Anticipatory — factoring in critical future trends and needs as well as potential long term impacts of implementation;
- Ecologically responsible — reflecting nature's underlying principles while enhancing the Earth's life-support systems;
- Feasible — relying on current technology and existing resources;
- Verifiable — able to withstand rigorous empirical testing;
- Replicable — able to scale and adapt to a broad range of conditions.

We want the winning solution to be what Fuller called a trimtab – a catalyst inserted into a failing system at the right time and place that accelerates the transition to an equitable and sustainable future.

To enter go to <http://challenge.bfi.org/enter>

JCT Promises A Green Spring For Construction

Most of the construction contracts in use will include green provisions by next spring, the Joint Contracts Tribunal has confirmed. Sustainability provisions are on the way and are expected to appear in print, together with guidance notes, before the end of the year. Almost three-quarters of projects built in the UK are currently built using a JCT form of contract. Details of the provisions have yet to be released, but statements from the JCT indicate that waste reduction and energy consumption will both feature, although JCT general secretary Peter Hibberd has said that the setting of specific limits on energy use is unlikely.

The JCT, which includes the RIBA among its member organisations, launched a consultation on the desirability of sustainability clauses in February this year following talks with senior industry representatives. The level of response was excellent, according to JCT, with architects and lawyers particularly well represented. Around 80% of respondents thought that guidance was essential for dealing with sustainability issues in contracts, although the general view was that any sustainability clauses should be legally enforceable. A JCT working party was subsequently appointed to draft the guidance and new contract provisions.

Source: RIBA Practice Bulletin - No. 462 11 September 2008

The Cost Of Zero Carbon Inflexibility

The dramatic cost implications of insisting on on-site energy generation to achieve zero-carbon housing are made clear in a new report commissioned by the CLG to inform the imminent consultation on what the government's zero carbon definition should be. The average construction cost premium for delivering homes with generation entirely on-site could be 17-24% higher than current build costs by 2016, according to the report by Cyril Sweett and others. This translates into increased costs for house builders (on a total net present cost basis) of between £10 billion and £14.5 billion over the next fifteen years to 2025 - not the sort of figures the beleaguered industry wants to contemplate at the moment.

In contrast, allowing part of the carbon reductions to be met through off-site schemes brings costs down dramatically. The report puts a price on the policy option of allowing off-site contributions after the 2016 target date, in which case the estimate additional costs could drop to just £4 billion (or £1 billion if the carbon emissions benefits are factored in). All of the development types modelled in the report were able to achieve zero carbon using on-site technologies with the exception of city infill projects. Here the authors suggest that the lack of available roof/façade space for PV panels would require a fundamental redesign of the typical solution to increase the area of exposed surfaces.

The report suggests that the industry will meet 2016 performance requirements with a cost effective mix of technologies - including PV, micro wind, biomass heating, solar thermal and energy efficiency measures - with no one particular technology dominating. The Treasury has stuck firm to the idea that zero housing should source its renewal energy supplies onsite, though a growing number of critics, including sustainability campaigners, have argued that the zero carbon policy is unrealistic unless it can accommodate contributions from larger-scale off-site renewable energy sources.

This latest report accepts that allowing unqualified levels of off-site power would remove any incentive to build higher performance homes, with no savings in fuel bills for homeowners. With a compromise (such as homes meeting the Energy Saving Trust Advanced Practice standard), the impact of capital costs where some off-site power is allowed is still dramatically reduced.

The report: 'Research to Assess the Cost and Benefits of the Government's Proposals to Reduce the Carbon Footprint of New Housing Development' is at www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/housingcarbonfootprint

Source: RIBA Practice Bulletin - No. 462 11 September 2008

Rates Relief Over Microgeneration

Concern that installation of microgeneration technologies in business premises will trigger an increase in business rates has been laid to rest by local government minister John Healey. Amendments to rates legislation have been published

that will remove the need for a revaluation following any such green investments. CLG says the changes will come in force from 1 October.

Under the current rates regime, any material improvement to a property can trigger a reassessment of rateable value by the local valuation officer, so owners could find themselves penalised for installing PV panels or a wind turbine. Under the new plans, the valuation assessment will be delayed until the next general revaluation, which is currently scheduled for 1 April 2010. However, investment in microgeneration as part of a much larger project would presumably still fall within any consequent re-assessment.

Source: RIBA Practice Bulletin - No. 462 11 September 2008

Refurbished Victorian Terrace House Cuts Emissions By 80%

A semi-detached Victorian terrace in London refurbished by Camden Council shows what a low-energy refurbishment approach can achieve. In January this year, construction work started on 17 St Augustine's Road in London's Kentish Town. The work has now been completed on a new roof with solar panels to generate heat and electricity, insulation for walls, floors and ceilings, draught-sealed and double-glazed windows, a heat exchange ventilation system and a rainwater harvesting system for the garden.

According to Camden Council, the refurbished building has reduced its carbon use by over 80% to around 3.8 tonnes per year. Much of the technology used in the refurbishment is experimental, so its performance will be carefully monitored over coming months before a family from the council's housing list moves in.

London alone has over four million homes built before 1919 that would benefit from low-carbon refurbishment like St Augustine's Road.

UK Can And Will Make Homes More Energy Efficient, Says UKGBC Report

A new report from the UK Green Building Council (UKGBC) says the UK can and will make it easy and affordable for households to become energy efficient. In light of the Government's new commitment to slashing greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050, improving the efficiency of the country's housing stock is even more essential than ever. Households emit 27% of the UK's total CO2 emissions and most of the existing stock will still be in use in 2050. To make the necessary cut in emissions, 25 million homes will need to be refurbished by 2050.

The market has significantly failed to deliver low-carbon refurbishment of existing homes, says the report, which it blames on a lack of vision from the Government and little or no householder demand. But the first signs of change are already apparent. New Energy and Climate Change Secretary Ed Miliband has already acted on the report's first recommendation of committing to an 80% cut in emissions by 2050.

To encourage the take up of low-carbon refurbishments, the UKGBC is calling for the establishment of a 'Whole Home Energy Plan' for homes outlining what measures should be taken and when. The Government should also consider making Energy Performance Certificates the basis of regulatory standards to ensure that the worst-performing homes are improved over time. Information is one thing, but action is another. The key barriers for householders to start making low-carbon refurbishments are the availability of finance and expert builders.

The Government should look at fundamentally new ways of helping consumers fund improvements to their homes, says the report. A coordinated approach from the Government including measures such as long-term loans, grants, council tax or stamp duty rebates and the reduction of VAT on low-carbon refurbishments could make all the difference. The final part of the jigsaw is ensuring that builders and tradesmen have the necessary skills to carry out low-carbon refurbishment. In the current economic climate, this could be worth between £3.5 billion and £6.5 billion a year and could create thousands of jobs.

The UKGBC report should enable that by feeding into the Government's energy efficiency consultation later this year and the strategy for Low Carbon Homes next spring.

UK Gets New Department For Energy And Climate Change In Government Reshuffle

In a surprise move, UK Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, announced the formation of a new government department for Energy and Climate Change to be headed up by Ed Miliband, one of the Prime Minister's closest allies. Industry groups have broadly welcomed the announcement. Philip Wolfe, Director General of the Renewable Energy Association, says, "We are delighted that the Government has acted on our suggestion that energy now needs its own department and cabinet minister,"

New Package To Tackle Fuel Poverty In Scotland

A new package of assistance measures aimed at tackling fuel poverty in Scotland will focus on improving the energy efficiency of the most vulnerable households, as well as providing advice on energy tariffs and available benefits. The Scottish Government is committed to eradicating fuel poverty by 2016, but current measures won't enable this target to be met according to the report from the Scottish Fuel Poverty Forum, Towards 2016 – The Future of Fuel Poverty Policy in Scotland.

The Forum's report recommends taking a more holistic approach to the problem – considering energy efficiency and use, as well as fuel prices and income, and finding ways to bring together relevant funding from different sources. The Energy Assistance Package will advise on the lowest energy tariffs, check benefits and tax credits to maximise individuals' incomes and undertake an energy audit with advice on reducing energy use.

London Must Be More Energy Efficient, Says Mayor

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, has launched a strategy aimed at helping the capital city deal with the effects of climate change. According to London's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, the city is currently ill-prepared to cope with floods, droughts and heat waves. These events are likely to occur more frequently as the climate changes.

To tackle the problem, the strategy outlines efforts to 'green' the city. Improving and increasing London's green spaces could cool the city down in the summer, suggests the report. They could also be used to provide renewable energy for the city – either as a biomass source or as sites for wind turbines. Water management faces two extremes. On the one hand Londoners will also be encouraged to use water more efficiently, particularly in times of drought. Conversely, flood management on tributaries to the Thames will also have to be addressed, as well as surface water flooding after heavy rainfall.

The strategy is now open for consultation with London authorities before a second version is published in 2009 for public comment.

For further information: www.london.gov.uk/view_press_release.jsp?releaseid=18576

UK Businesses 'Unaware' Of Energy Efficiency Incentives

Over 90% of UK businesses are unaware of Government incentives to improve energy efficiency, according to a survey by air conditioning company Daikin UK. The Government's Enhanced Capital Allowance (ECA) scheme aims to help companies invest in energy efficient technology. However, a huge majority of 1300 companies in the office, retail and leisure sector are unaware of the scheme.

Although 69% of respondents said their company could be doing more to save energy and cut costs, a similar proportion said the expense of making changes was the biggest barrier. But good news for SMEs comes today with the announcement from the Carbon Trust that it is increasing the maximum size of its interest-free energy efficiency loans from £100,000 to £200,000. The total pot of cash available to companies, which want to upgrade equipment to more energy efficient versions, has also increased by 45% to £31 million.

The old limit of £100,000 was simply not high enough for organisations trying to embark on more ambitious projects such as lighting installations, boilers or heat recovery systems, explains Hugh Jones of the Carbon Trust. The Carbon Trust says it expects the move in boost energy and carbon savings by 20% compared with what would have been possible under the previous scheme.

For further information: www.eca.gov.uk/eti

Small UK Manufacturers Need More Help On Green Policies

The UK manufacturers' organisation EEF is calling for the government to give more help to small organisations to improve their environmental performance. According to a recent survey conducted by EEF together with Envirowise, Measuring performance - Environment survey 2008, energy efficiency and waste management are the key priorities for both small and large manufacturers.

However, while over 90% of the surveyed companies said they were addressing environmental issues such as these, only 58% of smaller organisations said they had an actual environmental policy (compared with 92% of larger companies). In the current difficult economic climate, companies are focusing on reducing energy usage and waste to reduce costs, adds Bill McCausland of Envirowise. The government has a vital role to play in providing financial support and advice on resource and energy efficiency. It could be particularly useful for small- and medium-sized companies who can find it difficult to find the best way to address environmental issues, says the EEF.

For further information: www.eef.org.uk/

UK Making Progress On Sustainable Biofuels

The Renewables Fuels Agency (RFA)'s first quarterly report into the use of biofuels in the UK reveals that some companies are failing to meet any of the targets set by the Government. BP, Esso, Murco, Prax and Topaz have not reported any biofuels that meet the Government's environmental standards. Prax and Topaz have also failed to report the country of origin of their biofuels. Of the three sustainability targets set by the Government, none are being met by Esso, Petroplus, Prax and Topaz.

However, Harvest Energy, Greenergy, Mabanafit and Shell have all exceeded the Government's targets for carbon savings. ConocoPhillips reported negative carbon savings and Chevron only very low savings – although these figures might be revised. Despite the poor performance by some big names, the RFA maintains that good progress is being made. Compared with an interim report in the summer, the proportion of biofuels making up road fuel has risen from 2.14% to 2.61%, exceeding the Government's target of 2.5%.

Nevertheless, although the Government had set a target of 30% of biofuels meeting its environmental criteria, only 20% have managed it. While the vast majority of biofuel is imported, of that derived in the UK, almost all (97%) meets the criteria. Figures are improving, says the RFA. Feedstock is now known for 95% of biofuels, and both feedstock and country of origin are known for 72% – a marked improvement over the figures earlier in the year.

The RFA claims that the use of biofuels during the first three months of operation of the Renewable Transport Fuels Obligation (RTFO), has garnered carbon reductions of 44%, exceeding the Government's target of 40%.

For further information: www.dft.gov.uk/rfa/

Scotland To Get Fair Share Of Energy Efficiency Funds

The Scottish Government has reached an agreement with energy companies to increase the funds available to Scotland through the country-wide Carbon Emission Reductions Target (CERT). According to data collected as part of the programme, between 2002-2005 (under the previous scheme, the Energy Efficiency Commitment), spending in Scotland fell 22% below its pro rata share.

Following a meeting of the Scottish CERT Strategy Steering Group last week, energy companies have agreed to provide annual information on CERT activity in Scotland and ensure that the region gets its fair share of CERT spending. This could mean that Scotland will receive £321 million over the next three years to help households undertake energy efficiency measures to reduce fuel costs.

The Scottish Government will be introducing additional energy efficiency measures to help residents meet the rising cost of fuel. These include a 'home help service' to advise on energy efficiency and microgeneration installations, £3.5 million network of regional advice centres for householders and small businesses providing information on energy efficiency, renewables and low carbon transport, and a 'benefit health check' service to ensure that the poorest households are receiving all the help to which they are entitled.

For further information: www.scotland.gov.uk/Home

Go Ahead For Combined Heat And Power Plant In North East England

UK Energy Minister Malcolm Wicks has given the go ahead for a highly efficient 1020 MW gas-fired combined heat and power station in Teesside in North East England. Thor Cogeneration Ltd will begin construction at the 40 acre site in 2009 and expect that the plant could be operational in early 2012. The plant will feature two gas-fired generators, with surplus heat producing steam for a further generator. Any additional steam will be exported to local industries.

This combined cycle operation will require around 20% less gas per megawatt hour of electricity generated than traditional gas-fired power stations and will produce 60% less carbon emissions than coal-fired plants.

For further information: www.berr.gov.uk

Events

Green Building Conference – Bristol's Watershed Media Centre, 11th November

A cutting-edge conference that will explore whether the UK really can be a 'Green and Pleasant Land' is to take place at Bristol's Watershed Media Centre on 11 November 2008. This event will bring together high profile industry representatives including Sunand Prasad, President of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and Paul King, Head of the UK Green Building Council.

Bristol-based company The Green Register are running the event in partnership with RIBA and the West of England Sustainable Construction Network (WESCON). Topics up for discussion include the proposals for the redevelopment of the Chocolate Factory in Bristol, the Harvey's Foundry Trust on the brownfield site in Hayle, Cornwall, and the Ashton Park urban extension proposal from Chris Dadds, RTPI South West Chair.

To book a place on conference please contact The Green Register on 0117 3773490 or mail@greenregister.org.uk. For more information about The Green Register go to www.greenregister.org.uk

NBS Seminar Series On Sustainable Construction, 11th, 19th And 26th November

Complying with sustainable construction legislation is one of the greatest challenges facing construction professionals today. This seminar series consists of three separate seminars addressing the key elements of sustainable construction; implementing greener regulations for construction (11 November), achieving water efficient construction (19 November) and understanding site waste management (26 November).

It all takes place at the Building Centre in London, where each half-day seminar will provide an essential guide to the relevant legislation, advice on how this may impact on you and suggests practical ways in which you can respond. Delivered by leading industry professionals, each seminar also offers delegates 4 hours CPD and provides valuable networking opportunities for only £125+VAT (discount is available for booking multiple seminars).

For further information about the NBS Seminar Series, including full seminar content and how to register, please visit: <http://www.thenbs.com/training/conferences/index.asp>.

CoHousing Conference – Liverpool – Friday 14 November 2008

A green CoHousing scheme is proposed at Ullet Grange Liverpool, which is hosting a conference about CoHousing. Speakers include Chris Coates (author of Utopia Britannica) and Martin Field (author of 'Thinking about Cohousing'). www.cohousing.org.uk for information

What is CoHousing? The term CoHousing has been coined based on a Danish model, and the basics should include that it is an intentional community where there is self contained accommodation and communal facilities and that it is a socially creative enterprise where residents equitably manage their immediate environment.

Venue – Ullet Grange, 36 Ullet Road, L17 3BP, 12am lunch and registration – speakers from 1pm.

For info contact Mike at grangestock@gmail.com or 0151 733 2073.

International Conference – Organic Waste in Urban Environments – New European Challenges – Brussels, 20 & 21 Nov. 2008

In order to promote information exchange about how to implement the new European rules and to foster the debate at European level, particularly about the appropriateness of concrete actions for waste prevention and recycling, ACR+ (the Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling and sustainable Resource management) and Bruxelles Environment (the Environment Administration of the Brussels-Capital Region) will hold an international conference on “Organic Waste in Urban Environments” on 20 & 21 November 2008.

Full programme, registration form and more info: www.acrplus.org/conf_organic_waste

The Future of Heat Energy for the Built Environment – London – 25th November 2008

Forty seven percent of the UK’s CO2 emissions are from heat alone. To deliver on an overall reduction target of CO2emissions heat must be considered. The Department of Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR) acknowledged the importance of heat publishing a Heat Call for Evidence at the start of the year and this is to be followed by a General Heat Strategy due to be published in November.

This conference, timed to coincide with the General Strategy, will outline how BERR plan to deploy the reduction and the role Local authorities have to play in its success. It will provide further clarity on the challenges and barriers created by the existing building stock and discuss how a future energy mix may look.

Key issues to be covered include:

- Why Heat is a tough nut to crack
- How to carry it out – non-domestic buildings
- The role of the private home owner
- Changing the way heat is supplied
- What will the future of Heat supply look like?

A conference brochure, including further details and speakers is available on our website: go to www.eventsforce.net/WATERFRONT/frontend/reg/thome.csp?pageID=5371&CSPCHDx=000000000000&eventID=22

Green Strategy 2008: 27th November 2008, The Royal Institute, London

Green Strategy 2008 has been specifically designed to meet the needs of businesses formulating their response to climate change and related environmental crises. The conference will combine world-class speakers, inspirational stories, best practice, and networking with like-minded professionals in a collaborative learning environment.

The agenda will be made up of a series of compelling interactive sessions that will dissect and debate the latest thinking on the business drivers and help you understand market trends, update your products and operational strategies, improve communications, and strengthen ties with your customers.

The structure will help you consider the implications in all areas of your business and help you construct a coherent response. We do work on one central premise – action is needed and a strong corporate response is likely to be part of the solution. It will also be a significant element in deciding your future competitive advantage.

Full details are at www.greenbizevents.co.uk/events/greenstrategy2008/

HEAT 2008 - 28 November, New Hall, Cambridge

This year’s core themes are: Low Power Devices – Smart Metering – Solar Power

We hope to inspire you. Such an important topic is one which decision-makers would want to discuss first-hand with others. The briefing aspect of the talks shall be concise, complete and provided with opportunities for questions, debate and general inputs. Enjoy the day: all talks and discussions shall be captured and presented online after the event. Delegates can influence a discussion which shall be reported.

Go to www.hvm-uk.com for more information.

Measuring Corporate Water Footprint, 16- 17 December 2008, Olympia, London

2-Day Industry-Led Summit, with Practical One-Day Pre-Conference Workshop from the Alliance for Water Stewardship on 15 December 2008. Registration for the Summit is open. With a huge number of brands, retailers and water industry practitioners already signed up to attend; the Water Footprint Summit is predicted to fully sell-out.

Full programme at www.water-footprint.com.

Housing Innovation and Solutions Expo – The Lighthouse, Glasgow, 29th January 2009

Now in its 3rd year, HISE (Housing Innovation and Solutions Expo) will take place on the 29th January at The Lighthouse, Glasgow. Bringing serious buyers, specifiers and decision makers from throughout the Scottish Housing industry under one roof, HISE is attended by over 100 visitors from all spectrums of public and private housing.

The Annual expo will showcase the very best in innovation in Scottish Housing and provide fantastic networking and learning opportunities.

Full details are at www.hise.co.uk

Scottish Energy And Environment Conference – Hilton Hotel, Glasgow, 3rd February 2009

The most successful exhibition, conferencing and networking event in Scotland for suppliers and buyers of the latest energy and environmental technologies.

For more information go to www.seecon.org.uk/

Ecobuild 2009, 3 - 5 March 2009 At Earls Court, London

The credit crunch has really hit home but the UK still needs to build new homes and to refurbish its existing stock to high environmental standards. So visit Ecobuild 2009 to find sustainable solutions for all types of build. The Ecobuild website www.ecobuild.co.uk already has details about some of the many free seminars that will be available so check it out and pick the ones you don't want to miss.

And remember, the AECB will be there, promoting our members and highlighting the very successful AECB CarbonLite programme. So come and see us while you're there too.

Publications

The Long Descent: A User's Guide to the End of the Industrial Age - By John Michael Greer

New Society Publishers. Review: by Frank Kaminski

The Long Descent is Greer's attempt to help the average reader make sense of this coming age of decline. He begins the book with a bit of background on peak oil, the Club of Rome's The Limits to Growth study, some lessons from past societal collapses and the difference between problems (which are solvable) and predicaments (which aren't). He makes a strong case for peak oil being a predicament rather than a problem.

The Long Descent is one of the most highly anticipated peak oil books of the year, and it lives up to every ounce of hype. Greer is a captivating, brilliantly inventive writer with a deep knowledge of history, an impressive amount of mechanical savvy, a flair for storytelling and a gift for drawing apt analogies. He is perhaps the most spiritual out of all the current thinkers on peak oil, as well as one of the most eclectic and wryly humorous. No other peak oil writer possesses his same blend of aptitudes, and only a few approach his cunning.

His new book presents an astonishing view of our society's past, present and future trajectory—one that is unmatched in its breadth and depth.

Frank Kaminski is an ardent peak oiler who participates regularly in Seattle Peak Oil Awareness (SPOA). He can be reached at frank.kaminski@gmail.com.

New Publications From IHS BRE.

- Hemp Lime Construction – A Guide To Building With Hemp Lime Composites

Rachel Bevan and Tom Woolley, EP85, ISBN 978-1-84806-033-3,

With contributions by Ian Pritchett, Ralph Carpenter, Peter Walker and Mike Duckett.

The first complete guide to building with hemp lime.

Hemp lime is a lightweight construction material that can be used for walls, insulation of roofs and floors and as part of timber-framed buildings. It provides very good thermal and acoustic performance, and offers a genuinely zero-carbon contribution to sustainable construction. Hemp masonry is breathable and is able to absorb and emit moisture, leading to much healthier buildings. Comprehensive guidance on using this novel material for housing and low-rise buildings is given for the first time in this book, which is full of practical information on materials, design and construction. It is fully illustrated and includes case studies and design details, and explains how the use of hemp-based material can capture and store carbon dioxide in the fabric of buildings. The guide is the output from a Defra-funded study commissioned by the National Non-Food Crops Centre.

- Sustainable Housebuilding: New Build And Refurbishment In The Sustainable Communities Plan

F Plimmer, G Pottinger, S Harris, M Waters and Y Pocock, FB16 ISBN 978-1-84806-020-3

Demolishing existing housing stock in favour of building new homes results in loss of heritage and wastes carbon emissions embedded in otherwise sound structures, as well as breaking up existing communities. These criticisms have been levelled at the housing market renewal Pathfinder areas established within the UK government's Sustainable Communities Plan. Deciding how best to regenerate run-down urban areas and create sustainable communities therefore demands comparisons between the relative advantages of the two approaches to housing renewal: "knock it down or do it up". This report by the College of Estate Management, sponsored by BRE Trust, investigated the responses to this question by private and social housing developers and their professional advisers. Although the research points to the benefits of refurbishment in terms of achieving sustainability objectives, it also shows that the uptake of sustainable construction practices is still being held back by higher costs compared to traditional housing, risk aversion, less favourable financial incentives and lack of consumer demand.

- Applying the Code for Sustainable Homes on the BRE Innovation Park (4-part set) – Lessons learnt

C Gaze et al, IP9/08 (4 part set) ISBN 978-1-84806-056-2

This four-part Information Paper looks at the lessons learnt from the BRE Innovation Park concerning compliance with the Code for Sustainable Homes. The four parts deal with: building fabric; energy sources, overheating and ventilation; water use, harvesting, recycling and drainage; architecture, construction and material sourcing.

Contents

Part 1: Lessons learnt about building fabric

Part 2: Lessons learnt about energy sources, overheating and ventilation

Part 3: Lessons learnt about water use, harvesting, recycling and drainage

Part 4: Lessons learnt about architecture, construction and material sourcing, insulation of timber-frame construction – U-values and regulations for the UK, Republic of Ireland and Isle of Man

This Special Digest describes timber-frame wall construction solutions that are capable of achieving very high insulation levels using existing technologies; in some cases, wall U-values as low as 0.13 W/m²K are achieved. Timber-frame insulation solutions lend themselves to going significantly beyond the thermal performance requirements of current building regulations, with the potential to address the future aim of zero-carbon housing. This Digest is written for all those involved in specifying or assessing designs, including timber-frame manufacturers, designers, architects and housebuilders.

Each part is also available individually.

Tel 01344 328038, email brepres@ihs.com or go to www.brepres.com

Positive Development: From Vicious Circles To Virtuous Cycles Through Built Environment Design

Janis Birkeland

Janis Birkeland presents the innovative new paradigm of 'Positive Development' in which the built environment provides greater life quality, health, amenity and safety for all without sacrificing resources or money. With a different form of design, development itself can become a 'sustainability solution'. A cornerstone of this new paradigm is the eco-retrofitting of the vast urban fabric we already inhabit. This book challenges everyone working in or studying the areas of sustainable development, planning, architecture or the built environment to rethink their current ideas and practices.

Go to www.earthscan.co.uk

The Community Planning Event Manual: How To Use Collaborative Planning And Urban Design Events To Improve Your Environment

Professor Brian Evans, deputy chair, Architecture+Design Scotland and Partner, Gillespies LLP

From Nick Wates, author of the hugely successful Community Planning Handbook, comes this Event Manual, the first on the subject, which explains why and how to organize community planning events. The book is aimed at anyone - from concerned individuals to community groups to professional planners in business and government - interested in the remarkable potential of community planning events. It includes a step-by-step guide, detailed checklists and other tools for event organisers. The method is user-friendly, flexible and easy to employ in any context from small neighbourhood improvements to major infrastructure and construction projects anywhere in the world.

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