

**ASSOCIATION FOR
ENVIRONMENT CONSCIOUS BUILDING
COMPANY NO 5336768**

ANNUAL REPORT

**COVERING THE PERIOD
OCTOBER 2006 TO SEPTEMBER 2007**

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INTRODUCTION

AECB Chair: Chris Herring

Last year, I introduced the Annual Report by saying it had been a pivotal year for the AECB. I think it fair to say that this year could also be seen in a similar light with major developments for the Association.

The year saw continually escalating concern over human induced climate change with major landmarks in recognition and mitigation in the UK, at least relating to policy, if not action. In October, the publication of the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change made clear the economic case for urgently addressing the causes of climate change. In December came the government's target of 'zero carbon homes' by 2016. Announcing the target, Ruth Kelly, communities secretary, said: "Climate change is a real and imminent threat.....so it is vital that homes and other buildings are as sustainable and eco-friendly as possible." If there were ever a case of the association's time having come, this might be thought to be it!

For the association, perhaps the key development of the year was the effective inauguration of the AECB CarbonLite Programme (CLP), building off the work done on the AECB Energy Standards the previous year. Funded by the Carbon Trust, Esme Fairbairn Foundation and the AECB, the programme arguably represents the very best aspects of the AECB. It builds on the expertise of our members, supports members in building truly low energy buildings, and aims to disseminate the core knowledge developed to a far wider audience, utilising the association's expertise to influence the mainstream. It is a stepwise programme, building on the lessons from abroad of what has really worked over many years. It aims to provide the information and training necessary to enable construction professionals to build truly low carbon buildings. The programme is cited in the CLG document *'Building Regulations - Energy efficiency requirements for new dwellings: A forward look at what standards may be in 2010 and 2013'*, and is widely supported by the industry through the CLP Advisory Panel.

Of course, the AECB CarbonLite Programme is building off many years of effective networking and action by the association and its members since its inception in 1989. During this year, the Association remained in good heart with a number of other notable activities and developments.

As ever, our annual conference and AGM was a huge success. Hosted by the Rivergreen Centre, in Durham, the event not only offered a fascinating venue, but a wide range of highly thought-provoking and informative workshops and events. The challenge, of course, is to 'follow that' the next year, although I am sure our conference event organisers will rise to the challenge.

The year also saw two developments, which together have hugely expanded the ability of the AECB to offer networking opportunities to its members. For the first time, local groups really took off, with six groups strongly established throughout the UK, and more proposed. In addition, the online forum, for those who like the medium, has offered an excellent opportunity for discussions at all levels of eco building. Some of the discussion threads are at the leading edge of their subject, and represent the very best thinking in their field. For the AECB, as a unique membership organisation, these two developments offer huge potential for further expansion.

At this year's AGM we said goodbye to Chris Lord Smith as the secretary to the board. Pressure from his business means that he can no longer put in the hours necessary to collect sub-group reports and prepare minutes of meetings as well as put together the excellent Network newsletter. So Chris has decided to concentrate on the newsletter. His departure has left a vacancy, which Peter Wilkinson has bravely offered to fill until a permanent replacement can be found. The Board's thanks go to Chris for all he has done in his role as secretary.

There is much more I could mention for this year, but my priority should, as always, be to express appreciation of the huge amount of commitment and voluntary effort, which sustains the association. This applies to board members, many of whom donate huge amounts of voluntary time, modestly paid staff who give far beyond their remit, and also many members who contribute so much; organising local groups, tending the forum, helping with the conference, attending events and so on. I have no doubt that the association needs to consider how to develop its infrastructure to enable it to continue to 'punch above its weight' without fear of burnout in key members. However, it will surely continue to rely on the voluntary support of members. For all who give their time and effort to the association, I would like to say a very big Thank You.

And finally, I think I can do no more than reiterate my words from last year.

The environmental challenges we face are so huge that only with all of us playing our part are we likely to have the slightest chance of allaying a global catastrophe of quite unprecedented scale. As members of the AECB, we are privileged to be at the forefront of expertise, experience and commitment in putting forward solutions for the built environment. Now is the time to act. I hope that membership of the AECB can enable us all to act effectively.

I look forward to a year in which the AECB and its members can help inform and inspire solutions to the challenge of our times.

AECB BOARD

The board of directors of AECB Ltd met four times during the year at the Friends of the Earth offices in Birmingham. The system of each sub-group submitting a written report prior to each meeting has reduced the amount of time spent on routine matters, although the board has still struggled to get through a tightly packed agenda. The minutes of each meeting are published on the website.

In June the board held a strategy day, which allowed trustees to spend time away from the routine business of running the association. They discussed how the AECB was developing and how priorities could be established to make best use of very limited resources.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

AECB Executive Officer: Andrew Simmonds

The EO continued to report to the board through the Personnel sub-group by way of phone conferences and written quarterly reports. The EO fully participated in the quarterly board meetings.

The activities of the EO were focused on delivery of the CarbonLite programme (CLP) and PASS-NET (see separate report below) and development of the CLP project.

The EO continued to successfully develop links with other organizations and businesses, with a view to future joint projects.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

PR sub group:

Christine Armstrong, Cath Hassell

The sub group continued to build the AECB brand. A shift in emphasis to referring to the organisation as AECB, with a strapline of “the sustainable building association” has proved successful and immediately identifies what the association represents. A new logo was designed to reflect the new name, with new postcards highlighting the core activities of the AECB as well as new banners.

The AECB continued to have a strong presence at environmental events across the UK, including Glastonbury Festival and, for the first time, a stand at Ecobuild.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Conference sub-group:

Christine Armstrong, Nick Grant, Neill Lewis, Geoff Stow

This year's conference was held in June at the Rivergreen Centre in Durham, an office complex with conference facilities, built and run on environmentally friendly principles. Presentations included an introduction by Paul King to the UK Green Building Council, with an invitation to the AECB to become members. A series of talks and workshops, with the emphasis on renovation of existing buildings, the local networks meeting, screenings of DVDs, web site support was finally followed by the association's AGM. See our website for a more detailed report. On the whole the format worked well. In general the workshops were of a high quality. What is also a big feature for the membership is that it's a chance to meet up with old friends and colleagues and have a chat. Generally the feedback on the conference was very positive and the summary of the feedback forms has been circulated.

Financially this year we made a small loss, despite the presenters working for free and many not claiming expenses. This was due to several factors, which need to be looked at in relation to future events. Among these are cost, accessibility and availability of accommodation.

SussEd (Sustainable Skills and Education)

SussEd sub-group:

Neill Lewis, Geoff Stow and Peter Wilkinson

The training arm of the AECB, SussEd, ran the course 'Designing Genuinely Energy Efficient Buildings that will Perform', twice this year. The AECB was invited to re-run the 'energy efficiency' course at The University of Wales Architecture Department. Also, to promote the proposed sustainable construction training centre in Yorkshire, we ran the course at Slaithwaite, near Huddersfield to an enthusiastic group of industry professionals and practitioners. The feedback from both of these events was extremely positive.

Together both sessions of the course made a small profit, which will be rolled over into future course development. However, developing these courses to the high level needed is proving time consuming to organise and administer. External development funding will be needed to develop a range of quality courses related to the AECB's CarbonLite Programme, in addition to the many other areas of training not directly related to energy efficiency.

ENERGY

Energy has been an AECB priority since 2004 when the urgency of taking action on climate change became paramount. The objectives of the energy campaign are as follows:

- 1) to produce energy performance standards consistent with significant reductions in CO2 emissions from new homes
- 2) to provide resources and training to help practitioners deliver to those standards
- 3) to profile the Association as an essential source of expertise on the energy performance of buildings for policy-makers and practitioners.

The CarbonLite Programme (CLP)

In 2007, the AECB's energy campaign became the CarbonLite Programme. The AECB was successful in its applications for funding from the Carbon Trust's Network's Programme and from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation. As a result, the AECB's energy team has spent 2007 rolling out the CLP – a crash course in energy-efficient, low carbon buildings - for the design and construction industries, with advice for clients and developers, as well as for occupiers. The CLP comprises three energy standards, a description of principles and methodologies for calculating heat loss and emissions, a comprehensive training programme, a web-site with a forum and a database of buildings, with measured energy results,

The funding for the programme ends in March 2008 when it will be launched at Ecobuild. Further funding will be sought so that the initial work can be disseminated more widely and its principles consolidated and embedded in the work of existing and new members.

PASS-NET

The AECB has also been successful in PASS-NET, an 'Intelligent energy' funded project with 14 partners, of which AECB is the UK partner. PASS-NET is a three-year programme, which aims to promote low energy and low carbon buildings in the UK.

WEB SITE www.aecb.net

Web site sub group:

Nick Grant, Chris Herring

Webmaster: Tom Anderson

Additional Help: Mark Siddal

Other than routine maintenance, work on the website has focussed on developing the Carbon Lite web site.

Payment of subscriptions is now possible online via Worldpay rather than Paypal.

Our forum is the place for regular discussion, announcements, events, job adverts etc. The use of the forum continues to grow steadily with a core of regular users and the level of debate is very high, with a current total of 4729 posts covering 918 topics. There about 2,500 users registered compared with 1,700 in May 2007

The 'member's profile' feature is now live but uptake has been modest with around 60 companies having filled in their profiles. Feedback from members who have filled in profiles has been good and other members are encouraged to take advantage of this unique feature.

FINANCE

Finance sub-group:

Christine Armstrong, Paul Ellis, Chris Lord-Smith

Finance Officer:, Sally Hall

There were three main areas of work in this period; main core activities, sussED and the CarbonLite programme (CLP). We did not need to dip into the reserves this year as each returned a surplus. With regards to the excess of income over expenditure for the CLP, this related to grant money not yet spent in the current year but which will be used on commitments in the following financial period. Grants received in this period for CLP included funding from the Esmee Fairbairn Trust, Carbon Trust and Ecology Building Society. The AECB is very grateful to these bodies for assisting with this project.

The subscription income from members increased by just over 20% and membership averaged 1400 in the period. Most members renewed their subscriptions and there were 337 new members (compared with 195 in the previous year). Membership increased steadily each quarter (a trend similar to previous years) so some of the additional income can be attributed to this. However, in early 2006 membership rates and categories changed. Rates became based on turnover rather than employee numbers so many members moved into a higher category and therefore paid more. As members renewed throughout the year, the full benefits of the rate increases were not realised until the 2006/7 period, hence the noticeable increase in income.

The accounts are published separately and are available on the web www.aecb.net.

REGIONAL GROUPS

Co-ordinator: Joanna Saadi

There are currently six regional AECB groups networking and sharing information at a local level. Activities are co-ordinated via the web site.

BOARD MEMBERS, STAFF AND PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS

Trustees (Directors)

Chris Herring
Peter Wilkinson

Additional Trustees (Directors)

Christine Armstrong
Paul Ellis
Nick Grant
Cath Hassell
Neill Lewis
Chris Lord Smith [retired at the June AGM]
Sally Starbuck
Geoff Stow
Peter Wilshaw

Officers

Chair, Chris Herring
Secretary to the Board [to June], Chris Lord Smith
Acting Secretary to the Board, Peter Wilkinson
Treasurer, Christine Armstrong
Company Secretary, Peter Wilkinson

Staffing

Executive Officer, Andy Simmonds
Finance / Administration, Sally Hall
Emails, Chris Lord-Smith
Network newsletter, Chris Lord-Smith

CarbonLite Project

Director, Liz Reason
Andy Simmonds
Sally Hall

Auditors, Keith Bridgford & Co Limited Company
Building Society, Ecology Building Society
Bankers, The Co-operative Bank