

**[THE] ASSOCIATION FOR
ENVIRONMENT CONSCIOUS BUILDING**
COMPANY NO 5336768
ANNUAL REPORT
COVERING THE PERIOD
OCTOBER 2007 TO SEPTEMBER 2008

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INTRODUCTION

AECB Chair: Chris Herring

This Annual Report is the third which I have had the privilege to introduce as Chair of the Association. In my last two introductions, I have seen the years as pivotal to the development of the AECB. This year has been different: we have finally seen the AECB 'coming of age' and starting to play a key role in shaping the future of our industry. The year saw increasing acceptance within Government and the industry of the urgent and pressing need to address the environmental impact of buildings in construction and use. At times it has almost felt as though the AECB's battles were won. Where we were once espousing a message which was seen as very much 'on the fringe', we are now seeing these issues right at the heart of policy.

So, what is the AECB's key role? Primarily we are a networking association of construction professionals (and others) committed to developing best practice. We are an independent voice, without any controlling vested interests to inhibit us, and our members are those willing to continue to experiment and develop best practice. The challenge for the Association is to continue to support and enable our members in doing this, and to channel this experience into the mainstream industry and into policy.

This year has seen an expansion in our Regional Groups network, enabling committed members to meet together regularly for informal information exchange, events and of course social activities. For those not able to meet up in Regional Groups, the online Forum continues to offer leading edge discussion on key issues in sustainable construction. We also enjoyed another excellent Annual Conference, this time at the University of East Anglia, in Norwich with our Guest Speaker, Dr Bertoldt Kaufmann of the German Passivhaus Institut topping an outstanding range of workshops and discussions.

During the year, we witnessed the completion of a majority of the initial phase of the CarbonLite Programme, funded by the Carbon Trust and Esmay Fairbairn Foundation. The aim of the Programme has been to promote carbon literate design and construction within the industry. The outcome has been a training programme and some key tools based on international best practice, particularly the German Passivhaus methodology. Not only has this resulted in increasing 'carbon literacy' within the industry, but it has also started to influence policy makers. Although this report is about the past year, we should also look forward as the AECB, along with some key industry partners, starts to explore the future of the CarbonLite Programme, and the important role we can expect it to play within the industry.

A major concern for the AECB Board this year has been to put the Association on a sound and sustainable footing for the future, as it becomes increasingly influential. In common with many modestly sized voluntary organizations, the Association gets by on a mixture of minimal levels of underpaid and overworked staff input, together with a huge amount of voluntary effort. The Board consequently started a review process this year with the aim of developing a business plan to put the AECB on a sounder footing. I expect that by the time I write the introduction to the next Annual Report, this new footing for the Association will be firmly in place.

There is much more I could mention for this year, but my priority should, as always, be to express appreciation of the 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 regional groups, tending the forum, helping with the conference and so on. For all who give their time and effort to the Association this year, I would like to say a very big thank you.

For the last two years I have ended my introduction in the same way. I had intended to write something new this year, but in the end we continue to face the same, steadily escalating, challenges. So I will conclude by saying that the environmental challenges we face are so big 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 continue to 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 Board continues to struggle to get through a tightly packed agenda. The minutes of each meeting are published on the website at www.aecb.net.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

AECB Executive Officer: Andrew Simmonds

The EO participated in the quarterly Board meetings. The EO's main focus has continued to be delivery of the Carbonlite Programme and PASS-NET [see below] while still developing links with external bodies and individuals to promote the AECB.

The EO was granted three months' sabbatical leave to work on his own Passivhaus refurbishment project; the time being made up by an increase of hours from 12 to 16hrs per week for the remainder of the year.

PUBLICITY

Publicity sub group: Christine Armstrong, Cath Hassell, Geoff Stow

AECB had a presence at Eco Build and the Home Building and Renovating Shows, Glastonbury and Greener Homes and Buildings as well as several smaller regional events this year. Our stand at Eco Build was bigger than in previous years and we were continuously busy with general enquiries and members introducing themselves which is always very welcome and interesting. We also used the event to officially launch the CarbonLite Standards, which was a sell-out event. The Homebuilding and Renovating Show organisers offered us the "Ask the Experts" desk. This worked very well in Birmingham with members of the public asking green building questions all day. They clearly liked getting independent advice after being sold stuff by other exhibitors. It was interesting that the vast majority of questions were on ground source heat pumps (over 90%) and no one asked about design details and insulation or airtightness. Maybe we need to look at how to get more independent advice out there.

A limited amount of PR was outsourced this year which covered work for the AECB and CarbonLite programme. Following the successful launch of the standards at Ecobuild a series of articles appeared in the trade press. It is important that we build on this work for the year ahead with serious consideration being given to employing a PR consultant. Feedback from members recommended that more emphasis should be given to Passivhaus and again the name change of the Association came up. AECB post cards to be given out at fairs were printed for both building professionals and members of the general public.

Cath Hassell resigned as a Board Director but was co-opted onto the sub group.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Conference sub-group: Christine Armstrong, Nick Grant, Neill Lewis, Geoff Stow

This year's conference was held in the University Of East Anglia Conference suite.

We were very pleased to get Berthold Kaufmann from the PassivHaus Institut as the keynote speaker and we would like to take this opportunity to thank him again for his excellent input.

The campus offered some very interesting buildings and the tours of these were very well received and were both informative and delivered with humour. On the whole all the workshops were well received especially those by Bethold Kaufmann who participated in 3 workshops over the 2 days as well as having endless discussions with delegates. All the feed back from participants was that the workshops were wide ranging and informative. In fact feed back was on the whole very positive and criticisms constructive. Part of the success of this event is down to the quality of the workshops and again we would like to thank all the presenters for their hard work and support.

Finding and booking the venue, organising speakers etc. was done on a voluntary basis as usual. As has been said before this is a lot of work and needs to be looked at. This year we reserved some rooms in the halls of residence, this turned out to be a great resource for speakers.

As usual this was a member only event. The cost was £200 including VAT per delegate. This was slightly higher than previous years but we felt that it still represented excellent value for money, especially when compared to the rates charged by private conference organisers. A recurring problem with this event is that bookings come in late and there were slightly fewer delegates than we hoped. It is hard to tell why the numbers were low but the credit crunch and the proliferation of, so called, green building events must be part of the problem. In the event the conference just

covered its costs but ideally it should add to the AECB coffers and if we could guarantee higher numbers we could reduce delegate costs but we cannot afford to run at a loss. As the event is members only there is very little we can do to increase promotion. We may need to look at widening out the potential audience and use it as a way of increasing our membership.

The conference is still a major part of the AECB's work and lessons learnt this year will go on to inform future events.

SUSSED [Sustainable Skills and Education]

SussEd sub-group:

Neill Lewis, Geoff Stow and Peter Wilkinson

SussEd has been dormant this year, the emphasis being on courses related to the AECB's CarbonLite Programme. Discussions have taken place on proposals to re-launch SussEd in 2009, possibly including CarbonLite training courses in its remit.

THE CARBONLITE PROGRAMME [CLP]

The CarbonLite Programme, funded by the Carbon Trust, is gradually drawing to a close with the final documentation and training courses nearing completion. Over 200 individuals have attended its training courses, key documents have been downloaded thousands of times, and CarbonLite has had an undoubted influence on the form of the proposed new Building Regulations for 2010, 2013 and beyond. In future it is extremely likely that CO2 emissions limits for new buildings will have a parallel primary energy limit to ensure that buildings cannot waste precious renewable resources simply because they are low carbon. The report comparing the Passivhaus Planning Package with SAP is already leading to changes in the way that SAP calculates energy projections for new homes.

While to many, progress must have appeared painfully slow, the CarbonLite team's commitment to clarity, quality and robust outcomes means that it has attracted the attention of large and better-resourced organisations that wish to see CarbonLite grow. Plans are now afoot by a group of organisations to launch in 2009 a CarbonLite Centre, which will work with any individual or organisation committed to developing flagship low energy low carbon buildings and developments. It is certainly true that in the UK there are virtually no buildings that can be held up as successful examples of what can be achieved with careful design, construction and operation. The CarbonLite Centre aims to change all that.

So we expect 2009 to be the year of progress towards a low carbon built environment – with CarbonLite at the forefront.

WEB SITE

Web site sub group: Nick Grant, Chris Herring

Webmaster: Tom Anderson

Additional Help: Mark Siddal

Other than routine maintenance, new work on the website has been largely on hold whilst the CarbonLite website (www.carbonlite.net) was developed. Proposals are now being considered for refreshing the content and structure.

The 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. Many more people are viewing the forum than are actually posting. Currently there

about 3,000 users registered, an average of 4.4 posts per day and, on average, a new topic every day. Other features can be seen by exploring the website at www.aecb.net

FINANCE

Finance sub-group: Christine Armstrong, Paul Ellis, Chris Lord-Smith

Finance and Admin Officer: Sally Hall

Main core activities and the CarbonLite programme (CLP) were the focus during this period, (SussEd being dormant). There was a surplus for the period. Grants were received from the Carbon Trust (final payments), and PassNet (first payment over three years). The AECB is very grateful to these bodies for assisting with funding, which is mainly directed at the CarbonLite and low energy housing work.

Christine Armstrong resigned as Treasurer at the 2008 AGM but agreed to remain on the Finance Sub Group. She was thanked for all her hard work, assisting with the implementation of Sage and reports for the Board. Peter Wilkinson took on the role of Treasurer. The subscription income from members increased by just under 40%, reflecting the increase in fees and categories, which are based on turnover. Membership averaged 1643 in the period. Most members renewed their subscriptions and there were 290 new members (compared with 337 in the previous year). The accounts are published separately and are available on the web www.aecb.net.

The finance sub-group wish to express its thanks to Sally Hall, who has implemented the new Sage accounting system for the Association and absorbed an increased work load due to the success of the CarbonLite Programme.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership Officer, Peter Wilshaw

Membership at start of the year numbered 1477. This has increased by 166 to 1643 by the end of this financial year (2007/08). This is part of a trend of an increasing membership year on year. The membership has also increased by a small percentage against the overall total membership, demonstrating a modest increase in awareness of and interest in the values and aims of the organisation within the construction industry.

The nature of the membership is quite diverse with the majority of the members, coming from small to medium scale enterprises throughout the construction industry. The areas of work, skills and practices remain well spread from architects, materials manufacturers and suppliers to construction practitioners offering a range of trades and services.

Membership promotion activities across the year included; AECB board members supported by others, maintaining an active presence at various conferences and events across the UK; Greener Homes & Buildings Show, Llanidloes Green Fair, and Eco-Build (Earls Court) amongst others.

Contribution to future vision - the key to a membership organisation's success is contained within its membership. It is the principal tool in the AECB's box for delivery of the overall aim of the AECB and where its efficacy as an organisation can be demonstrated. The AECB's work cannot be done without a strong membership who value their involvement with the organisation

The membership officer is advocating a refreshed emphasis on membership in the coming years in order to both harness the strength of the collective voice and to deliver the change that can be effected together.

REGIONAL GROUPS

Co-ordinator: Joanna Saady

Five groups have been established –
Yorkshire and Humber; Edinburgh; London; Brighton;
Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire;
and an Oxford group is being set up.

Group activities vary and include visits to buildings, lectures, discussions and social evenings.

Groups keep in touch via the website at www.aecb.net

BOARD MEMBERS, STAFF AND PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS

Trustees (Directors)

Chris Herring
Peter Wilkinson
Christine Armstrong
Paul Ellis
Nick Grant
Neill Lewis
Geoff Stow
Peter Wilshaw

Additional Trustees (Directors)

Jo Saady

Officers

Chair: Chris Herring
Secretary to the Board: Neill Lewis
Treasurer: Peter Wilkinson
Company Secretary: Peter Wilkinson

Officers and Staff

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

CarbonLite Project

Project Manager: Liz Reason with
Andy Simmonds

Auditors
Building Society
Bankers

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