

Green Construction Roundup

July, 2008 No. 173

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### **Construction News**

#### **Energy rules relaxed**

The communities department has revised its rules on energy certificates to allow one certificate to cover a whole estate, if data cannot be collected for individual buildings before the October deadline.

The concession will last for one year, and applies to display energy certificates (DECs). It will give organisations with several buildings on one site time to fit energy meters to them.

*Building*. 25 July (Pg.14)

<http://www.building.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=3119096>

#### **Prison plans may spell end for Norfolk eco town**

The Coltishall Group, the developer behind the proposed eco-town on the former RAF Coltishall airbase in Norfolk, has vowed to pull its scheme if the Ministry of Justice's plan to convert the former accommodation blocks into a category C prison is given the go-ahead.

*Building*. 25 July (Pg.18)

[http://www.building.co.uk/sustain\\_story.asp?sectioncode=284&storycode=3119203](http://www.building.co.uk/sustain_story.asp?sectioncode=284&storycode=3119203)

#### **Social housing may be excused from green targets**

The Housing Corporation has admitted that the units it is planning to buy from struggling housebuilders to turn into social housing will not necessarily meet level three of the Code for Sustainable Homes. As private homes do not have to meet this level until 2011, it is likely that many of units will not meet the standard.

*Building*. 25 July (Pg.19)

<http://www.building.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=3119163>

#### **2016 zero carbon target cannot be met**

The Home Builders Federation (HBF) has, reportedly, written privately to Caroline Flint, the housing minister, to say builders will not be able to reach zero-carbon targets through the building fabric alone.

The HBF letter argues that the government should rely on energy policy to reach level six, the zero-carbon level of the Code for Sustainable Homes; requiring that renewable energy be used to power home appliances.

*Building*. 18 July (Pg.10)

<http://www.building.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=284&storycode=3118603>

#### **MPs: make quick fixes a priority for green offices**

The government should reduce the carbon footprint of commercial buildings through a series of "quick wins", such as switching off electrical equipment, before providing tax breaks for green refurbishment, says the *Greening UK cities' buildings* report, compiled by the All Party Urban Development Group (APUDG).

The report says that before embarking on more complex retrofitting, much can be achieved by better management of building systems and simple energy saving measures.

*Building*. 18 July (Pg.16)

<http://www.building.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=29&storycode=3118521>

### **Eco towns are in the wrong places, report claims**

The government's proposed eco-towns are in the wrong locations, and the whole initiative should be renamed if it is to be successful, says the *Eco Towns and beyond* paper, written by housing specialist PRP Architects, urban designer Urbed and lobby group Design for Homes. The paper says the government should reconsider its siting decisions and concentrate on urban extensions with existing planning permissions.

*Architects Journal*. 17 July (Pg.10)

[http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/dailynews/2008/07/ecotowns\\_are\\_in\\_the\\_wrong\\_places\\_report\\_claims.html](http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/dailynews/2008/07/ecotowns_are_in_the_wrong_places_report_claims.html)

### **Green refurb rules could be worth £6.5 billion to industry**

Government policies to make existing homes more energy efficient could provide a £6.5bn lifeline to the construction industry, according to a report by the Federation of Master Builders (FMB). The FMB report says a programme to improve the energy efficiency of 500,000 homes a year could be worth £3.5-6.5 billion.

The figures, from case studies, are based on upgrades such as the installation of solid wall insulation and solar panels.

*Building*. 11 July (Pg.16)

<http://www.building.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=29&storycode=3118102>

### **Boris ditches Ken's 50% affordable target**

Boris Johnson is to formally drop Ken Livingstone's 50% affordable housing target as part of an end-to-end review of the London Plan. Johnson had said during his campaign to become mayor that he did not think the 50% quota was the answer to the capital's affordable housing shortage.

*Building*. 11 July (Pg.23)

<http://www.building.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=555&storycode=3118013&c=1>

### **Over ambitious eco town plans thrown into turmoil**

Ministers are under intense pressure to cut the government's flagship eco-towns programme from 10 schemes to just one or two. Senior officials within the DCLG and members of the government's advisory Eco-towns Challenge Panel want the initiative scaled down.

The current plans involve creating 10 new towns of between 5,000 and 15,000 homes.

*New Civil Engineer*. 10 July (Pg.5)

[http://www.nce.co.uk/news/2008/07/overambitious\\_ecotown\\_plans\\_thrown\\_into\\_turmoil.html](http://www.nce.co.uk/news/2008/07/overambitious_ecotown_plans_thrown_into_turmoil.html)

### **Government delays eco town design competition**

Government plans for a competition to set the design standards for its eco-towns programme have been delayed by at least a year amid mounting hostility to the proposed sites.

The contest, announced last October, was set to involve leading creative thinkers in architecture and landscape design, as well as a 'citizens' panel. It was due to name winning proposals early this year.

However, the competition has now been mothballed until this October.

*Building Design*. 04 July (Pg.5)

<http://www.bdonline.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=3117477>

### **Energy bills to soar to fund renewables**

Meeting government targets for increasing renewable energy use is expected to add an extra £213 to average annual domestic energy bills, according to a recent report by management consultant Ernst & Young.

The report says the cost to Britain of meeting European renewable energy targets by 2020 will be £100 billion, however that would result in 15% of the energy mix coming from renewables. The report states that consumers will have to contribute £5.3 billion towards that cost through a 20% rise in energy bills assuming commodity prices remain stable.

*New Civil Engineer*. 03 July (Pg.8)

[http://www.nce.co.uk/energy/2008/07/energy\\_bills\\_to\\_soar\\_to\\_fund\\_renewables.html](http://www.nce.co.uk/energy/2008/07/energy_bills_to_soar_to_fund_renewables.html)

### **Eco towns being developed for the wrong reasons says think tank**

The green credentials of the government's 10 proposed eco-towns have been rubbished in a critical report from the Optimum Population Trust (OPT).

The report also criticises the eco-town approach of building in isolated rural sites as opposed to redeveloping brownfield sites.

*New Civil Engineer*. 03 July (Pg.9)

[http://www.nce.co.uk/news/2008/07/ecotowns\\_being\\_developed\\_for\\_wrong\\_reasons\\_says\\_think\\_tank.html](http://www.nce.co.uk/news/2008/07/ecotowns_being_developed_for_wrong_reasons_says_think_tank.html)

## **Periodical Articles**

### **Open the window and let the natural ventilation in**

Foster + Partners pioneered the use of natural ventilation in towers by using a double skinned façade and separating the building into zones, with internal atria. Most current landmark projects aspire to be at least partially naturally ventilated, but the use of this feature is not widespread enough.

Article looking at why natural ventilation in towers is not as simple as it would seem; focussing on lessons learned by Foster's CommerzBank.

*Architects Journal*. 24 July (Pg.46-48)

### **What it costs: thermal insulation**

Since October 2006 new housing has needed to meet the energy requirements in Part L1A of the Building Regulations. While certain components and elements must achieve a minimum thermal efficiency, it is the complete building that is assessed as being compliant.

Designers have some flexibility in achieving the dwelling emission rate (DER), and increasing the thermal insulation levels is one the ways it can be done. In this article Peter Mayer of Building LifePlans examines the effectiveness of different materials.

*Building*. 18 July (Pg.81)

<http://www.building.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=482&storycode=3118591>

### **UKGBC tells profession to get its own house in order**

When it comes to sustainability, good housekeeping is essential, is the main message of the UK Green Building Council's (UK-GBC) third task group report, by the UK-GBC's measuring and reporting task group (M&RTG).

The report begins with measuring the impact of one's own organisation, examining the impact of business operations only when this is complete. This may sound straightforward, however surprisingly few organisations have started to measure their own carbon footprint, much less other factors relating to sustainability. This article looks at the UK-GBC report into the route to more sustainable business practice.

*Architects Journal*. 10 July (Pg.12-13)

### **Soakaways**

NBS shortcut looking at soakaways. Austin Williams looks at these 'holes in the ground' and finds the use of soakaways to be a more complex process than it would, at first, seem.

*Architects Journal*. 10 July (Pg.38-40)

### **Spec and sustainable**

Sustainability can flourish even in the competitive world of speculative office development. One Kingdom Street in London's Paddington, is a 12-storey scheme that, in addition to its low carbon footprint and BREEAM excellent rating, is characterised by extensive prefabrication of heating and cooling systems and switchroom equipment.

While the project was on site, contractor Skanska produced a monthly environmental monitoring report covering 18 categories, such as electrical consumption and diesel use by vehicles and generators.

This article looks at a case study of an office building, which proves that speculative development does not mean compromise.

*Building Services Journal*. July 2008 (Pg.14-15)

<http://www.bsjonline.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=3117205>

### **Concentrated solar power plants in North Africa could supply Europe**

Electricity is one of our fastest growing carbon problems. The means of generation, distribution, storage and use all need to be addressed afresh. The government's efforts to improve the thermal performance of new buildings are completely at odds with the prevalent disregard of the use of electrical energy. This article looks at solar factories, in North Africa, which could soon be supplying electricity to Europe. But, it appears, only to countries with more pro-active governments than the UK.

*Building Services Journal*. July 2008 (Pg.39-41)

<http://www.bsjonline.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=218&storycode=3117126>

### **Soaring energy costs herald more whole life costing in construction**

Too many companies regard whole life costing as a costly or cosmetic endeavour.

When assessing a project's viability, it seems obvious that account should be taken not only of capital costs but also the long-term impact of the design. In effect, basing a decision to build on the best value over time. While the Treasury requires all public-sector construction projects to be evaluated on a whole life cost (WLC) basis, it is rarely used as a key decision-making tool.

This article looks at what can be done to increase the use of WLC, and discusses the key issues related to it; The life of the asset, The discount rate to be used, and The data source underpinning the calculations for operational and maintenance costs.

*Building Services Journal*. July 2008 (Pg.50-52)

<http://www.bsjonline.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=41&storycode=3117157>

## **Recent Publications**

### **Eco-Towns, back to the future?**

A new report by the Local Government Association has warned that Government plans to create eco-towns were significantly flawed and that the developments risk becoming 'eco-slums' of the future, without more input from councils.

The report argues that the government has failed to learn lessons from the past by falling back on discredited new town powers to impose the initiatives on the public.

To view the LGA report, *Eco-towns: back to the future?* go to

[http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/external-](http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/external-link.do?redirectUrl=http%3A//www.lga.gov.uk/lga/publications/publication-display.do%3Fid%3D751218)

[link.do?redirectUrl=http%3A//www.lga.gov.uk/lga/publications/publication-display.do%3Fid%3D751218](http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/external-link.do?redirectUrl=http%3A//www.lga.gov.uk/lga/publications/publication-display.do%3Fid%3D751218)

### **Waste Consultation**

DEFRA has launched a consultation on how to target criminals who profit from polluting the environment by illegally dumping waste. The proposals will give local authorities and the Environment Agency new powers to stop, search and instantly seize vehicles suspected of being involved in fly-tipping and other waste offences. Offenders who do not come forward risk their vehicles being crushed.

The consultation closes on 8th September 2008. The consultation documents can be found on the DEFRA website, at

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/waste-controls/>

### **Future water efficiency targets**

Water companies are expected to face targets to help customers save more than 23 million litres of water a day, under new proposals published by Ofwat.

The targets, set to run initially for five years from 2010-2015, will involve companies delivering real savings by providing household and business customers with information on how to use water sensibly, and promoting the use of water saving devices.

Ofwat's proposals are outlined in the paper, *Future water efficiency targets: A consultation*, which ends on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2008. The paper is available through the Ofwat website

[http://www.ofwat.gov.uk/aptrix/ofwat/publish.nsf/Content/pap\\_con\\_watefftar200608](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk/aptrix/ofwat/publish.nsf/Content/pap_con_watefftar200608)

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