

Green Construction Roundup

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Construction News

OFT clears housebuilders – but raises zero-carbon fears

A year-long inquiry into the housing industry has found that the drive for zero-carbon homes could affect competition in the industry. However, in a major victory for the construction sector, the study by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) found 'little evidence' of anti-competitive practice by housebuilders and 'no evidence' of monopolies, even on a local level.

However, the OFT study report found the move to zero carbon may push up customer complaints and that small firms 'may struggle, without assistance, to meet the requirements'.

Building. 26 September (Pg. 11)

<http://www.building.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=29&storycode=3123504>

UK architects will visit China on sustainability market mission

The government is to take a group of architects to China in November in an attempt to snatch a share of the country's sustainability market. Consultants aiming to capitalise on China's growing interest in green buildings are being invited to join a trade mission to Sichuan.

It is understood that architects including Arup, Benoy and RMJM have been invited to attend, and some spaces are still to be filled.

Building. 26 September (Pg. 11)

<http://www.building.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=29&storycode=3123276>

Prasad: only two or three eco-towns should go ahead

Sunand Prasad, the president of the RIBA and a member of the eco-towns challenge panel set up to check the quality of the developments, said all eco-towns needed to allow residents to live low-carbon lifestyles.

He said: "I'd be very happy to see just two or three eco towns. Ten would definitely be too many on the evidence we have before us."

Building. 26 September (Pg. 23)

<http://www.building.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=555&storycode=3123411>

Halt to eco-towns consultation called for until after review

Planning lawyers have called for the government to delay a consultation on its eco-town programme until after a judicial review of one scheme.

A lawyer for the Bard campaign group said the consultation should be put on hold while a judicial review of the Middle Quanton eco-town, granted by Mr Justice Collins, was carried out. The review could take up to a year.

Building. 19 September (Pg. 23)

<http://www.building.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=555&storycode=3122776>

Sustainable Chinese takeaway

An office designed by Martha Schwartz made from reused shipping containers from China has opened in Leeds as part of the £450 million Wellington Place development.

The two-storey marketing suite, Wellington Central, is part of the sustainable business community for developer MEPC and includes a design workshop for the Renaissance Leeds Partnership, the body overseeing the city's development.

Building Design. 19 September (Pg. 2)

Affordable homes target at risk despite rescue package

The government has admitted it may miss its targets for affordable housing, despite announcing a £1 billion housing rescue package. Housebuilders have said the measures, which contain no new money, are inadequate to tackle the scale of the collapse in the industry following the credit crunch.

Building. 05 September (Pg. 11)

<http://www.building.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=29&storycode=3121815>

Insurers warn of fire risks from green roofs

Swiss insurer Zurich has said the roofs could dry out and become flammable. Green roofs have been promoted as one of the best ways to green new buildings and, recently, London mayor Boris Johnson put them at the heart of the capital's climate change strategy.

In a statement, Zurich said it would not refuse to insure buildings with green roofs as long as 'appropriate guidelines have been followed'. These include continuing maintenance and risk assessment. However, Zurich was unable to immediately point to any instances of fire in green roofs.

Building. 05 September (Pg. 12)

<http://www.building.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=29&storycode=3121655>

New eco town bidders escape inquisition process

It has come to light that the new bidders for the government's eco-towns scheme will not have to go through the same process as the original bidders. Of the 16 bidders shortlisted in April, four have formally withdrawn, with two further sites unlikely to be developed.

Since April three new bidders have emerged; a consortium of public bodies for a site in Norfolk and the Crown Estate and Crown Golf for separate sites near Rushcliffe in Nottinghamshire.

Building. 05 September (Pg. 22)

<http://www.building.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=555&storycode=3121607>

New blow for eco towns

Tesco has pulled-out of the Cambridgeshire eco-town scheme, citing local opposition. The supermarket has confirmed that it is pulling out of a bid to build an 8,000 home eco-town on land it owns at Hanley Grange near Duxford in Cambridgeshire. This leaves only 12 proposals to be considered for the final shortlist of 10 early next year.

New Civil Engineer. 04 September (Pg. 10/11)

http://www.nce.co.uk/news/2008/09/new_blow_for_ecotowns.html

Periodical Articles

The green dream

New Civil Engineer interview with Tim Jervis, sustainability director at Pell Frischmann, about quantifying sustainability. The interview also looks at his plans for taking carbon out of the calculation in the UK's infrastructure, by re-engineering society.

New Civil Engineer. 25 September (Pg. 18-19)

Is it possible to be green in a downturn?

Short discussion article looking at the current conundrum for those designing and building green. How can we keep the sustainability ship afloat during increasingly stormy economic waters?

In a bid to be balanced the article puts forward the differing viewpoints as to the short-term prospects of the green agenda in a 'green glass half full or half empty?' approach.

Building Design. 19 September (Pg. 19)

<http://www.bdonline.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=452&storycode=3122813>

New ways to catch some rays

Travel round mainland Europe and you'll find photovoltaic panels everywhere — in fields, on houses, and on crinkly-tin sheds. The UK lags way behind the rest of Europe, not just in the application of the technology, but also in grants and tax credits.

Thin-film photovoltaics are currently made with one of three materials which can be sprayed on both rigid and flexible substrates to create photovoltaic layers. Thin-film cells are generally cheaper to produce than crystalline cells, are lighter and less fragile, and are better suited to curved surfaces. As a result, they are much easier to incorporate into complex building shapes. However, what is gained in flexibility is lost in efficiency.

This article looks at the benefits of thin-film technology; a recent innovation that enables photovoltaics to be almost any shape.

Building Design. 12 September (Pg. 25)

<http://www.bdonline.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=3122112>

How green is PVCu?

In recent months an argument has broken out centering on the environmental ratings awarded for certain types of windows in BRE's latest Green Guide to Specification.

In the new edition PVCu making a leap in the table, from 'C' to an overall 'A' rating, has raised eyebrows among architects and specifiers. The upgrading of PVCu windows in the guide is contentious, and many do not consider PVCu to be a sustainable material. There are also general concerns that the improved rating is perhaps the result of lobbying from the PVCu industry.

Article looking at why the old rivalry between timber and PVCu has returned, following the BRE award of an overall 'A' grade to PVCu windows in its latest green guide; and why the Green Guide to Specification is generally creating waves in the window industry.

Building. 05 September (Pg. 68-70)

http://www.building.co.uk/sustain_story.asp?sectioncode=331&storycode=3121531

Greening a terrace

According to the Energy Saving Trust, the average household can save up to 25% of its annual carbon emissions through energy efficiency, and retrofitting is one way to achieve this. ECD Architects retrofit of a terraced house in south-east London, is aiming for a reduction of more than three times that figure, targeting 80%.

This Hyde Housing Association property is a nondescript brick terraced house built in the 1930s, with a flat-roofed rear extension added in the 1980s. The target for an 80% reduction is the figure proposed for the UK's existing housing stock by Brenda Boardman, of the University of Oxford's Environmental Change Institute, in her Home truths report.

The article looks at how the considered use of products can contribute to retrofits, potentially having far-reaching implications on how properties owned by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) are transformed to reduce carbon emissions.

Architects Journal. 04 September (Pg. 80-84)

How to install a green wall

Short article, by David Morley, looking at how David Morley Architects went about retrofitting a green wall into the courtyard of their own London office.

Architects Journal. 04 September (Pg. 92)

Web Resources

FloodSim

If you've ever wanted to make important decisions, affecting millions of people, now is your chance. FloodSim puts you in control of all flood policy decisions and spending in the UK for 3 years. You decide how much money to allocate to flood defences, where to build houses, or how best to inform people about the risk of flooding.

FloodSim is a serious game with the aims to raise awareness of the vast number of issues surrounding flood policy and government expenditure and to increase citizen engagement through an accessible simulation.

<http://www.floodsim.com/>

CarbonBuzz

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and the Chartered Institution of Services Engineers (CIBSE) are inviting UK designers and engineers to contribute to, manage and share forecast and actual energy use of their projects anonymously through an online platform called CarbonBuzz.

The project will create a sector by sector monitor of UK buildings energy use and provide a RIBA and CIBSE recognised framework for 'Carbon-Conscious' practice. After an extended pilot at the RIBA, the project is due to be launched on 5th November 2008.

<http://www.architecture.com/WhatsOn/Seminars/Events/2008/CarbonBuzz.aspx>

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