

## Sustainability in the News – No 3

**This is your latest extract of news stories around sustainability and regeneration all taken from the regional on-line newsletter – bdaily – in recent weeks.**

**They will help you and your pupils understand some of the current issues surrounding sustainability and to learn of some of the new initiatives, products and services being offered in this growing area. We hope they provide inspiration and ideas.**

## **B Daily March 6**

### **Commercial Break**

#### **Commercial impact of being green**

With [Watson Burton LLP Law Firm](#)

With climate change still high on the agenda, 2008 can expect to see some significant changes to the regulation of businesses.

From 6 April 2008 all new or leased buildings that comprise of more than 10,000 sq metres will be required to have an Energy Performance Certificate ('EPC'). This certificate is similar to those produced for white goods and will indicate the energy efficiency of a building based on various measured factors including heating, lighting, carbon dioxide emissions and insulation. Based on this certificate buildings will be given a rating A through to G, the idea being that the better the rating the lower the fuel bills, therefore making the building potentially more attractive to commercial tenants. The requirement of the EPC will be triggered by the sale of the building or the grant of a lease or sublease. By 1 October 2008 all owners of "commercial buildings" will be required to produce EPCs when selling or leasing a property, with the scheme being brought in in phases through the year.

Although the government are currently focused on making residential buildings zero-carbon, there has been an indication that the focus will shift to take in commercial buildings as well, following a similar format to that currently employed in France where a 71,000 sq metre zero-carbon office building is being built. Added to this a study published by The Confederation of British Industry and GVA Grimley in January this year indicated that companies would be willing to pay higher rents for greener buildings in an effort to reduce energy costs.

Given that higher energy efficiency standards are also being introduced on new buildings it may pay in the long run to be greener.

If you have any queries regarding this article or any other property related issue please do not hesitate to contact Laura Keegan on [laura.keegan@watsonburton.com](mailto:laura.keegan@watsonburton.com).

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#### **Rural communities join forces**

Small rural communities could have a stronger network of support as the region's Rural Community Councils (RCCs) explore ways of working together more closely.

The North East England RCCs in Northumberland, Tees Valley and County Durham are the first line of support for people in rural communities on local regeneration. These RCCs are developing a regional network to give rural areas a stronger voice in planning and policy.

The work, supported in part by a £50,860 grant from regional development agency One NorthEast, has also seen the existing RCC's joining together to share training, different approaches to common issues, and their experience of what works for rural communities and what doesn't. They are also building links and partnerships on issues such as energy efficiency and community supported agriculture with councils, Northumberland Strategic Partnership, Government Office for the North East and the North East Rural Affairs Forum.

Bob Burston, chairman of the North East England RCCs, said: "One NorthEast's funding has been an enormous help in developing a stronger voice for rural areas in the region, and has also shown that there is a real will - not just amongst the RCCs, but from other partners too - for that voice to be heard."

Pat Ritchie, One NorthEast Assistant Chief Executive (Strategy), said: "For us, this is about helping rural communities across the region to work together on the key issues affecting them and to achieve a bigger impact. "Rural areas have an important contribution to make to the regional economy and the RCCs' have a key role in making that happen - helping to run local services in remote areas, supporting rural enterprise, promoting affordable housing and tackling issues around climate change, so we were pleased to support this project."

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## **B daily March 25**

### **Wind turbine secures investment**

An award winning wind turbine has won funding and research money to continue into the next stage of its development. The Aerogenerator is being engineered in the North East at [NaREC](#) in Blyth. It has the potential to help the UK meet its ambitious wind energy targets and has just won a low carbon technology prize from oil major Shell.

Unlike the 'propeller on a stick' turbines we see today, the Aerogenerator has no tower and rotates around a 'vertical axis' harnessing wind energy from any direction. It has been described as looking like a cross between a glider and giant harp. Although it will work on-shore, the V-shaped rotor is designed for offshore use. Its design is intended to be capable of delivering the same power at sea as a nuclear power station on land.

The investment, from [NStar](#) Three Pillars Fund, and a Research and Development Grant from One NorthEast, will enable developers of Aerogenerator to step up research and development activities at NaREC.

Theo Bird, director of Aerogenerator, said: "It's still early days for the project, but moving to the North East was one of the best project decisions we ever made. We are proud to be associated with the region and people of Blyth which is the project's home.

"We are pleased to report that the region's rich engineering heritage is very much alive and well in the renewables sector. We believe Aerogenerator can make a big impact. It's efficient and



## **B daily April 2**

### **Business school breaks ground on brewery**

Newcastle University Business School and property group Downing have set the ball rolling on the new £200 million Downing Plaza development as work begins today on the demolition of the former Scottish and Newcastle Brewery site.

The former bottling plant will be flattened to make way for a new 600,000 sq ft mixed-use scheme, a large portion of which will house Newcastle University Business School's headquarters.

Professor John Leopold, Acting Director and Head of Newcastle University Business School said: "We are very pleased that work is progressing on the site. The cosmopolitan surroundings of the city centre are vital for the School as it enables students and our staff alike to engage with the local business community. "Our relocation to such a prestigious building is a mark of just one of the great things in the pipeline for Newcastle University Business School as we move forward into the future."

The plans for Downing Plaza were developed over four years of consultation with Newcastle City Council, CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) and a nine-month public consultation exercise.

George Tyson of Downing, said: "After four years of planning it is very satisfying to begin work with a major tenant already on board. We're looking forward to seeing Downing Plaza act as a catalyst for positive change in this area of the city centre, linking to the exciting proposals for Science City."

The deal with the University means that half of the commercial element of the scheme is already taken, with the remaining 100,000 sq ft to be released to the market shortly.

Downing Plaza will feature a four star hotel, a student village, residential apartments, retail space, and 200,000 sq ft of offices, across six new buildings. The scheme represented the largest planning application to be lodged in Newcastle since 1973.

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## **B daily April 3**

### **Boat builder uses initiative to ride sea change**

A North East boat builder is using a national Design Council initiative to help his business sail forward and meet the needs of a changing market. John Flynn has worked in the boat building industry for over 19 years, overseeing the construction of over 500 narrow boats, designed especially for cruising the canals of UK and Europe.

John Flynn, Managing Director of Le Skerne based in Trimdon Grange, County Durham, said: "As the demand for canal boats has decreased due to the volume of vessels already out there in the UK, there has been a massive influx of interest in the wide-beam boats that we also produce, and we are now approached more frequently directly by our customers, rather than by commercial agents.

"Land is becoming an increasingly rare commodity. Boat life provides a solution for people who still want to live in cities, and also offers the benefits of being able to choose fantastic surroundings."

John applied for acceptance onto the Generate stage of Designing Demand, a national support programme which helps SMEs in using design to improve business performance.

John Flynn said: "When I first heard the name of the programme I envisioned embarking on a design project, such as a website or an advertising campaign. The programme actually offers a lot more than that and aims to analyse the very design of a company's needs before identifying ways to progress."

John is now working with a design manager to help the business identify the right projects to move forward.

Willie Herdman, who is responsible for delivering the Designing Demand programme in the North East, said: "Businesses such as Le Skerne are ideal candidates for the Designing Demand programme, as they have innovative design talent, rock-solid build quality, superb attention to detail, and most importantly a desire to move the business forward to meet the needs of an evolving market."

For more information Designing Demand, visit [www.designingdemand.org.uk](http://www.designingdemand.org.uk).

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## **ASIMO teaches young engineers the power of dreams**

The latest version of ASIMO, the world's most advanced humanoid robot, will be making its UK debut in the North East of England with a mission to inspire the region's next generation of engineers.

Honda's humanoid robot (capable of running at nearly 4 mph) will be in the North East for three days at the Youth Engineering Summit (YES) being held at Rainton Meadows Arena, Houghton le Spring, in June.

YES provides an opportunity for around 7,000 year 7 and 8 students to see the importance of engineering in modern day life and appreciate the range of career options available in the field.

A range of public and private sector organisations, including One NorthEast, the North East Productivity Alliance (NEPA) and the Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS), are backing the show in the North East with the aim to make it an annual event in the future.

Dr Colin Herron, One NorthEast Manufacturing and Productivity Manager, said: "The Youth Engineering Summit has been successfully run in the Midlands since 2000 and it is excellent to have the opportunity to bring it up to the North East. "Engineering applies to all industries, from record making to financial services, as well as within manufacturing, production and construction, and the show is a fantastic opportunity for youngsters from the North East to see the diverse range of career options available.

"I am also personally really looking forward to seeing the world famous ASIMO whose presence in the UK should inspire the next generation of engineers - particularly from North East England."

The event will be held at the Rainton Meadows Arena, Houghton le Spring, Tyne & Wear on 24-26 June. For more information call 02392 631 331.

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## **b daily April 4**

### **Eco-friendly students make impact**

Northumbria University's Students' Union was celebrating last week after winning a silver award in the Sound Impact Awards. The awards act as an accreditation scheme for environmental best practice in Students' Unions in both Further and Higher Education.

Northumbria's Students' Union has been involved in several initiatives over the past year in a bid to boost their 'green' credentials. These have included recycling of paper, mobile phones and bar waste, organising clothes Swap Shops and working with University staff to cut down on energy usage in halls of residence.

Martin Farr, President of the Students' Union, said: "It's absolutely fantastic to receive such a prestigious award, and coming just a couple of weeks after winning Best Bar None award for the most socially responsible club in Newcastle, it really shows that Northumbria Students' Union is focussed on being a truly ethical organisation as students' unions should.

"With climate change becoming an increasing problem in the world we believe that it is important for the Students' Union to lead the way in reducing its negative impact on the environment and this award for being one of the top ten environmentally minded Students' Unions in the country really proves we've done that. The award is even more special to us as the founder of the scheme, Anna Heywood, was a student at Northumbria."

Anna, who also audits the sound impact awards, said: "Given a bit of fun competition, the evidence shows that Students' Unions have really striven to improve and out-do each other this year which was one of the original aims of the scheme."

Northumbria was one of just six Students' Unions among 67 who entered to win a silver award.

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## **b daily April 7**

