

# URBAN ECOLOGY: PEOPLE, PLACE, PROCESS

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS INTRODUCTION



**SUST.**  
THE LIGHTHOUSE ON SUSTAINABILITY

# Urban Ecology: People, Place, Process

## **The Background**

This major conference and workshop on sustainable urban design in Europe was organised by The Lighthouse: Scotland's Centre for Architecture, Design and the City, in partnership with NABU: Norwegian Architects for Sustainable Development. The conference was arranged on behalf of the Scottish Executive and in response to its policies on architecture and sustainable development.

The conference presented the visions and experiences of some of Europe's leading large-scale urban ecology projects. Most of these are mixed-use residential and commercial developments, including both inner city regeneration and the use of greenfield urban sites.

## **Why Urban Ecology?**

Cities are central to our wellbeing and quality of life. They are dynamic hubs representing the epicentres of economic activity and social interaction. In Scotland, 70% of the population live in and around cities. However, the increasing density of cities, their demand on resources, and the infrastructure and architectural requirements needed to support urban activities are becoming increasingly unsustainable. We need sustainable design approaches to the maintenance, renewal and continued development of our cities. Leading European and Scandinavian urban developments are doing just this.

This conference presented a variety of cutting-edge urban developments in which integrated approaches to urban sustainability have been adopted. These are visionary, ambitious sustainable urban projects that show how an innovative approach can have social, economical and environmental benefits. The projects demonstrate how sustainable design can be applied to large-scale developments, that the approaches taken are replicable, and that sustainable design can be mainstreamed; and can be profitable as well as ecologically and socially sound.

## **What is Urban Ecology?**

Until recently, environmental considerations have dominated discussions on sustainable development. There is, however, an increasing recognition that although energy use, healthy materials, waste, pollution and other technical or material considerations related to the 'ecological footprint' of our built environment are central to sustainable design, the wider issues of social and economic sustainability are of equal importance.

Urban ecology addresses resources, economics/management, as well as community aspects of development in planning and building projects. This conference highlighted a variety of approaches to sustainable design with the aim of providing a forum for sharing the successes, and discussing the barriers, to implementing urban ecology in practice. Different



Photography: Renzo Mazzolini

approaches were illustrated addressing contextual and pragmatic considerations as they relate to specific localities.

The conference was held at The Lighthouse on 23rd and 24th of February 2004. Dr Stuart MacDonald, Director of The Lighthouse, introduced Mr Frank McAveety, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, who gave the opening address.

The delegates included planners, design and urban development professionals, and representatives from both public and private organisations.

#### **About the Organisers**

This conference is one of the key activities comprising 'Sust: The Lighthouse on Sustainability', a campaign to raise awareness of sustainable design in the built environment. Sust. has been devised by Lighthouse: Scotland's Centre for Architecture, Design and the City, on behalf of the Scottish Executive in support of the aims of the Policy on Architecture. Sust. is funded by the Sustainable Action Fund.

The conference and workshops were organised by The Lighthouse in partnership with NABU: Norwegian Architects for Sustainable Development, which is a project of the National Association of Norwegian Architects and is a leading Scandinavian resource centre for sustainable planning and architecture.

Sust.: The Lighthouse on Sustainability aims to raise awareness of sustainable design in architecture. It was devised by The Lighthouse: Scotland's Centre for Architecture, Design and the City on behalf of the Scottish Executive and in support of the aims of the Policy on Architecture. It is funded by the Sustainable Action Fund.

[www.sust.org](http://www.sust.org)