

URBAN ECOLOGY: PEOPLE, PLACE, PROCESS

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

FAIRFIELD – A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

Presenter: Howard Liddell

Organisation: Gaia Architects



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THE LIGHTHOUSE ON SUSTAINABILITY

Fairfield – A Sustainable Community

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Practice: Gaia Architects

Overview

The Regeneration of Hunter Crescent

The Fairfield Project constitutes the complete regeneration of an existing and badly run-down housing estate. Originally established by Perth local authority in the 1930s, in the decades that followed, the area around Hunter Crescent gradually deteriorated to such a degree that it became one of Scotland's most notorious residential areas. By 1989, the area was hallmarked by high crime rates and low employment, and around 200 families had registered relocation requests with the local authority, in the hope of moving to a better environment.

In 1986, Fairfield Housing Co-operative was founded and showed an immense commitment to turning the area around. Gaia Architects were commissioned by the association to work on the improvement and development of the area. Hunter Crescent was renamed Fairfield Housing Estate and a sustainable regeneration scheme was implemented. By 2003, the restoration and revival of Fairfield was recognised as a World Habitat exemplar residential area, offering mixed housing tenure. As well as boasting an increase in residents in the area, there is currently a waiting list of over 100 families wanting to relocate to Fairfield.

Progress within the development is evident from the initial 'Community in Crisis' residents' workshops held in a local bar, to the recent award-winning status of the Low Allergy Housing

commissioned by the association. The architects and residents have collaborated on the project over a period of 12 years. Research information based around the developments within the Fairfield estate includes issues relating to landscape strategy, and ways in which an increased level of sustainable specification was delivered at affordable costs.

Gaia has developed a sustainable development methodology or 'Toolbox' - with benchmark audits and surveys providing an indication of lessons learned through the project. All aspects of the development - social (residents), economic (local business and employment), and environmental - are explored.



Photography: Renzo Mazzolini

Organisation Profile: Gaia Architects

Gaia Architects – part of the Gaia Group - is acknowledged as one of the leading ecological-design practices in Europe and is committed to the highest standards of ecological specification, excellence in design and affordability. Gaia Architects has gained a reputation for innovation, underpinned by research and quality feedback in pursuit of sustainable development. The practice's commitment to innovative architecture has resulted in several design, community and environmental awards. Gaia Architect's current portfolio comprises a wide range of development including sports facilities; visitor centres for the National Trust of Scotland; school buildings and private and social housing.

Gaia Architects is located in two offices in Scotland and two in Norway. The Gaia Group endeavour to consider every aspect of ecological design in urban and country planning, from materials choice through systems, construction and landscape.

Presenter Profile: Howard Liddell

Howard Liddell, principal of Gaia Architects, is the environmental spokesman for Royal Incorporation of Architects Scotland (RIAS). Liddell was co-founder and former chairman of the Scottish Ecological Design Association, and has lectured internationally on issues ranging from community development and ecological design to the specifics of technically innovative design.

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.

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