

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

19 JANUARY 2009

Agenda Item	
Report No	

SPONSORSHIP OF THE INVERNESS ARCHITECTS ASSOCIATION DESIGN AWARDS SCHEME

Report by Director of Planning and Development

SUMMARY

The Highland Council has aspirations to improve the design and layout of new development. This aspiration which will in due course be enshrined in development plan policy needs to be given full and proper publicity. The Inverness Architects Association embarked upon its Design Awards Scheme, announcing it and gaining significant media coverage on 7 March 2008 at the Culloden Visitor Centre.

The Highland Council has for some time been interested in promoting a Design Awards Scheme but it has felt that there may not be capacity in respect of media coverage or public interest for a further award scheme in the Highlands & Islands. The Head of Planning & Building Standards had been in discussion with the Inverness Architects Association to see if the aspirations of both the Association and the Council could be joined or run in parallel.

The Planning, Environment & Development Committee at its meeting of 28 May 2008 agreed to promote the aspirations of improving design and layout for all forms of development and that the Highland Council sponsor the Inverness Architects Association Award Scheme at a cost of £7,500 for 2008.

The Committee approved the sponsorship but with a requirement that a further report be presented to Committee on the conclusion of the Awards Scheme in November 2008.

The Awards Scheme was a distinct success with recognition of the highest quality of entry and significant publicity in the media. It is recommended that, subject to budget pressures, Highland Council sponsor future events.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 While there are a number of examples of high quality design of development in the Highlands it is felt that there is not enough quality architecture throughout the area. The standard of design and layout needs to be improved to ensure an attractive environment in which to live and work. This is critical for the confidence of the Highlands in future years. If Inverness wishes to promote its status as a city it should look to encourage innovative and high quality exciting design and architecture for all types of development particularly for housing which in recent years has been criticised as being too standardised and mundane.

- 1.2 The Highland Council in the coming months is to commission both a Residential Development Guide and a Design Guide for Houses in the Countryside.
- 1.3 It is felt that there is now greater public interest in modern architecture which has been created by recent television programmes and design competitions.
- 1.4 The Design Award Scheme for the Highlands & Islands was launched by the Inverness Architects Association at the new Culloden Battlefield Visitor Centre on 7 March 2008 while the Head of Planning & Building Standards was negotiating the Council's (discounted) sponsorship of the Scheme.

2.0 The Inverness Architectural Association Award Scheme

- 2.1 The Inverness Architects Association (IAA) represents registered architects in the north of Scotland covering an area from Shetland to Lochaber and from the Western Isles to Elgin. The aim of the Award Scheme is to promote public interest and involvement in design within the Highlands & Islands. The first Awards ceremony in 2008 (with local awards) commenced in May 2008 culminating in regional awards in November. The mixture of local and regional events generated much publicity and news coverage.
- 2.2 The Awards Scheme is also sponsored by Bord na Gaidhlig, the Forestry Commission, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and the Royal Institute of Architects in Scotland.
- 2.3 The Awards process compromise a series of local events comprising public exhibitions and Award ceremonies in:
 - Shetland and Orkney
 - Caithness and Sutherland
 - Skye, Lochalsh, Wester Ross and Lochaber
 - Inverness and Easter Ross
 - Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey
 - Moray
 - Western Isles
- 2.4 Judging panels included representatives from the community, representatives from the IAA and suitable celebrities i.e. personalities the public would recognise. The judging panel for the Inverness area awards included the Chairman of the Planning, Environment & Development Committee and the Director of Planning & Development.
- 2.5 Winners in each area were put forward to a regional Awards ceremony which chose an overall Highlands & Islands wide winner for each Award. Awards were made in the following categories at local and regional level:
 - New buildings
 - New life for old buildings
 - Details including internal spaces
 - Place making i.e. external spaces
 - Lost opportunities i.e. projects that were never implemented

- 2.6 In addition to these Awards there was one open Award for the best building in Highland which was open to practices outside Highland. Winners of these Awards were publicised in the local and trade press and exhibited material is to be compiled into a book format for public release.
- 2.7 The complete list of award winners for each category and each area is as follows:

Highland Central

Best New Building: David Somerville of Somerville Design for private house “Roshven”, Belladrum, nr Beauly. Commendation: HRI Architects Forestry Commission office at Smithton.

New Life for Old Buildings: SMC Davis Duncan Architects for their extension to Glen Mor Lodge outdoor centre. Commendation: Maxwell and Company for a sensitive restoration and extension to Barkly House in Cromarty.

Place Making: Neil Sutherland Architects – Strathnairn Forest Shelter, Farr, Strathnairn. Commendation: Trevor Black Architects – housing development at Ferry Lane, Beauly.

Details: Neil Sutherland Architects, Onwin Lawrence House, Strathnairn.

Highland West

Best New Building: Mary Arnold Forster of Dualchas Design for “The Shed” at Tokavaig, Sleat, Isle of Skye. Commendation: House at Uig, Skye – Dualchas Building Design.

New Life for Old Building: Dualchas Design for “An Gearasdan”, Glenelg.

Place Making: Rural Design for Sustainable Housing for Lochalsh & Skye HA at Edinbane, Skye. Commendation: Bruce & Neil, Chartered Architects, for the conversion of The Old Distillery, Fort William.

Lost Opportunities: David Mee Architect for “Cocoon” Sustainable Housing for Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association at Inchree, Lochaber.

Highland North

Best New Building: Knight & Macdonald Architects, Thurso, for Castle Gardens Apartments, Thurso. Commendation: New House at Croft 15, Inverkirkaig, Lochinver, by Dualchas Building Design.

New Life for Old Buildings: White & McGinn Architects, Inverness, for Oversteps Eventide Home in Dornoch. Commendation: Highland Council Offices, Drummuie, Golspie, by Colin Armstrong Associates, Inverness.

Lost Opportunities: HRI Architects, Inverness, for Proposed Centre for Energy and the Environment, Thurso. Commendation: Dornoch Amphitheatre, Dornoch, for Forestry Commission Scotland by Neil Sutherland Architects.

2.8 The overall winner for the Highlands and Islands were as follows:

Best Building in Highlands and Islands: Pier Arts Centre, Stromness (Relach & Hall). Commendations: Strathnairn Forest Shelter (Neil Sutherland Architects) and Eden Court Theatre Extension/Redevelopment (Page/Park Architects).

Best Use of Timber: Strathnairn Forest Shelter (Neil Sutherland Architects). Commendation: Forestry Commission Local HQ, Smithton, Culloden (HRI Architects).

Best New Building: The Shed, Tokavaig, Skye (Dualchas Building Design). Commendation: House at West Shore, Walls, Shetland Islands (Richard Gibson Architects).

Best New Life for Old: An Gearasdan, Glenelg, Lochalsh (Dualchas Building Design). Commendation: Black Sheep House, Strong, Eilean Na Hearadh (Stuart Bagshaw Associates).

Best Place Making: Edinbane Sustainable Housing, Edinbane, Skye (Rural Design).

Lost Opportunities: Cragol Bird Hide, Luskentyre (Stuart Bagshaw Association). Commendation: Centre for Energy and the Environment, Thurso (HRI Architects).

3. Discussion

- 3.1 The entry field was of the highest quality of layout, design and detail. The winners were examples of excellence. Full information on the Awards is available in the news pages at www.scottisharchitecture.com.
- 3.2 In the eyes of the judging panels all of the projects submitted developed close links between the cultural, historic and landscape characteristics of their area. They also demonstrated high levels of sustainable development and sensitivity towards the environment. The Awards scheme has proven a foundation for the development of new ideas which can address contemporary issues in a meaningful and confident way. It is felt that the Awards have highlighted the distinct environment and identities of each local area.
- 3.3 They have also demonstrated the immense pool of talented and skilled architects working throughout the Highlands. Their work is making a significant contribution to local communities and the quality of the built environment.
- 3.4 The Highland Council's sponsorship of the Awards scheme is part of a raft of initiatives to improve the quality of sustainable design throughout the Highlands. In the course of 2009 it is proposed to develop:
- A Policy for Sustainability in the Design of Large Scale Buildings
 - Housing in the Countryside – Design Guidance
 - The Highland Council Residential Development Guide

- 3.5 It is intended that the Awards Scheme be run bi-annually (subject to confirmation by the IAA Council) so the next event will be in 2010.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Committee acknowledges the success of the Inverness Architects Association and Design Awards 2008 and the benefits to sustainable quality and innovative design in our communities that it generates.
2. That the Committee acknowledges the sponsorship of the Awards scheme is one of a number of initiatives to be taken to improve the quality of sustainable layout and design in future developments in the Highlands.
3. That the Committee agrees in principle to the sponsorship of future IAA Awards Schemes should funds be available.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Planning & Development

Date: 9 January 2009

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Background Papers: Sponsorship of the Inverness Architects Association Design Scheme – Report to the Planning, Environment & Development Committee, 28 May 2008