

## EDGE Report - to sponsoring Institutions for the year to end of March 2007

### **Edge activities**

In the 10 months since the last 'Annual' report the Edge has been ramping up its activities to cover a wider range of audiences and discussions while maintaining strong links with its sponsor institutions (the RIBA, ICE, CIBSE, IStructE & RICS). The Institute of Structural Engineers (IStructE) has joined this list in the past year and discussions are held with the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) for them to join during 2007. The funding and encouragement from The Carbon Trust has been invaluable in achieving our ambitions.

The core group of the Edge 'Committee' has continued to meet on a monthly basis with several members achieving additional prominence:

- Paul Jowitt will become the President of the Institute of Civil Engineers in 2008
- Andy Ford of Fulcrum Consulting is Chairing the Technical and Research Committee of the recently launched UK Green Building Council.
- Corresponding member Peter Bishop has been appointed Director of Design for London, the architecture and urbanism team for the Greater London Authority

Other members of the committee continue their active involvement with the sponsoring construction and built environment institutions as well as other groups including; Constructing Excellence, the Strategic Forum, the British Property Federation, the Building Research Establishment, CABE, the Civic Trust, the Construction Industry Council, the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE), the European Forum for Architectural Policies (EFAP), the Global Commons Institute (GCI), the All Party Parliamentary Climate Change Group (APPCCG), Good Homes Alliance and the UK Green Building Council (UKGBC). Members maintain regular contact with government departments, including; DTI, ODPM, DEFRA, DCMS, OGC, DfES and The Cabinet Office, as well as ministers and members of both houses of parliament. Members of the Edge teach and lecture widely, both in the UK and abroad as well as being active professionally in the design and delivery of significant projects across the world.

New recruits to the Edge committee in 2006-2007 include:

- Duncan McCorquodale, Black Dog Publishing
- Michael Pawlyn, Grimshaw
- Bill Watts, Max Fordham LLP
- Megan Yates, Techniker

### **Debates**

Holding debates that ask challenging questions continues to be the Edge's key activity. Subjects for debates have been generated both within the Edge committee but sponsoring and linked groups are also and increasingly using the *neutral ground* that the Edge can offer, to air issues that would be difficult to examine within their own formal procures.

Debates held in 2006-7 have covered a wide range of themes centering on the built environment but ranging widely to cover social, organizational and resource issues. The discussions and outcomes of debates have also been reported as articles in the industry magazine Building (see below).

- 3<sup>rd</sup> May Edge Debate #28  
**Energy debate #3. Balance: Living within our means**  
 Held at the ICE and chaired by Peter Guthrie (Professor of Engineering Cambridge University). Speakers: Aubrey Meyer, (the Global Commons Institute) and Lord Oxburgh, (Former Chairman of Shell Transport and Trading).
- 14<sup>th</sup> Sept 06 Edge Debate #29  
**Dongtan**  
 Held at the RIBA and chaired by London Deputy Mayor Nicky Gavron. Speakers: Alejandro Gutierrez (Arup), John Hopkins (LDA Design) and Isabel Hilton (BBC & China Dialogue).
- 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 06 Edge Debate #30  
**Fat Cities: can the design of the build environment help the obesity crisis?**  
 Held at CABE and chaired by Mark Whitby (whitbybird). Speakers: Christine Hancock (European Director of Oxford Health Alliance), Charlie Foster (British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group, University of Oxford) and Neil Blackshaw (NHS London Healthy Urban Development Unit)
- 19<sup>th</sup> Feb 07 Edge Debate #31  
**Regime Change: Is there a case for restructuring development control?**  
 Held at the RIBA and chaired by Simon Foxell (The Architects Practice). Speakers: Chris Watts (Renaissance Bedford & co-author of the 2004 Halcrow report for the ODPM), Paul Overall (LABC & previously Head of Buildings Division, ODPM) and John Callcutt (Chair of the Callcutt Review and formerly Chief Executive English Partnerships).

Planned future debates include:

- Do we need East Anglia?
- What does a sustainable city look like?
- We have built it wrong. What are you going to do about it?

Edge debates continue to attract a high calibre audience including senior members of the sponsoring institutions, civil servants, academics and practitioners as well as politicians and influential public figures. The Edge committee plans the debates and reviews and follows up on the resulting outcomes. Janet Kidner of Battle McCarthy acts as Minutes secretary, while Jane Powell continues to arrange events and look after finances.

## Debate Outcomes

### Contraction and Convergence

The concluding debate on Energy (Balance: Living with our Means) held at the Institute of Civil Engineers in May 2006 proposed that the Institutions that sponsor the Edge should be asked to adopt the principles of Contraction and Convergence (C&C) as a high level policy. Over the last year the Edge has been holding a series of bilateral discussions with senior staff and members of the RIBA, ICE, CIBSE, IStructE and the RTPI, as well as the CIC, to discuss this issue.

Since our meeting with the RIBA, the Institute's ruling Council has voted to accept C&C as formal policy and the RIBA is developing a series of far-reaching initiatives under the heading 'Combating Climate Change' (CCC) as a result. It is believed that the RIBA's decision has prompted some of the medical Colleges to take a similar step. Other built environment institutions have vigorously debated the issue in their ruling bodies following the Edge's request, but while accepting the principle remain concerned about the international political dimension and whether it is beyond their charitable/learned society remit.

### Development Control regimes

The 31<sup>st</sup> Edge debate on the complex system of consent regimes that govern planning, development and construction in the UK proposed that reform to the system was essential and at the least the Halcrow report (2004) should be implemented with preferably a more thoroughgoing rationalisation. The Edge is currently in discussion with the Better Regulation Executive of the Cabinet Office to examine how this might be taken forward.

### **Edge Column**

Following an agreement with the weekly journal 'Building', the Edge has been contributing a regular column. The column provides space to report on the outcome of debates and to address issues and questions great and small.

#### Edge columns in Building in the past year:

May 2006	Zero carbon schools – Author: Simon Foxell
May 2006	Energy balance – Author: Adam Poole
July 2006	Energy billing – Author Simon Foxell
September 2006	Future schools – Authors Simon Foxell & Bill Bordass
October 2006	Dongtan – Author Simon Foxell
March 2007	Regime change – Authors Simon Foxell & Adam Poole

Future columns are anticipated on the Edge pledge, Obesity & the built environment, Annual Carbon Statements and China.

### **Voluntary Energy and CO<sub>2</sub> declaration (VECD)**

The work carried out by the Usable Buildings Trust (UBT) with the Edge on the VECD has now spread its wings and is informing work for CIBSE and discussions with the Communities and Local Government department, on operational ratings in particular. The most recent contribution has been as lead author of a scoping study on benchmarking, which CIBSE recently presented to CLG. The input was funded 75% by CIBSE and 25% from the Edge's remaining budget of £ 2000 for the VECD.

CIBSE is now funding a second, strategy phase. It expects this to pave the way for a new Technical Memorandum on energy reporting and benchmarking which would provide the technical underpinnings to support complementary statutory and voluntary processes. It will also link in the work UBT is doing with BPF on rented buildings as part of the Carbon Trust's Networks programme.

### **Carbon Counting – The Edge pledge**

The Edge continues to promote the Edge pledge Carbon counting tool. It continues to develop and has recently formed the basis of a project for CIBSE

## Scenario Planning

The Edge has been undertaking scenario planning work with the assistance of experienced facilitator Philip Guildford, Director of Research at the Department of Engineering and the Martin Centre for Architectural and Urban Studies, both of the University of Cambridge. A series of alternative scenarios for 2020-5 have been built up and will be used to inform both the Edge's and also our sponsor Institutes' thinking. They will also be used to directly inform the 'Edge Futures' publishing venture with Black Dog Publishing (see below).

## Edge Books

### Edge Futures

The Edge Futures publishing collaboration with Black Dog Publishing is the currently the major Edge activity. Six short books will examine the social, environmental, political and professional changes that are likely to have occurred in the UK and the wider world by 2020-25.

Each book will address a theme (*Education and Creativity / Transport and Networks / Working / Living and Community / Globalism and Regionalism / Health and Leisure*) and be written by a different well-known writer. The series will be published in rapid-fire succession in September and October 2007.

Development work on the books is underway by a small editorial team drawn from the Edge committee. Funding is from voluntary contributions and sponsorship.

### RIBA Best Practice Guide: Climate Change

The Edge will be contributing editorially to an RIBA guide on Climate Change due to be published in the spring of 2008. Written by Edge member, Simon Foxell, author of an existing guide to 'Starting a Practice'. The Edge will be credited on the cover and frontispiece.

The book will:

- provide an explanation of climate change and its impact relevant to the working lives of architects
- explain key concepts
- outline existing and future legislative requirements and common standards and codes – providing guidance on how to comply
- discuss different strategies for dealing with both mitigation of and adaptation to climate change
- suggest and examine likely models for future practice, along with sources of guidance etc.

## Edge workstreams 2007-8

- **Debates**

The Edge will continue to arrange debates on a range of themes, including professional, wellbeing and sustainability issues. Future debates are planned on: flooding, sustainable urbanism, health and safety, quality of construction, water resources, drivers for innovation and intelligent infrastructure.

- **Future thinking**

The Edge will continue to engage with futures thinking, developing links with, amongst others, the Government's Foresight programme. The impact of climate change and demographic shifts will have such a significant impact on life and society within a very short period that the ability to plan effectively for the future will become an essential tool for the construction industry. This workstream will include a major conference on the future development of China, to be organized in conjunction with China Dialogue. Other activities will include the further development of the scenarios work begun in 2006-7 by a number of independent thinkers.

- **Publishing**

Writing and publishing activities will become a mainstream activity of the Edge. The column in Building will continue as a regular feature and it is the link with Black Dog Publishing should deliver a significant set of six books this year. In addition the relationship with RIBA Publishing should provide high-level dissemination of Edge members' knowledge

- **Brokerage**

Brokerage will continue to be an important activity of the Edge and the group will carry on developing useful linkages and relationships between external parties. The main focus will still be on the main professional institutes and their presidents and senior executives, but links will be maintained and developed with other groups and government bodies, especially including those in Parliament (including the All Party Climate Change Group) and leading public sector bodies such as the Greater London Authority and the East of England Development Agency.

The Edge is keen to develop its role as an effective forum for debate and to make this available to a wide range of bodies concerned with issues affecting the built environment.

- **Wellbeing**

The Edge has started its work on wellbeing with the joint debate with CABI on the links between obesity and the built environment. It intends to continue this work with a long term series of debates and other events looking at investigating the relationship between quality of life and the built environment. Work may include assessments of evidence-based design and the impact of densification in cities and towns

- **The Edge website**

The current Edge website [www.at-the-edge.org.uk](http://www.at-the-edge.org.uk) has recently been updated and improved with notes from debates available, the Edge pledge and some other features. It should shortly make available the texts from the Building 'Edge column'. However it could be a lot better and a site that reflects and builds upon the Edge's wider remit and activities.

- **Policy thinking**

During our 2006 meeting with the Construction Industry Council they described the edge as the CIC's policy arm. The Edge will continue to focus on the built environment and in particular the potential policy agendas of its sponsor institutes. The Edge has the freedom to think widely and incisively, consulting experts and provocative theorists and practitioners as it does so. The Edge will use this freedom to help develop and influence the approach and policy development of the mainstream institutional bodies as well as to inform decision making processes amongst designers, built environment professionals, contractors, clients, regulators and many others.

**Funding**

The Edge remains grateful to the Carbon Trust for providing core-funding for several of its activities including the web-site and arranging debates. The five sponsor institutes (the RIBA, ICE, Cibse, RICS and IStructE) provide support in kind through the hosting of debates on their premises the provision of refreshments and access to senior members and staff. In addition the many individual companies generously host the Edge committee meetings on a regular basis.

The Edge March 2007