



Registered Charity No. 517544  
www.cardiffcivicsociety.co.uk

# Special Eisteddfod Supplement

# Civic News

## Summer 2008

Editor: Karen Allen

## Chairman's Message

### **Making Better Places: A Sustainable Future for Cardiff**

Cardiff Civic Society works with the Civic Trust for Wales and other like-minded amenity societies in and around Cardiff. We promote civic pride and community action as a means to encouraging good design, sustainable development and quality of life for all, in the places where we live and work. We hope this special Eisteddfod edition of Civic News will present a flavour of the wide-ranging issues we cover in seeking to encourage respect for the built environment amongst the diverse communities of Cardiff. **Cardiff Civic Society is for all citizens who are interested in the past, present and future of Cardiff.**

We hope you will join us! Croeso.

**Ann-Marie Petty, Chairman**

**Cardiff Civic Society**

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## Cardiff Civic Society's Mission

Cardiff Civic Society is a registered charity with the following objectives:

- To promote high standards of planning, architecture and environment in or affecting the City of Cardiff.
- To educate the public in the environment (geography), history, natural history and architecture of the area of benefit with the aim of inspiring the appreciation of the rich culture and heritage of the area and improving the quality of the environment.
- To secure the preservation, conservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest in the City of Cardiff.



Photograph: David Williams

**Cardiff Civic Society: Proud sponsors of the Gold Medal for  
Architecture at the National Eisteddfod Cardiff 2008**

# The Future Development Of Cardiff:

A one-day conference  
Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2008  
@ County Hall

## Cardiff's Local Development Plan

Your chance to have your say about the future development of Cardiff

**The Future Development of Cardiff** is a one-day conference jointly organised by Cardiff Civic Society, Radyr & Morganstown Association, Penarth Society, Llandaff Society and Rhiwbina Society.

Speakers will include: Professor John Punter of the School of City & Regional Planning, Cardiff University; Sue Essex, former Welsh Assembly Minister for Finance & Local Government; Stuart Williams of Cardiff Council's Strategic Planning department. For further information, please call Cardiff Civic Society (029) 2037 1472 / [info@cardiffcivicsociety.co.uk](mailto:info@cardiffcivicsociety.co.uk)

The process of drawing up Cardiff's Local Development Plan for the years leading up to 2020 is due to reach a crucial stage this autumn when the next stage of public consultation takes place.

Anyone wishing to be notified can be added to Cardiff Council's consultation database by sending their details to the Strategic Planning department at Cardiff Council:

[developmentplan@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:developmentplan@cardiff.gov.uk)

Tel: (029) 2087 2000

The Welsh Assembly have produced a helpful guide to explain how communities can have their say, titled "LDP Wales: Planning Your Community – A Guide to Local Development Plans". This can be downloaded by visiting [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk) and typing "Planning Your Community" into the Search box, or contact 0845 010 3300.



Photograph: David Williams

## Ty Unnos

An old Welsh tradition inspires affordable housing for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

**Ty Unnos**, or 'house in a night', is an old Welsh traditional belief dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, that if a person could build a house on common land in one night, and have a fire burning in the hearth by the following morning, then the land belonged to them as a freehold. Many of the legends surrounding this belief have a theme of social justice, often with landless families taking up wagers with prominent society landowners, to build a house overnight and thus secure the land.

### Ty Unnos for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

Inspired by the Ty Unnos tradition, **Coed Cymru** (the woodland management charity in Wales) is currently working with the **Welsh School of Architecture** and the **University of Wales Bangor** to develop a system of affordable housing using home-grown timber. Prefabricated construction systems using timber are already well developed in Scandinavia, but this is the first time that modular systems have been developed based on the properties of locally sourced Welsh wood.

The Ty Unnos system is a highly adaptable system that can create a range of house types and sizes based on four standard modules. The system has been designed so that it can be manufactured by small-scale local enterprises using locally sourced timber, to produce simple housing 'kits' that are suitable for self or assisted build. For further information, contact Coed Cymru 01686 650777 or visit the Coed Cymru stand at the Eisteddfod. [www.coedcymru.org.uk](http://www.coedcymru.org.uk)

**Cardiff Civic Society** is proud to have supported this innovative project by sponsoring one of the researchers at the Welsh School of Architecture to attend an international conference on the role of timber in improving the sustainability of the built environment.



## Back to the land: Cardiff rushes to allotment life

In the last 5 years, Cardiff has experienced an explosion of interest in allotments as a result of rising food prices and the population's increasing desire to eat organic, locally produced food.

The majority of allotment sites in Cardiff are full and in some cases the waiting lists are growing out of all proportion to the number of plots available, to the point where people could be waiting for several years. The starkest example is Rhiwbina in north Cardiff, which has only 10 plots, all of which are occupied, and a waiting list that currently stands at 29 (July 2008).

It has been a traditional principle that citizens should have access to allotment land within a reasonable distance of their homes (often quoted as half a mile) but people are now travelling greater distances across Cardiff to take up available plots.



This year is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Small Holdings & Allotments Act (1908), which places a duty on councils to take into consideration their provision of allotments, should they receive a written request from six resident registered electors or ratepayers. It seems unclear how this clause has worked in practice, but the National Society of Allotment & Leisure Gardeners and the National Allotment Gardens Trust are encouraging people to work together with their local councils to explore innovative ways of providing allotments such as forming partnerships with local landowners.

It is widely believed that the revival of allotment gardening is unlikely to be a passing trend; particularly as rising oil prices will continue to affect food costs. Indeed, there is a growing body of thought that food issues will start to shape our cities in a way they haven't done for many decades.

As architect and author Carolyn Steel (*Hungry City*) has said, cities have been able to defy geography and tap into a global hinterland for food supplies during the era of cheap fuel. In the future, cities will need to reconnect with their local countryside through farmers markets, and food will once again resume a central role in architecture and urban design.

Monty Don, speaking as the new President of the Soil Association at this year's Hay Festival, called for British cities to take inspiration from Cuba and make the most of opportunities for urban agriculture, including allotments, community gardens and composting schemes.

## Cardiff Transition Project: Ever wondered what climate change and peak oil have to do with you?

Cardiff Transition Project is a local response to the challenges of climate change and peak oil. All around the UK people in villages, towns and cities involved in the transition movement are getting together to raise awareness about the changes we need to make, and to work together to become more self-reliant in areas such as food, energy, health care, jobs and economic decision-making.

Our modern lifestyle is based on the availability of cheap oil. Whilst optimists talk about 20 years, a growing number of experts say the days of abundant cheap oil could be over within just 2 or 3 years. With oil so deeply embedded in our current way of life, from transportation to food production to consumer products, the end of cheap oil will have a severe impact on the lifestyles to which we have become accustomed. We can already see the trouble in store as oil prices start to rise and impact on prices for other goods, most notably food.

Cardiff Transition Project is an invitation to help create the spaces for people in Cardiff to learn new skills required to deal with the changes to our lives and get ready to live happily ever after in a more sustainable way. Increasingly the challenges relating to peak oil are being seen as a 'wake-up call'; a chance to seriously reconsider how we relate to each other and the natural world, and an opportunity to build more resilient societies that will be sustainable for the future.

A programme of events is in the pipeline for the autumn, starting with a speaker event on 8<sup>th</sup> September at Dempsey's. Why not come and join us to find out more, or drop us an e-mail and we'll keep you updated of further events and activities: [info@cardifftransitionproject.org.uk](mailto:info@cardifftransitionproject.org.uk)

**Eva Trier, Cardiff Transition Project**

# Making Creative Use Of Cardiff's Heritage

The character of our city and its historic environment contributes to our sense of place and cultural identity. It enhances our quality of life and adds to regional and local distinctiveness. It is one of our most important social assets, linking people with places, and also an economic asset that makes a powerful contribution to tourism and levels of investment. It is important that we manage our city's historic environment sensitively and sustainably to retain what is significant and pass it on to future generations\*.

Featured below are two exceptional examples of recent building projects in Cardiff that have made creative use of our city's heritage, breathing new life into listed buildings that had fallen into disuse.

\*Source: Historic Environment Group: Draft Strategic Statement



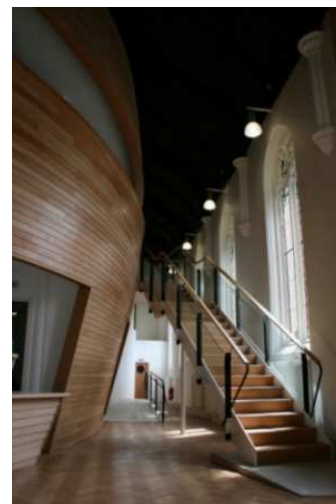
## Water Tower, Cyncoed, Cardiff *Loyn & Co Architects*

Loyn & Co Architects' restoration of the Grade II listed Water Tower in Cyncoed, Cardiff, won the **Gold Medal for Architecture** at last year's National Eisteddfod, an exceptional achievement for a residential project as the award is usually given to public buildings.

This creative fusion of old and new architecture has become a hallmark of the work of Chris Loyn and his colleagues. The project also won the **Best Restoration** category at the Grand Designs Magazine Awards.

## The Wallich Conversion of the former Presbyterian Church, Cathedral Road, Cardiff *Latter Davies Architects*

This disused church was given a new lease of life as a base for the homeless charity *The Wallich* in 2007. Finding sympathetic projects for the re-use of vacant church buildings is often a challenge because of the large internal spaces. Latter Davies' innovative solution to the problem was to accommodate an extraordinary and elegant office structure, fashioned in the manner of a tall-ship's wooden hull. Cardiff Civic Society will be nominating this truly inspiring conversion for the Welsh Local Design Awards 2008.



## Join us!

Individual Membership £7  
Joint Membership £10

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## News in Brief:

**Griff Rhys Jones** was announced as the new President of the Civic Trust in June. The Civic Trust is the nationwide charity that campaigns for better places in the built and green environment, and is a partner organisation to the Civic Trust for Wales. The Cardiff-born writer, actor and comedian presented BBC's **Restoration**, which ran for three series and has undertaken several projects of his own, notably the restoration of a Pembrokeshire farm, which was filmed for the BBC. Griff Rhys Jones said: "All over Britain people who love and care about their towns and cities work to take responsibility for something that affects us all - our urban landscape. I salute them, respect them and am delighted to be made their President and to support the work of the Civic Trust."