Innovation by Design

Royal Institute of British Architects and the Learning and Skills Council Conference 2008

A summary of the further education college schemes shortlisted for the RIBA/LSC Further Education Design Excellence Awards 2008
This publication has been produced in partnership with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA).
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Rammell MP, Minister of State, Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy Wilson, Chair of RIBA Learning &amp; Skills Sector Forum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Principal of Westminster Kingsway College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The LSC Capital Programme perspective</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip Head, Director of Infrastructure and Property Services, LSC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning environments of the future</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Heppell, Future thinker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges at the heart of the community</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven Broomhead, Chief Executive, Northwest Regional Development Agency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RIBA/LSC Further Education Design Excellence Awards 2008</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Boulton College, Birmingham</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usworth Sixth Form College, Washington, Tyne and Wear</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilburn Centre, College of North West London</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arcadia Fashion Retail Academy, London</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darlington College, Darlington</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucestershire College, Gloucester</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference workshops</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space planning</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology as the enabler for sustainable, flexible and innovative</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning spaces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a difference – not just a different building</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation in learning delivery</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RIBA Learning &amp; Skills Sector Forum – current activities and future plans</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The conference and award ceremony, held at RIBA HQ in Portland Place, London, on 21 April 2008, brought together professionals and clients to celebrate key examples of innovative design in the further education (FE) sector and to share good practice.

The event provided a unique opportunity for those leading capital projects within FE and for industry professionals to consider together how the current investment in FE infrastructure will ensure high-quality educational buildings in the future.

The conference and RIBA/LSC FE Design Excellence awards ceremony followed the announcement in March by John Denham, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, of a further £2.3 billion investment over the next three years to continue to deliver the national capital strategy, Building Colleges for the Future.
Foreword

This conference and award ceremony is an excellent opportunity to celebrate how our capital investment is creating exciting, innovative places of learning up and down the country.

At incorporation, much of the FE estate was in poor condition and unsuitable for modern learning. In 1997, the mainstream FE capital budget was nil. Since then, the Government’s investment of over £2 billion has meant that renewal and modernisation of more than half of the FE estate is now complete or under way. And we will be investing another £2.3 billion through our capital strategy, Building Colleges for the Future, over the next three years. This is a record amount and a fantastic opportunity for colleges to shape their own futures, driving regeneration in the communities they serve.

In the finalists for the second RIBA/LSC Further Education Design Excellence Awards we can see six outstanding examples of just how big an impact innovative design can have in locations across England. We know from independent research that high-quality facilities like these are more likely to attract learners and contribute to raising standards across the FE sector.

We are making every pound of taxpayers’ money work as hard as it can. The capital investment programme is helping us to deliver greater specialisation, so that businesses have access to a wider range of industry-specific skills that will provide development opportunities for their current and future employees. From this autumn, the Learning and Skills Council will also expect all contractors to have in place a formal training plan that maximises access to Apprenticeships, work-based learning and other training opportunities. And we have also raised the bar on how new college buildings will need to perform environmentally, in line with the Government’s ambitious targets for reducing the UK’s carbon emissions.

These are truly exciting times, as we ensure that the FE and Skills sector has the investment needed to achieve its full potential as a driver for economic growth and social mobility.

Bill Rammell MP
Minister of State, Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education
Introduction

The RIBA and LSC Innovation by Design Conference provides a showcase for outstanding projects and an opportunity to show the expanding activities of the RIBA Learning & Skills Sector (LSS) Forum.

In underlining the important part buildings play in the quality of education, the Forum's aim is to encourage innovation and to share best practice between clients and professionals.

The winning colleges in this year’s RIBA/LSC Further Education Design Excellence Awards are excellent examples of innovation by design. The provision of such intelligently designed facilities will enable students to enjoy a high quality of learning and will leave a superb legacy for generations to come.

Andy Wilson
Chair of RIBA Learning & Skills Sector Forum and Principal of Westminster Kingsway College

Some key themes explored:

- the positive impact of innovative design
- the importance of sustainable approaches
- the positive role of the RIBA LSS Forum
- future learning trends
- the benefits of community engagement
- the scale of the capital investment and its aims
- better informed clients specify better projects.
The LSC Capital Programme perspective

Philip Head
Director of Infrastructure and Property Services, Learning and Skills Council

Growing evaluation evidence confirms the impact and importance of capital investment in supporting learning to give young people and adults the skills, attitudes and qualifications they need to prepare for productive, rewarding, high-value employment in an internationally competitive, modern economy.

LSC capital objectives:

• to secure the right organisational solution in each local area
• to ensure that the qualifying 14–19 capital projects in the FE and schools sectors are adequately funded
• to promote collaboration between providers and partners to deliver the projects
• to support excellent providers of vocational FE, the voluntary sector and other qualifying providers
• to support sustainability and FE carbon footprint reduction and to encourage innovation in sustainable design and construction
• to deliver the modernisation and renewal of the FE sector through the Building Colleges for the Future strategy.
The LSC is implementing a major programme of capital investment, Building Colleges for the Future. This programme will:

- address the government agenda for skills and specialisation
- provide new places in colleges for 14–19 learners and adults
- provide new places in leading schools for 16- to 19-year-olds
- assist other post-16 providers to increase their levels of capital investment
- further accelerate the modernisation and renewal of the FE estate.

Over the three-year period to 2010–11, the LSC expects to invest over £2 billion in its capital programme and promote £4–5 billion of development by colleges, schools and other providers. Nearly 60 per cent of the FE estate has been renewed or modernised and if the annual level of capital funding currently projected to 2010–11 continues into future years, the modernisation and renewal of the FE estate could be substantially complete by 2016.

The LSC strongly believes that all learners should experience teaching and learning in sustainable, modern, fit-for-purpose, world-class learning environments appropriate to the learning paths they are following. The LSC has a duty to help ensure that learning opportunities are maximised through the investment of capital funds in order to raise the participation, retention and attainment of young people and adults.

With these aims in mind, the LSC is delighted to be working with the RIBA LSS Forum to highlight and promote the importance of excellent design so that college campuses, in particular, better meet the needs and aspirations of learners. A third RIBA/LSC FE Design Excellence competition will be held in 2008/09 and the LSC will support the enhanced programme of activities that the Forum is proposing to run over the coming year to help disseminate and promote the importance of excellent design in delivering effective capital investment. The LSC will complement this with its continuing programme to enhance colleges’ expert client capabilities.
Learning environments of the future

Stephen Heppell
Future thinker

As an expert in teaching practices across the globe, Stephen Heppell looked at international trends in FE and how the UK compares.

China has a huge base of 1.7 million schools. Dubai plans to build the best schools in the world. They have big ambitions. In this country we need to match the growing competition. Globally, the tide is running, but we have initiated one of the largest capital investments in learning of any nation in the world.

The ‘in-betweenies’ – beyond rigid timetables

What will tomorrow look like? Radical learning spaces are being built around the world with a gradual shift to a ‘democracy of learning’ – eradicating staff rooms and corridors to create a more open environment where everyone in the institution is treated as a learner.

You only have to relate that to the design of learning spaces to realise that those boxes where people sit in rows learning simply don’t deliver. The message is that we can’t keep doing the same thing because the countries we are competing against are moving on rapidly. Learning is escaping from its boxes.

We are in the era of the ‘in-betweenies’. All the interesting stuff is happening in this new middle space. There used to be simply broadcasters and viewers, or teachers and learners. The radical changes happening in broadcasting are the result of viewers being able to make their own material and the explosion of podcasts. Teachers are becoming learners, learners are teaching through these new media. Non-linear in-between spaces such as Facebook or texting are becoming important.

We have to do more than build boxes, we have to build better communities of learning

Designing for the space between the teacher and learner where a climate of engagement can be built up is the real challenge – a place that learns with you, rather than learning for you.

Looking at international examples, we are into exciting new territory here. We have to do more than build boxes, we have to build better communities of learning. The future is about dissolving learning out into the community. In Thailand, for example, TK Park is a community learning space on top of a shopping mall, for everyone.

Our students today want to stand out in a global economy. This will only happen if our educational buildings are noticed worldwide, and they will only attract global attention if they are truly 21st-century buildings.
Colleges at the heart of the community

Steven Broomhead
Chief Executive, Northwest Regional Development Agency

Once funding streams change in 2010, the LSC will be remembered for having renewed a significant proportion of the FE estate. Yet the challenges of overturning the legacy of underinvestment and poor quality, uninspiring environments will remain.

Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) play an important role as catalysts for change, helping to access European funding and joining together capital grants.

FE must not stand still. Accessibility and community engagement are key. New projects must be demand-led by the local community.

And there is a growing role for the third sector – the LSC will allow workplace providers and voluntary sector trusts to access funds as the numbers of part-time learners are increasing.

It is not only about producing better buildings, but also about offering better quality learning environments to improve the image of FE. Delivering the new Diploma programme will mean a huge shift and emphasis on capital investment; in tackling these challenges, the importance of joined-up thinking and teamwork will come to the fore.

A new college can be a beacon for community regeneration. Good colleges in good buildings are about giving people a better quality of life and a better chance for the future. They can also be beacons for sustainable living, capturing the imagination by offering great design and teaching excellence.
The RIBA/LSC Further Education Design Excellence Awards 2008

The RIBA/LSC awards celebrate design excellence in the FE sector and entries are judged on their innovation, excellence, sustainability, adaptability and ‘feel good factor’. The judges look for world-leading facilities that help to inspire excellent teaching and learning, raising standards across the entire FE sector. Two colleges were announced as 2008’s joint winners at the Innovation by Design Conference in April.

The finalists

The 2008 finalists were commended for providing high-quality teaching and learning environments. Each has achieved remarkable results against the available budgets.

- Arcadia Fashion Retail Academy, London
- Darlington College, Darlington
- Gloucestershire College, Cheltenham and Gloucester
- Kilburn Centre, College of North West London, London
- Matthew Boulton College, Birmingham
- City of Sunderland College – Usworth Sixth Form College, Washington, Tyne and Wear

The award went to the buildings seen to provide the most effective and innovative learning spaces.

Joint winners
Matthew Boulton College, Birmingham
Usworth Sixth Form College, Washington, Tyne and Wear

Runner-up
Kilburn Centre, College of North West London

Judges
Chair
Ian Caldwell – Director of Estates and Facilities, King’s College London
Philip Head – Director of Infrastructure and Property Services, LSC
Nigel Robbins – Principal of Cirencester College
Liz Rushton – Principal of West Herts College
John Walker – Walker Simpson Architects

Royal Institute of British Architects and the Learning and Skills Council Conference 2008
Matthew Boulton College is a striking new nine-storey landmark building in the heart of Eastside, Birmingham’s new learning quarter.

The brief called for 18,000 square metres on a tight urban site. The greatest challenge was to include a reception, theatre school, performance venue and social facilities on the lower floors, while providing an open and accessible feel.

Matthew Boulton is designed as a pragmatic, adaptable building that can respond to future change, with a great deal of cellular accommodation. There is a variety of social and learning spaces for blended learning.

Through mixing open atrium spaces, café seating areas and breakout study spaces, the design seeks to break down the definition between learning and social environments. A triple-height orientation area connecting the key spaces provides a welcoming and bright introduction to the college. The building’s impact on the environment is limited by careful design orientation and the use of natural ventilation where possible.

Judges’ view

An inspiring learning environment with excellent use of space. It sets high-quality standards which were difficult to achieve given the constraints of multi-storey development. The project execution exemplified the strong partnership between the client and design team. They have achieved a building which is well executed, making striking use of colour and materials internally to differentiate separate parts of the building as part of the inclusive design concept. It is a welcoming building which is clearly attractive and stimulating to students, as evidenced by increases in enrolments. Nice touches include the provision of seating in staircases and corridors, making good use of space throughout the building.
Usworth Sixth Form College, Tyne & Wear

Architect: Dewjo’c Architects

Usworth is a 900-pupil sixth form college built on the sports ground of a former comprehensive school in Washington, a ‘second wave’ new town on the outskirts of Sunderland.

The client wanted a learning experience in every sense – an inclusive, bold, flexible, enjoyable and sustainable building. Independent learning, guided learning and formal teaching are all catered for within a variety of spaces.

The design set out to create a ‘three-dimensional’ learning environment based around a hierarchy of three distinct types of spaces: classrooms for formal learning, a learning resource centre for individual guided learning which is the shopfront of the college and, at the heart of the building, the atrium, for informal exchanges. The large area of glazing with its dramatic and functional sun shading gives the building a distinct expression. There are no corridors and the ‘in-between’ area is conceived as a large social space which maximises informal social contact.

Judges’ view

The judges felt this was a striking and bold building which sets a high-quality standard for the sector. The building feels very inclusive with an interior that promotes a calm atmosphere. It has a strong focus on sustainability in its design, a limited palette of materials and makes excellent use of natural daylight and ventilation throughout. The learning resource centre, over two storeys, is a striking and flexible space, and the café facilities are very welcoming.
The Kilburn Centre has been built on wasteland behind Kilburn High Road, a difficult and uncompromising location for a flagship building. There was a great deal of prior consultation with the local community to ensure the result was a democratic, accessible building. Solar control shading fins are a striking feature of its exterior. Inside, the plan is modelled round a central spine light slot running between stair and lift cores, with teaching spaces to one side and back-up administration space on the back leg of the L-shaped plan. It is designed as a supremely flexible, open building with frameless glass walls and doors to classrooms. The use of natural materials gives it a human feel. Both students and staff alike feel they can own the building.

Judges’ view
The Kilburn Centre is a striking building in a difficult inner-London location with severe planning constraints. It makes an external impact while managing to complement neighbouring buildings. The building has considered sustainability and maintenance in its design and makes good use of natural daylight and natural ventilation where possible, given its location. There is a high quality of detailing throughout, with some interesting lighting around the internal atrium, stairs and lifts. The teaching rooms with full-height windows and interior glazing, together with the use of flexible furniture, provide stimulating learning spaces.
Arcadia Fashion Retail Academy, London

Architect: Nightingale Associates

Created out of the shell of a 1960s seven-storey office building, the Fashion Academy is set in the heart of London’s West End retail quarter. It is designed to inspire its students by offering state-of-the-art vocational facilities that mimic the contemporary retail setting in which they will go on to build their careers.

The architects’ principal objective was to create the illusion of walking into a fashion outlet, offering a sense of grandeur and animation which would excite students and visitors. The core of the derelict shell was transformed into a three-storey atrium, providing impact, depth, natural lighting and connectivity between floors. Acting as the circulatory heart of the college, the atrium was developed to become an exhibition space for student portfolios and incorporates a flexible catwalk area.

The external façade meanwhile emphasises the Academy’s role as a beacon for the study of fashion retailing. Mock shop windows facing the street link the building and the community, allowing students to showcase their fashion creations.

Judges’ view

The Academy is an exemplar of collaboration between business and academia, with joint funding and ongoing involvement by major retail companies. It has been achieved by high-quality refurbishment within an old building in the centre of London’s West End shopping area where many of the students will work. This and the proximity to public transport benefits its sustainability, which is enhanced by the fact that an existing building forms its heart. The interior design is striking, with an impressive entrance and lecture theatre. Cutting-edge IT systems have been incorporated into the design and provide excellent facilities such as flexible project desks in the learning resource centre. The result is a professional, sleek building with strong attention to detail.
Darlington College, Darlington

Architect: Ellis Williams Architects

The client’s ambition was for an iconic landmark building at the heart of the region. It would be an enjoyable and inclusive environment that would inspire and motivate learners. The resulting building is designed to be welcoming, user-friendly and to make a major statement about education. It has created an easily accessible and highly visible centre of excellence in the centre of Darlington.

The brief was for an open-plan innovative building with flexible spaces designed to meet future demands. The large open-plan staff room promotes effective teamwork while wireless technology enables the accommodation to be used flexibly. The 19,000 square metre development includes accommodation for construction and engineering, arts and media, catering and hair and beauty.

Public and private spaces flow transparently into one another. Links and axes run from a glazed hub which acts as a meeting point and the location for core front-of-house services.

This single central point of entry connects every department and allows users to circulate within the building with ease.

The concept called for a building which maximised natural daylight and use of natural ventilation. Its successful integration into the local community has seen participation in the FE sector increase by 13 per cent.

Judges’ view

Darlington College provides a significant new public building for the town on a brownfield site at the heart of a substantial regeneration programme. Its location and integration into the community has been important in widening participation at the college. The building’s circular form draws visitors into an impressive entrance space at its heart which is used as a multi-purpose and community space and acts as a beacon for the college. There are also excellent nursery and outdoor sporting facilities.

highly commended
Gloucestershire College is located on the canal waterfront, 10 minutes’ walk from Gloucester’s city centre.

There is a strong link from the new campus to the adjoining Llanthony Priory, founded in the 12th century, its partial ruin forming one of the entrances to the new building.

Key to the plan for the new building is a central courtyard which acts as a focal point for the campus. This provides a light-filled, busy circulation area where students can sit and meet in a welcoming, inclusive environment. The restaurant, which is also a teaching facility for catering students, has been placed near the main entrance with excellent views over the Priory.

The college houses a variety of vocational teaching facilities, from make-up and hairdressing to bricklaying and plumbing. With the focus on these practical skills, teaching areas replicate working environments and are designed to be flexible.

The building has achieved a ‘Very Good’ BREEAM rating which is helped by its proximity to the city centre on a brownfield site, as well as the use of natural ventilation and chilled slabs in the IT areas, rather than air-conditioning.

**Judges’ view**

Gloucestershire College is an important component of the regeneration of this part of the historic city. The eye-catching design has cleverly overcome many of the site constraints on this potentially difficult site. It has a bold façade facing on to the waterfront and the scheme has imaginatively linked the adjacent historic monument, Llanthony Priory, with the modern college building. There is a good sense of place within its historic setting. Flexible spaces for learning are commended and the design engenders a strong feeling of inclusivity.
Conference workshops

Space planning

Workshop leaders:
Steve Maslin, lead adviser for the LSC’s latest space planning guidance and associate director, Bond Bryan Architects;
Grace Kenny, space planning consultant and member of RIBA LSS Client Forum

The current LSC-funded redevelopment programme provides a huge opportunity for FE institutions to regenerate their estate at a comparatively modest cost.

The three stages of preparing an area brief for new buildings were presented and discussed.

Stage 1: The preparation and presentation of a college’s space proposals to the LSC. This stage is a prerequisite for success in any college project, and the speakers described the new GLH/MNW model for establishing a college’s gross floor area, published by the LSC last year. They showed how the method has been refined to respond to colleges’ concerns.

Stage 2: When planning enough of the right sort of space, it is essential to understand the space demands of different curriculum areas and to aim for efficient but realistic targets relating to how the space will be used. The process of undertaking effective workplace utilisation surveys was described, as was how to interpret the results to help in generating a schedule of accommodation. An illustration of a target gross floor area breakdown across teaching, learning and other usable space was also presented.

Stage 3: Planning a college’s estate through future curriculum thinking. The future curriculum model will significantly affect the previous stages and will potentially shape the arrangement of space and even the form of the building. Flexibility in room size, plan arrangement and learning infrastructure are all key to the success of a new building. Recent design developments illustrate how future flexibility can be integrated into college buildings.
Technology as the enabler for sustainable, flexible and innovative learning spaces

Workshop leaders:
Peter Orr, Business Development Director, Honeywell;
Maria Hernandez, European Business Development Manager, Cisco Systems

The workshop concentrated on how FE colleges could benefit from the concept of convergence, which is widely deployed in retail, commercial, leisure and government estates.

Its premise is that the traditional approach to designing buildings – deploying proprietary networks for voice, video, data, HVAC, video surveillance, lighting etc. – unnecessarily increases capital and operational expense, as well as forfeiting the ability to integrate some of these systems. By converging building and IT systems onto a single network, not only do lifecycle costs decrease but there is a greater opportunity to deliver innovative new learning spaces.

A network that is integrated into the fabric of the building unites the disparate networks and systems over a single IP network that allows all communication, security and building systems to be monitored and managed centrally.

The advancement of internet technology development, together with convergence of building management and control systems, is providing an opportunity for FE colleges to streamline their operations and introduce innovative learning – both within new build and refurbished buildings.
Building a difference – not just a different building

The Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) has supported Building a Difference, a college-led approach to help ensure that colleges use the development of new capital projects to help maximise the performance of the whole organisation through good building design. The project focuses on the importance of approaching a capital project as a strategic investment in the core college business of teaching, learning and assessment and the related organisational infrastructure. This should then be allowed to drive the design. Case studies are available and case study colleges are now offering funded customised support to colleges which engage with the project.

Key elements of Building a Difference

Phase 1 involves assembling active case studies of the following concepts:

Virtual opening/piloting
Introducing virtual opening/piloting during the planning and construction period will improve organisational capacity in preparing to move into a new building. Liverpool Community College developed a virtual timetabling model leading up to the opening of each of its six new local centres. Matthew Boulton College restructured a year in advance to ensure operational effectiveness. West Cheshire College reorganised its hospitality and catering operation to pilot vertically integrated learning opportunities.
A curriculum-based briefing process to drive the design of new accommodation in specialist curriculum areas
Liverpool Community College developed the concept of a curriculum project sponsor covering the design phase of each of its new purpose-built vocational centres. West Cheshire College developed working principles for each area to guide the whole design process.

Using capital investment to drive whole-organisation change
West Cheshire College elected to modernise the whole college to deliver vocational learning.

Other concepts to be piloted are:
- integrating ICT – developing an integrated building technology solution as a core element of a capital project
- developing a whole-organisation approach to learning resources – pinning down their exact purpose, function, organisation and staffing.

Building a Difference is about finding a way for colleges to work through their issues and come up with excellent buildings – demonstrating the link between effective learning outcomes and good building design.

Don’t say yes until you are sure what you want

Innovation in learning delivery

Workshop leader:
John Stone, Chief Executive, Learning and Skills Network

In 2000, the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) published a book based on expert projections exploring how the delivery of learning was set to be transformed over the next decade. With ten years almost up, the only reasonable conclusion is that progress in education has been a little slow, particularly when compared with the transformation that has taken place in many other industries such as music and media.

The presentation looked at what IT is capable of doing to change methods of teaching and learning and the impact this is already having. It is clear that more needs to be done to prepare teachers to make the most of IT in the classroom.

Finally, the workshop examined some of the key drivers of change, mobile learning, inter-operability, personalisation, web 2.0, the design of learning spaces and, of course, the implications for staff training and how they are all set to take forward innovation in learning delivery.
Sustainability

Workshop leader:
David Stansfield, Partner, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios

The workshop explored Feilden Clegg Bradley Studio’s experience of building in the educational sector and showcased their approaches to sustainability.

Exemplar project: North Devon College, Barnstaple

North Devon College is a new 35,000 square metre campus planned for a riverside setting in Barnstaple.

The practice’s key principles of low-energy design are fundamental to the approach at North Devon College, including good orientation, good natural light and ventilation.

Rainwater will be recycled and collected in tanks for use in toilets. Generally, a natural ventilation strategy will be used to minimise energy consumption.

Exposed concrete soffits (ceilings) will be used as a kind of thermal sponge, absorbing heat during the day to keep the spaces cool and releasing the heat at night.

A large biomass woodchip boiler will provide the majority of the college’s heat from a renewable (and largely carbon neutral) source.

The college will be looking to achieve a 30 to 40 per cent reduction in normal carbon emissions and the building is aiming for an ‘Excellent’ BREEAM rating.

A key question for FE is, how are building operations and management monitored after the team has gone? Architects and consultants can structure their fees to stay with a project for two to three years to monitor it and also learn from it, gaining post-occupancy feedback.

With design and build becoming more prevalent, it is important to get the contractors on board when planning a sustainable approach.
RIBA Learning & Skills Sector Forum – current activities and future plans

Liz Rushton
Vice Chair of the RIBA LSS Forum and Principal of West Herts College

The RIBA Learning & Skills Sector Forum presents a unique opportunity for capital project leaders and design professionals to work together. Its aim is to ensure the very best environment and facilities for learners by providing a shared resource in terms of good design, quality and process.

The Forum increases client capability by supporting project sponsors, college principals, senior managers, governors and project managers.

It does so by sharing knowledge and expertise in cost guidance and general delivery problems for new capital projects. Good practice is disseminated via workshops and two-day seminars at recently completed FE colleges. Two-day training courses are also held for project sponsors and a mentoring programme is available, both face-to-face and via e-sessions.

The Forum is a key partner, working with the LSC and its framework managers in the areas of improvement, collaboration and professional quality.

The LSC has developed a website to provide guidance and support to colleges and their consultants in developing capital projects, see:

http://designguidance.lsc.gov.uk

Future plans

Information about the 2008/09 RIBA/LSC Further Education Design Excellence Awards will be available in the autumn.

The Forum welcomes new members, particularly Framework representatives, college principals and project sponsors.

Please contact:
Clare Basel
RIBA
020 7580 5533 ext.3799
clare.basel@inst.riba.org

The RIBA LSS Forum’s objectives:

• to improve the performance of both client and design professionals to ensure that value for money, fitness for purpose and quality are achieved in the projects they undertake
• to encourage clients and design professionals to understand and embrace strategic issues
• to inform and improve specific project developments
• to research the needs of building users and explore the success of projects in order to inform future projects
• to influence those who commission buildings to appreciate long-term issues rather than short-term, low-cost solutions.

RIBA LSS Forum – supporting good design