



BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	CEF/Specify construction excellence awards – 9th October 2008
Date:	19 th September 2008
Reporting Officer:	George Wright – Head of Facilities Management
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Relevant background information

Members will be aware that the Council, through the Building Upgrade Programme, has in recent years spent very significant sums in a number of properties around the city in order to carry out necessary maintenance and refurbishment work. This programme has now ceased, but during its last year of operation (2007/8) it was decided to carry out a major refurbishment of the Stables building located in Sir Thomas & Lady Dixon park. This project was identified for a number of reasons:

- the building itself was in need of significant repair and refurbishment including major roof repairs before it could be used as office accommodation;
- the restaurant area had deteriorated badly, did not meet access requirements imposed by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and could not be easily adapted in its upstairs location;
- the refurbished restaurant could be franchised to an external caterer and provide additional revenue to the Council;
- it provided an excellent opportunity for BCC to demonstrate and showcase its commitment to environmental sustainability by designing and installing advanced sustainable energy technology (solar panels for electricity, solar thermal water heating, carbon-neutral biomass boiler systems, low-energy lighting etc); *and*
- these sustainable technologies would attract additional initial grant of **£38,000** from the Carbon Trust to help offset the overall costs of the project.

This project has been designed and managed by the Property Maintenance unit, and work is now complete. The upper tier now houses the Conservation Unit of the Parks & Leisure Department, while the restaurant area – now located on the ground floor – has been franchised and is operating successfully and providing a much-needed facility in the area for visitors and tourists.

The building has therefore been successfully brought back into use and is an attractive and financially viable property; however the really notable feature of the project is that the site has become the **first BCC property to achieve a potentially zero carbon footprint**. During times of standard demand the building is essentially carbon-neutral; in times of peak demand the overall energy usage generates a carbon footprint which is significantly better than even the most stringent government targets; in fact we are bettering the ‘good’ benchmark set by the Public Sector Energy Campaign by 16% and the building is 30% more efficient than is required by the Building Regulations (Part F). In addition we are saving between a half and three quarters of a ton of carbon per month, which is contributing to the overall requirement for the Council to offer a 20% carbon reduction by 2010.

This has been achieved using the sustainable technologies referred to above, and demonstrates in a very practical and visible way the Council's commitment to sustainability and civic leadership.

More recently the project was entered for consideration under the highly prestigious **CEF/Specify Construction Excellence Awards 2008**. Over 70 submissions were made in respect of these awards, mostly by large private-sector construction companies.

However in early September 2008 we were informed that the Stables project had been short-listed in two categories – i.e. Restoration and Environmental Sustainability – meaning that we are in the final four in both categories out of a total of 73 submissions. This is a very significant achievement for the unit as we are the only public-sector finalist in both categories, and have been short-listed alongside a number of very high-profile projects (see appendix 1).

The winners in each category are to be announced at the annual CEF/Specify Construction Excellence Awards event, which will take place on 9th October 2008 at the Culloden Hotel. I believe that, in the circumstances, it would be appropriate for the Council to take one table at this event and that the Chair and Deputy Chair (or their nominees) plus the relevant officers involved in the design and management of the project be invited to attend. The overall cost would not exceed £500 + VAT.

Key Issues

The only issue for consideration is whether or not, in the light of the short-listing in these two prestigious categories, the Council wishes to be represented at the awards ceremony.

Resources Implications

Financial

The overall cost will not exceed £500 + VAT.

Human Resources

There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.

Asset & other implications

There are no direct asset implications arising from this report.

Recommendations & Decisions

The Committee is requested to note the achievement of the Property Maintenance unit in the design and management of the project and the creation of the Council's first potentially carbon-neutral site, and to approve the attendance of the relevant Members and officers at the CEF/Specify Construction Excellence Awards event in October 2008.

Key to Abbreviations

CEF – Construction Employers Federation

Documents attached

List of finalists by category.

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