

Judges' Report



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The Judging Panel

The independent judging panel represented a variety of interests in relation to the new home building industry. Chaired by **CBI Scotland Assistant Director David Lonsdale** ⁽¹⁾, the panel also included:

Keith Anderson - Chief Executive, Port of Leith Housing Association ⁽²⁾

Hayley Millar - BBC Scotland business correspondent ⁽³⁾

John Bury - Head of Planning, City of Edinburgh Council ⁽⁴⁾

Douglas Cochrane - Chair, Council of Mortgage Lenders Scotland ⁽⁵⁾

Lynne Sullivan OBE - Partner of Sustainable by Design ⁽⁶⁾

Steve Bell - Director, Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives ⁽⁷⁾



The Judging Process

Following the first meeting of the judging panel on Wednesday 12 January, the Homes for Scotland Quality Awards 2011 were officially launched to members on Wednesday 2 February with a closing date of Monday 7 March.

With this year's Awards aligned to the key themes of Homes for Scotland's Scottish Parliamentary election manifesto, entries were invited across the following categories on the basis of a single stage submission process:

Homes

- Local Authority and Key Agency Working*
- Customer Assistance

Jobs

- Skills and Resourcing
- Health, Safety and Well-being

Environment

- Sustainable Design
- Environmental Corporate Social Responsibility

*nominations in this category were also welcomed from Local Authorities, National Parks and Key Agencies

Fifty-one entries were received in total. At their discretion, the judges reallocated entries to other categories as they felt appropriate. Each judge then assessed entries in two categories wholly based on the quality and content of the original submission. This process was supported by the use of a judging matrix to ensure consistency.

Shortlisting was undertaken at a meeting of the judges on Friday 25 March with awards and commendations agreed on Monday 4 April. Details were announced at the Homes for Scotland Annual Lunch and Quality Awards on Friday 13 May.

Chair's Foreword

I was particularly pleased to be invited to take part in the judging process for the 2011 Homes for Scotland Quality Awards for one reason above all – because we simply don't do enough to acknowledge or celebrate the good things the private sector does in Scotland.

And few industries have such a central place in our economy and in our communities as house building does: the more successful this sector is, the better it is for jobs, growth and society as a whole.

It was clear from the first meeting of the Judging Panel in early January that my fellow judges were a rigorous and demanding but, nonetheless, fair bunch. They strengthened the guidance on entries and introduced score cards to assess the quality of submissions. Reaching consensus on each of the awards, I'd like to thank and pay tribute to my fellow judges for their contributions and expertise throughout the judging process over the past few months.

Given the economic climate, I did wonder whether we would receive sufficient numbers of entries but, with over 50 submissions, we ended up with the very difficult but welcome task of selecting the winners.

While those that lost out will understandably be disappointed, it was clear that all had put considerable time and effort into their submissions, and had demonstrated a remarkable ability and determination to adapt and thrive through challenging times.

Those who were successful had a great story to tell - but they were also the best at articulating how their submission met the entry requirements, and in demonstrating how their entry was special. The industry can be rightly proud of all of them.

It was particularly heartening to see some genuinely creative and innovative approaches being taken to:

- help buyers overcome the lack of mortgage availability in an era of severely constrained credit,
- ensure considerations of environmental performance permeated every stage of the construction life-cycle, and
- actually deliver on the promise of culture change between the private and public sectors

Those that stood out for recognition have powerful things to say about the industry, but are also highly replicable. They provide plenty of hope about the future prospects for the house building sector.

David Lonsdale
Assistant Director
CBI Scotland

David Lonsdale shares his thoughts on this year's Quality Awards with the 600 strong audience attending our Annual Lunch on Friday 13 May.





Happy Cruden home owners Amanda and Steven.

Customer Assistance

Winner: Cruden Homes West

The financial squeeze facing home owners has led to a growing range of initiatives from house builders aimed at making a purchase easier. This category boasted a wealth of strong examples of innovative financial assistance and sound customer service principles.

Among the offers of shared equity, part exchanges and cash incentives, Unique Property Solutions from Cruden Homes West stood out as something truly different in the current market.

Partnering with Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Credit Union and the NHS Credit Union, Cruden Homes West offers an alternative and at times more favourable funding package to purchasers. Providing affordable higher loan to value mortgages and deposit funding loans, Cruden Homes West has enabled more First Time Buyers achieve their dream of owning a home.

The judges were also impressed by the way in which this unique package was delivered, through a community-based 'one stop shop' which offered a more personalised and specific service. Strong customer testimonials demonstrated the value of this approach while impressive sales figures underlined its success.

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Delivering a new housing product for an emerging market.

Local Authority and Key Agency Working

Winner: Springfield Properties / Dunedin Canmore / Rettie & Co

In a keenly contested category with a wide range of high quality submissions, this project stands out as a ground-breaking approach to delivering a new housing product for an emerging market.

Excellent partnership working between Springfield Properties, Dunedin Canmore and Rettie and Co, as well as the City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Government, has resulted in the successful piloting of a new approach to mid-market renting. Of 35 new one, two and three bedroom apartments at Milton Road East, Edinburgh, 18 will be transferred to mid-market renting through the 'Resonance'TM scheme.

Requiring a brand new approach to funding and risk management, the judges were impressed by the demonstration of how this new model can work without public subsidy while maintaining quality and affordability for the growing numbers of households unable to access traditional social rented or full market priced housing.

The end result is an approach to funding and delivering affordable housing which can be replicated, thereby providing more confidence to all parties of the ability to continue building new homes.

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A creative approach to taking forward production of a development framework.

Local Authority and Key Agency Working

Commendation: I & H Brown

At a time when the discipline of master planning large regeneration projects is under considerable pressure, I & H Brown should be commended on their creative approach to taking forward production of a development framework for an area at Banknock in Falkirk.

Working closely with Falkirk Council, Scottish Water, SNH, Transport Scotland, A+DS and local community groups, the developer has successfully bridged a gap between what is contained in the local plan and a detailed master plan, effectively producing a better understanding of the investment required and flexibility needed to improve confidence around the deliverability of the proposals.

Working effectively as a team, the key agencies demonstrated great sensitivity to a complex project and showed just how well a local Council can broker partnerships while retaining its statutory planning role. The judges were particularly impressed with the links established with community groups, including encouraging and helping local school children to participate in the regeneration of an ecologically sensitive area.

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Demonstrating clear, measureable benefits in terms of jobs and careers.

Skills and Resourcing

Winner: McTaggart Construction / Cruden Building & Renewals

This entry impressed the judges with its partnership working, development of construction skills and opportunities for school leavers and jobless adults.

McTaggart and Cruden worked effectively with their partners (the Glasgow Southwest Regeneration Agency, Govan Housing Association and Elderpark Housing Association) to deliver the Central Govan Action Plan. Community benefit clauses in the contracts helped secure apprenticeships for more than 40 local residents, career development opportunities for 20 current employees and jobs and work experience for many others.

The clear measurable benefit in terms of jobs and careers was impressive and resulted not just from investment in the housing sector but from strong partnering between agencies to deliver a positive legacy on the employment front.

The partnership approach shown here is highly replicable, providing the potential for other communities to share similar opportunities to those delivered in Govan.

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www.mctaggartconstruction.co.uk



Skills and Resourcing

Commendation: Glasgow Housing Association

The judges would like to commend this entry for the community benefits it delivered and the scale of its achievements in creating jobs and training opportunities.

As a result of new build contract requirements, around 60 new employees were recruited, almost all of them Glasgow city residents with the vast majority having been previously unemployed. The judges would also like to recognise the fact that many GHA tenants were able to find work, leading to improvements in their own lives and subsequent benefits for their families and their local communities.

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Forster Roofing has clearly embraced wider issues related to well-being.

Health, Safety and Well-being

Winner: Forster Roofing

The commitment shown by Forster Roofing to the health, safety and well-being of its staff is exemplary, proving that the industry can set impressive standards regardless of size.

The judges were particularly impressed with the extensive engagement of staff in identifying and addressing issues of concern, and with the quantifiable nature of the outcomes through Key Performance Indicators. A comprehensive three-year plan saw the company achieve its initial aim of reducing the number of reportable accidents to zero.

But what sets Forster Roofing apart is the way in which it has clearly embraced wider issues related to well-being. This goes well beyond employee benefits packages to include training in managing mental health issues at work and campaigns on sun awareness, drugs and alcohol. The good practice demonstrated has also been recognised through its achievement of a Healthy Working Lives Award.

The judges were impressed by a clearly demonstrated focus on health, safety and well-being and commitment to investment during an economic downturn. This was a genuine and innovative attempt to change the culture of a company.

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Cala's face-fitted dust protection.

Health, Safety and Well-being

Commendation: CALA Homes

CALA Homes has been commended by the judges for showing a commitment to health and safety which has delivered significant reductions in accident rates, giving them the lowest accident incident rate amongst the top 20 UK house builders for two years' running. In achieving this, CALA has also reduced its accident incident rate by 90% in the past three years.

CALA has demonstrated good practice by actively involving its workforce in problem solving. A highly pioneering approach has led to the introduction of face-fitted dust protection for staff and the development of an innovative safety solution in respect of roughcasting.

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Mactaggart & Mickel had a clear plan for helping house purchasers understand their property's environmental footprint.



Environmental Corporate Social Responsibility

Winner: Mactaggart and Mickel

Mactaggart and Mickel have put environmental 'good practice' at the heart of the company's operations. The judges scored this entry highly for its creativity and innovation, both of which are highly replicable across the industry, as well as its clear evidence of the measurable benefits.

Mactaggart and Mickel's green procurement practices were particularly impressive, mainstreaming good company-wide practice, and importantly, good practice within its wider supply chain. Staff were clearly involved in its 'whole life-cycle' approach to waste management which led to significant and demonstrable improvements in recycling rates and an impressive 90% reduction in waste going to landfill.

The environmentally and socially responsible approach also focused on the customer, with a clear plan for helping house purchasers understand the environmental footprint of their property and its running costs, and encouraging them to lower their energy usage.

This was a strong and well articulated submission which clearly demonstrated how a radical approach to waste management can generate financial savings at a time when increasing efficiency is crucial.

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The judges enjoyed the lively and colourful aesthetic of Marconi Road's homes.

Sustainable Design

Winner: Halliday Fraser Munro for Marconi Road, Fraserburgh

The judges were impressed by the wide-ranging social, environmental and economic strategy of this scheme as well as the impressive attention to detail in the measurement of its sustainability benefits.

In particular, the judges enjoyed the lively and colourful aesthetic of the homes, and the quality of the public realm designed to encourage safe and enjoyable pedestrian movement.

Halliday Fraser Munro's scheme at Mackie Avenue, Tarves also scored highly in the judging process and both schemes bear witness to a consistent and creative approach to sustainable design including, for example, landscaping for microclimatic benefits and a character which has local and historic resonance.

The judges felt that the Marconi Road development delivered a family-friendly environment which celebrates its historic associations, substantially reduces its environmental impact and sets a new standard in energy efficient construction which should result in much lower energy bills. It offers a replicable model in its approach to sustainable design, whilst at the same time achieving a distinctive character.

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Edinburgh Council's leadership approach blazes a trail for other local authorities to follow.

Special Recognition

City of Edinburgh Council

Taking the discipline of collaborative working to a new level and demonstrating how to embrace the ethos of planning reform as expected from the Planning Act of 2006, the judges wished to give special recognition to the City of Edinburgh Council Planning Service for the pro-active, innovative and imaginative way it has approached working in partnership with the housing building sector, particularly over the past year.

Within the context of its Economic Resilience Action Plan, the Council has shown how it can make a real difference by improving the planning process in three ways.

First, a new Planning Concordat with Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce has clarified expectations and responsibilities about resources, skills and process for both developers and the planning authority.

Secondly, new processing agreements with developers mean a consensus is reached on key target dates, information requirements, risks and a project plan, before applications are submitted.

Finally, a six month secondment of a key Council staff member to Homes for Scotland during the past year has improved the mutual understanding of the challenges facing house builders and of the planning requirements.

At a time of severe economic uncertainty for all house builders, City of Edinburgh Council has taken an enlightened approach to planning and development, delivering effective collaboration, better communication, shared expectations and a mutual understanding of the process. In economic terms, this has delivered 16 new housing sites in the capital in the past year, more than in the rest of Scotland. This is an excellent example of leadership, which blazes a trail for other local authorities to follow.

The visual excitement of the wide variety of architectural designs particularly impressed the judges.



Judges' Award

Highland Housing Alliance and Highland Council for Scotland's Housing Expo 2010

The judges wanted to reward both Highland Housing Alliance and Highland Council for their achievement in creating a showcase of contemporary housing which also acts as an exemplar in place-making.

Whilst the Expo successfully attracted a large number of visitors during its exhibition stage, it has also delivered a firm foundation for a sustainable community including the provision of a new primary school.

The judges were particularly impressed by the visual excitement of the wide variety of architectural designs which successfully demonstrated how different lifestyles and aesthetics can exist in a harmonious context.

The judges wished to recognise the local, national and international stimulus which the Expo provided for sustainable housing by promoting a wide range of energy-efficiency options and a variety of renewable energy systems.

Scotland's Housing Expo has set a very high standard for this kind of exhibition and made it truly sustainable by embedding it into a proper community context.



www.highlandhousingalliance.com

www.highland.gov.uk

www.highlandhousingalliance.com/developments/scotlands_housing_expo

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