

The Larch House wins Low Energy Social Project of the Year

Written by Matt

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The Larch House, which is part of the development of four prototype homes at The Works: Ebbw Vale was announced as a winner for the Low Energy Project of the year at the Sustainable Housing Awards 2011.

The house was developed as a partnership project between United Welsh Housing Association, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, BRE and Welsh Government. It is the UK's first zero carbon Passivhaus and is a one off incorporating many design features never before seen in the UK.

The three bedroom house was built as a prototype at the former steelworks site in Ebbw Vale, now known as The Works. With this property, there is no need for a conventional gas fired heating system. Air is heated through the house's large, triple-glazed windows, and by warm things such as the oven, electrical appliances, lights, hot water and the occupants' own bodies. During the winters the house is completely draught free once the windows are tightly closed and the air is circulated and kept fresh by a low-energy ventilation system that saves 10 times more energy than it uses.

The Sustainability awards celebrate those projects and organisations that are at the vanguard of housing sustainability best practice. The Larch house features as part of the Welsh Future Homes at The Works: Ebbw Vale (a project that is regenerating the former steelworks) and is the development of four showcase experimental low energy homes. As well as the Larch this includes:

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The Lime House – a two bedroom, code for sustainable homes level 5 Passivhaus that has been built using predominantly Welsh skills, suppliers and products. Ty Unnos - a two bedroom house designed by the Welsh School of Architecture and constructed from the Ty Unnos post and beam system. This low energy building also uses Welsh skill, suppliers and products. Dragon House – This three bedroom house is made from a single material for the internal and external building that is energy efficient, inexpensive, durable, quick to erect and is virtually fireproof, weatherproof and flood resistant.

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The houses are one offs and are establishing Ebbw Vale as the centre of a new sustainable construction industry in Wales and inspire a generation of housing that sets new standards in energy efficiency while being affordable and very cheap to run. Therefore these houses are setting a benchmark to build future homes that are the most energy efficient whilst using local material, manufacturing skills and construction expertise.

Councillor John Mason, Leader of Blaenau Gwent Council says: “Sustainability is a major part of regeneration projects at The Works in Blaenau Gwent and I am delighted that this has been recognised with yet another award for the Welsh Future Homes. This win is due to the hard work and dedication of

everyone involved, and it is thanks to this partnership working that The Works is fast becoming known as a project truly committed to sustainability, green living and changing the way people think about energy efficiency both at work and in the home.”