

DCFW Press Release – No embargo

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The Design Commission for Wales champions high standards of architecture, landscape and urban design in Wales, by promoting wider understanding of the importance of good quality in the built environment, supporting skill building, encouraging social inclusion and sustainable development.

We believe that good architecture and high quality in our built environment is crucial to our quality of life.

“Good design is about enjoying places and spaces”

Wendy Richards, the newly-appointed Development Director of the Design Commission for Wales, intends to hit the ground running. As an experienced urban designer and landscape architect, Wendy has been involved with delivering a diverse portfolio of high profile design projects, ranging from a major urban park development in Hong Kong’s New Territories to the acclaimed Riverfront Theatre in Newport as part of a team at Austin-Smith: Lord.

Wendy has spent the last three years working with Newport City Council and Newport Unlimited as their principal urban designer and has worked within the private and public sectors over a number of years, as well as being a voluntary member of the Design Commission’s own Design Review Panel. Her passion for the work of the Design Commission along with a long-held belief that good design and sustainability can only truly work if incorporated at the very outset of a development made Wendy an ideal candidate for this new role at the Commission.

Now in position, she believes Wales has a unique opportunity to take a strong lead in innovative good design in Europe through its use of sustainable design principles. The Welsh Assembly has put the necessary policies in place, but it is now up to planners and developers, with the assistance of the Design Commission, to make sure these principles are delivered on a pan-Wales basis.

Wendy says, “The Senedd in Cardiff Bay is a fantastic building which leads by example. It is iconic yet sustainable in its design and masks a great deal of ingenuity in its subtlety. Buildings like the Senedd may come along only once in a lifetime, but there are many smaller-scale projects which can deliver the same sustainability credentials if sound design principles are incorporated at the earliest stages of development planning. Good design is not necessarily about architectural style it is about responding to the local context and making successful spaces and places for people.”

“A well - designed building or place is usually one a team of people has enjoyed creating and responds to its location and users contributing to the sense of place of a town or city. As we move towards an agenda of building places to be carbon neutral in Wales by 2011, developers should push their design teams to maximise innovation and sustainability initiatives. The Design Commission for Wales can help developers to do this through its design review process. It is then imperative that good sustainable policy principles are incorporated within local planning policies to hit this target and in doing so lead the UK.”

Wendy also believes Wales needs to find a number of champions who can carry the baton for good design and improve the places in which we all live. Wendy feels that those champions are already there within local communities, the private and public sector; they just need to be teased out into the limelight. Part of her role in the Commission will be to find these potential champions to raise awareness about good design and provide them with the necessary training where needed, to push forward the design agenda to help create better places for us all to live in.

Wendy adds, “In general, I would like to think that people are becoming more aware of good design, we should be demanding more sustainable homes from house builders, until we do they will not provide them – to the purchaser this would mean more energy efficiency and lower bills, at the same time, making better places by responding to the local character and context of an area.

Part of my role at the Commission is to continue to develop this link with people and organisations, building on the work already done on ‘My Square Mile’, our education programme, delivering training about good design principles and encouraging local authorities and developers to use the Commissions’ free Design Review service. People need to understand the legacy which they are creating, to deliver places which Wales and its people can be justly proud of.”

Alan Francis, Chair of the Commission adds “We are delighted to welcome Wendy to this new role which develops a strong senior management team with the Chief Executive and the Development Director for the Commission, enabling us to expand the service we already provide in support of great spaces and places across Wales”

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Notes for editors

The Commission was established by the Welsh Assembly Government and charged with four strategic aims:

- To champion high standards of design and architecture to the public and private sector in Wales by promoting wider understanding of design issues and the importance of good standards in enhancing the built environment across all sectors.
- To promote design practice that is compatible with the National Assembly Sustainable Development Scheme, promoting best practice in energy efficiency, waste disposal and public transport.
- To promote design practice compatible with the highest standards in relation to equal opportunity and promoting social inclusion.
- Give due regard to promoting excellence in day to day developments, like housing estates and industrial units, as well as promoting excellence in prestige projects.

DCFW is concerned with the quality of the built environment in Wales.

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Further Information & Contact Details

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