STRONTIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL WINS SCOTTISH BUILT ENVIRONMENT AWARD

Thursday 8 October, 2020

The winning, highly commended and commended projects for the Scottish Civic Trust My Place Awards 2020 were announced on 8th October.

Winners were announced online with videos from judging panel members Colin McLean, former Chair of the Scottish Civic Trust; John Mark Di Ciacca, Trustee of the Scottish Civic Trust; and Beverley Ballin Smith, President of Archaeology Scotland.

The My Place Awards celebrate community-led built environment projects that have transformed their locality and are supported by the Scottish Government.

The winning project is Strontian Primary School.

Faced with the possibility of the village school becoming temporary modular units, parents and residents of Strontian worried that the future of the Highland village was on shaky ground. Working with the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust, they came up with a provocative idea: what if the community built a school and leased it to the Council? They set to work fundraising and tendering the construction, eventually choosing a design based on the footprint of four housing units. This gives the site flexibility to be converted to quality, affordable housing in the future. The new school has transformed the educational experience of the pupils by providing more space, facilitates, light and green space, and ensured the retention of young people in this remote village.

In undertaking this project, the Strontian community has demonstrated immeasurable courage, pioneered an innovative new route for community-led built environment projects and produced a beautiful building with flexibility for current and future uses.

The Awards highly commends Bridgend Farmhouse for excellence in volunteering.

Bridgend Farmhouse sits in South East Edinburgh at the crossroads of three large housing estates, an area that has experienced high unemployment and poverty which has left a legacy of poor health, lack of affordable facilities and isolation. The farmhouse had fallen into disrepair in the early 2000s until local residents recognised the site's key location and came together to pitch the idea of a community hub. Today, the sustainably-renovated farmhouse has saved a piece of local history and revamped the site with timber charring, interior designs and perimeter walls completed by volunteers. The space now has a kitchen providing healthy meals; a host of different workshops for woodworking, arts and crafts and bike hire; and over 80 regular volunteers.

The Awards commends Falls of Shin Visitor Attraction for excellence in community involvement.

The Falls of Shin are known for being one of the best places in Scotland to view salmon leaping upstream. After the original visitor centre was destroyed by fire in 2013, the local area suffered with the loss of a leading local employer. Recognising the need for regeneration, Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust secured funding to rebuild on the site and consulted the community about the new design. The new visitor attraction was opened in 2017 and is built mainly in timber, connecting the building to the surrounding pine forests. The site also includes educational panels, a restaurant, woodland trails and play area and has hosted events from business breakfasts to family fun days.

Chair of the judging panel, Colin McLean, said:

"The judges were impressed that all six shortlisted projects were the outcome of real community initiative and determination. When local people take a grip of their own community's destiny and develop such well-considered and innovative facilities, we can be confident that Scotland's people will build a bright future for Scotland's places"

Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture, Fiona Hyslop said:

"I am consistently impressed by the quality of the projects for the My Place Awards and send on my congratulations to the winning project and those commended by the judges. This year has reminded us that our local place and environment around us are crucial to our wellbeing and resilience, and the

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winning project is a truly inspiring example of how communities can use creativity and innovation to achieve positive change for local people."

Chair of Scottish Civic Trust, Sue Evans said:

"Yet again the My Place Award winner and commended projects show just what can be achieved when local people come together to improve their place be it for education, health and wellbeing or community economic development. It is wonderful to celebrate these projects which I hope will inspire other communities to take action too."

The My Place Awards were established in 2010 by the Scottish Civic Trust. They celebrate community-led built environment projects that have transformed their locality. They are unique in Scotland as a national celebration of good local design and conservation nominated by local people. The Awards are supported by the Scottish Government.

The My Place Awards are free to enter and open to buildings, public realm schemes and designed landscapes. The 2021 My Place Awards entries will open in November 2020.

Each year, winners of the My Place Awards are honoured at a reception and entries are displayed in a public exhibition. The 2020 reception, which was planned for 30th April at The Lighthouse (Glasgow), was held online with a series of video announcements through Scottish Civic Trust's Facebook and Twitter on 8th October. The 2020 exhibition is postponed until further notice.

The My Place Awards is part of Scottish Civic Trust's work to involve more and more diverse people in Scotland's heritage, built environment and culture. The My Place Awards also run in tandem with the My Place Photography Competition and My Place Mentoring. The My Place Photography Competition is a Scotland-wide built environment photography competition for school-aged young people. My Place Mentoring supports community groups across Scotland to increase the skills, knowledge and connections needed to get their heritage projects off the ground. More information can be found at myplacescotland.org.uk.

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Full details on the nominated projects, and short films about the winning projects can be found at myplacescotland.org.uk.

For interviews and photos please contact Erin.Burke@scottishcivictrust.org.uk

Notes for editors:

About Scottish Civic Trust

The Scottish Civic Trust's mission is to celebrate Scotland's built environment, take action for its improvement and empower its communities. The vision which drives this is thriving, beautiful and well cared for buildings and places, which help to support and sustain a high quality of life.

Founded in 1967, the Scottish Civic Trust exists to help people connect with their built heritage and take a leading role in guiding its development. In its infancy, it successfully campaigned for the restoration of Edinburgh's New Town and can also claim credit for saving New Lanark – both now part of Scotland's network of six World Heritage Sites.

In addition to these major milestones, the Scottish Civic Trust initiated Doors Open Days, now the largest free festival of architecture in the U.K. Doors Open Days celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2019. More information can be found at doorsopendays.org.uk.

Further Information

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