

# Feedback from opinion survey of AECB 2011 Conference at University of Nottingham

## 1. Please rate the booking process

Excellent	Very Good	Good	OK	Bad	Very Bad
35.8% (19)	<b>49.1% (26)</b>	9.4% (5)	3.8% (2)	1.9% (1)	0.0%

Karen was most helpful

So simple I've forgotten what I had to do.

Karen even pointed out I'd booked accommodation for the wrong night !

Simple no fuss

Slow response and details of conf vague till quite late

Faultless.

It was entirely straightforward and friendly.

the process wasn't applicable to me

Very efficient, good communication

easy and straight forward, only slightly confusing due to banking involvement of third party.

I feel I have to say bad when I arrived on the Thursday night and wasn't on the list for accommodation. Nor on the lists on Friday morning. Having said that, going on-line and booking was really easy

Smooth as ever!

## 2. How did you find the food

Excellent	Very	Good	OK	Bad	Very Bad
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	Good				
7.4% (4)	16.7% (9)	<b>40.7% (22)</b>	27.8% (15)	7.4% (4)	0.0% (0)

Buffet lunches were excellent. Dinner main course disappointing, lacked imagination. Veggie meal can be filling and tasty even for non veggies - this wasn't.

Labels would have been useful

Evening supper was very average and the staff needed us out sooner than seemed appropriate.

Dinner was disgusting but lunches were good

There ought to have been a meat option for the evening meal and day time lunches. Also the evening meal was rushed.

Yummy!

Could do with more variation. Also food that's not eaten on second day could be made up into packed lunches for delegates to take away or provide bags to facilitate this.

why all vegetarian? - bacon shortage at breakfast suggests attendees aren't. OK at CAT where they can do decent veggie food, otherwise could we have organic meat/MSC fish for our money?

OK except for breakfast in the Atrium which was very poor.

Not much meat! Not everybody is a vegetarian!

The evening dinner was good but the buffet lunches were dreadful and I avoided the cooked breakfast as it didn't look very appealing. I am a bit of a food snob though!

a choice would be good and less emphasis on the vegetarian aspects

Evening meal was a bit weak

Good range very tasty - one or 2 nice surprises

Lunch was good. Breakfast on Saturday, quality was OK but service was poor. Dinner was poor

Felt a bit processed and not very nutritional. Bland.

Lunch on day 1 was mediocre and not enough of it. This improved on day 2. The breakfast was poor. The muesli on offer was full of sugar and the coffee was tasteless. Unfortunately the most edible part of the food tended to be the bowl of fruit!

The main meal was good, particularly given the time available. Lunches were OK and there were plenty of hot drinks, which were welcome.

lunch was excellent; dinner main course was very bland unfortunately though starter and desert were great

Would have been nice to have a non-vegetarian choice, nearly did at breakfast when I had to go without bacon and eggs after having to wait over ten minutes to be served!

Friday dinner - long wait for all parts of main course to be served and not the most inspiring menu. Lunches and break bites pretty good.

I was disappointed by the veggie meal

the serving area was rather crowded

Good amounts, breakfast good, once seemed a little late setting up for us to come out of a workshop session

So nice not to have to worry about whether or not stuff is veggie - it was all veggie! Much greener that way too.

lunches were fine, the dinner main course was well below average, the caterers obviously can't do decent veggie

I Liked the vegetarian idea but the nut allergy labeling was ineffective, one day it seemed to say that everything except the crudités may have nuts in, the next day none and the desert certainly did but I had to ask.

### 3. How would you rate the information you were sent prior to the event? What more information would have been useful

Excellent	Very Good	Good	OK	Bad	Very Bad
14.8% (8)	<b>46.3% (25)</b>	35.2% (19)	1.9% (1)	1.9% (1)	0.0% (0)

A clearer indication that the Jubilee Campus was on a different site from the Nottingham University Campus.

I missed the more detailed description of workshops but believe they were there? was my fault not looking properly?

Nothing more.

Pre-arranged parking permits should have been issued to avoid the bottleneck at the site entry point

As said in meeting, the conference is a great opportunity to send out a 'what we've been doing' sheet.

More details on the content of workshops would have been useful to inform discussion

Was there any way to get there by public transport - not obvious so we used taxi

More information on getting to the venue by public transport/ bike from the station would have been useful (it is a green event after all!).

Bar location / Coffee on arrival

A bit last minute in firming up the workshops. difficult for you I know.

One or two last minute E-mails created slight confusion - this was not to do with the speakers canceling as the last minute

Information [breakfast times etc] would be better in table form. As it was, the text took two or three readings to digest, though all of the information was OK

Info good but a bit alte

There didn't seem to be any bus service from the train station. I walked and

got a lift back. If there was a bus, it would have been useful to find out beforehand.

pedestrian, cycling and public transport routes from station to venue would have been helpful

Interesting to have speaker biogs too.

\* I may have not looked closely enough but more detailed explanation of the location on campus would have been beneficial. \* Parking location info would have helped avoid an undesired parking fee

Kept up to date with events and changes

Info on the workshops could do with more details and background of speaker in the relevant area.

The name of the building on the Jubilee site was not shown on all the communications about "How to get there".

Because of booking problem no info!

Would have like a good deal more information on the content of each workshop.

Precise of the presentations sent with the event information.

#### **4. Please rate the range of workshops and add any comments on workshops you attended and how they could have been improved**

Excellent	Very Good	Good	OK	Bad	Very Bad
25.5% (14)	<b>54.5% (30)</b>	20.0% (11)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)

The last minute change to the heat pump workshop was disappointing but, as this was the result of illness, the changed format was as good as it could have been in the circumstances.

There was a wide range of workshop styles from bad to excellent.

As usual too hard to choose. Some were over-long with too much corporate waffle not tailored to audience - shorter wd have allowed more choice?

Too many good topics and not enough discussion time at the end. As always, time was wasted setting up the equipment and getting microphones to work - more dry-run planning please

It would be nice if some could be repeated for example May on NBT technologies - he was there anyway and wants to sell his products.

more detail about the role of MVHR in PH would have been useful and the debate on how PH works with power cuts?

Could workshops link into the forum officially after to continue some of the interesting conversations and share with those who didn't go?

See above - with more information in advance, more time could be allocated to discussion

Repeating some more that once would be good.

Range was good - I most enjoyed the real build stories and Fionn's talk. David Olivier (2nd run) needed a chair. Andy might have been in that role, but actually just joined in rambling chat.

They always vary - mostly in the quality of the presentation skills - I guess this is inevitable - but perhaps the presenters could be given some form of guidance ?

The worst workshops descended into general discussion/ranting... The better workshops were either good because of the technical content or because of the speaker. Plus I don't think you should call them workshops (apart from the CarbonLite taster sessions) because mostly they were just presentations with question time. Workshops usually require more user participation

Some questioners came back with second questions depriving others of chance to ask - perhaps this could be made clear at the start?

time constraints

the ones I attended with 2 speakers seemed a bit pushed for time, each one could have done the full session. I thought the sessions at the end with discussion were particularly useful. Nick Grant and Neil May were very good.

Language workshop was very good. I think Nick Grant's theme of design and Passivhaus buildings is important but was not really dealt with fully in the workshop.

Generally very good - disappointed that a couple of workshops had to be cancelled - I like more practical subjects covered in depth - they often don't feel like they are long enough - but maybe we look to do this at a local level where there is possibly more time.

Best few hours of presentations that I have seen for ages!

There were inevitable clashes and it was a shame about cancellations/changes.

attended the language workshop and it was really inspiring. Something like this should definitely be repeated

A great mix - provocative ensued. Everything I love about the AECB conf.

Would be good to repeat some workshops at different sessions to have a chance of seeing them

Combined practical workshops worked out well, since different ideas and practices were aired or similarities compared.

There should be a restricted number of workshops repeated so that delegates could attend more of them

The house refurb was all quite expensive, not the sort of thing people are likely to do under the Green Deal

The only problem was deciding which workshop to go to as there was always more than one of interest at any one time.

As usual, more workshops that I want to go to than sessions.

AECB is a very practical organisation and so the workshops are geared that way. Would be nice to see more like the 'language' workshop which are a bit more soul-searching/reflective in terms of AECB direction

I went to excellent workshops, which tended to be the more technical ones. The ones that veered into psychology and sociology were rather amateurish on the whole, though the discussion on the green deal was excellent. The people who talked on technical issues generally were quoting from scientific papers and were qualified in appropriate disciplines, the ones talking about psychology and sociology seemed to be constructing talks without making reference to the literature.

It was great to hear about other people experiences.

Nothing outstanding this year.

## 5 Is 90 minutes about right for the workshops?

**Yes 89.3%**      **No 10.7%**

Speakers should talk for abt 1/2 hr tops with 1/2 hr questions

Good idea to have 2 (or more) parts to each workshop with different speakers

Multiple speakers in some sessions were a good idea and worked well, in my opinion

As above - discussion with the workshop leader and other participants is the most important part

Way too long - Only made it to end of one 90 minute. I went to two workshops that were split into 2x45mins - much better. But really could go down to 20mins+5mins questions - no chance for presenter's life story, but not always worse for that.

When two presentations are happening in the same slot it sometimes feels not quite long enough

90mins is generally too long for anyone to sit in one place and maintain concentration. I had to leave early on a couple of occasions.

There could be some sessions at 1 hr and some at 45 mins to break up the format.

a bit longer would be better

90mins will put off some potential speakers not used to giving them. I would suggest 45 and 90mins.

Sometimes it would be nice to have them in two parts to cover more of the subject ie 2 x 90min

Format a bit loose, chairing erratic, sometimes too many people butting in and dominating the debate.

Too long, if 45 minutes then some could be repeated.

Two hours minimum to allow more Q and A time

The smaller sessions were better for discussions

And no 20 mins focused can be good with several in row with q and a at end but then I enjoyed talking for hour and a half, can't do that at home.

For me, the 90 mins flew by in each workshop that I attended, so about right.

Good to know beforehand which workshops leaders had agreed to provide their presentations, or which were being filmed, recorded or whatever. Then might adjust selection of workshops to attend.

Perfect.

with some 45 min doubles which are also good

Some of the chairs were poor and failed to maintain adequate order, letting those that shout the loudest dominate.

## **6 Do you have any suggestions for workshops you would like to see at future conferences**

All the ones I missed this year! Interested in some jobs from 5 or 10 yrs ago - how are they holding up now?

Building services and ventilation for passive house - design, installation and living with the systems.

More personal or group self-build or retrofit stories. Mike Berners-Lee, "How Bad are Bananas?"

more workshops on natural materials as opposed to man made which are dependant on oil industry

no

Andrew Farr on MHVR. I heard him at Ecobuild, he knows his stuff. I also persuaded a friend to join AECB, George Robinson who is interested in setting up wood burner based heating systems that can run without electricity for when the gov have to turn off elec supply cos run out of gas in cold weather.

Practical in some way

TSB retrofit feedback - with some real results. I can take any number of real-build stories! Internal insulation. Airtightness in retrofit. Latest in heat recovery vent. Latest window technology. Update on latest building regs, and preview of 2013 part L.

Last year's practical sessions were really interesting and valuable (eg the pro-clima demo) - it would be good to have one or two of these

More of them please! Shame about the cancellations

Debates on energy production rather than lectures. Although I have a lot of experience in this area I find the AECB pushes a "party line" which is not open to debate. So I don't contribute as I can talk to others who are more informed and open. This is in contrast to the AECB approach to energy efficient buildings. Very well informed and very open to discussion,

More full size construction elements?

An independent & unbiased assessment of the actual efficiency of different renewable energy system.

Achieving air tightness onsite - hands on workshop where we can play around with tapes, membranes and sticky blue stuff! Workshops in the form of formal debates with opposing sides pitching ideas and voting at the end - could be fun.

Would be good to have some less grand properties featured most people don't have loads of money to spend. How about a what you can really achieve with you GREEN DEAL loan.

Window design & (inelegant?)glazing

A continuation of the excellent themes raised this year ie the contradictions or not between low carbon/natural/ethical. Case studies always very welcome, we cannot have enough of them.

Ethical/collaborative/partnering contracts...how to achieve this in practice

A presentation on MVHR and a workshop about the design of a system. I would like the presentation to go into the energy used by MVHR. Passivhaus system being airtight need airflow, they save energy by the fabric being so efficient but what is the energy trade off between a passive ventilation system and a not so airtight house?

This year didn't seem to have quite the depth/range of subjects that the conference has had in the past - or perhaps this year covered a slightly different area but I'm not complaining

No. Well balanced I think. More evaluation following on from TSB?

Yes one on combined heat and power

the phrase 'our culture' was used a lot. I found that rather ambiguous and would like to see this explored further. What does it mean and why does it appear to stop us building energy efficient buildings?

The hydrothermal performance of materials - especially for retrofit

A session on PHPP

Discussion on Government policies, with the relevant ministers! ; details about the Green Deal and similar programs; details on accreditation of trades and advisors for the Green deal;

reducing water use, rainwater collection

More case studies, especially more mainstream buildings.

It would be very interesting to see a collection of all the new build/refurb examples where things went wrong and why. Both immediate issues and "several years on" would make for a very useful session.

Brenda Boardman update on fuel poverty/ issues with Green Deal; A report back on the latest findings from Retrofit for the Future

Lifestyle v Workstyle - do we practice what we preach?

Autonomous/Individual energy systems v district/group systems - what is appropriate where? (following on from David Olivier's excellent report)

Appropriate domestic ventilation - natural or mechanical?

Control systems and real world interactions Ethnic minorities and retrofit

**7 Would you be interested in longer "masterclass" type sessions where we could look at issues in more depth?**

*I didn't offer Yes or No option which was a mistake 13 said yes and 3 no and a few variations of maybe.*

Yes. Complex internal environmental monitoring. The need for this was also reflected in the content of the Building Limes Forum Gathering of 23 - 25th September.

Possibly, would of course depend on subject. Don't think would work alongside shorter workshops? Could be good as separate day/event? On right topic with right speakers I wd pay £100 for say 4hrs + lunch.

Yes but numbers attending may fall if too specialist and "geeky"

No. This is not the right forum for in-depth discussions, interesting though that might be for one or two people who relish such things

Yes, as I felt some of the workshops were a bit lightweight. The audience is very well informed and more depth would be good

yes. Would be nice to get more interaction with other delegates.

Potentially yes

Yes - though I think the focus should be in lively debate on a lot of varied issues in the current format.

Potentially.

Could be useful as an optional extra day.

Not really, I think 90 minutes is fine.

Yes, but it depends on what subject area.

Masterclasses are a good idea but I don't think the sessions need to be longer. You just need to launch in at the deep end and let people know they should only attend the session if they have prior knowledge of the topic.

As an option, yes maybe!

Depends whether I am interested in the subject or not!

Yes but still kept within the 90min module ie 2 or 3 parts

Perhaps, one on tricky thermal bridge analysis, or phpp.

I like to attend a range of workshops, so think the current length is about right.

personally no but I'm not a techy nerd. For those who are it could be very valuable

Possibly. Would have to be carefully selected and organised

No - it would be at expense of broader learning. Masterclasses should not held at Annual Conferences - they need a separate event.

Only if we ran to 3 days

yes very much

It would depend on the issue

Possibly

## **8 Would you be interested in themed days so you could attend only 1 day to save money and time.**

**Yes 43.1**

**No 56.9**

Building services - heating, MVHR etc. Passive house products

I really value the mix at conference

Passive house particularly the construction side - not enough focus on the "doing"; too much on the "teaching" & learning

Fabric upgrade

no

But themed days linked to the masterclass idea above would be good.

It's more a matter of dividing the content into logical parts which could then be allocate done day or the other

I'd rather spend two days, as I like the chance to see things outside my normal focus - and more time to chat during evening too.

2 days with one over a weekend is manageable and worth it - gives more chance for socialising too.

Some caution here - I would have the day(s) as an optional extra. Internal insulation.

Definitely, as taking a Friday off work is not always easy...

ditto above

Not especially but one area of interest for me would be new materials/techniques perhaps more from companies/bre/universities both home and abroad - to help keep us at the cutting edge.

No.

Given the travel involved, two days is good, particularly with the opportunity to socialise.

Only because in previous years I have only been able to attend one day and never did as there wasn't that option.

in addition to the annual conference, but not as a substitute.

Tricky one. Very difficult to set a theme which is sufficiently broad to attract lots of people but which is sufficiently detailed to be useful. Maybe something like: "ventilation", or "embodied energy of building materials" or "systems resilience: how will supply chain problems (due to peak oil) affect sourcing for ultra low energy building"

Seems a good idea

Practical subjects like airtightness; in-depth reviews of significant projects, e.g. Andy Simmonds house

Excellent idea. Themes: Ventilation Energy systems Fabric improvement Occupant factors

Depends where they are. External wall insulation

## **9 Any comments on this years conference or ideas for future years**

Was glad venue on main line rail, easy to get to even though I don't live especially near. Venue was fine - entertaining buildings (a 5-years-on job indeed!) and felt like good value (Oh no now you will put up prices.....)

Very well organised and run. Keep it up. Venue further north would be good.

Thank you for holding it in my home town of Nottingham enabling me to benefit from free B+B with my parents. Will not be so lucky next year in London and as I currently have no work, the travel and accommodation costs will probably prevent me from attending

What's wrong with two week days, instead of breaking both the end of the week and the weekend?

some truly great opportunities...Nick Grant was the highlight for me.

De-cafinated coffee - sorry just thought of that when IO was contemplating relaxation tank sessions half way through conference.

Nice spread of topics, though programme could be more explanatory - or supplemented by an abstract for each presentation. Venue was good - on site accommodation always welcome. Sorry to miss the building tours but clashed with presentations I really wanted to see. London event should have scope for interesting visits. Also, probably blasphemy in UK, but I find it nice when conferences run on schedule (especially if different presentations run after each other without a break) - you soon learn to get to rooms on time.

The building tours were not worth the time.

How about having poster sessions so anyone who wanted to could present the work that they've been doing and we could mill round and ask questions/ hear more about it in a more informal setting (including in the breaks perhaps).

Well organised - Thanks. Incidentally I learn as much between the sessions as in the sessions. Our membership make up, and their commitment to being "ecologically conscious" is the AECB's strongest asset.

The AECB need to work along with Universities to pass on their exceptional knowledge a lot more...

Great venue & well organised.

Many thanks.

good location relatively central

Excellent debates and presentations. Maybe widening beyond design with discussions around procurement methods/value engineering/training at all levels/dispute management etc

Really good, very inspiring considering there is a recession on. Would like to see more Aecb people as well as the usual suspects. What about a reduced rate for first timers and young people? I felt it was a bit middle aged, where are the young people?

I go to the conference mainly for inspiration and networking, David Olivier and Neil May's presentations were brilliant for this. Although I can get the technical tuition from other places it is good to have some technical detailed workshops to explore and push knowledge practice further. It is good to have the conference on an inspirational site.

Very enjoyable and interesting

This conference was in a beautiful location with good accommodation and good food - maybe some sort of light hearted Friday night session(s) focusing on the conference and commenting on mainstream talk

Excellent. More retrofit and more evaluation. Keep up the work on big policy too.

2013 may be time to hold one in N.W. England (Cumbria, Lancs., Cheshire). Since 2005 we have "done" the SW, NE, E Anglia, the S (Oxford), Wales and next year it is in the SE (London).

I hadn't attended for some years but came because of the retrofit theme and the energy beyond oil discussion was a bonus - both very timely.

Coffee/tea/water upon arrival

Better service in the restaurant please.

Retrofit is the major area of development in the housing sector, so lets keep raising the issue at future conferences.

Is there any way to offer different standards of accommodation at different prices. Many would be happy to share a room/bathroom facilities, if it meant reducing prices.

Some organised way for delegates to find out more about each other maybe in groups

Very good, best yet?

It was a fantastic conference - don't change it too much!

Not satisfied with the chairing of sessions - suggest making a rule that always have a woman chairing. AECB board needs to co-opt 2 women (say). If sessions are presented as workshops need to be better organised to include everyone, not just a few dominant speakers, maybe some small group work?

David Olivier's report and debate after was hugely important. AECB could do with more reflection with members e.g. an 'AECB Direction Think Tank' session or 'AECB Awayday at Conference' etc.

Delegates list available

Generally an excellent conference, made especially so by the expertise and commitment of the attendees.

Fairly low key this year, but still good. For future: What about local groups coming together at some time, so that people who have not been to one could meet their nearest group - could be good for members of the local group anyway to meet together at the conference. Alternatively, possibly arrange dinner seating as local groups?

## 10 Please rate your experience of the event as a whole

Excellent	Very Good	Good	OK	Bad	Very Bad
39.3% (22)	<b>51.8% (29)</b>	8.9% (5)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)

It is so great to catch up with everyone, even if the workshops were rubbish it would still be grand! On subject of prices, I can afford, but sometimes feel a bit uneasy that some 'true core members' might be finding the cost a struggle. How about a veteran discount? Or every 10th conf you attend is 1/2 price?

It would have been helpful to have had a more detailed description of the presentations and a background to the speakers

10/10

Didn't think the venue was quite up to the standard of the last few years

Thank you Geoff - see you next year

Thank you for organising it. Still my favorite conference. I really value the independence from the sponsorship sharks and the commitment and generosity of AECB members who share their knowledge

Thoroughly enjoyable and stimulating. (And the accommodation was much more comfortable than last year)

Always good for networking / mutual support - particularly for sole traders

Very inspiring, educational, thought provoking and sociable couple of days. Thanks

Well done to the organisers and thanks

Keep doing what you are doing - we do appreciate the hard work that is put in that means we always seem to come away inspired in one way or another.

One the best conferences around but still feels a bit secret! Age grouping a bit high. AECB needs to bring in some younger members.

How about an outside speaker even a foreign one? Speaking in one country and appearing on a large screen in the UK should be straightforward for a large venue to arrange.

well done for organizing!

Only let down by the catering

I joined 1 year ago and didn't know much about how AEBC works. I will use the Web site more.

Mostly a networking event for me, which makes it very enjoyable and not much pressure.

I love the warmth and enthusiasm - and the challenge of open debate!

You have not asked for a rating of the accommodation or venue, they were both very good, in contrast to previous years. Ticked all boxes, room, parking, close to venue.