Feedback on AECB 2015 Conference

As is usual we ask all delegates to the annual conference for their feedback and comments. Over the years this had helped us in designing the event, finding venues and speakers as well as themes to cover.

Below is a copy of the results and comments. A couple of comments that were personal have been removed and the spelling and some of the grammar has been tweaked.

1. **Please rate the booking process**

| **–** | **Excellent–** | **Very Good–** | **Good–** | **OK–** | **Bad–** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **–****Rating** | **53.33%**24 | **37.78%**17 | **6.67%**3 | **2.22%**1 | **0.00%**0 |

**Comments**

Slightly disconcerting to be repeatedly reminded that we must book up for the conference when booking already made. Can some filter be applied?

Very easy.

There was no phone number or address on the booking form. the system would not accept my card. It turned out that I was not the only one having problems with this. In the end, I sent a cheque to Sally. There could be a ''contact us'' option. It seems there's a sort of assumption that all can be done on the computer!

Everything was all sorted for me because I was a speaker

Efficient considering mine was last minute

1. **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–** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **–****Rating** | **40.91%**18 | **36.36%**16 | **18.18%**8 | **4.55%**2 | **0.00%**0 |

**Comments**

Better car parking info

Notes in the lectures in advance would have been usefull

Would be most helpful to have clear statement of registration time and finish time and postcode in early announcements about conference / even before detailed content confirmed - to enable people to book travel etc.

Bit more info on workshop contents would have been nice

A more detailed programme would have helped.

Perhaps a little more detail about each presentation/workshop would have enabled me to choose which sessions I wanted to attend

Perhaps fewer versions. Earlier ones more clearly marked 'provisional' ?

# 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–** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **–****Rating** | **31.82%**14 | **50.00%**22 | **15.91%**7 | **2.27%**1 | **0.00%**0 |  |

**Comments**

Quite varied from very good to dire. We need more laughs and fewer graphs

Good variety - one workshop overran where there were two speakers - good to remind those delivering that they need to keep time (sure you do and keep reminding)

Paul Jennings's workshop needed more time to do the tasks, or less tasks.

Too much on monitoring, feedback, post-occupancy, different names for the same sort of thing.

Some were a little long for their content - maybe some workshops would be best split into two to keep the content fresh.

Still a bit chalk and talk / mini plenaries with participants in rows before an "expert"

The hands on workshop(s?) was ok but could have been more in depth - taping things together can only be of interest for a certain of time so the overall workshop could have contained alot more tech info and demonstration.

Mostly good, but some were a bit self-indulgent

Good hands on workshop.

I'd like to see speakers kept to time, in one session the first speaker spoke for so long that the second speaker barely had time to speak.

Always need to be careful on timekeeping. Difficult one but 1.5hrs each hard to concentrate after two sessions.

Nice new perspective on Value Engineering if only the construction industry had attended

I didn't go to any because I have done some before and they were good. I was just so tempted by the new stuff I hadn't heard.

Would it be idea to invite lecturers from outside uk that are working on research relevant to UK?

It was a bit of a shame that in the community retrofit session on Saturday afternoon, which was billed as at least part discussion/debate, the first speaker took up almost all of the time - so the second speaker had only limited time and there was almost no time for what could have been a very interesting debate.

Really enjoyed Alan Clarke and Andrew Farr's talk and also Paul Jennings' v hands-on workshop. I like the talks/workshops which really go into the detail and also those which incorporate real, measured performance and show what has worked and what hasn't.

The only difficulty is choosing between them!

# Do you have any suggestions for formats, themes and workshops you would like to see at future conferences

**Comments**

More self-build stories

I always enjoy the reports from the real world and how things have worked in practice. Please keep doing these. I think the format depends on the speaker but generally time for questions and discussion after or perhaps during if its v. technical and would benefit from immediate clarification. Themes - affordable passivhaus - getting a grip on costs. There's a fair bit of cost reporting on schemes but the figures seem to vary hugely.

Definitely some hands on workshops again - the air tightness one with Paul Jennings was excellent - also a really good way to get everyone mixing and working together which led to some interesting exchanges of thoughts and approaches. Also the focussed conversation groups were a great way to mix and exchange thoughts - some lost their way a little and maybe a couple more tables were needed in the end but a great way to get conversations going.

Can you focus on good facilitation mechanisms / round cabaret tables of 6 or max 8 participants to encourage speaking out in smaller groups / sharing experiences

CLR workshops on technical detail. Been done a few years ago but with more informed data from CLR programme, should be very informative.

Straw bale demo? Examples of a variety of sustainable construction techniques?

Would prefer fewer workshops in parallel but all 60 mins not 90

The workshops I participated in could have been more interactive and participatory, most were simply a speaker or speakers and an audience in rows listening with Q&A at the end. I'd like to see more interaction and more creative formats tried out, eg, many short presentations or small group discussions mixed with plenary discussions. Finally, I'd like to see chair laid out in more of a circle or curve. Rows don't lend themselves to discussion or interaction but also it's often hard to hear what someone in the front rows is saying if you are towards the back.

It would have been good to have a building to do a tour of, like at some of the previous conferences.

A little more on water saving with practical advice with examples. enjoyed Cath Hassell's session in Bradford

Overheating, Interstitial Condensation, Internal Insulation, Circular economy, Resource mapping, Reuse of reclaimed, bioengineering, Biophilia, biodiveristy,

MORE PRACTICAL HANDS ON WORKSHOPS

Structural engineering that avoid thermal bridging. Particularly retrofit.

Trips off site to interesting and inspiring buildings.

I'm interested in everything, and always good to have a mix - probably more important that the workshops and presentations are high quality.

Perhaps one or two longer, more detailed presentations rather than or in addition to the quick 15-20 minute "bullet-point" style presentations.

I like to see real case study results - e.g. moisture in buildings data and interpretation, or post refurb energy use and temp / IAQ data

No

Within some workshops incorporate short contributions from those who have built, had built and/or have occupied new or retrofit Passiv Houses, recounting their experiences. These are the non-professional end-users and their views would complement those of the professionals (consultants, designers and the like).

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

# Yes 40% No 60%

**Comments**

Affordability, simplifying design and construction, working together as designers, clients, builders and cost consultants to achieve this

Air tightness, interstitial condensation

In depth on moisture seems to be the current cutting edge stuff

This may work if you happen to live close to the venue.

Non-domestic exemplar projects and approaches

Insulating existing buildings. Ventilation without m.v.h.r.

This may increase attendance for certain days

Any of the above in 4

Low Energy Day and Low Impacts Day

Because it is my holiday away from the family (but don't tell them that).

Update on latest state of legislation

Environmental development. Green Infrastructure. How architectural improvements can lower costs for developers/builders/house owners. Brownfield land development (don't know if this is in the AECB's remit, but is high on governments agenda)

Air tightness Ventilation

Possibly - but I quite like the 2-day format

That's a harder question!

Reduces cost but also reduces networking time.

I am a bit undecided as actually I struggle to decide what to go to as often there are 2 workshops on at the same time that I like, a themed event might make that even worse! To be honest I just book the conference each year without looking much at the programme as I know I will always learn a lot regardless.

# If you enjoyed it, what made this a good conference for you? If not why not?

**Comments**

Great venue. It's like a giant family reunion.

Good venue and networking opportunities but still had a feel of preaching to the converted

High quality of information presented. Always interesting discussion with other attendees during breaks.

Meeting like-minded people, learning something new, being inspired to keep the faith against rapidly diminishing central government legislation

First visit so it was good to see what happened. I'm from Essex so being in Sheffield didn't put me off.

Have not been for some years, so good to catch up with people and I really enjoyed it.

High standard of presentations, atmosphere of open discussion,

Networking and friends

Inspirational talks rather than technical, and the networking.

Always the people. Good venue, good food. Pity we didn't have direct access to an outside space for coffee etc.

The opportunity to network, discuss ideas, learn from others experiences and see different opinions.

The evening in the bar with pop-up discussion groups was great.

Thanks to ALL the organising crew!

Great venue, breakout rooms were good & handy. Catering was very good.

Really good to be with people all sharing the same interest

Mixture of workshops and networking was good

Very friendly atmosphere.

It was great being amongst so many experts, and being able to network with so many like minded individuals.

Practical workshops. Not too obsessed with passivhaus!

The ability to meet others working in the same sector from around the country.

It was great venue but I didn't think the workshops were as good as normal.

Yes, excellent. An opportunity to get out of and away from the office, network and see likeminded friends and interested people

made to feel welcome after a long break, the members, catching up, hot meals and tea and buns, seminars of course, conference main,

The people made it good. The venue was also good.

Always enjoy it. Meeting people you know who are wearing name badges so you can place them easily. Staff in the conference centre were great. Liked the Saturday evening event so you had a theme to talk about. It was easier to then start conversations with people you didn't know. Must of been good for first timers. Food was fab!

GOOD VENUE, GOOD FOOD, GOOD PROGRAMME

Excellent speakers some attendees asked too many questions and sessions were not adequately chaired (Ranald Lawrence)

Enthusiastic, impressive and generous lecturers - describing real life projects including the problematic issues and sharing dedicated research.

The whole package over two days with accommodation on site.

Good conference overall. Would have liked more stuff around the built environment and more facts and figures around how building sustainable is better for everyone.

Networking

As always, the range of views and the openness of most of the presentations and discussions.

Chance to keep abreast of current best practice and learn from fellow practitioners. I live in Sheffield and could walk to the conference, which was marvellous. Can we have it in Sheffield every year?

The content of the workshops, the networking and a steady supply of food!

Networking opportunities

As Fran said last year "its the annual get-together of my professional family". I might add - shows the Beeb how to 'Inform, Educate and Entertain'

My first time....I learnt a lot and met some interesting people. Having just completed a project I was interested in post occupation monitoring. Has all that effort worked as PHPP suggested?

How friendly everyone is. I never feel afraid to ask questions, despite feeling that everyone knows more than me! I tend to attend each conference with a project problem in mind and solve most of it while there, however I also realise more potential problems as well, but that is also useful of course.

# For many attendees, networking with like-minded persons seems to be a major

#  benefit and pleasure of the conference. How might we improve this aspect of future conferences?

**Comments**

I liked the 'world cafe' type event

I don't know how to do it but Board Members need to spend more time talking to delegates and less time talking to one another

Not sure. It works pretty well as is. Ensure there is space where people can sit down and chat or hang out. Make sure everything works smoothly in terms of directions, facilities so attendees can just be there.

I liked the idea of themed discussions though it was very noisy in the venue and sometimes hard to take part in the groups. maybe something like speed dating where you move from table to table

Make delegates contacts available afterwards (permission permitted)

This works well as one can always drop out for extra chats

The evening discussion session worked well, perhaps an increase variety of topics.

It's just about right

Give a brief description of the nature of the businesses/practices that people represent in the attendees list. Continue the themed discussion tables in the evening over drinks.

Just right this year I think. Enough time & room to get round people.

not sure it needs improving.....though maybe a bit of speed networking or intro of who you are to everyone is good as some people are not so confident in just talking to strangers in a room where there isn't an activity to break the ice.....???? The table event was good....

I think it worked pretty well, any niggles would be more about the venue (acoustics, layout etc) than the organisation - but no serious complaint!

The acoustics of the bar and the conference venue weren't great, so it was hard to engage with the discussion groups properly.

It's brilliant!.....I'm not sure....maybe a free bar!

Specific regional networking opportunities in order to meet people from your area. Also Principle Six networking, a networking tool used in the co-operative movement where each person talks for 60 seconds about their work and three key business 'asks' they are looking for. It's fast, effective and fun.

With the small number of people it was very easy to network.

Topical tables was a good idea, topical seminars you do, colour coded circles on name tags with areas of interest, match the colours?

I think you have the balance just right with people staying over at the University halls and the opportunity to enjoy a sit down meal together and a few drinks etc.

People informally arranged meetings on Thursday night. Perhaps having a informal planned meeting on the Thursday night that everyone knew about would extend the 'actively involved' time.

The world cafe worked well

Set aside an Open Space Technology 1.5 hour session as part of the programme.

If you only went to one day of the conference, and weren't staying for dinner then opportunities to network were limited apart from at lunch. More networking opportunities during the day maybe useful.

Allowing a little more time for it perhaps - though often enough time for a good chat over meals.

Don't think you need to improve it. Standing at the bar on Friday night works well for me!

I liked the world cafe - we wandered off topic but it was a good way to meet people and talk on & off the original topic.

It was very good with bar and accommodation in one place

Without changing the length of the 24 hour clock, difficult to imagine.

Thought this was OK

I think it was perfect in Sheffield. It was especially useful to have a break out space to have a more in depth conversation with one person or do a bit of work with someone.

# Any general comments on this year’s conference or ideas for workshops and possible venues for future years.

**Comments**

This is a conference I really enjoy attending

I thought the evening talk session worked well, it was great to see so many AECB people engaged even after a whole conference day

Hi, as an exhibitor the numbers seemed smaller? As always a really high quality though!

Excellent

More interaction between speaker and audience. i.e. some workshops, not all lectures.

I felt that the lectures/workshops had been hijacked by the university. This shifted the balance away from low energy/impact building a little. I didn't actually attend many/any of these.

University campus accommodation worked very well. The university's speakers were a little light weight & general for me. Not techy enough.

More central venues? Was happy to travel to Sheffield but was told the northern venues attract less people than when the conference is held in southern venues.

Good to see it outside of London. Bristol next year.

Our old barn conversion home is well insulated but is also home to lots of nesting birds and even a nest of bees! do passivehouses offer the same hosptality to the eco system!

I'd like to see a better gender balance in speakers. On a couple of occasions I saw male speakers speak over, interrupt or answer on behalf of female speakers in shared sessions - I think better chairing or facilitation is required to eliminate this.

I thought the catering was excellent, really made a difference.

venue seemed to work well for main and break outs, exhibition and networking

Coventry University

The London centric thing. Is it that lots of aecb members live in London and don't travel north, or is it due to travel networks being orientated to London, or a mix? In first advert for conference could an important part of it be information on how to get to the place so people don't think it is difficult and give up the idea before they have started?

The main hall was a poor quality space

A conference location in the East of England, e.g. Cambridge or Norwich.

Any sort of masterclass would be good - I want to learn! One on insulation or airtightness or ventilation or space heating and dhw.

Excellent organisation, matched by very smooth venue. Food was great, too.

Monitoring and data logging for the amateur. How do I get those sensors to talk to my laptop without becoming an IT systems expert or without spending a lot of money. The Omisense session was great but, do I need to monitor via a remote website and pay a subscription when I'm living in the house?

Manchester? There seems to have been a lot going on there recently. Cambridge perhaps? Although I suppose that will be difficult for West UK/Wales people to get to.

# If the AECB were to plan some practical courses or include a practical session in the annual conference what would you like to see covered?

**Comments**

As a designer any use of tools to help with costing projects in the design stages.

Messy things like straw bale are always enjoyable and lighten the atmosphere

The use of finishes - as a paint / finishes producer we have so many conversations with people building wonderful eco or healthy buildings and then using synthetic derived finishes or partially sealing their breathable walls. We focus too much on the main structure of the building (and rightly so) that we lose track of how the smaller details can benefit or detract from the final effect of the building.

I don't think this is a good idea, there isn't time as part of the main 2 day event. I wish I could have stayed for the bike tour and building visits - this was a great optional extra after the event.

Practical demonstrations relating to CLR course possibly. Not sure how we could achieve this though.

some tours of working buildings close to the venue could be good but appreciate can take a bit of organising and timing which may not fit the overall programme.

PHPP

I would love to see some intros to software packages such as SAP, PHPP and Therm.

Fitting new widows and doors in existing buildings.

airtightness, water saving, do's and don't of timber frame?

Airtightness, using social media to promote what you do, Infrared thermography, bat surveys/walks

More hands on air tightness. Role playing to simulate situations commonly found on construction sites - focussing on changing behaviours and culture onsite to encourage high quality workmanship and sustainable practice

Get a group of people to visit a house with an expert with measuring devices to show people hands on how cold and leaky a standard house is.

Facts & figures around costs, savings, energy efficiency and benefits of sustainable building process would be useful. Handouts which could be circulated amongst networks would be useful.

Ventilation, Carbonlite

Air-tightness was good this year - repeating something similar would be an idea.

Same answer as above plus any PHPP guidance/common mistakes and pitfalls to avoid etc.

How about taster sessions on existing AECB courses - and maybe a chance for experienced users to feedback (e.g. with ideas on how to improve them or adapt them to new situations)

Not sure

Short, sharp ENTERTAINING demo of DesignPH ?

see 8 above

I missed the airtightness course which everyone said was good. Thermal bridging for retrofit and new build would be good.