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PRESS RELEASE

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Architecture Competition Results Reimagine the Heart of Dumfries Town Centre

The results of a national Architectural Ideas Competition organised for the Stove Network by the Glasgow Institute of Architects has been revealed, with Ayr based ARPL Architects winning the 1st prize of £1000. Gordon Flemming from ARPL Architects stated, “We are very pleased that our ideas for the Midsteeple Quarter in Dumfries were recognised by the competition judges. The challenge of ensuring regional town centres stay viable and lively is a great task and we hope our contribution to the discussion helps add a new dimension to this.”

The Midsteeple Quarter project is an important part of a national debate about the future of town centres as traditional retail declines everywhere, the architectural ideas submitted are not proposals of what will be built, but a way of continuing the conversation of how the Midsteeple Quarter could develop as a new heart of Dumfries town centre.

The judging panel consisted of John Dowson, a Dumfries High Street Resident; Melissa Gunn, Lecturer in Business and Enterprise at the University of the West of Scotland & Chair of the Board of Directors at The Stove Network; Tim Gray, Director at Holmes Miller Architects & GIA President; Iain Monteith, Director at Loader & Monteith Architects and Tutor at the Mackintosh School of Architecture and David Cowan, Head of Regeneration Unit at the Scottish Government.

Second place was awarded to a group of young female architects who focused their entry on the social aspect of regenerating Dumfries High Street, providing solutions which introduced both day and night time activity. Their reimagining of the town centre sought to provide an achievable, affordable and permanent solution to empty shop fronts whilst integrating student accommodation into the heart of a potentially thriving community. Third place was awarded to Pioneer Landscape Architecture, who looked at the unique nature of the site and its spaces to guide their response. Their aim was to revitalise the Midsteeple Quarter by making proposals on both a regional and local scale, reinstating the importance of Dumfries as a regional capital in a post retail society. In addition to the cash prizes the Judges wanted to commend Ryan Canning and Titas Grikevicius from Holmes Miller with a Drawing Commendation.

Sam Patterson, who coordinated the architecture competition on behalf of the Glasgow Institute of Architects, commented, “The GIA are delighted to have worked with The Stove Network on developing such a rich and challenging competition brief and we are thrilled with the range of ideas that were received across the 15 submissions. The quality of the submissions exceeded our expectations and we hope will stimulate the debate in Dumfries about the potential of the Midsteeple Quarter.”

Long-term and careful public consultation, led by Dumfries’ Community Development Trust; The Stove Network, has brought a consensus that re-populating the town centre is an urgent necessity.

Following a recent online survey conducted by The Stove Network, responses from over 800 members of the public revealed support for a more diverse approach to the future of the town centre with a very positive response to ideas of enterprise, education, live-work, health services and restaurants/nightlife all being available in the town centre as well as more events, festivals and markets to encourage more people to come into the town.

Midsteeple Quarter is a response to this need, identifying a block including Georgian buildings in the heart of the town centre as the site for this bold initiative that will see local people developing their own High Street as a contemporary living, working, socialising, learning and enterprising hub. The project is led by a diverse and grassroots community collaboration working in partnership with cross-party MSPs and MPs, Higher Education Institutions, the Local Authority and National Agencies, The University of the West of Scotland, Third Sector D&G, Loreburne Community Council, NHS Dumfries & Galloway, D&G Council and Crichton Institute.

On Friday 9th June, entries to the Midsteeple Quarter Architecture Competition will be on display in the Stove building, 100 High Street, until 21st June, as well as South Block in Glasgow. The exhibition launch at The Stove will be opened by the new Leader of Dumfries and Galloway Council, Councillor Elaine Murray, and will begin at 6.30pm. Members of the public are invited to come along and view the architectural concepts for the Midsteeple Quarter of Dumfries High Street from professional individuals and practices for a reimaged urban core of Dumfries. The public in Dumfries will be able to vote for a 'Peoples Choice' winner at the exhibition at The Stove.

For more information, please contact David Smith at david@intobeing.net or visit the Glasgow Institute of Architects website <http://gia.org.uk>.

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The Midsteeples Quarter Project

Long-term and careful public consultation, led by Dumfries' Community Development Trust; The Stove Network, has brought a consensus that re-populating the town centre is an urgent necessity. Midsteeples Quarter is a response to this need, identifying a block of mostly Georgian buildings in the heart of the town centre as the site for this bold initiative that will see local people developing their own High Street as a contemporary living, working, socialising, learning and enterprising hub. Working with a diverse partnership of agencies, groups and individuals in Dumfries to build a vision for Midsteeples Quarter as a key project for the regeneration of Dumfries town centre.

Community Partnership

The project is led by a diverse and grassroots community collaboration working in partnership with cross-party MSPs and MPs, Higher Education Institutions, the Local Authority and National Agencies which include The Stove Network, The University of the West of Scotland, Third Sector D&G, Loreburne Community Council, NHS Dumfries & Galloway, D&G Council, and Crichton Institute. Over 400 individuals have also signed up to a Dumfries Pledge, supporting the Midsteeples Quarter Project and bringing new life back into Dumfries town centre.

The Glasgow Institute of Architects (GIA)

The Glasgow Institute of Architects is the largest of the six Chapters of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland. The Institute is run by a Council of members who sit on various Committees covering Architecture People and Places, Communications, Education, Practice/CPD and Conservation-Sustainability. The Midsteeples Quarter Ideas Competition sits within the Architecture, People and Place Committee which has the objective to promote architecture and urban design matters that can provide tangible benefit to the wider public.

Contact:

David Smith

07967593619

david@intobeing.net