CASE STUDY

Students design projects combining heritage places with design innovation

In 2012/13, a group of undergraduate architecture students at the University of Nottingham were set a challenge to design innovative contemporary architecture which respected the genius loci of the Peak District – celebrating the past, addressing current needs and sustaining its future health and character.

The exhibition sought to explore what it means to design sustainably using the Peak District National Park as a locale, a unique place which offers a different perspective to those who live or visit the area. It can be seen as the home of a sensitive ecosystem, a valued picturesque landscape, a unique historic industrial artefact, home to thousands of local residents and a tourist destination for millions of visitors.

In response to the challenge, students produced ideas for public facilities at or near the disused Miller’s Dale Railway Station, as well as other sites across the Peak District. Eleven students were involved in producing a range of designs that took into account the local habitat and the multiple uses of the locations. The design work was created over several months with input from the Peak District National Park Authority, who provided planning advice, briefings and guided ranger tours of the design site.

Supported by Hermes funding, the results were illustrated on four display panels at Miller’s Dale Railway Station. The students’ creations addressed issues such as sustainable transport, local employment and production, and environment and education. The design approaches ranged from subtle reinterpretations of the vernacular through to site-specific iconic landmark buildings.
The official launch of the display took place on 16 August 2013 with the exhibition continuing through to the end of September. Members of the Peak District National Park Authority including Chief Executive Jim Dixon, Cultural Heritage Manager Ken Smith and Miller’s Dale Ranger Gary Bacon, volunteers, students, University design staff and local architects were all in attendance.

Jim Dixon said how impressed he was by the ambition and creativity of the work on show.

Yasmin Nally, architecture student in front of the display panels