

The ARCHITECTURAL WORKSHOP

— BILL FAWCUS (340)

One of the highlights of the Dover Festival was an architectural workshop organised by IMPACT and the South East Region of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Competing teams were composed of architects and students from as far afield as Lille and Brighton alongside local people and students. The event was held in Images Nightclub and was sponsored by KCC, DDC, Oaklea Properties Limited, Adeptus, the Royal Institute of British Architects, P&O European Ferries and Rouse (Kent) Ltd.

The workshop took the form of a competition with the participants forming into five teams all of which were led by practising architects. Their task was to develop a proposal on the theme of the European Gateway to Dover based in the area bounded by Townwall Street, Russell Street, Woolcomber Street and the back of Castle Street.

The rules were minimal and the teams were required to use their imagination within the bounds of the site. Fanciful and well-illustrated ideas from all teams ranged from a tower with a time-ball revolving restaurant, through fun fairs, theatres and maritime heritage centres to more prosaic offices and shops. All the participants recognised the need for enhanced linkages with cable cars, monorails, funicular railways and glass tunnels to and from other attractions in the town.

The winning Yellow Team was the only one to respect the confines of the site without taking a sledgehammer to the Gateway Flats. Their proposal focused on internal squares built in layers with viewing galleries at different levels to provide a rich composition of complementary uses. These ranged from a filling station and bus station at ground level and ascended through hotel, pubs, restaurants, offices and shops to a huge tower linked by cable car to the Castle and the Western Heights.

The event stimulated an abundance of exciting ideas for Dover and will be well worth repeating at future festivals.

Bill Fawcus, (General Manager (Property) Dover Harbour Board was one of the judges for this competition. The other two were Malcolm Higgs (Head of School of Architecture, Kent Institute of Art and Design) and Colin Dunlop (Operations Manager, P&O European Ferries).