

# urban scrawl

## // Retrofit

April 2011



## A Community Green Deal?

*With increasing recognition of the need to retrofit our towns and cities to meet the challenge of climate change Nick Dodd explores the challenges and opportunities for regeneration, communities and local economies..*

When the 'New Deal' was ushered in by US President Roosevelt in 1933 as a response to great depression it was nothing short of a 'call to arms', an invitation to the American citizens to take part in rebuilding the economy from the bottom-up – creating new homes, farms, factories and even power grids.

In 2008, as we appeared to be entering a new great depression the New Economics Foundation saw sufficient resonance to call for a 'Green New Deal'. This New Deal would seek to match the ambition of Roosevelt, challenging UK plc to rebalance, reshape and rebuild its economy along sustainable lines – embracing the potential of so called 'green collar' employment.

The spirit of the 'Green New Deal' is now being taken forward in post-downturn 2011. The Coalition Government is bringing forward legislation for a 'Green Deal'. A revolution in energy efficiency is promised. But what kind of deal will it be? The answer from the Coalition Government is whatever we want it to be. The 'Green Deal' is proposed as forming just one strand of an enterprise-led, low carbon economic sector which will help bring us out of recession.

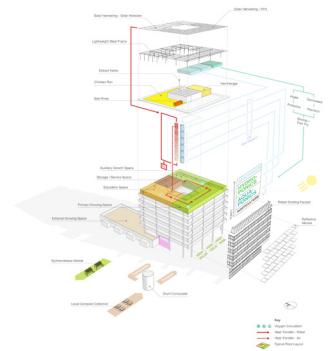
But is there any evidence that this could work? Well, yes. Germany has been Europe's low carbon economic powerhouse for nearly two decades now. Driven by successive coalitions of mainstream political parties along with the Greens, they grasped early on the need to ready their economy to exploit the potential of new sectors such as solar photovoltaics and building retrofitting – with a focus on nurturing home-grown demand, hand in hand with R&D, manufacturing and development of skilled trades.

But their approach has gone further than that. Germany has realised that in order to really drive low carbon economic growth you need to engage local government, businesses and citizens at all levels. The Government took the lead by using economic and planning levers to create certainty and make it attractive and beneficial to invest. Then everyone else has done the rest. And it really has been everyone – local councils, landlords, homeowners, manufacturers, skilled trades, farmers.

The result is a dynamic green collar sector which has played a part in filling the gap left by the hollowing out of old industry in areas such as the Ruhr Valley as

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Here are a few retrofit projects we have been working on recently.....



## Vertical Farm

We have been working with our friends Creative Concern to develop a vertical farm here in sunny Manchester as part of this years Manchester International Festival.



## Retrofit for the Future Award

URBED's retrofit for the future project in Rotherham has been named winner of the 'Property and the Built Environment' category in the 2011 Sustain Awards.



is borne out by recent opinion polls. So what happens if we don't like the deal on offer?

The proposed new [Neighbourhood Plans](#) could create a more positive way forward. They could be used to help shape how the Green Deal is delivered. People are more inclined to put up with disruption if investment reflects their concerns, needs and aspirations, and if they can better understand and enjoy the benefits that will come. They are also more inclined to believe word of mouth recommendations or if they can see their friends and neighbours benefiting. They might even want to get involved, tackle other issues such as food, recycling and transport, or even form new social enterprises or businesses to create new jobs and skills.

The low carbon economy has taken too long to get started in the UK. Now is surely the time for us all to get involved. And what about the 'Green Deal'? Certainly we should embrace it – we have a natural tendency in the UK towards cynicism as a self-defence mechanism against change – but it is for us to define what we want from it and how we could use it to shape the future of our communities and to find a new impetus for our economy.



### Victoria Baths

Opened by Manchester Corporation in 1906 Victoria Baths is an iconic and very special building. The challenge of re-commissioning the baths led the Trust to commission us to develop a low carbon heating strategy.



### Dearne Valley Eco-Vision

An ambitious long-term vision to transform the post-industrial landscape, infrastructure and know-how of the Dearne in a way that within ten years it will have the lowest carbon footprint in Europe.

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