

# Sustainability awards for Larkfleet

The CEO of Larkfleet won two titles at the Institute of Directors (IoD) East Midlands Director of the Year awards, crowning a year of similar successes for himself and the company.

Karl Hick was named as the IoD's overall East Midlands Director of the Year and also as the Director of the Year in the Large Company category.

Ron Lynch, IoD East Midlands regional director, said: "To ensure that the business stays ahead of its competitors, this director set up a R&D team to lead the development of new technologies in housing, waste and energy, wind and solar power. Some of the research has the potential to revolutionise the future of the construction industry.

"This director has always had a 'hands on' management style but as the business grew he recognised the need to develop an excellent management team to help lead it forward. There is also a strong track record of investing in people, including apprentices and more recently graduate trainees to recruit, train and retain future senior management talent.

"Karl Hick has demonstrated a commitment to providing work experience opportunities for young people, employing local people, placing contracts with local suppliers and supporting local schools."

The IoD awards have crowned a year of success for Karl. Earlier this year he was named winner of the Outstanding Entrepreneur Award at the 2015 Global Business Excellence Awards.

The high profile award attracts a wide range of entries from organisations across the world ranging from large international PLCs and public sector organisations to dynamic and innovative small businesses.

Individual awards for Karl have come alongside awards for Larkfleet companies.

At the end of 2014 Larkfleet won the Sustainability Award from the British Chambers of Commerce for its commitment to the environment and for investing in sustainability-focused research and development.

The company's award highlighted features such as the fact that it builds using sustainable timber frames, minimises waste and the use of materials during construction and protects wildlife around its sites. It also noted that the company's carbon emissions are independently verified and that it is driving down energy and water use, increasing recycling rates and reducing car travel where possible.

This success has been matched by further awards through 2015.

Larkfleet was shortlisted in the Construction News Awards as Sustainable Company of the Year and in the CleanTech New Energy Awards as Developer of the Year.

The Croft, a retirement community development by Larkfleet Homes, has been shortlisted as one of Inside Housing's Top 60 Developments, for a HouseBuilder Award, for a UK Property Award and for a WhatHouse? Award. Larkfleet itself has been shortlisted in the Sustainability category of the HouseBuilder Awards. Results of all these competitions are due to be announced shortly.

Larkfleet company Lark Energy won the Innovative Development of the Year title at the Lincs Energy Awards for its Solar Steam R&D project, which aims to produce low-cost solar power. At the same awards Larkfleet was named as Sustainable Construction Company of the Year.

Lark Energy is also the current holder of the Solar Power Portal Award for best ground-mounted solar site under 10 MWp and the UK Solar Award for the best large ground mounted installation. It is the second year running that Lark Energy has been selected for both these top accolades. The current awards were both won for the company's solar farm at Hanson Cement's Ketton Works in Rutland.

Karl Hick said: "We are seeking to embrace sustainability in all its aspects.

"We are therefore not just seeking to drive down energy use by managing our own activities and by building energy-efficient homes. We are also trying to create and maintain sustainable local communities wherever we operate – providing local employment, supporting the provision of training for local youngsters, contributing to local community activities and helping to solve the very real problem of providing sufficient affordable, high-quality homes for the region's growing population."

**"This director has always had a 'hands on' management style..."**



## Housebuilding leading construction growth

**The UK construction sector rebounded further in September driven by fast rates of expansion in housebuilding according to data from a recent Markit/Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply survey.**

At 59.9% in September, up from 57.3% in August, the headline seasonally adjusted index signaled a sharp and accelerated expansion of overall business activity. Moreover, the latest reading was well above the long-run survey average of 54.7% and pointed to the fastest increase in output levels since February.

The latest expansion of residential building was the strongest for 12 months, which some survey respondents attributed to the launch of development projects that had been delayed earlier in 2015. Construction companies like Larkfleet Homes remain upbeat about their prospects for output growth over the next 12 months. Reflecting this, more than half of the

survey panel (52%) forecast an upturn in business activity, while only 6% anticipate a reduction.

Tim Moore, senior economist at Markit and author of the survey, said: "Construction firms enjoyed a strong finish to the third quarter of 2015, as a sustained rebound in new development projects continued to have an impact on the ground.

"Residential building saw the most decisive momentum shift in September, hitting a one-year high in the process, while commercial development also picked up speed as rising business investment and improving UK economic conditions acted to bolster demand."



## Solar industry launches 'rescue plan'

**The solar industry is putting forward an emergency rescue plan for British solar which will cost just £1 on bills in 2019 as an alternative to the Government's proposed cuts to the Feed-in Tariff for the technology.**



The Solar Trade Association hopes that its '£1 solar rescue plan' will work for both the solar industry and the Government, allowing a viable solar market to continue while giving the Government the cost control guarantees it requires.

The £1 plan garnered cross-party support from over 30 MPs from all parties yesterday at an action day outside the House of Commons including Sir David Amess MP (Con), Mims Davies MP (Con), Kevin Hollinrake MP (Con), Caroline Flint MP (Lab), Caroline Lucas MP (Green), Callum McCaig MP (SNP) and Tom Brake MP (Lib Dem).

The Government consultation on the changes is set to close tomorrow, with a final decision expected later this year.

Leonie Greene, Head of External Affairs at the Solar Trade Association said:

"This emergency plan represents a compromise agreement which, given the current crisis, aims to find a way forward that is acceptable for both the Government and the solar industry."

**"The fact that this plan costs just £1 per household shows just how affordable it could be to adopt steady, gradual reductions in support for solar."**

"Solar is close to grid parity, but it is not there yet. The Government's 98% cut in the overall budget for solar would derail the industry at the last hurdle and waste the millions of public investment in solar to date."

The STA's proposal introduces higher tariffs than those proposed by Government, with higher and more flexible caps on the total amount of solar that can be deployed and an improved mechanism to continually bring support levels down.

The trade body is asking for a total of £95million over the next three years, a significant increase on the £7million the Government is proposing over the same period.

The plan would only add an extra £1 per year on average household energy bills from 2019 for new solar deployed over the next three years which would generate enough electricity to power the equivalent of 875,000 homes.

Earlier this week utility company Good Energy published a report showing that solar and wind generation is already helping to reduce wholesale electricity costs with a reduction of £1.55billion on power prices in 2014, thereby offsetting much of the cost of supporting the renewable technologies.

The proposed cuts have already dealt a heavy blow to investor confidence in the market, with three solar businesses, Mark Group, Climate Energy and Southern Solar, having already gone into administration over the last few weeks making over 1,200 people across the country redundant. American firm Zep Solar has also pulled out of the UK market. The Solar Trade Association has estimated that up to 27,000 jobs in the solar sector and its supply chain could be at risk if the proposed reductions in tariffs go ahead.

## Larkfleet launches £500,000 community fund

Larkfleet Group has announced the first payments as part of an innovative new community benefit scheme linked to the construction of new houses. In total the grants available through this scheme could amount to more than £500,000 across Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire over the next five years.



The Larkfleet Community Fund proposes to pay up to £500 for each house built for sale on the open market on new Larkfleet Homes developments, up to a maximum individual fund of £75,000 for each site.

This is part of the company's overall commitment to creating sustainable communities and in recognition of the need to support the integration of new housing developments with existing communities.

Since its inception in 2013, the fund has been advertised as part of 16 potential developments in Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire and, following the grant of planning permission, has now been put in place at seven sites: Laceby, Pinchbeck, Horncastle, Colsterworth and Louth in Lincolnshire and two sites in Eye, Peterborough.

The individual community funds announced so far will total:

Laceby	£40,000
Pinchbeck	£56,500
Colsterworth	£16,000
Horncastle	£32,000
Louth	£43,000
Eye	£42,000 in total across both sites

For each fund, Larkfleet works through an established local community foundation trust which will manage the fund independently. The foundation will be responsible for inviting and assessing applications from local community groups, making grants and monitoring progress.

The first payments under the scheme have now been paid out in Eye, with subsequent payments expected on the other six sites with planning permission during 2016-17.

Jane Darlington, CEO of Cambridgeshire Community Foundation, commented: "Cambridgeshire Community Foundation is pleased to be working with Larkfleet on its innovative Community Fund and is managing the process for Larkfleet.

"The first community to benefit from the Fund is Eye, where Larkfleet is taking forward a new development at Parson's Prospect. We are working closely with Eye Parish Council and are now inviting applications for grants from charitable projects which will benefit local residents."

Other funds will be put in place as and when other sites are developed.

Allison Homes, which is also part of the Larkfleet Group, will be announcing details of a similar scheme in due course.

Karl Hick, CEO of Larkfleet Group, said: "We all know that there is a desperate shortage of houses in this country and in this area. But we must also recognise that the challenge is more than about building houses – it is about creating communities. We need to ensure that new developments contribute to and integrate quickly with existing communities and are built with minimal disruption to local people.

"The Larkfleet Community Fund aims to address this issue and offers communities opportunities to bid for financial support for projects and causes that deliver at the local level."

## Larkfleet develops homes for flood risk areas

Larkfleet has appointed Adrian Brotherton as director of special projects to oversee development of innovative new schemes that could transform the building of homes across the UK in flood risk areas.

Adrian (47), an architectural technician by trade, spent more than a decade with Allison Homes before running his own Spalding-based building firm Fieldview Homes and then becoming managing director of luxury house builder Seagate Homes.

He has been taken on by Larkfleet, which specialises in sustainable development, to look at ways of alleviating and overcoming flood risk so that more land across the country can be approved for future home building.

Adrian will accelerate development of Larkfleet's low carbon flood risk house project and turn it into a viable commercial prospect that could one day allow homes to be safely built in areas susceptible to regular flooding.

A prototype of the house is currently being constructed from new lightweight structures and building products that will allow it to be built on a platform that could be raised at times of local flooding.

"We want the Environment Agency to approve the project in principle and I hope to be arranging demonstrations for them in the autumn," says Adrian. "After that I'm estimating another two years of development and refinement work before the houses are ready for the market."

A second aspect of Adrian's role is to manage the development of flood alleviation schemes which could lead to land in different parts of the country that is currently blighted by regular floods being released for home building.

**"Both projects are very exciting prospects because flooding is a massive problem for this country and is only going to become worse."**

"I am working with specialist engineers and we are looking at water management projects to transform land that is currently classified as unacceptable for homes into areas that are safe to build on," he explains.

In planning terms the idea would be to take land that is currently classified as Flood Risk Zone 3 – which is either on a flood plain or is categorised as having a high probability of flooding – to low probability Flood Risk Zone 1.

"Both projects are very exciting prospects because flooding is a massive problem for this country and is only going to become worse. Releasing more land for home building would obviously be very beneficial," adds Adrian.

Larkfleet has a strong record in creating high quality homes and communities. It specialises in building energy-efficient housing and continually invests in research and the development of innovative new sustainable building designs, materials and construction methods.

It is also a major developer of sustainable energy projects and a provider of energy-efficiency improvements for new and existing buildings. Larkfleet companies are developing large photovoltaic (PV) 'solar farms', adding PV panels to new and existing buildings at a variety of scales, and refurbishing existing homes to reduce their carbon footprint, energy use and energy costs.

