

FarmED, Cotswolds

Poesia glass bricks showcase modern, sustainable design at the award-winning FarmED



FarmED is a regenerative farming education centre at Honeydale Farm in the UK's Cotswolds. This low-carbon project, designed by Timothy Tasker Architects, was established as a demonstration operation to promote regenerative farming techniques to tackle climate change, teaching sustainable farming methods to farmers, governing bodies and researchers.

The owners wanted to use beautiful, sustainable architecture to enhance and reinforce the farm's message.

Taking an environment-first approach, Timothy Tasker Architects designed three timber barn-like buildings, arranged around a central courtyard, for conferences, events and demonstrations. Modelled on traditional Cotswolds farmsteads, the buildings and courtyard create harmonious proportions and provide shelter and protection against strong winds. Paved paths beneath deep eaves connect the three buildings, which open onto a wildflower meadow in the courtyard.

The first block is the FarmED learning centre, offering a flexible space for up to 500 people for community and educational events; the second is home to FarmEAT, a dining hall complete with a farm-to-table demonstration kitchen to educate people about local, low-carbon eating; and the final one, the smallest building, is a micro dairy and tractor garage.

The material palette reflects the program's sustainable and regenerative intent, Timothy Tasker Architects reducing the embodied carbon of the project through careful material choice. Local pine and larch were used to clad the buildings (instead of masonry and plaster), and a layer of rockwool was swapped for sheep's wool insulation – which was estimated to save 32 tonnes of carbon.

Standard material sizes were used for the structure and finishes to reduce waste and enable the buildings to be easily disassembled and materials reused and adapted in future projects.

The steel and pine-framed buildings sit on foundations made from the crushed masonry of old structures cleared from the site, and the roofs are made from zinc with 95% recycled content.



Custom-made Poesia glass bricks are used as a feature wall at the entrance to the conference room to maximise light transmission. The architects were inspired by the Crystal Houses project in the Netherlands, and wanted to make use of the sold glass bricks at FarmED. The glass bricks were laid in a brick bond formation, with half bricks at the ends on alternate courses. The bricks are opaque, enabling light to filter through from the front entrance and from the glass doors at the back of the room. It's incredible how one glass brick wall can have such a striking effect.

"We knew architecture was going to be central to the success of Honeydale Farm. We could have put up some nice sheds to host our education programme and events, but instead we sought to use design to create a deeper impact and reiterate our ideas on regeneration," says client Ian Wilkinson.

"The buildings work beautifully, they feel comfortable and natural and, importantly, positively contribute to our farm and mission," Ian continues.

Rewardingly for the team, FarmED won a RIBA South Award 2023, the jury commenting:

"The buildings are warm, spacious, and hard-wearing, but most of all delightfully detailed and expertly executed, creating a seamless and harmonious connection between the buildings and the surrounding landscape. It is so rare that agricultural buildings have this level of finesse.

FarmED is a shining example of how architecture can play a crucial role in promoting sustainable agriculture and education. By integrating sustainable practices into its design, the centre serves as a model for others looking to create similar facilities."

A high accolade, indeed, that's so well deserved.

In 2022, FarmED also won two Civic Trust Awards: The Civic Trust Award and The Special Award for Sustainability. While the Civic Trust Awards recognise excellence in the built environment, the Special Award for Sustainability is 'presented to an exemplar project that demonstrates excellent sustainability credentials in terms of overall design parameters, material selection, construction methods and long term energy consumption.'



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Lead architect: Timothy Tasker Architects.
Consulting architect: Anthony Carlisle Architects.
Product: Poesia handmade smooth cast glass bricks, Clear, 246mm x 116mm x 53mm
Services engineer: Project Design Services.
Structural engineer: O'Brien & Price
Landscape design: Timothy Tasker Architects
Contractor: TNC Renovate
Photography: Tim Crocker