



CAT Graduate Symposium 2026 – Programme*

9th - 10th May 2026

Friday 8th May 2026

B&B arrival and check in from 15:00 onwards at WISE Reception. Please park in the bottom car park once you have dropped luggage off at your accommodation. For those who have booked an evening meal (in addition to the Graduate Symposium ticket/on-site accommodation booking), this will be served in the Café' at 18:00. The bar will be open from 19:00 – 21:00.

Saturday 9th May 2026

9:00 Registration at WISE Reception followed by welcome tea and coffee served in the Café

10:00 Welcome and Introduction to the Graduate Symposium from Adrian Watson (Head of School) and Megan McGrattan (CAT Trustee) *Sheppard Theatre*

10:30 Keynote Speaker – Anna Hollyman, Co-Head of Policy and Places, UK Green Building Council & CAT Graduate *Sheppard Theatre*

11:00 Panel Session 'Approaches to Research and How They Effect Change' with Krista Zvirgzda, Julie Cayzer and Ellie Perkins *Sheppard Theatre*

11:30 Tea and Coffee *Café*

12:00 Choose from:

Rediscovering the CAT Site – Guided Walk with Tim Coleridge and Ivor Davies *WISE Reception*
Speed Networking with Rebecca Kent *Courtyard Rooms (or outside if the weather allows)*

13:00 Lunch *Café*

14:00 Breakout Sessions, choose from:

	14:00 - 14:30	Changeover Time	14:40 - 15:10	Changeover Time	15:20 - 15:50
Dulas Room	Jo Blackshaw (SBC)		Giada Gonzalez (MArch)		Ellie Perkins (GB)
Well Wishers Room	Janet Tuppen (S&E)		Shu Zhu (S&E)		Rob Toplis (SA)

15:50 Tea and Coffee *Café*

16:20 Breakout Sessions, choose from:

	16:20 - 16:50	Changeover Time	17:00 - 17:30
Dulas Room	Krista Zvirgzda (GB)		John Winters (GB)
Well Wishers Room	Huw Williams (SEPDM)		Paul Allen (CAT ZCB Team)

18:00 Dinner in the Café followed by entertainment in the Bar with Liam Rickard

* Please note that this is a provisional programme and is subject to change.



CAT Graduate Symposium 2025 – Programme 9th - 10th May 2026

Sunday 10th May 2026

08:00 Breakfast for B&B guests

09:15 Networking/Check out of bedrooms/chance to explore site.

(Please note that all bedrooms must be vacated by 09:30 at the latest unless the attendee has booked to stay at CAT for the following module on-site week)

10:15 Breakout Sessions, choose from:

	10:15 – 11:15
Dulas Room	Julie Cayzer (SBC) & Joe Downie (S&E) (joint session)
Well Wishers Room	Michael Havard (SBC) & Dafydd Haine (SBC) (joint session)

11:30 Tea and Coffee *Café*

12:00 Beyond Graduation: Marketing, Graduate Network and Opportunities to Stay Connected with CAT with Alis Rees (Co-Head of Marketing & Communications) *Sheppard Theatre*

13:00 Lunch *Café*

14:00 CAT's Future Plans/Strategy & Final Words/Close *Sheppard Theatre*

15:00 Networking and Depart (site closes at 16:00)



CAT Graduate Symposium 2026 Speaker Profiles

Keynote Speaker – Saturday 9th May 10:00-10:30

Anna Hollyman

Co-Head of Policy and Places at the UK Green Building Council

What if, every time we built or retrofitted something, the communities and ecosystems around us got better? ‘Regenerative’ principles are being discussed within the built environment at an increasing rate. However, there is a lack of consensus within industry on what we mean by ‘regenerative’, and particularly how, and at what stage principles should be implemented, or outcomes measured.

The UKGBC Regenerative Places Framework Task Group will explore this crucially important challenge, building the compelling case to industry and policy makers for the benefits of place-based regenerative approaches, and examining the pathways, approaches, and shifts in practice needed to achieve more regenerative outcomes on projects. Anna developed this programme of work, currently launched as a draft for consultation, alongside job-share colleague Jo Wheeler.

Anna graduated from the MSc Architecture: Advanced Environmental and Energy Studies programme at CAT.



Breakout Session – Saturday 9th May 14:00-14:30

How do key experiences and emotions contribute to decisive climate action?

Jo Blackshaw (MSc Sustainability and Behaviour Change)

Jo will explore how key experiences and emotions contribute to taking decisive climate action – specifically, studying at CAT.

Jo notes that her own “stomach punch” moment when I became “really, REALLY aware” of the climate crisis ultimately led me to studying at CAT. Her dissertation looked at when other CAT students first became aware of the climate crisis and the nature of their awareness. She used 10 interviews and one focus group to talk to 13 CAT students and deployed thematic analysis to ascertain the central findings of these. She uncovered the pathways they took via specific emotions that played a role in driving further learning and ultimately uptake of further climate action. Jo looked at how different actions have different levels of impact and is now beginning to design “wellness walks” around a Triple Wellbeing model, which shares the Head, Heart and Hands lenses that her dissertation used to examine the pathways between awareness and action and thus encourage more people to take action.

Using MSc study to switch careers and putting what I’ve learnt at CAT into practice in a new role.

Janet Tuppen (MSc Sustainability & Ecology)

Project Support Officer, Chilterns National Landscape

Janet’s session will reflect on her set up of an experiment on pollinators in allotments, and how she has used knowledge and skills gained during her MSc at CAT to then switch careers. Janet has moved from a career in BBC Radio to Chilterns National Landscape, where she is now combining her project management and communications skills with the knowledge and skills gained from her MSc. She has recently created a GIS StoryMap with multimedia content for the project.



Breakout Session – Saturday 9th May 14:40-15:10

From hemp to high-performance buildings – rethinking how we build

Giada Gonzalez (M.Arch Sustainable Architecture)

‘From hemp to high-performance buildings – rethinking how we build’

This presentation looks at the challenges and opportunities of building with natural materials, based on Giada’s work at Natural Building Systems. It will showcase a few projects from the past year and explain the ideas and decisions behind them. The talk will also walk through the process of working with materials like hemp, highlighting both the difficulties and the potential they offer for more sustainable, high-performance buildings.

Urban Ecology and how environmental drivers affect species diversity

Shu Zhu (MSc Sustainability and Ecology)

Shu’s dissertation explored how environmental drivers affect the species diversity and functional traits of urban forb species. Her experience at CAT, especially during some modules and the dissertation, made her feel more certain about working in urban ecology, especially in the area of plant strategies and their interactions with the environment. Shu is also interested in encouraging people to become more involved with urban nature. Her dissertation experience also led her to register for a plant identification course with BSBI and plan for a city nature challenge activity at the end of April.



Breakout Session – Saturday 9th May 15:20 – 15:50

From niche innovations to national necessities – modular and offsite timber construction in Canada

Ellie Perkins (PGDip Green Building)
PhD Researcher (University of York)

Against the backdrop of Canada's accelerated housing delivery and 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan, modular and offsite timber construction are moving from niche innovations to national necessities. Ellie's PhD research explores how Canada can scale mid-to-high-rise modular construction solutions, learning from international case studies and the UK's more mature offsite sector. It initially seeks to deliver key insights into the opportunities and challenges facing both the modular and offsite timber construction sectors, and how the two can align to deliver long term sustainable growth.

Ellie is a PhD researcher at University of York, Architect and Passivhaus Designer specialising in research and industry development of low-carbon construction.

Cooling walls – the effects of ivy

Rob Toplis (MSc Sustainability and Adaptation)
Trustee of Climate Action Wendover

Rob's presentation will address the cooling effects of ivy on brick walls in the UK. It reviews physical and biological processes; research literature on green walls and temperatures in different climate zones; wall features and weather effects. It outlines data collection methods and data analysis, and discusses findings, limitations and the potential for ivy as a sustainable approach to reduce climate-induced wall heating.

Rob is a founder member and trustee of Climate Action Wendover, a charity working on engagement between the community and council on local climate change issues, sustainability, biodiversity and transport.



Breakout Session – Saturday 9th May 16:20 – 16:50

Sustainability and Adaptive Reuse

Krista Zvirgzda (MSc Green Building)

Lecturer & Operations Manager

Currently teaching on the Interior Architecture course at Kingston University, Krista's session will explore how sustainability and adaptive reuse can be embedded within interior architecture education through hands-on, practice-based learning. Drawing on her teaching experience, it highlights approaches that integrate community (both human and non-human) engagement, material exploration, and digital fabrication into the design process. Krista's students are encouraged to work with existing resources, rethink material value, and respond to real-world contexts. The session will reflect on both the opportunities and challenges of fostering sustainable thinking in future designers.

Regional Energy and Innovation in Mid Wales

Huw Williams (MSc Sustainability in Energy Provision and Demand Management)

Regional Energy Officer

Huw works for Growing Mid Wales as Regional Energy Officer. He is project lead on the Whole System Research and Innovation in Decarbonisation (WSRID) projects in Mid Wales. These are innovative projects in response to the challenge set around decarbonisation in rural communities and managing demand on constrained rural electricity grids. His session will look at regional energy planning in Wales, specifically the Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs) in Powys and Ceredigion and how these have been used to support placed based energy innovation through the Welsh Government funded WSRID programme.

Huw also volunteers as a Trustee for Ponthafren, a mental health charity around Welshpool and Newtown.



Breakout Session – Saturday 9th May 17:00 - 17:30

Small odd quirky theatres – how low-co to go?

John Winters (MSc Green Building)

John's session will examine the small, odd, and quirky buildings that theatres occupy. Although theatre knows no boundaries and can be performed almost anywhere, these buildings still need to be decarbonised, so how should that be achieved? Fabric-based retrofit offers many advantages, but it can be costly – should we simply install a heat pump? In this presentation, John will cover some key aspects of his MSc dissertation research on a decarbonisation plan for my local community theatre. He'll also passionately discuss the new Net Zero Carbon Building Standard, whether it is enough, and how buildings might meet it.

ZCB's 20th Anniversary - What's next for Zero Carbon Britain?

Paul Allen (CAT's ZCB Team)

Next year is the 20th anniversary of CAT's Zero Carbon Britain research. We are keen to mark this with new research and a new report. The current plan is to expand the work from zero carbon to a wider 'futureproofing' research. This includes emissions reduction but also biodiversity loss, the need for resilience, culture, food and diets etc.

Rooted in the insights from the 20 years of CAT's ZCB work, we are keen to explore the scope of this project with a wide range of expertise. A key element of this is the GSE graduate symposium and GSE Alumni – so we will be running a session focusing on exploring what the new project could become...



Breakout Session – Sunday 10th May 10:15 – 11:15

Pondering proposals to tackle vet pet treatments polluting ponds

Julie Cayzer (MSc Sustainability and Behaviour Change) & Joe Downie (MSc Sustainability and Ecology)

The emphasis of our joint talk will be on the harmful effect of the pet parasite treatments that our dissertation highlighted on ponds, lakes and rivers as well as the potential harm to human health. Joe's research measured the levels of contamination of a unique pond in Hampstead Heath. Julie designed a training programme for vets and their practice teams to promote responsible use of the vet treatments using a One Health Approach.

Both Julie and Joe will also reflect on how their MSc study at CAT has supported their future careers.

Julie has recently started a new role at the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons in association with the University of Nottingham's Vet School of Medicine and Science and Nottingham University Business School. It is Knowledge Transfer Partnership Associate role which looks to identify and develop and quality improvement model for the vet sector.

Is it okay to be happy right now? A participatory workshop exploring sustainable wellbeing in the age of climate crisis

Michael Havard (MSc Sustainability and Behaviour Change) and Dafydd Haine (MSc Sustainability and Behaviour Change)

More information to follow.