

A Stonehenge of glass on the banks of the Mersey

Sculptor's bold vision

BY LIAM MURPHY
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A MODERN version of Stonehenge could be built on the banks of the Mersey as part of Wirral's contribution to Liverpool's Capital of Culture celebrations.

It is hoped the tide-powered moon clock, made completely of glass, could become a huge tourist attraction.

The feature would be visible from the Liverpool side of the river and has been designed by artist Laura Williams, who has already received praise from illustrious names including astronomer Patrick Moore.

Known as the Aluna project, the design has three concentric rings made from glass measuring 50 metres wide (164ft) and rising up to six-storeys high. Embedded in the glass are thousands of small light emitting diodes (LEDs) which illuminate it.

Powered by the waves, different parts of the artwork light up according to the phases of the moon. It will also display the lunar day and the tidal changes.

The project has been presented to senior figures at Wirral Council who have said they are giving the project "broad support", although they have stressed the project is in its early stages.

Howard Mortimer, the leader of Wirral Council's special initiatives team, said the scheme needed some detailed feasibility work before it could go ahead.

Locations for the project are currently being looked at, but one of the leading contenders is near Seacombe Ferry, although there are a number of issues still to overcome. The size of the sculpture means it would take about an acre of land.

Ms Williams, 32, who is a graduate of St Martin's College and lives in London, said: "It is about our perception of time. We are so concentrated on saving fractions of time and Aluna looks at big time and big space."

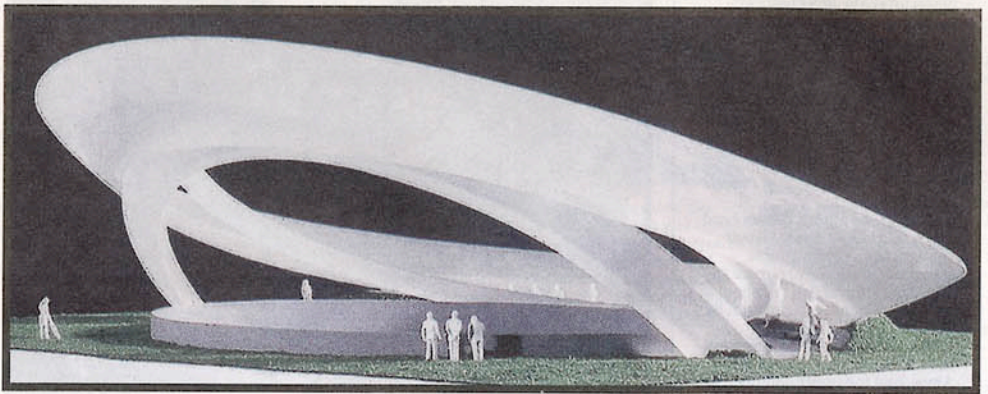
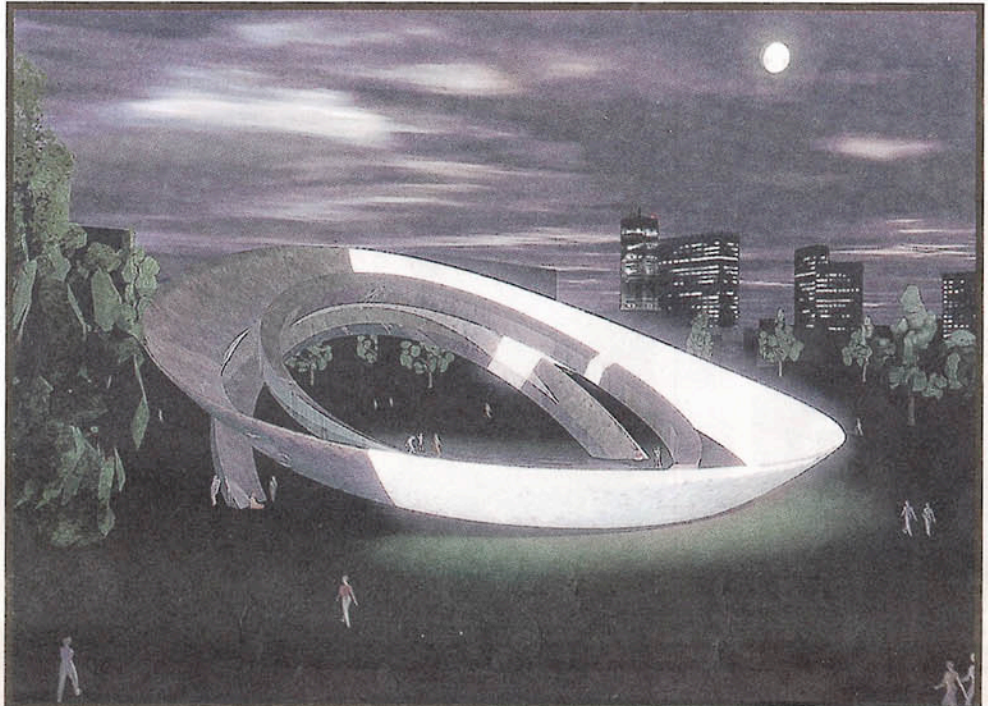
"Everybody went crazy for the eclipse in 1999 and it made me realise how the moon means something to everybody."

"There has been international interest but Merseyside struck a real chord, particularly because of the location on the banks of the Mersey. I'm incredibly excited about it."

It is hoped that along with the International Space and Astronomy Centre planned for Seacombe, Aluna will act as a catalyst for the public understanding of science and highlight the direct relationship between the moon, the tides and Merseyside's maritime history.

Visible 24 hours a day from land, air and sea, it is believed Aluna could become an internationally recognised landmark and a huge tourist attraction.

If so, it could play a major role



Two views of the ambitious Aluna project which may be created in Wirral

Why the ancient monument was built has always been a mystery

THE Aluna has been likened to Stonehenge because it will be an astronomical instrument that will reflect the phases of the moon.

Stonehenge in Wiltshire is probably the most important prehistoric

monument in the whole of Britain, but why it was built still remains a mystery. Among the theories for its use are that it was a druid temple for sacrifice or a huge astronomical observatory.

It was built in three

phases between 3050 BC and 1600 BC.

It has been estimated that the three phases of the construction required more than 30 million hours of labour.

Stonehenge was made a world heritage site in 1986.



Stonehenge in Wiltshire

in the economic and social rejuvenation of the Wirral waterfront - greatly increasing tourism, recreation and river transport usage.

The non-for-profit company behind the scheme, also called Aluna, says it has the support of a wide base of influential people

and organisations.

They range from Mersey Ferries, Wirral Waterfront Partnership, John Moores University Astrophysics Research Institute and the

Artist Laura Williams



Arts Council, to the Astronomer Royal Sir Martin Rees, Sir Patrick Moore, science author and Oxford professor Richard Dawkins, and musician Brian Eno. ■ The website for the project is www.alunatime.org