

North-East hopes for Luna-tick idea

AS a tourist attraction to place the North-East as the eye-catching and breathtaking centre of the universe – it would simply be out of this world.

Powered by the tidal phases, and standing 130ft across and 40ft high, the world's first Moon Clock is tipped to change the way we see time and space.

And, if built on a proposed site in Northumberland, the £4m Aluna project could bring a welcome boost to the region's growing list of major attractions.

The artist behind the concept, Laura Williams, last night confirmed she will travel to Blyth later this month to visit a possible site for the art work.

Laura said: "This has been a long project. It needs a certain amount of scientific and astronomical understanding, but it brings science, spirituality and art together.

"It was difficult, because whereas the sun has a yearly cycle, the moon has a 19-year cycle. But it's something that can connect absolutely everyone."

The five-storey Moon Clock is made up of three concentric, translucent glass rings, which light up to show the moon's movement either in the sky, or below the horizon.

Visitors will be able to follow its current phase, along with the ebb and flow of the tides.

The animation – dubbed *Alunatime* – will use the latest technology, and will also be powered directly by tidal flows, using turbines in the sea or on a tidal river.

Laura, who has built other art installations, began work on the ambitious project during the final year of her Art and Design course at St Martin's College, London, in 2002.

She said: "I was looking at time and how fast life is.

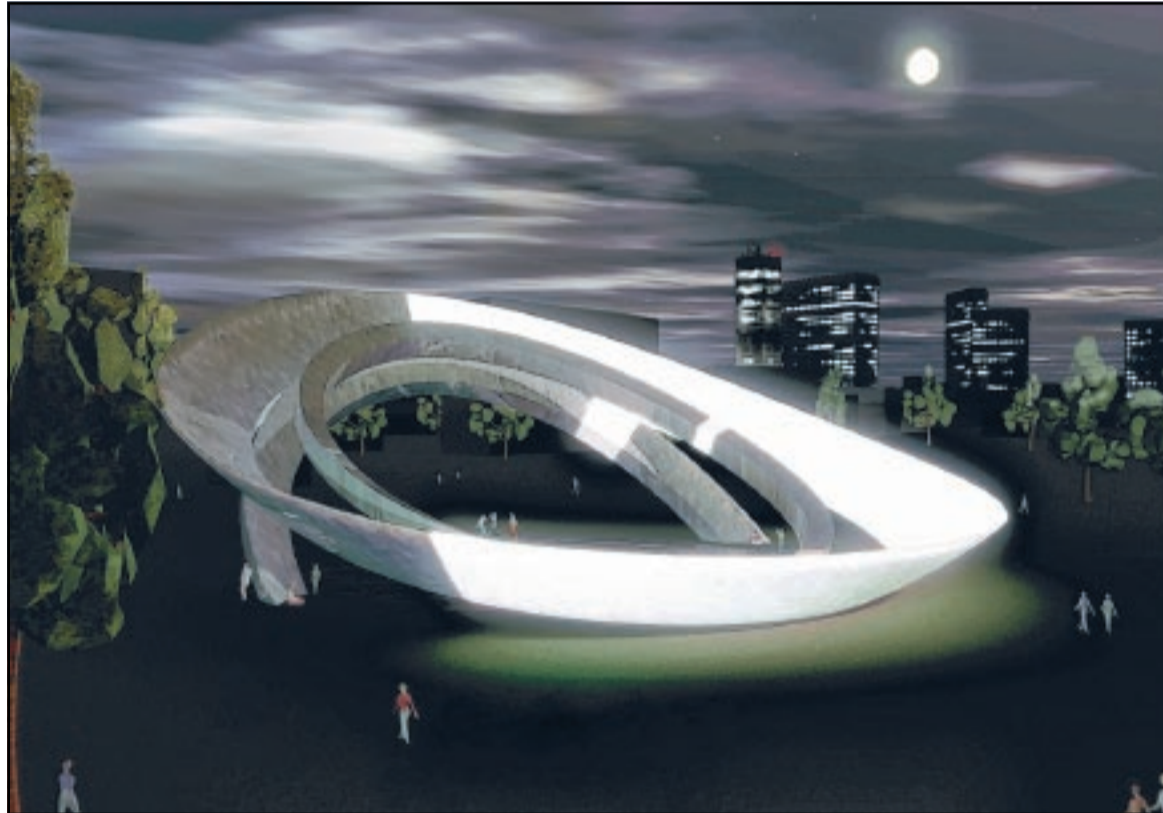
"We are consuming ourselves with our own existence. I wanted to find an idea that can put us back in real time and space.

"The moon is a mirror to the sun and can give us an immediate concept as to where we are in

Moon clock would be major tourist attraction for region

By Guy Basnett

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TIME AND TIDE: The Moon Clock could be installed at Blyth.

relation to the sun. Space is often seen as limitless, but this allows people to place themselves directly in relation to the moon and the sun."

She believes the work will become a major tourist attraction, and said people all over the world who have heard about the project have already vowed to come and see it.

"It will definitely be a huge attraction, and not just a space for quiet time, but for outdoor events and concerts.

"It will really be a place for people," added Laura.

While the concept is complete, Laura is still looking at ever-improving technologies to help make-up the structure, and funding for the project. She hopes it will be

made up of a range of public money, and technological and corporate sponsorship.

"We are still looking at a number of possible locations around the UK. I was contacted by somebody about coming to Blyth, but I can't give you details about that," she said.

The town already has an offshore wind farm generating power for thousands of homes.

Other sites being considered include Dover, London, Merseyside and Scarborough.

Laura added: "I need to see the places before we can reach the next stage.

"Once everything is decided though it could be up and switched on within three years."

Popular couple die in Africa crash

PEOPLE in a Northumberland market town have spoken of their shock after an elderly couple were killed in a road accident while on holiday in South Africa.

Louis David Grant – known as Lee – and his wife Margaret, who have lived in Morpeth for more than 20 years, suffered fatal injuries in the crash near the town of Worcester in the Western Cape.

It is understood Mr Grant, who was aged around 80, was killed in-

stantly and his 71-year-old wife died in hospital 12 days later.

The couple lived in a bungalow in Friars Gate, Morpeth, where neighbours have been left stunned by the tragedy.

The accident happened on February 24 and it is believed the couple's car was waiting to pull out at a road junction when it was struck from behind by another vehicle.

Mr Grant served in the Royal Navy during World War Two and worked as an

air traffic controller until his retirement.

Yesterday one neighbour said: "What has happened is absolutely terrible, no-one can believe it.

"They were an extremely nice couple who could not do enough for you. They were on good terms with everyone."

"They were a lovely couple who were always together and this has completely shocked everyone around here."

Mr and Mrs Grant are understood to have family

elsewhere in the country. It is believed a memorial service is being planned in Morpeth.

The town of Worcester is the capital of the Breede River Valley and lies on the main route to and from Cape Town, Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth. It is a popular spot for tourists.

A Foreign Office spokeswoman said: "Our staff have provided assistance to the family of this couple following the tragedy."

Dave Black

Inquest on rail tragedy

AN inquest will open today into the deaths of two teenage boys on a North-East rail line.

Stuart Adams, 15, and Lee Mullis, 14, from Darlington, died on Good Friday when they were hit by a train travelling from Manchester to Newcastle at 60mph near Darlington Bank Top station.

The Durham coroner will open an inquest in Crook this morning.

Plan to cut MPs

THREE public inquiries will be held later this year about proposals to reduce the number of MPs in the North-East.

The Parliamentary Boundary Commission last year announced plans to reduce the number of parliamentary constituencies in Tyne and Wear from 13 to 12, and it will be holding inquiries on the plans in Newcastle, Sunderland and Jarrow in June. The changes will not affect the General Election in May.

Island link

NORTHUMBERLAND County Council has confirmed that the second phase of improvements to the causeway linking Holy Island with the mainland south of Berwick will not be carried out until after the end of the busy tourist season.

And the causeway will remain open while steps are taken to prevent pools of water being left when the tide goes out. An estimated £100,000 is to be spent on the latest phase, which will be undertaken towards the end of the year.

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