

Time has come for lunar clock

FORESHORE PLAN FOR ARTWORK

By JULIA LEWIS

PLANS are ticking along nicely for the world's first tidal-powered moon clock to be set up in Greenwich.

Aluna is both a work of art and a sophisticated piece of technology that, if it goes ahead, will form an unusual landmark on the Greenwich foreshore.

It is the vision of Hackney-based artist Laura Williams, 38, who designed it for her final-year project at art school in 2002.

Larger than Stonehenge and powered by turbines, Aluna shows the ebb and flow of the tides and the phases of the moon.

The structure would take up about three-quarters of an acre of land beside the Thames Path, and consists of three concentric circles, 40 metres in diameter, made of recycled steel and clad in recycled, semi-transparent glass.

Under the glass would be a mass of LED bulbs that light up according to the phase of the moon and the tides.

The largest ring would light up when it is a full moon and go dark when there is a new moon.

Ms Williams created a small model of it while a student at Central St Martins.

In the intervening years she has been working with a team consisting of structural engineers, lighting architects, landscape designers and project managers on creating a full-scale version.

Dominic Cole, one of the consultants, was responsible for the Eden Project in Cornwall.

The landmark was first intended to be on the north side of the river, but just before Christmas the negotiations came to nothing.

Ms Williams has now

found what she considers a perfect, "very visible" spot to the west of The O2 on a site owned by the Port of London Authority (PLA) and next to the Meridian line, and is now seeking the relevant permissions to go ahead.

She must get agreement from the PLA, Greenwich council and the Environment Agency.

It would be a good place for Aluna, she said, because it would continue the cosmic theme of the O2, which represents the earth, and the Meridian.

Ms Williams hopes Aluna will help people understand tides and the impact the moon has, especially the spring tides that occur twice a month.

She said: "I want to help people lift their heads out of the sand and get them to look up at the sky and the environment around us and understand how these things work."

Wealth

"The moon and the tides were intrinsic to London and the whole of London's wealth was dependent on tides.

"We were great seafarers and built on our understanding of the moon and the tides for navigation."

The moon, she pointed out, is equally significant to other cultures, and hundreds of festivals around the world are based on it.

Her plan is to create an educational and cultural programme around Aluna linked to the National Curriculum, in the hope that it will be visited by children from all over the country, and also create a new public waterfront space where people can contemplate the river.



Artist Laura Williams came up with the idea in 2002

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Ms Williams said she often thought about "our very fast and short-term culture" and hoped Aluna might help people stand back and see "the bigger picture".

She said: "It will be a landmark that is of use. It will be a beacon for a peaceful and sustainable future and it will have all these activities around it."

Ideally, she would like it to be ready for the 2012 Olympics, but admits this might not be possible.

The Aluna Project has been endorsed by a number of high-profile people, among them Lord Martin Rees, Astronomer Royal and President of the Royal Society; London Mayor Boris Johnson; Councillor Chris Roberts, leader of Greenwich council; scientist Richard Dawkins, author of *The Selfish Gene*; and David Rooney, former curator of timekeeping at the Greenwich Royal Observatory.

The project will cost a total of £6million, £4million of which still needs to be raised.

● For more information visit www.alunatime.org.uk



An artist's impression of how the tidal-powered moon clock will look on the Greenwich Peninsula

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A vision of how Aluna may light up the Greenwich Peninsula

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