

127 In Celsius, the average daytime temperature on the moon

SOURCE: NASA

“ If you want to write a song about the human race, write a song about the moon

PAUL SIMON, LYRICS, SONG ABOUT THE MOON



MOON RIVER

The Thames is set to power the world's first tidal-powered lunar clock – if a band of enthusiasts have their way, writes our resident geek **Tom Moggach**

LAURA WILLIAMS was watching the solar eclipse of 1999 from an old hill fort on a friend's farm in Cornwall when inspiration struck. As the young artist – then in her late 20s – marvelled at what she calls “the incredible dance of the sun and the moon” she decided that she was going to act on her long-term ambition to construct the world's first tidal-powered lunar clock. In the intervening seven years she and her team of architects and engineers have put together plans for a stunning sculpture which will be at least 40m wide and five storeys high.

The latest turbine technology will generate energy from the tidal waters of the Thames to power the

the Prime Meridian of the world, at Greenwich, and the proposed 2012 Olympic village. And a number of prominent London figures, including the Astronomer Royal Sir Martin Rees, the musician Brian Eno, and Jude Kelly, chair of the arts, culture and education committee of London 2012, are supporting the bid. But while Williams, 35, and her supporters at Aluna – the not-for-profit organisation which is administering the project – have raised and invested £500,000 in their vision over the past four years, they need to find a further £5 million to bring it to fruition.

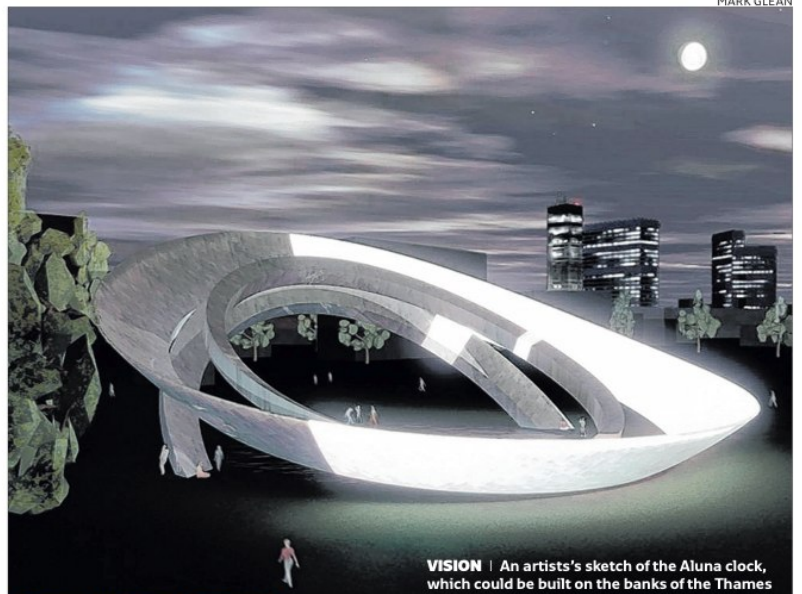
And the “Moon Clock” would take two years to construct. The danger is that an

of the project it is obvious how powerful and iconic it will be,” she says. “It is essential to maintain the momentum and turn an excellent concept into reality on the ground.”

Apart from being a seminal achievement in both environmental and scientific terms, the lunar clock promises to be a driver for the regeneration of the lower Lee Valley by creating jobs and bringing in tourist income.

The local community would be encouraged to participate in the project by recycling the glass that would be used to build the three rings.

For Williams, the most powerful aspect of the clock is that it reawakens our awareness of the moon as a timekeeper. David Rooney,



MARK GLEAN

VISION | An artists' sketch of the Aluna clock, which could be built on the banks of the Thames

LONDON'S LUNAR VIEWS

www.crescentmoon-watch.org will point you to the first crescent moon of the month. **The Royal Observatory in Greenwich** runs evenings where you can

use the telescope to view the moon. Next sessions are 2 and 3 November. A new 120-seat planetarium will be ready at the observatory in May as part of a £15 million

redevelopment. See **www.rog.nmm.ac.uk** **Hampstead Observatory** is open Friday and Saturday evenings. Entrance is free. **www.hampsteadscience.ac.uk**

The London Planetarium in Marglebone has closed due to lack of demand and will re-open as the London Auditorium, with shows exploring celebrity culture.

ALUNA FACTS

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

Log on to **www.aluna-time.org** to sign the petition, write a message of support and register for updates.

Individuals can donate via PayPal on the website and the project is also looking for corporate sponsors: **www.alunatime.org/html/sponsors.htm**

HOW DOES ALUNA WORK?

Aluna will have three huge concentric and translucent glass rings, which will track and display three lunar cycles by means of thousands of light emitting diodes – white at night and coloured during the day.

The three cycles are the wax and wane of the lunar phase (which takes 29.5 days), the ebb and flow of the tides, and the rise and set of the lunar day (24hrs and 50 mins).

Energy generated from the Thames' tidal waters will power the clock, a Visitors' Centre and nearby homes and businesses.

unhealthy and dysfunctional relationship with time,” he says. “We need to reconnect with those other rhythms. We have lost the idea of natural time and the art of changing gears and slowing down.”

“Aluna is a call to arms against the tyranny of the digital clock.”

Williams and her team are currently seeking development funding in order to get their feasibility studies underway and, if they can secure the money, they need, London will have Aluna in good time for 2012.

“When London is looking at the moon, half the world is looking at it with us,” says Williams.

“All the different cultures coming to London will relate to Aluna. The Olympics is all about tiny fractions of a second, but Aluna will be a timepiece showing the opposite end of time – big, slow time.”

Meanwhile, the woman who could go down in history as the brains behind a modern London monument is forced to keep herself going by doing graphic design, dressing shop windows, hiring herself out as a session violinist and cleaning other people's houses.

“ We have lost the idea of natural time. This is a call to arms against the tyranny of the digital clock”

CARL HONORÉ, AUTHOR



GRAND DESIGN | The sculpture would be 40m wide

lighting up of three huge glass rings.

One of the rings will reflect the waxing and waning of the moon, another will point to where the moon is at any given point in the day, while the third will reflect the state of the tide.

Initial discussions have been held with Lee Valley Regional Park Authority about building the sculpture at a site that they own next to the East India Dock Basin, which is near both

other world capital will beat London to the punch. With news of the project spreading fast, cities in five continents are threatening to overtake us in the race to secure the financial backing and support needed to give the green light to what could turn out to be a World Heritage Site.

London's deputy mayor, Nicky Gavron, a passionate Aluna supporter, believes that it would be “dreadful” if another city got there first. “Once you see the scale

curator of time at the Greenwich Maritime Museum, believes that the “exquisite” Aluna clock will also help us spiritually by encouraging us to pause, reflect and ask ourselves questions about “how our actions and inventions and hopes and fears sit in a long time and a big space”.

For Carl Honoré, bestselling author of *In Praise of Slow*, the clock will help our speedaholic culture decelerate. “We have developed an increasingly neurotic,

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