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VR-EP Virtual Reality – Empathy Platform, Dementia Sufferers Design tool, David Burgher Galashiels

VR-EP Virtual Reality – Empathy Platform

3 Dec 2020

Design tool for dementia sufferers

Borders Architect Leaves Practice To Advance Development Of Pioneering Dementia Technology

Galashiels, Thursday 3rd December 2020: One of the Directors of the Borders' leading architectural practice is stepping down after 21 years to continue the development of an innovative technology created to improve the quality of life for people living with dementia.

David Burgher:

David Burgher, a director of award-winning architectural practice Aitken Turnbull, based in Galashiels' Bridge Place, is leaving the firm to focus his efforts on further developing this pioneering design tool – VR-EP (Virtual Reality – Empathy Platform) which allows architects and designers to enhance the environments and living spaces for dementia sufferers.

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Current estimates suggest there are 50 million people globally and 90,000 people in Scotland living with the condition and David's aim is to make Scotland the most dementia-inclusive country in the world.

People with dementia can experience varying levels of impaired memory, sight and hearing impairment, and cognitive challenges.

The VR-EP (Virtual Reality – Empathy Platform) uses smart technology and bespoke software to enable people to have a tangible experience of how physical spaces can feel to someone living with dementia and brings a new understanding of how dementia affects not only those who live with it, but their families, friends and carers.

David comments;

"It was a wrench to be leaving Aitken Turnbull after 21 years – a practice that has been part of the Borders community for well over 130 years. However, the more I researched the devastating impact living with dementia has on individuals and their families, the more I realised that addressing issues around living environment and space needed a full-time focus.

I studied architecture because I was interested in how the built environment influences how we live. It has a significant role to play in supporting people to live well with dementia, especially when a person experiences visuospatial difficulties and where changes to an environment can compensate in part for reduced sensory, cognitive and motor ability. Designing with empathy produces the best environments, so being able to understand what someone experiences with dementia is crucial in developing enabling places."

The VR-EP platform aids designers to conceptualise dementia-friendly buildings and spaces that can transform people's lives, bringing about significant and lasting change across the nation and setting an example to the rest of the world of how people with dementia can be supported.

It is a system which can deliver real-time comprehension and empathy to a wide-reaching audience and with the advent of shared VR, overcomes current challenges of social distancing.

Recent international investment has given David the opportunity to work on VR-EP as an independent business, whilst maintaining the close relationship with Aitken Turnbull where the concept originally emerged.

Alasdair Rankin, Managing Director of Aitken Turnbull comments;

"David has been working on developing VR-EP for quite some time and it got to the point where he felt he needed to devote his energies full time to take the platform to the next level.

He has been an integral part of Aitken Turnbull's evolution for the past two decades and is renowned across the Borders and beyond for his visionary approach to his profession. He's been a fantastic business partner and played a critical role in making Aitken Turnbull, a true Borders' success story."

VR-EP Virtual Reality – Empathy Platform image / information received 031220

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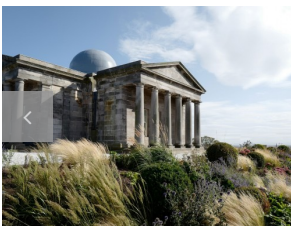Comments / photos for the *VR-EP Virtual Reality – Empathy Platform* page welcome

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