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Realise your dreams

By Andrea Watson

TV'S property guru Melissa Porter is this year's face for Architect in the House – a scheme where ordinary people can get a top architect round to their home.

The fundraising initiative, run by Shelter, the charity for the homeless, and the Royal Institute for British Architects (Riba), gives people the chance to enjoy their dream home with a clear conscience, knowing they are also helping the homeless.

We often know our homes need changes but how to start and what will it cost? It can be daunting to take the plunge and many of us simply never get around to it.

Ms Porter, known for presenting TV shows such as Put Your Money Where Your House Is, says architects can help homeowners unlock hidden potential in their properties – important to anyone worried about falling property values.

Despite a rather high-flying image, most architects are ordinary professionals who work on a range of smaller-scale building projects, from extensions and loft conversions to new-build



What the scheme can do

Help you go green

Your architect can advise on the most up-to-date 'green' materials and technology, which will reduce your carbon footprint and fuel costs.

Save space

Architects can advise on loft conversions or basement excavations, and also provide ideas on changing the layout of your home to make more space.

Improve lighting

Find out about fitting a skylight, adding windows or installing light tubes in basement areas to create an impression of natural light.

IMPRESSIVE: Lyneham Coombe in Devon by Webster Sheryn, who will be taking part in this year's Architect in the House. Left: Melissa Porter

projects. Ms Porter said: "Many people think architects are only for the rich and famous, but Architect in the House is a fantastic way to show how we can all benefit from their

advice. The high property prices of today mean many people cannot afford to move, but a little help from an architect could help you create more space, add value to your

home and allow you to enjoy it for years to come."

She added: "I've met lots of people who can't afford to move, but are desperate for more space to accommodate growing families. Speak to an architect about altering your home to suit your changing needs, so you can continue living there happily for years."

Homeowners who can sign up for the scheme from Sunday get to discuss design changes to their home with a top Riba architect, subject to availability in their area.

The architects give their time for free to offer hour-long consultations to the public in return for a £40 suggested donation to Shelter.

Adam Sampson, chief executive of Shelter, said: "Many of us take pleasure in improving our homes, but sadly, many children across Britain are homeless or trapped in temporary accommodation, squalid or overcrowded housing.

"Architect in the House is a great way for homeowners to get some expert advice on making the most of their property, while helping thousands in housing need."

INFORMATION:

For a guide on the scheme and to sign up from Sunday visit www.architectinthehouse.org.uk