

# Rosliston

A physical activity centre for the National Forest



**A £1.5m showcase physical activity centre has been developed within the National Forest at Rosliston, to enhance the local communities' opportunities for engaging in physical activity in the low cost, accessible and restorative natural environment. The centre, with all the activities it offers, combined with luxury all-access log cabins, offers the perfect setting for education and training for all. Innovation has been the key to engaging a wide spectrum of visitors and novel ideas are continually being tested to increase physical activity levels. New activities range from laser combat and climbing walls to cycling proficiency and 'lads and dads' events.**

## objectives

- To develop Rosliston Forestry Centre as **the** physical activity centre for the National Forest, attracting the whole of the surrounding area.
- To encourage physical activity within the local community, whether independently, in a group, in the community or at the Forestry Centre.
- To help reduce barriers to physical exercise by increasing access, outreach services, information provision and inter-agency partnership working.
- To develop Rosliston Forestry Centre as a useful community facility.

## actions

- Provision of a physical activity facility which offers opportunities for led and independent participation in walking, cycling, environmental and conservation activity, and formal and natural play.
- Redevelopment of an agricultural barn and units into activity and retail areas.
- Provision of changing and toilet facilities, a youth room, a climbing wall, all access play equipment, environmental works centre and workshop, surfaced cycle tracks and events arena.
- Development of cultural and activity zones around the 64 hectare site.
- Provision of three luxury multi-berth fully accessible log cabins for use by schools, disabled groups and working holiday groups.
- The use of sustainable energy, through a Woodfuel heating system for the site.
- Delivery of an outreach programme for community engagement in physical activities, with professional development officers and leaders to mentor and train people to undertake vocational and non-vocational training.

## achievements

- Inspiring natural play with sensory stimulation, imagination, and challenges -such as the perception of risk, height and the feeling of being unsupervised.
- Running weekly walking groups for men and women from the Asian community.
- Inspiring Cultural Sculpture: young people from the Burton Caribbean Association created a breakdance sculpture following a workshop event, and the local Chinese Association produced a sculpture for the year of the pig. Events like this have led to a sense of ownership by young people and resulted in demand for activities like night hiking, archery and laser combat.
- Engaging children having problems in mainstream education through falconry.
- Establishing the annual Get Active Inter-schools Orienteering Competition.
- Working with Granville Community School, which achieved Specialist Sports College status focussing on outdoor pursuits delivered at the Forestry Centre.

## background

The Rosliston Forestry Centre is the oldest Forestry Commission site in the National Forest having been established in 1995. The site is 64ha in size and is a partnership between the Forestry Commission, the District Council and the National Forest. Aurora Country Developments Ltd are contracted to manage the site and the activities.

Embracing 200 square miles of the Midlands, the National Forest is situated in the heart of England across parts of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire. It is transforming the landscape with the aim of linking the two ancient Forests of Charnwood on its Eastern fringe with Needwood Forest to its West. Within its boundary are miles of rolling farmland and a former coalfield which was in desperate need of regeneration.

The goal for the National Forest is to increase woodland cover to about a third of all the land within its boundary. This is now well under way with woodland cover having increased from around 6% in 1991 to more than 17% in 2006. This has made large swathes of countryside more accessible for local people and visitors with 90% of woodland sites open to all, for exploration and enjoyment. Increasing numbers of people are relishing this new public access in ever-changing surroundings and finding a host of attractions and activities to enjoy - all to the benefit of the local economy.

## quotes

"It was wicked", "never done this before", "it gave me a buzz", "I loved it!"  
14 year olds' comments on the first residential weekend, March 2007. Wilnecote Youth Centre, Tamworth.

"A lady who came cycling last week for the first time in 47 years, came back again today and hired a bike - she said she had really enjoyed it and felt fantastic and was definitely coming again on Friday!!!" Debbie Chesterman, Rosliston Forest Centre.

## partners

National Forest  
South Derbyshire District  
Council

## funding

Total £1.5 million

Active England  
(Sport England/Big Lottery)  
Derbyshire & District Economic  
Partnership (RDA)  
Forestry Commission

## lessons learnt

- If you are looking to reach target groups go directly to established groups for guidance.
- Working with local organisations and companies enabled efficiencies in putting on activities for schools and community groups.
- You need to think about the practicalities of parents when you organise children's activities i.e. whole day events.
- You need to pace yourself, and not try and do too much for too many too soon!