

Dalby Visitor Centre

Forestry Commission – North York Moors District
100,000 visitors feel the heat



Dalby Visitor Centre at the heart of Dalby Forest, North Yorkshire is the Forestry Commissions focal point for actives in the the UK's most wooded National Park. The centre is a totally 'green' build, with timber sourced from the FC's own estate, wind turbine, rainwater harvesting and PV generated electricity. The centre houses, a shop, restaurant, confereence room and exhibition space, opened in April 2007, it receives 100,000 vistors annually. The centre cost £2.6m won the Prime Ministers Better Public Building Award in 2007. The building is currently heated with woodchips from a local supplier using timber harvested from the surrounding woodland .

objectives

- To improve and develop the forest as a regional centre of excellence for sustainable economic activity.
- To create an iconic build that reflects the values and aspirations of the organisation.
- To provide an information site for wood fuel, showing that a sustainable source of fuel can heat an active well used public building.
- To provide an outlet for lower quality wood products such as the estates 1st and 2nd thinnings.

actions

- Commissioning of White Design Ltd, to provide a building that will fulfil there need to diversify and improve the economy of the area and be a sustainable development.
- The site had to have a minima footprint, use FSC and sustainable timber in an innovative way acting as exemplar of what can be accomplished with wood.
- To source a biomass boiler heating system preferably from a British supplier to provide heating and hot water for the building.
- To employ the use of sustainable energy generating technologies including wind turbine, solar panels, photovoltaices and a grey water system.
- Funding to be sourced from Ryedale District Council, Yorkshire Forward and the European Rural Development Fund.

achievements

For local residents:

- The centre employs 6 permanent and 3 seasonal staff directly, and with its conference, training and event hosting facilities has brought new provision to the area.
- The centre has hosted events such as Wildfire Conference 2007 & the finish for the Yorkshire stage of the Tour of Britain Cycle race.
- The wider Dalby site has brought several large-scale music events to the area including concerts by Status Quo and Jools Holland amongst many more.

For the region:

- The building provides a focal point for the FC's recreation activities in North Yorkshire, being within the 5 most visited site in the region, achieving £18k's of Christmas tree sales and over 9000 pupil visits per annum as a measure of this success.
- Winner of The Prime Ministers Better Public Building Award, the building has featured in numerous publications.
- This much-needed destination is worth thousands of pounds in additional tourism spend for the region, plus associated employment and investment.

background

- Dalby Forest is managed by the Forestry Commission and is the largest forest in Yorkshire. It receives around 300,000 visits per year making it a key visitor attraction in Ryedale and the North York Moors National Park. Visitor facilities at Dalby have developed organically over a period of more than 40 years starting with the opening up of the Forest Drive as a through route in 1960, then opening of a 'museum' in Dalby Village, creation of Staindale Lake, toilets, picnic areas and way marked trails.
- Historically facilities at Dalby have been geared to provide for the 'day visitor'. At Cropton forest a few miles to the west however, the area has been developed for 'residential' visitors with an FC managed forest cabin site at Keldy and campsites at Spiers House catering for 80,000 bed nights per year, as well as a number of non-FC outdoor pursuit centres.
- Dalby Forest offers over 8,000 acres of woodland to explore and enjoy. Facilities include play areas; way marked walking and cycling trails for all abilities, orienteering, barbecue and picnic sites, bike hire, visitor centre, restaurant and a courtyard housing craft workshops, offices and a cafe. 'Go Ape' operates a high ropes course next to the visitor centre.
- The building was designed to minimise the impact on the valley and focus upon sustainability both during its construction and operation. One of the main considerations of the design was to minimise the impact on the valley topography. The building is designed to sit lightly in the existing landscape and its orientation along the natural sight lines of the valley minimise its visual impact as well as its physical impact. It is the FC's belief that once the building is no longer required the physical footprint it leaves behind should be negligible.
- Dalby Visitor Centre with its sustainable energy features and systems is educating people on the possibilities of using these new and green technologies in an effort to increase people's awareness of their impact on the environment.

quotes

'The fantastic new Dalby Visitor Centre will have a strong and positive impact on the development of a genuinely sustainable approach to tourism in North Yorkshire. The regeneration at Dalby will offer new businesses and employment opportunities both on site and in nearby market towns and villages.'

Don Stewart, Executive Director of Strategy, Yorkshire Forward

'This magnificent and innovative building delivers important sustainability principles in every fibre, and the use of natural materials, including local timber, ensure that it nestles perfectly into the beautiful wooded valley in which it sits'.

Lord Clark of Windemere, Forestry Commission Chairman

partners

Ryedale DC
North York Moors National
Park Authority

funding

Total

£ 2.6 million

Yorkshire Forward, ERDF Objective 2,
Forestry Commission, Ryedale District
Council, North York Moors National Park
Authority, Yorventure.

lessons learnt

- Ensure any woodfuel heating system is designed in at the planning stage.
- Be aware of funding constraints and limitations/pressures regarding timescale.
- Ensure fuel storage facility is easily accessible to accommodate a full standard delivery load, thereby minimising costs and ensuring maximum range of suppliers.
- Ensure the boiler is sophisticated enough to be able to respond flexibly to variable heat demands.
- Install an accumulator tank to act as heat and hot water buffer store.