

# Innovation Centre

## Project Summary

A new multi-purpose centre with visitor & conference facilities, 'incubator' workshops, and offices for the Forest.

## Background

With the Forest of Mercia Team housed in some run-down, former mining offices, few people knew about the Forest or what it was achieving. What was needed was a place for local people to visit and which would:

- Give the Forest a tangible identity and showcase its work.
- Demonstrate the value of local timber and woodlands.
- Provide a workplace for the team and other partnership organisations.

## The Project

Consultants were appointed to prepare a business plan and identify a site. Chasewater Country Park was chosen – it already had 150,000 visitors, and is located on the route of two long distance footpaths, and close to the A5 and the M6 toll road.

## What has been achieved?

The Innovation Centre has become a thriving business community and a popular visitor centre. It has a conference and training room and a coffee shop for visitors.

The building itself demonstrates how timber can be used successfully in modern construction. Its timber frame forms sweeping internal and external arches, with boards manufactured from recycled waste timber used as the internal covering. Cedar cladding covers the building externally and recycled

newspaper is used as insulation.

The building is highly energy efficient, partly due to its living roof – a summer-flowering quilt of sedum which extends the roof's life by absorbing UV rays.

Next to the modern form of the main building are ten craft workshops, built using traditional green oak frames with wattle and daub walls. Much of the timber used was harvested from local woods. These 'incubator' units are let to a range of small and start-up timber and craft enterprises.



KEY FACTS	
DATES	2000 – 2001
Partners & Funders	Advantage West Midlands, Government Office West Midlands, Staffordshire County Council, Countryside Agency, Forestry Commission
Costs	£1.8m
Size/scale	2 ha site with Forest Centre with capacity for 20 permanent office staff, conference and visitor facilities and 10 workshops for craft related businesses enterprises.