

Press release

24 May 2000

The National Botanic Garden of Wales opens to the public

The National Botanic Garden of Wales opens its doors to the public today and will celebrate with a day of activities for the local community. The Garden will be officially opened later in the Summer.

Occupying 568 acres of land at Llanarthne in Carmarthenshire, the National Botanic Garden of Wales is the first national botanic garden to be established in the United Kingdom for 200 years. Half of the funding for the project has come from the Millennium Commission.

Foster and Partners has designed three buildings at the garden: the Gatehouse that greets visitors at the entrance to the site; the Biomass Energy Centre, which creates clean energy for use within the garden; and the project's centrepiece - the Great Glasshouse. This elliptical steel and glass dome is the largest single-span glasshouse in the world. It provides a habitat for the display and conservation of more than a thousand plant species - many endangered - from Mediterranean climates throughout the world including South Africa, South Western Australia, the Canary Islands, Chile and California.

The building reinvents the glasshouse for the twenty-first century, offering a model of sustainability. The lightweight steel structure is designed to minimise materials and maintenance and maximise light transmission to the plants. The glazing system is designed to channel rainwater into tanks for reuse in irrigation and flushing lavatories. The building's concrete substructure is oriented to provide protection from cold northerly winds and is concealed by a covering of turf. To optimise energy usage, the building's internal environment is monitored by a computer-controlled system, which adjusts the supply of heat and opens glazing panels in the roof to achieve desired levels of temperature, humidity and air movement.

For further information

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