

Blackpool Borough Council

Project: Solaris – Centre for Environmental Excellence

Funding: European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) both regionally and sub-regionally all funding is under the business and ideas priority: Measure 1.2 funding through North West Universities Association Action Plan (Regional) and Measure 1.5 through North and Western Lancashire Priority 1 Action Plan (Sub-Regional).

Good Practice themes demonstrated: Sustainable Development and ICT

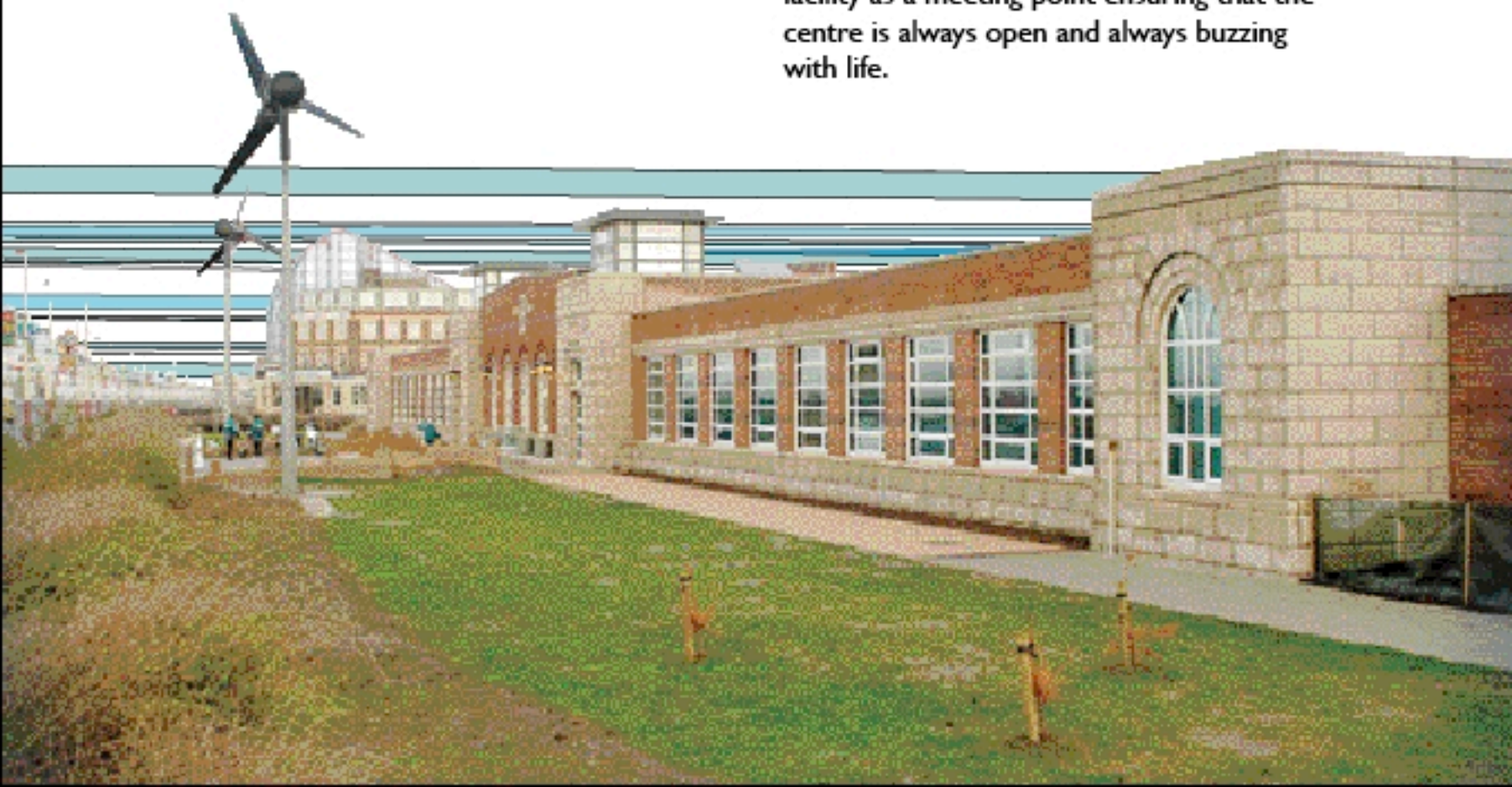
What does the project do?

The aim of the project is to promote the sustainable development message but in a practical way. Solaris is based around transforming the old art-deco Harrowside Solarium on the South Promenade at Blackpool, into a multi-purpose zero-energy resource for the local community. The aim is to lead by example and inspire local people to make real changes that have direct environmental benefits.

Solaris has been an example of a true partnership at work. Many local groups including the Blackpool Environmental Action Team, Blackpool Council and

Lancaster University have been involved in the £2m development of the building, which has also received support from the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and Lottery funding.

Currently on site is an exhibition space, a community café, four environmentally focussed small businesses, office and meeting spaces. Various organisations including Blackpool and Fylde Collage, Lancaster University and local schools use the centre as an educational resource and many voluntary and community groups use the centre as a base. Perhaps the most inspiring thing about Solaris is the number of locals who use the facility as a meeting point ensuring that the centre is always open and always buzzing with life.



What singles the project out as being sustainable?

- Has the second largest array of photovoltaic (solar power) cells currently in the North West (September 2005) - there is also a solar hot water panel that heats the water for the washbasins.
- Collects rain water that not only cleans the solar panels, but is also used in all the lavatories.
- Has its own mini (5.4 KW) combined heat and power plant.
- Uses condensing boilers to help demonstrate their energy efficiency.
- Has under floor heating.
- Has passive ventilation combined with good insulation that keeps the building cool as well as warm in winter.
- Has two 6KW wind turbines.
- Is working towards achieving 0% energy bills.
- Has the capacity to sell spare electrical capacity back to the grid.
- Is working towards achieving the prestigious BREEAM environmental building 'Excellent' rating.
- Works with numerous local groups acting as a community resource.
- Houses four business start-ups who have located to the centre.
- Additionally this is a reuse and conversion of an existing building with a display area in the foyer that has an interactive display aimed at fun ways of educating the visitors on environmental issues.

Project Beneficiaries: The visitors and users of the centre

The business plan for this project had the aim of attracting 20,000 visitors a year. Before the end of the first year the total had reached 60,000. The project has attracted numerous different groups including: local community groups, hotel groups, members of the local community, visitors (to use the café and visit the revolving art exhibitions), Blackpool Environmental Action Team, schools and local businesses.

Visitor comments include "A great delight. Very informative. Makes you realise that we all have to pull together to save the planet" and "Nice to see the old Solarium restored so well" One father fed back that his kids "finally turned off the telly" after visiting the centre.

Further Information:

If you want to find out more about The Solaris Centre and its various activities - why not go and visit? You can find it on the New South Promenade opposite the large mirror ball in Blackpool. Further information can be found on the Blackpool Council web site (although a dedicated site is currently under construction). To hire a room or organise a visit contact Duncan Broadbent (the Centre Manager) on [01253 478026](tel:01253478026).



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GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE NORTH WEST

