

Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

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Report title: Demonstration Building progress report	
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board with a progress report on the opening of the Demonstration Building and the forward programme of events and activities.

2. Background

- 2.1 The purpose of the Demonstration Building is to provide a building, ahead of development at NW Bicester that can demonstrate new construction techniques and technologies to people as well as provide information on energy efficiency and generation, retrofitting schemes and sustainable travel options. The building also provides an early focus for engagement with the community on NW Bicester and the wider Eco Bicester project. It was also very important for the Eco Bicester project team to have a Bicester base, so that the project is accessible to all.
- 2.2 The building opened in May 2011. The temporary permission for the building is now due to expire in December 2012. The building was sponsored by Cassadian Homes (Bicester) Ltd, with a contribution of £15,000 from the Eco Town funding from CLG for the foundation hard standing.

3. The Building in Use

- 3.1 The building was formally opened on Wednesday 25 May 2011 by Tony Baldry MP in attendance of around 100 guests, including local members from Bicester Town Council (BTC), Cherwell District Council (CDC), and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), as well as P3Eco, Cassadian Homes Ltd, and supplier representatives. Local community groups were also invited to the event. The press coverage around the opening was very positive, with 11 different press activities published locally and regionally.
- 3.2 The building is currently manned five days a week between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm by the Eco Bicester Community Liaison officer and P3Estates, a company working in conjunction with P3Eco. Information is being gathered to find out what visitors are looking for when attending the building. This will be used adapt the content of presentational information and display material to meet the requests and needs of visitors. P3Estates is gathering information on people interested in NW Bicester.

- 3.3 Since its opening there have been around 1,100 visitors to the building of all ages and with different interests. The public reaction has been generally positive and is recorded in the visitors' book. Some comments include *'very informative'* and *'a very well thought building demonstrating 21st century ideas'*.
- 3.4 Groups that have already visited are OxCAN (Oxfordshire Climate Change) group, RSL development group and resident's panel, Abingdon Preparatory School, Bicester's Women's institute, Bicester Town Council staff and a small group of CDC's Environmental services team.

4. Future Use of the Building

- 4.1 A programme of events is currently being developed to maximise the potential of the building. The programme will focus on the different aspects of a sustainable lifestyle, looking at energy & water efficiency in the home as well as sustainable transport. A six month rolling programme is being drawn up and it is anticipated that this will continue to evolve based on the levels of interest in the building and the progress of other initiatives in the town and development at NW Bicester.
- 4.2 The programme of events will take into account existing events and different groups' activities. Work is taking place to make sure the programme complements BTC events taking place in Garth Park and events at the Youth Art's Courtyard Centre.
- 4.3 As the building and its information is easily adaptable, there are several groups that will be targeted and encouraged to attend. These included schools, businesses and community voluntary groups. This will be done by adapting the information to meet their interest and their links with the Eco Bicester project.
- 4.4 In August working alongside CDC's Environmental Services, an energy monitor loan scheme for parish councils and community groups will be launched. In the demonstration building local parish councils and community groups will be invited to learn more about the scheme with the possibility of signing up. Also in August, we are looking to support the launch of the A2 Dominion website, where local businesses can sign up to register their interest in getting involved in NW Bicester. A local event also taking place in August is the Bicester Activity Day organised by the Oxfordshire Play Association, aimed at all ages between 0 -18 years. At this event the demonstration building will provide renewable electricity from its solar PV panels to run the Oxford & Cherwell Valley College motor racing simulator.
- 4.5 The full programme is still being developed but as part of the on going programme it is envisaged that an event around solid wall insulation and energy efficiency measures for older properties will take place in the autumn. An event inviting Bicester schools to join the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust Wildlife Watch scheme, which is being supported in Bicester, is being investigated. It is also hoped that an event around solar PV's can take place to provide local residents and businesses with information about the costs and benefits.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board note the positive response to the building to date and support the steps being taken to develop a programme for the building.