

E W Beard helps innovative building to win 'Sustainability' award from the Civic Trust

Innovative construction work by Swindon-based building contractors E W Beard has helped The Kindersley Centre at Sheepdrove Organic Farm, Berkshire, to win a special 'Sustainability' award from the Civic Trust.

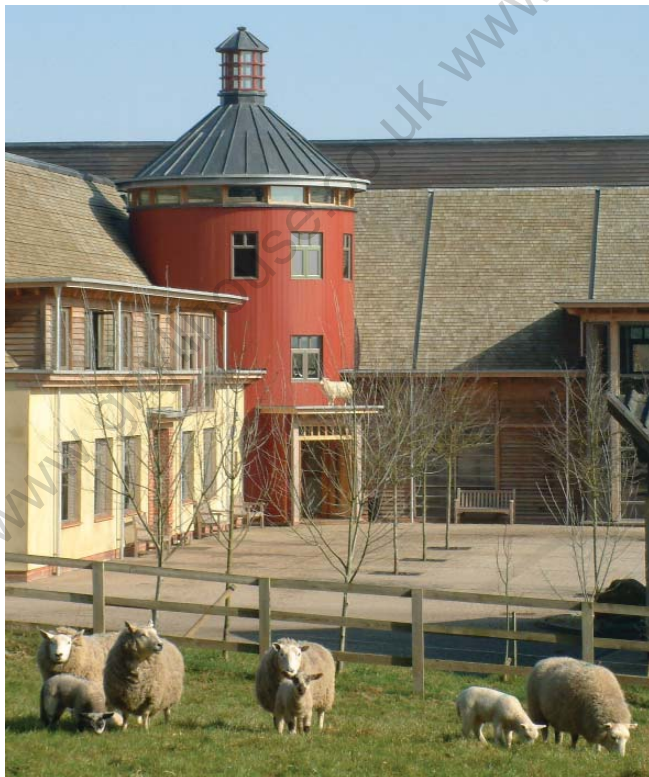
The award - one of only 19 given by the Civic Trust this year - recognises the centre's many eco-friendly features, which include a 450mm-thick rammed chalk wall insulating one side of the £3.6m building.

E W Beard and the structural engineering team maximised the wall's thermal mass by developing a chalk mixture that recycled three tonnes of chalk excavated from the building's foundations. The mixture, which had to be prepared manually because it clogged conventional cement or paddle mixers, was applied in 150mm layers.

The Kindersley Centre is a purpose-built conference environment. Its largest meeting space, the soaring 'Oak Room', features nine timber arches that echo the cruck frame of a medieval long barn. The nine-metre high arches are made from Douglas Fir, and were lifted into place by crane, then bolted together using innovative timber engineering that minimised the need for metal connections. The spruce ply for the ceiling comes from managed forests. Outside, the walls are clad with cedar boarding and the roof tiles are made from cedar shingles.

The ridge of the building incorporates a bespoke full-length roof light, which also forms part of the centre's natural ventilation system.

"This project needed specialist skills and a team approach to



The Kindersley Centre at Sheepdrove Organic Farm, Berkshire, photo by Jason Ball



The 'Oak Room' at The Kindersley Centre, photo by Adam Wilson

problem-solving," said Allan Bland, E W Beard Construction Director.

"Our construction team had to be adaptable and able to step back and think laterally. We also had to work closely with many different trades and suppliers to ensure that each stage of the project kept to schedule.

"We share the delight of the client, architect, structural engineer and the centre's thousands of visitors in the finished result."

Nigel Dyke from the project's architects, Alec French Architects of Bristol, said: "This was a complex and challenging building to both design and build, and we are very pleased with the final quality of work and the contribution E W Beard made to this project."

The Kindersley Centre was commissioned by publishers and environmental campaigners Peter and Juliet Kindersley, who saw its creation as a way of promoting organic farming and sustainability.

The building provides a variety of meeting and study spaces on two floors, and also accommodates an eco-friendly shop, organic kitchen and dining room, and farm offices.

"Our vision was to get people onto the farm to experience natural farming systems at work, all the way from field to plate," said Peter Kindersley. "This spectacular building provides an inspiring meeting space, which helps us to realise that vision." The architects avoided the use of PVC by specifying alternative materials, for example cast iron waste pipes and, for the hand basins, recycled CD laminates. The waterless urinals and rainwater recovery systems minimise water wastage, and the solar panel on the roof reduces reliance on central heating.

The Kindersley Centre was one of 19 buildings to receive main awards in the Civic Trust's 2005 environmental design awards, which attracted 364 entries.

The awards were allocated by a national panel of experts from the fields of architecture, planning, landscape design, conservation, access and sustainability.

E W Beard (www.ewbeard.co.uk) operates throughout central southern England and undertakes construction projects worth up to £6m. Established in 1892, the company has offices in Swindon and Oxford and employs more than 160 people. E W Beard's Managing Director, Mark Beard, is the Oxfordshire Businessman of the Year 2004.