

27 February 2007

Greenest building ever constructed in UK taking root at Thorpe Park

Innovate Office Leeds, a 45,000 square foot office building currently nearing completion at Thorpe Park Leeds, has just been awarded the highest ever BREEAM assessment achieved by any building in the UK.

Innovate Office, a joint venture between Innovate Property Ltd and Yorkshire Forward, will provide a complete managed office solution to small and medium sized businesses at the heart of Thorpe Park, the country's third largest business park.

For over a decade, BRE's Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) has been used to assess the environmental performance of both new and existing buildings. It is regarded by the UK's construction and property sectors as the measure of best practice in environmental design and management. The Innovate Office project rated 87.55 % – the highest ever given to a building of any kind in the UK. The new DEFRA building in London, previously the highest rated office building in the country, has been significantly outpaced by Innovate Office.

The building was awarded maximum marks in a number of categories, including the management of the building during the construction process as well as on-going management once it is completed, and ensuring the health and well-being of the occupants of the buildings.

"We were stepping into the unknown when we initiated the development of Innovate Office Leeds," said Stephen Dargavel, Managing Director of Innovate Property Ltd. "However, the huge endorsement by the Building Research Establishment – together with some great interest from potential occupiers – has reinforced our vision of combining cutting edge environmental considerations with a business environment that is second to none."

Innovate Office Leeds used a number of construction options very different to traditional construction methods. Unusual for most office buildings of this size, the building is almost entirely constructed from pre-cast concrete. The concrete – itself made from recycled aggregate and pulverised fuel ash – uses significantly less resources and energy than traditional steel-framed structures, and it allows the use of other innovative processes, such as Termodeck, passive cooling, rooftop landscaping and plantings, vacuum drainage and combined heat and power units, designed to make the building more energy efficient.

Innovate Office Leeds has also been designed to provide good air movement throughout the building to 'suck' out heat naturally and to aid with increased evaporation rates which also has a cooling effect. Additionally, there will be a rainwater recycling facility which will significantly reduce the amount of external water needed by the advanced heating and cooling system. The rainwater recycling plant makes up part of the 'green roof' concept of the

building. The roof will be heavily landscaped – not only will it look pretty, but it will also help with the thermal performance of the building through stopping heat loss in the winter and heat gain in the summer. It will also help soundproof the building as well as increase the air quality throughout Innovate Office.

Although the building was designed to greatly reduce its environmental impact, its primary purpose is to offer a managed office environment for small and medium sized businesses. Office space is available within the building, from 200 sq ft through to 10,000 sq ft. The space is flexible to grow with occupiers, starting at single person offices - perfect for sole traders or start ups, in a professional environment for one person – through to open plan offices on an entire floor of the Innovate Office Leeds building.

Innovate already operates a highly successful 34,000 sq ft managed office at Nottingham's Sherwood Park.

“Following our success at Nottingham, we analysed the potential markets for another managed office building and Leeds – with its booming economy and demand for offices – came top of the list. The Thorpe Park Business Park is an ideal location for Innovate's customers due to its excellent access to both Leeds city centre and the motorway network. The emphasis that Thorpe Park place on environmental factors, landscaping and ensuring an excellent working environment fit perfectly with our green vision,” said Mr Dargavel.

The construction of Innovate Green was managed by GMI Property Company. GMI Construction Group plc was the main building contractor; Mirus Management Services provided Project Management and Cost Consultancy Services required to keep the development on time and on budget. The architects for the Innovate Green project are led by Richard Roberts, Director of Rio Architects. Providing integrated structural, environmental and building services engineering support to Rio and the rest of the team were Mike Shaw and Doug King from King Shaw Associates. Yorkshire Forward worked with Innovate to develop an enhanced specification for the building and funded a proportion of the cost difference between traditional construction methods and the sustainable methods used in Innovate Green.

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