

The ultimate green home: the WWF's new headquarters.

Sandwiched between an incredibly ugly shopping centre and a busy main road, the environmentalist Sir David Attenborough, no less, is planting a tree and declaring: 'Today is a historic day.' He really means it.

Maybe our children's future will be an overheated, desert-like world, but if it's not, it will probably look a lot like this. The new, highly environmentally friendly home of the World Wide Fund for Nature, a hemispherical glass tube standing above a council car park, was officially opened today, watched by a small but enthusiastic crowd. **(1)**.....

Known as the 'Living Planet Centre', it has jumping panda animations that greet visitors to its WWF Experience, where schoolchildren can interact with Ocean, River, Forest and Wildlife Zones. Since the mid-20th century, many of the ideas behind humanity's attempts to protect animals and the natural world have been started by the WWF. **(2)**.....

'The World Wide Fund for Nature is one of the great hopes for the world,' Sir David Attenborough said. 'This building enshrines that, and advertises it to the world.' The concrete is all recycled, as is the carpet and even most of the computer equipment, and there are many solar energy panels. **(3)**..... In addition, new habitats and plant species have been installed around the gardens, while indoors a home has been found for three tall trees.

The sense of total calm inside, from the high curved ceilings to the plants and trees, is all the more remarkable for the building's urban location. It has been built between a canal and a small area of woods listed as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. **(4)**..... The contrast gives us an idea of what might just be possible in the future.

The WWF was set up in 1961. The organisation originally fought to protect individual species, such as the Arabian oryx, from extinction. Eventually, the focus moved from individual species to ecosystems: all the living things in one area and

the way they affect each other. Sir David, who is an ambassador for the WWF, said: 'Now, it's not just individual ecosystems. Now the change is to a global approach. (5)..... That is because the planet is one vast ecosystem. The WWF has been the leader in changing everyone's attitudes towards nature.'

Sir David is clear about the task ahead, and more importantly, unlike many environmentalists, he believes it is not too late to make a difference. 'You can't turn the clock back, of course. (6)..... But we can slow down the rate at which the numbers are increasing, we can cut down the carbon we put in the atmosphere,' he said. 'It's never happened before that the whole world has come together and made a decision. To go as far as we have done to reduce carbon is an impressive achievement. But you cannot have unlimited growth in a limited situation. You can't expand infinitely in a finite planet.'

A Even so, it remains in an ugly corner of a fairly unattractive town centre.

B So even if you aren't particularly concerned about the environment, as energy costs rise you'll want to save money on fuel bills.

C Other such features include extensive glass to increase natural light, natural ventilation, rainwater in the toilets, and heat pumps that bring warm air up from 200 metres below.

D It is hoped their new home will be a living example of that.

E That means you can't put back forests that are gone, not for a century, and the population size is not going to shrink.

F If you want to do something, you have to persuade people of the world not to pollute.

G If humanity is to survive, they must have been thinking, it will do so living in buildings of this kind.