

# Grand opening for city's smallest hotel

THE smallest hotel in Manchester has opened at The Trafford Centre – and this time it's strictly for the bugs!

The insect hotel is the brainchild of students from Partington Primary School, who won a World Environment Day competition to design an outdoor classroom.

The competition invited local schools to submit their ideas for a green space in Wildespool Woods, from which classes could get up close and personal with nature's finest beasties.

Shortlisted ideas included bee hives, bird watching stations and deluxe bat boxes.

But the winning plans featured a novel hotel built just for bugs, made of an open-air cabinet filled with nesting materials such as old slippers, cardboard, and even a deflated football.

The winner's prize was to have their ideas turned into reality – and Trafford Centre landscaping experts set about building the smallest new hotel in the north-west. The young architects were then treated to a special picnic in the woods as their creation was unveiled – to the clear delight of nearby dragonflies.

Gordon McKinnon, director of operations at The Trafford Centre, explained: "We wanted to mark our commitment to becoming the greenest shopping centre in the UK by providing an outdoor classroom for local schoolchildren which would really take them into the heart of nature. The standard of entries was very high indeed, but the winning school showed imagination and a sense of fun, as well as being sustainable and non-harmful to our protected woodland.

"Our aim was to raise awareness of the environment that exists all around us in the most unlikely of places, and to engage our young people with British insects and woodland animals. The huge interest we had from schools is a really positive reflection of how involved today's younger generation seem to be with green issues, and that's a testament to their parents and teachers.

"Our Community Development officer is now working with teachers to create teaching materials for the site, which means many more students will have the opportunity to go green whilst they enjoy their school trip to the Centre."

The winning class of 5MR also suggested a recycled work area made of logs, a dipping station to study pondlife, and a flower hunt using indigenous species like sorrel, wild garlic and vetch.

The hotel has already welcomed its first winged guests, Trafford Centre gardeners confirmed – although they drew the line at adding a gymnasium and swimming pool facilities for the Centre's smallest fans...

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