

## Project Profile

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### Chafford Gorges Nature Park Visitor Centre

Location Chafford Hundred  
Essex  
Postcode RM16 7RG



Project An innovative and eco-friendly visitor centre at the Chafford Gorges Nature Park  
 Client Essex Wildlife Trust  
 Architect Laurie Wood Architects, Colchester  
 Roofing Arnold Roofing, Clacton-on-Sea  
 Type Public building (visitor centre)  
 Category Newbuild  
 Element Roof  
 Product SSQ First Del Carmen<sup>®</sup> Blue-black roofing slate  
 Supplier Arnold Roofing, Clacton-on-Sea  
 Scope c.7,500 roofing slates

Comment The visitor centre at Essex Wildlife Trust's Chafford Gorges Nature Park is one of seven operated by one of the largest county-wildlife trusts in the UK. The centre overlooks Warren Gorge – 200 acres of tranquillity surrounded by a new, 6,500-home Thames Gateway development close to the hustle-and-bustle of Essex's Lakeside shopping centre – and plays a key role in realising 'biophilia', the instinctive bond that people have with nature.

The new visitor centre accommodates a range of visitor and operations facilities in a building that's in harmony with both its location and purpose, its curved design helping to shield the houses from the visitors gaze, focusing their attention into the gorge and its wildlife.

The concave roof is dictated by the design of the building: the front and rear elevations follow parallel curves that result in a single-pitch roof with an eaves length of 21m rising at a gentle 25° slope to a 29m long ridge. The design philosophy also influenced the choice of roofing material: slate – both a natural material and one that could be cut to shape to follow the roof's curvature. Around 7,000 SSQ First Del Carmen<sup>®</sup> Blue-black roofing slates were hook-fixed – each being trimmed so that the 116 slates per course gradually increased from 180mm wide at the eaves to 250mm at the ridge.