

David Bellamy's visit to Dolguog Estates in Machynlleth, Powys.

The park kindly provided accommodation for the group. David wanted to preview the many environmental initiatives which had led to the Gold conservation awards for owners Richard and Diana Rhodes.

Dolguog Estate has twenty luxury timber-built lodges in its grounds which overlook the picturesque Dyfi Valley and beyond to the Snowdonia National Park. Also within its idyllic setting is a stretch of the River Dulas, the banks of which Richard and Diana have carefully restored to provide habitats for a host of wildlife, including otters.

The jewel of Dolguog Estates, however, is Grandma's Garden - nine acres of landscaped grounds which are now being restored to their former natural glory with the aid of a £10,000 European regeneration grant. The garden contains over fifty specimens of trees, including yews which are more than 400 years old - plus a delightful Victorian garden featuring many familiar and less common plants, trees and shrubs.



But when Richard and Diana bought the property 18 years ago, the grounds had been badly neglected, the couple have invested considerable time, effort and enterprise in restoration work. Its many features now also include a children's enchanted garden, more than 150 azalea bushes producing spectacular floral displays, and a collection of strategically sited statues and other works of art which reflect the garden's theme of 'global peace and understanding'.

David Bellamy with Richard and Diana Rhodes sat under the Willow arbor

During his visit, Professor Bellamy officially dedicated the garden, which has been specially designed by Diana Rhodes, herself a wheelchair user, to be easily accessible by those with disabilities.

David Bellamy also praised the eco-friendly house which Richard and Diana have built for themselves at Dolguog. Using an underground geo-thermal system and advanced solar panel technology, their home generates 97 percent of its own energy, and has zero carbon emissions.

Richard Rhodes, who is the Director of the Mid Wales branch of BH&HPA, told David Bellamy that by managing their business in the most environmentally friendly way possible, they hoped to inspire others to adopt conservation as a way of life - and that many holidaymakers take a keen interest in their work, and the ways in which they too can help protect the natural world.

As well as the holiday park, Dolguog Estates has within its grounds the 12 bedroom Plas Dolguog Hotel, the origins of which can be traced back to the Sixth Century. The hotel is run by Anthony and Tina Rhodes.