

Forth Valley Sensory Centre

A tin man, a giant glockenspiel, fountain and beautiful plants are just some of the delights in store for visitors to the Forth Valley Sensory Centre's new garden.

The sensory garden welcomed its first visitors in the spring when the highly successful Centre - the first of its kind in the UK and one of the most advanced in the world - celebrated its official opening.

Algy, the tin man who extends the hand of friendship to visitors at the entrance to the garden, was designed, built and donated to the centre by Falkirk firm A.L. Gordon Engineering.

Three apprentices, Steven Kidd, Andrew Tuplin and Chris Smart, overseen by their training officers John Cruickshanks and Thomas Binnie, created Algy to look and sound great, down to his steel shoelaces, and produce a variety of intriguing sounds when tapped with a mallet.

The garden, designed by Falkirk Council's Development Service and constructed by the Council's Commercial Services, is intended to provide stimulation and enjoyment through touch, sound and scent.

The scented and leafy planting was carefully chosen to offer a range of sensations to people whose vision is limited.

Since the £1.5 million Centre opened for business in Camelon, Falkirk, last summer it has had welcomed well over 8000 visitors who came to use everything from clinical and social work services to training and social facilities.

The unique £1.5 million Centre was built by the Forth Valley Sensory Centre Trust - partnership of Falkirk Council, the Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) Scotland, Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils and NHS Forth Valley with support from the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID), the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, and service users.