



UK-based architect Barton Willmore has won the international competition to create a "futuristic" botanical garden - the King Abdullah International Gardens (KAIG) - in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The competition to design the 160 ha, US\$ 170 million KAIG was won by a joint venture, which included civil engineers Buro Happold, London's Natural History Museum, the UK's award winning Eden Project and specialist sustainable development design group, Emery.

The centrepiece of Barton Willmore's proposal is an 8 ha "paleobotanic" building, formed as two interlocking crescents that accommodate a sequence of controlled environments.

According to Barton Willmore spokesman, each environment will allow visitors to "travel through time" by recreating "pre-existing ecosystems based on actual environments which have occurred on this precise piece of land through time."

The eco-friendly, "sustainable" scheme also includes an open air Wadi garden - the central space enclosed by the crescent - and an enclosed Garden of Choices - an educational space that "explores and explains the choices we are still able to make and which have the potential to preserve the environment of our planet for future generations".

Commenting on the scheme project director Nick Sweet said, "In this day and age, we are all, to one degree or another, fearful of the rapid changes in climate change occurring in the world and many are uncertain about how to respond.

"We wanted to use the scheme to tell the story of a single piece of land through time. It might be a desert now, but there was a time when rivers flowed here and forests grew."

