



The Gateway Centre

ANTRIM



CENTRE OF ATTENTION

QMAC CONSTRUCTION LTD COMPLETES GATEWAY PROJECT ON THE BANKS OF LOUGH NEAGH...

The Gateway Centre on Antrim's Lough Shore is set to become a popular local landmark. Portal to the tranquil, unspoilt natural beauty of Lough Neagh, it forms an integral part of Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council's strategy to boost tourism in the area. With a stunning waterside setting, the responsibility of realising the council's vision for their new visitor centre fell to QMAC Construction Ltd. Established in 1982 and now one of the country's leading construction companies, QMAC took the reins of the project, partly funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Lough Neagh Landscape Partnership, in September 2018. "The scope of the works was the development and building of the Gateway project," explained QMAC Construction's Contracts Manager, Stephen McCaffrey. "The employer novated the design team - namely architects, building services engineer, structural and civil engineers to us as

main contractor immediately upon award of contract."

The £2.3m Gateway Centre is a multi-faceted building, combining a ground floor exhibition/conference room, provision for an activity space and watersports franchise, shower and toilet facilities for the general public, and a new home for the Lough Neagh Rescue. The first floor boasts The Boathouse Restaurant, with an outdoor terrace and stunning views across the Lough.

In short, this would be no straightforward build. "There was a lot of detailed design associated with the building," added Stephen. "The diversity required the use of numerous sub-contractors and placed considerable importance on coordination meetings."

QMAC coordinated a combination of materials (and sub-contractors) to bring the design vision to life... Designed by one of Northern Ireland's longest-standing architectural firms RPP Architects Ltd, the Gateway

PROJECT TEAM...

Client: Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council

Main Contractor: QMAC Construction Ltd

Architect: RPP Architects

PM & QS: Faithful+Gould

Structural and Civil Engineer: Doran Consulting

M&E Consultants: Williams & Shaw Ltd

Electrical: W.K.K. Electrical

Mechanical: McCorley Mechanical & Electrical


QMAC
Construction Ltd

QMAC Construction Ltd
Coolmaghera, 156 Poweroy Road,
Dungannon BT70 2TY
T: +44 (0)28 8776 7088
www.qmacconstruction.com



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« Centre is a striking addition to this lough-side landscape. One of many eye-catching features is the stone panelling that adorns parts of the building's exterior. "The black slate is a natural stone from CED Stone in Omagh," said QMAC's Stephen McCaffrey. "It's a panelling system of interlocking tiers that fit seamlessly together. A dark natural slate, the hint of rust colour gives it a rustic feel." The cladding board is another impressive facet of the building. "The board is from the Material Exterior Range by ABET Laminati. Supplied by SIG Plc, it's solid, compact, weather-resistant, and long lasting." When you have spectacular views across Lough Neagh it almost demands that you make use of natural light when possible. The conference/exhibition room is a case in point. A contemporary space (that will be available for external hire), it is one of numerous areas where glazing is naturally the material of choice. "As there were a lot of glazing aspects to the building, it also required a lot of design coordination meetings. That collaboration between main contractor, design teams and subcontractor was important to ensure a successful project."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE ENSURED QMAC CONSTRUCTION COULD OVERCOME CHALLENGES...

Renowned for their positive, proactive, and solution-based approach, QMAC Construction Ltd was the ideal choice for a complex build like The Gateway. With a portfolio that includes retail, commercial, industrial, healthcare, education, housing cultural/ community, and of course leisure, the County Tyrone-based company has seen it, done it, and has the T-shirt to prove it. In addition to the main building itself, the Gateway project involved substantial work on a restructured car park area. Having fulfilled a similar remit in a previous works at the Donaghmore Sports Hub, it was a task QMAC undertook with their trademark professionalism. Not that everything was a complete walk in the park. "As with all projects there were challenges," Stephen admitted. "Placing a sewage pumping station approximately 4m below ground level in high water table levels close to the Lough was

anything but straightforward. "It involved the installation of a cofferdam, pumps and settlement measures to deal with the incoming groundwater." Another area requiring food for thought was the simultaneous restaurant and kitchen fit-out. "We had to undertake the fit-out of the kitchen towards the end of the scheme and these works ran concurrently with the fit-out of the [Boathouse] restaurant on the first floor that was undertaken by the franchise. It was another occasion when regular collaborative meetings between all parties was the key."

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GATEWAY GOES GREEN

A HIGH SPECIFICATION BUILD THAT ALWAYS HAD ONE EYE ON ITS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT...

The Gateway Centre was a high-specification build, from innovative MET to high-tech CCTV, extensive balcony areas to the roof's Solar Photovoltaic system. As with all modern builds, it also placed a great emphasis on energy efficiency and generating the sort of reduced carbon footprint that might get a thumbs up from eco-warrior Greta Thunberg. Efficiency and cost-effectiveness were rightly high on the agenda, but so too was aesthetics. Sure, no-one would set out to construct an ugly building, but let's face it - when the location is this beautiful there's a little added pressure. "Everything had to be factored in, and that certainly included how the finished building, car park etc would enhance and not detract from the surrounding area. QMAC Construction has been delivering

Generating the sort of reduced carbon footprint that might get a thumbs up from eco-warrior Greta Thunberg.

projects for nearly three decades and the quality of finish and exceeding the client's expectations continue to be our aim."

QMAC has achieved a success. Mayor of Antrim & Newtownabbey borough Council, Alderman John Smyth said: "Lough Neagh has been one of our borough's under-utilized assets and the purpose of this development [The Gateway Centre] is to attract more visitors and residents to the

Lough. I am delighted to see the progress that has been made." The result of QMAC's approach and delivery is a Gateway Centre that forms an outstanding centrepiece for the council's ongoing work.



QMAC's commitment to the environment

'All projects are managed within the maximum level of consideration for the environment. We acknowledge that our business impacts on the environment, so we are totally committed to operating in an environmentally sustainable manner.'