

Sir Harold Hillier Gardens Visitor and Education Centre

Property Services

SCALA Civic Building of the Year Award 2004



Location:
Romsey, Hampshire

Client:
Hampshire County Council

Value: £3.5 million

Completed: 2003

Specialist teams:
Architect/ Mechanical and Electrical/ Quantity Surveyor:
HCC Property Services
Structural Engineers: Price & Myers
Landscape Architects:
Colvin and Moggridge

The Sir Harold Hillier Gardens in Romsey has one of the greatest collections of hardy trees and shrubs in the world. It is an important centre for education and conservation, enjoyed by some 90,000 visitors a year.

HCC Property Services was asked to design a Visitor and Education Centre. The brief for the project was to provide new facilities for exhibitions and educational activities, and to improve accessibility to the Gardens. The project was unique, aiming for increased visitor numbers, but also requiring a design sensitive to the expansion and development of the garden itself. From these objectives, we created a detailed master plan that informed the planning of the changes to the gardens and visitor centre, and also lays a framework for future developments.

The new building includes an education centre, shop, restaurant and exhibition space. The plan also included redesigning the access, parking and circulation routes within the garden itself. Iroko timber louvres reduce solar gain, and modern glazing increases insulation levels. Under floor heating and condensing boilers have been included to reduce energy consumption. Local bricks and stone add to the sustainable credentials.

The building succeeds in achieving the aims of the brief; extending facilities, providing better access for all age groups and enables increased visitor numbers. It also provides a facility which gives both an interesting, and informative experience of the environment and extends the opportunities for growth and development of this young Arboretum. The centre was formally opened by Her Majesty the Queen in 2003.

Key Benefits

- Improved access for all ages has increased visitor numbers and expanded business opportunities.
- The new centre accommodates a range of different uses, and includes a range of flexible spaces including lecture theatre/ exhibition space and restaurant.
- Extensive landscape works and a water feature embed the building in the surrounding gardens.
- The visitor centre is a highly sustainable building, in keeping with the philosophy of the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens.

“ It was judged against the following criteria: Impact; considering its form and materials, Build Quality; including performance, engineering and construction, Functionality; looked at use, access, and space and, Context concentrated on environmental conditions.

Against these criteria it was considered an outstanding public building. ”

SCALA Civic Building of the Year Judges, 2004



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