

# The Lookout at Lepe



Lepe Country Park is one of the few points within the New Forest National Park where there is easy public access to the coast. It is close to the mouth of the Beaulieu River and from a stand of mature pines on its upper slopes enjoys panoramic views across the Solent to the Isle of Wight.

In 2010 Hampshire County Council Property Services were commissioned to produce options for replacing a beachside café and visitor facility which was dated and with rising sea levels increasingly vulnerable to damage from storm and tidal surges. The new building had to be financially sustainable, robust, and of a scale and character fitting for such a unique and on occasion brutal environment. These needs combined with a lack of basic utilities, numerous ecological and geological designations imposed some significant constraints upon the proposals.

Following a lengthy period of bids and consultation a decision was made to elevate the new building on concrete columns some 2.5m above the tidal flood plain. This approach positioned the building at mid level between the upper and lower car parks and avoided compromising the views and valuable recreation space at the top of the coastal slope.

In addition to a restaurant and visitor facilities The Lookout at Lepe provides an office and welfare space for staff and volunteers. To ensure the building is fully accessible steps and a timber boardwalk gently links the beach with its main entrance. External terraces sit either side of a glazed dining space and together these allow visitors to enjoy broad uninterrupted views of the sea and surrounding coastline.

Since its opening in July of 2018 'The Lookout' has seen a 43% increase in visitors and a 50% increase in income.

## Key Benefits:

- Raised building for resilience against flooding and to meet the requirements of the Shoreline Management Policy for this section of coastline
- A building that is located to take maximum advantage of the views
- Facilities which are purpose built and fully accessible
- Is constructed from materials that are robust, sustainable and, where possible, locally sourced
- Designed to reduce energy consumption at source with super insulation to perform better than the standards defined in the current Building Regulations
- Installation of Solar PV panels
- A reduced building footprint that increases the area of natural habitat and biodiversity

**Location:** Lepe Country Park, Exbury, Southampton, Hampshire

**Client:** Hampshire County Council (HCC) Countryside Service

**Project Team:** Hampshire County Council

**Project Manager:** Hampshire County Council Property Services

**Size:** 355m<sup>2</sup>

**Budget:** £3m including fees.

**Completed:** July 2018

**Specialist teams:** HCC Architects, Structural, Civils, Mechanical and Electrical Engineers, Interior Design, Landscape and Cost Management.

**Main contractor:** W Stirland Ltd.

“ I haven't visited Lepe Country Park for ten years and possibly more. I had forgotten that there was a new visitor centre and cafe, so was pleasantly surprised at how well this has been designed and how complementary it is to the natural environment of Lepe Beach.

Tripadvisor Review 15.07.18 ”



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Hampshire  
County Council