

BEST USE OF TIMBER 2016 SHORTLIST

AS PART OF THE ANNUAL RIAS AWARDS SCHEME, FORESTRY COMMISSION SCOTLAND AND WOOD FOR GOOD HAVE COMBINED TO SPONSOR AN AWARD AIMED AT ENCOURAGING INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE USE OF TIMBER IN BUILDINGS IN SCOTLAND



Wood for Good
Challenge your perceptions.



Forestry Commission Scotland
Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba

Architecture & Design Scotland
Ailtearachd is Dealbhadh na h-Alba

FORSINARD LOOKOUT TOWER

Location: Sutherland
Date Completed: May 2015
Building Type: Lookout Tower
Architect: Icosis Architects

Client: The Peatland Partnership
Main Contractor: O'Brien Construction
Timber Supplier: Forestry Commission

THE PROJECT

Forsinard Lookout Tower was commissioned to provide visitors to Sutherland elevated views across the Dubh Lochan peat bogs pools and the Flows landscape beyond, and to assist with introducing the concepts of conserving peatland habitats to mitigate climate change. The structure also provides a destination for stargazing given its location within an area of Dark Skies.

A special feature of blanket bogs is the pool systems, which can create impressive patterned areas when seen from above. This is one of the classic views of the peatlands, which is rarely accessible.

The Lookout Tower sits on the edge of a bog pool system forming part of the Dubh Lochan Trail. The exact location was carefully chosen with regard to its impact on the landscape; how it would sit within the pattern of bog pools; how it would be viewed from different angles including upon the approach along the new board-walk. There was a detailed assessment of the optimum height to view the pool system considered against how this height would appear on the wider landscape.

The design resolved upon a single organic form clad in untreated locally-sourced timber, with the design concept simple in providing a blank elevation to the public road to the east and opening up at two levels to provide views to the west focusing visitors attention across the pools and the natural landscape beyond.

In order to minimise disruption to the peat, the construction is similar to that of an oil rig, built off hollow piles driven to a solid base around 4m below the surface of the peat bog. The ground floor is raised above the adjacent surface, both to provide slightly elevated views from the entrance level and to allow clearance above the peat surface, in order to mitigate the potential build up of carbon dioxide within a contained base.

USE OF TIMBER

Untreated Scottish Larch was supplied by the Forestry Commission from a plantation near Ullapool and used as hit and miss battens to clad the timber and steel structure, both inside and out. Larger (50x50mm) timber battens were used externally, with smaller (38x38mm) internally, with correspondingly different gaps between in order to subtly demark the distinction. Matching battens were also used to form a simple handrail at the mezzanine level and a bench to the rear of the viewing deck.

Non-slip Scottish Larch boarding is used for both the upper viewing deck and the viewing level with a dark grey single ply rubber membrane installed beneath as waterproofing and used as protection to the parapet walls. Caithness stone is used as the finish to the ground floor. Simple flatbar steel is used to provide the curved handrails to the stair and around the viewing areas.

All the main materials including the timber elements were delivered to site using a helicopter to minimise the impact of large machines on the bog surface.

Images: Gordon Mackie, Sjoerd Tel



