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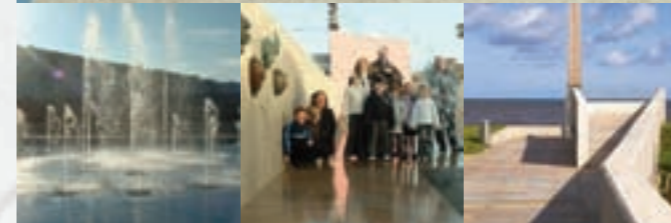


The overview

DRIFT PARK is the result of a study undertaken by BCA Landscape for the Denbighshire County Council to revitalise the seafront at Rhyl. The area of the town behind the promenade is relatively run down and the scheme aims to act as a catalyst to promote regeneration. Drift Park is designed in contemporary style, with a continuous theme of artwork and artefacts which celebrate Rhyl's heritage and its role as a seaside resort: these are scattered through the park, to be discovered by holidaymakers in a 'beachcombing' experience to enhance their visit. This part of the design was developed with Stephen Broadbent Artworks, who were integral to the team from the outset. The landscape design contrasts the undulating landforms derived from natural coastal processes with the geometric man-made forms introduced to control them – the dividing walls and groyne. Design began in 2002 and involved consultation with the Rhyl community through an exhibition at the town's White Rose Centre, and subsequent evening presentations as the scheme evolved to explain the proposals, receive comments, and gain the support of the business community. The consultation has continued to the detailed design stage, with the Local History Group involved in the selection of images and memories to be portrayed in the artwork, and the involvement of children from Ysgol Mair Primary School in the design and production of the 'Fish Faces' which feature in the 'Water play garden'. Hardscape supplied to the scheme Magma granite flame textured slabs 1000mm x 500mm x 80mm, Kobra granite flame textured kerbs and edgings and Kobra granite steps 350mm x 175mm x random length to the 'theatre area'. All materials conformed with BS Standards for testing and laying. Hardscape worked with BCA Landscape to interpret the complicated step drawings and scheduled the individual components for manufacturing and programming purposes - the results speak for themselves!



Landscape Architect: BCA Landscape, Liverpool
Artist: Stephen Broadbent Artworks
Client: Denbighshire County Council
Area of Project 2.44ha
Start and finish dates Began on site: December 2005; practical completion of final phase: April 2007
Project costs £3.9m
Funding sources Denbighshire County Council; European Objective One; Welsh Assembly Government; Welsh Assembly Government Department for the Economy and Transport; Welsh Assembly Government Visit Wales
Main contractor E Nuttall



The detail

The park is divided into five gardens, with separate identities supporting key activities – the 'Water play garden', the 'Theatre garden' (which makes use of the remains of Rhyl's historic Coliseum Theatre), a 'Mini golf garden', a 'Play garden', and a final garden which features coastal plants and grasses in their natural setting. The seaward end of each garden is marked by a 13m high beacon to provide a landmark.

Due to the exposed conditions on the site all the hard materials avoid the use of painted finishes and any subsequent onerous maintenance issues. This approach, coupled with the scale of the proposed structures, the quality of the finishes required and the proximity of existing concrete sea defences meant precast concrete was the logical material to use.

The concrete structure design was a particular challenge, maximising the full potential of the material to resolve a challenging aesthetic and structural brief. Other key elements of the park are the creation of shelter through screen walls and an undulating landform, contrasting with the exhilaration of exposure to the wind on raised viewing platforms. Planting is based on the natural ecology of the fixed dunes, in contrast to five beds of colourful perennial planting along the edge to West Parade.

Construction began in December 2005 and was completed in two phases, with the formal opening in April 2007. The contract covers a two-year period for the establishment of the planting. Secretary of state for Wales Peter Hain has commented, "Rhyl's regeneration is a dramatic example of action to transform areas of seaside deprivation" and the Design Commission for Wales says: 'We have every reason to expect that this exemplar project will spearhead further regeneration in the area and set the standards to be followed in the future.'

