

Dumfries Learning Town, Dumfries & Galloway

'Whole town' education

£100m

/ Project value

March 2016

/ The build commenced

August 2019

/ The build was completed

Delivering education on a “whole town basis”, the Dumfries Learning Town investment project involved the design, construction, and finance of six new “All Through” learning campuses. The innovative model featured the construction of new buildings in parallel with the redevelopment of existing facilities, and their subsequent “whole town” integration. Phase 1 comprised of nursery, primary and secondary schools on three sites, while Phase 2 consists of the strategic development of three further sites. The £100m development scheme was procured through the Hub South West Development Framework, and was completed in partnership with Dumfries & Galloway Council. The model is now used as the blueprint for future schools’ development projects in the region, and was initiated for the development of both the North West Campus and North East Campus.

The brief

Through the vehicle of Hub SW, Dumfries & Galloway Council required higher quality, sustainable, best value, and integrated educational facilities to better serve the people of the area. Via partnership working, stakeholder consultation, and knowledge sharing of project design and build expertise, we were tasked with delivering an ambitious community development project that would support the transformation of education in Dumfries.



“The community engagement during the design process was the best I have ever seen.”

Professor Stephen Heppell

“We’re determined to improve life chances for young people and The Bridge will enable this. It is neither a school nor a college, so it can be difficult for people to grasp its role. But it will be key to delivering a range of previously unavailable learning options in post-15 education.”

Councillor Ros Surtees
Vice Chairwoman Children, Young People & Life-long Learning
Dumfries & Galloway Council

The challenges

With no detailed site brief, we developed a bespoke solution capable of meeting the School for the Future team’s aspirations as laid out in the “Curriculum for Excellence” and “Getting It Right for Every Child” policies. Close collaboration from the very outset was key, with our community engagement process, incorporating the participation of key stakeholders in the design phase of the scheme, described by renowned education authority, Professor Stephen Heppell, as the “best” he had ever seen. The diversity of the six campuses presented unique challenges, but our dedicated project team, ensured the consistent delivery of all elements from site developments and refurbishments, to the extension of listed buildings..

The solution

Dumfries Learning Town has led to a “vibrant, modern curriculum” where partnership working has ensured that every child’s “educational experience is of the highest quality”. The improved and extended facilities have revitalised the educational surroundings of the town with imaginative and flexible learning and teaching spaces. The designs were developed with extensive community consultation through workshops that benefitted from the participation of school children from the local community. A “passive design” approach was adopted, using “building physics” methodologies to ensure conformance to stringent benchmarks around fabric design, air tightness, energy, power and water use, and sustainability. Phase 1 included the North West Campus (£35m), where we achieved an area saving of 10% which equated to 900m² of building footprint.

Outputs & Benefits

- Cost saving efficiencies:** We delivered an area saving of 10% which equated to 900m² of building footprint. This saved £1.8m on Capex and £11,000 per year on FM costs
- Innovative design:** Model design was recognised as blueprint for schools. Notable for the seamless integration of new build elements and the full remodelling of existing Grade B Listed school buildings
- Investment in local community:** 18 job opportunities were created, along with 15 apprenticeships and 33 work experience placements.
- Community Engagement:** Project team developed a process for stakeholder engagement and stakeholder consultation which is recognised as a template for success
- Shareholding:** The Hub SW SPV shareholding consisted of 10% SFT, 60% private sector and 30% participant council. Equitix, GRAHAM, Kier and Galliford contributed the 60% private sector equity.



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