New Waitrose development uses innovative timber alternative

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Background:

For the new Waitrose site in Helensburgh, developers wanted to create a design that was visually attractive and complementary to the locale. Specifiers of the project selected Resysta, a new fibre reinforced hybrid material, to clad the building's soffit as it is both durable and aesthetically pleasing.

Project Challenges:

Waitrose selected Helensburgh as their fifth location in Scotland after extensive market research and feedback from the community convinced them that the new store would be a high quality asset to the region.

Positioned at the gateway to Helensburgh coming from Glasgow, the location brought up some challenges.The North Clyde railway is the only thing separating the site from the Clyde Estuary, leaving it very exposed. The marine environment and frequent rain meant that chosen materials needed to be able to cope with demanding conditions. It is for these reasons that using traditional timber cladding would be a challenge, if not an impossibility because the material would succumb to deterioration over time.

The visual design requirements were also an important consideration in the building's planning, as the Helensburgh City Community Council (HCC) published a Design Statement in order to promote and encourage Design Excellence in future developments in the region. Central to the guidelines were the obligations that future developments in the area would integrate with the immediate and wider locale, and deliver variety and distinctiveness in terms of design.

The store's prominent location makes it visible to all who travel along Cardross Road between Helensburgh and Glasgow, giving even more importance the look of the materials used. This was a particular concern when judging which material to use for the soffit cladding, as it is such a large feature of the building's design.

Solution:

Resysta was used for the soffit of the building as it was able to:

- Comply with HCCs design statement in terms of blending in with the natural materials used in both this construction and other developments in the area
- Cope well with the environment and weather conditions

Resysta was selected for the project as it looks and works like timber, yet it is water resistant,

highly durable, defect free, and sustainable. The fibre reinforced hybrid material is produced from approx. 60% rice husk, 22% common salt and 18% mineral oil; making it an environmentally friendly option in terms of saving trees and recycling waste materials.

Resysta is not subject to any fluctuations in size caused by humidity and whether lacquered or left raw, Resysta does not need a maintenance cycle. This means the material does not silver or grey like timber and will not rot and if lacquered one application is usually enough. This means that the soffit of the Waitrose store will continue to look new and retain its colour, despite the wet conditions.

Results:

This project is a superb example of how a progressive material such as Resysta is able to deliver the technical specification to match a marine environment, whilst at the same time look aesthetically pleasing so that it compliments natural materials such as timber, stone and slate.

Andrew Thorp, *Manager of Architecture for Waitrose*, commented, "We are trialling Resysta as it is an alternative to timber that looks great and is low maintenance. You would never know at our Helensburgh store that the soffit wasnt timber".

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The cladding is expected to endure the wet conditions of the location with very little upkeep, so the soffit will continue to be an attractive focal point of the building for years to come.

Falcon Panel Products are the UK distributor of Resysta's range of products including; cladding, decking, screening and louvres.

Company Contact:

Falcon Panel Products

T. +44 (0)1932 256580
E. sheron@falconpp.co.uk
W. https://www.falconpp.co.uk/

View Online

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