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#CaseStudy

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Seamus Heaney Homeplace

//// Bellaghy

Heritage





Fusion | Silver, Sienna Setts | Graphite, Mayfair Flags | Silver & Sandstone

Tobermore Paving Solution Specified for Inspirational Building Celebrating the Life & Literature of Seamus Heaney

When W & M Given Architects was assigned the prestigious task of designing a new arts and literary centre in Bellaghy that celebrates the life and literature of the late Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney, the architect was determined to create a striking tribute that would do the memory of Seamus Heaney justice. The external works were just as important as the interior design and having worked with Tobermore on numerous projects over the years, W & M Given was confident that Tobermore would have an appropriate hard landscaping solution that would achieve the desired result. Tobermore did not disappoint and provided the architect with a combination of fabulous Fusion and sparkling Sienna Setts block paving with modern Mayfair Flags to create a striking, contemporary landscape design.

The £4.2 million project was developed by Mid Ulster District Council, with part-funding from the former Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure. Philip Hutchinson, Partner at W & M Given Architects explained more on the

background of the site and the aims of the new 2,000 sq. m. project: **“The objective was to create a multi-purpose community/exhibition building in honour of world-renowned poet, Seamus Heaney, and draw visitors from near and far to experience the life and works of the poet in his home village.**

“As the site was formerly a barricaded police station, we wanted to open the site up to the street and allow visitors access to open public space whilst retaining some of the older unique features of the previous building. We looked into incorporating the existing basalt stone wall into the external finish as far as possible to symbolically show how a site which was once a fortress in the community has now peeled back the barriers and is inviting the community in. The split level site offered us the opportunity to wrap the old stonework around the lower half of the exhibition space structure.”

Brendan Loughran & Sons Ltd was appointed to manage the construction

of the project. Philip commented on the design and build: **“The building is essentially constructed in four parts - the exhibition area, the performance space, the library/concourse and the education resource areas.**

“The street level entrance leads through to a lower ground floor exhibition space and via a central stair/lift vertical circulation, the journey continues to the upper ground floor exhibition area, cafe, a 189 seat Helicon theatre space and library and education resource rooms. A glazed cantilever wedge platform penetrates through the side elevation of the exhibition space at high level to create a viewing area across the beautiful countryside which inspired so many of Heaney’s works - We wanted the impact of the natural light to be as effective as possible when moving from the darker exhibition areas to the glazed projection.”

The externals of the centre was created with stone, timber and cladding finishes, bringing a collaboration of modern and traditional styles together. W & M Given Architects made the decision to employ a paving solution for the external groundworks. Philip explained his team’s choice of hard landscaping material: **“We wanted a product that would provide scope and flexibility to define shapes and routes within the site. Due to the large open areas within the site, it was important that we specified a product that would allow us to be creative and**

allow the spaces to be broken up by planting and create a good palette of colours for visual contrast.”

Philip spoke with the Tobermore NI Sales team about the paving options available and the team offered their expertise on Tobermore’s most suitable products to complement the project. The architect was particularly impressed with the contemporary finishes of Tobermore’s Fusion block paving and Mayfair Flags – these products were specified for the site along with Sienna Setts which was selected as a bordering product. Fusion, Mayfair Flags and Sienna Setts are manufactured with a granite aggregate surface layer that produces a striking, modern appearance similar to natural granite. Tactile Flags in a Hazard Warning finish was also incorporated as a sensory paving solution, meeting health and safety standards.

Philip explained how Tobermore’s products were incorporated into the landscape design: **“Our design consisted of a defined circular area which acts as a central focal point intended to encourage gatherings for community activity and performances. Beds for soft planting and pathways were added to radiate out from this, leading visitors from the street and car parking areas to the centre entrance.”**

Philip added: **“The site is sloping in throughout and we needed to carefully plan landscaping to achieve suitable gradients, steps and transition areas to ensure accessibility for all users was**

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Philip Hutchinson | Partner at W & M Given Architects

achieved. Tobermore products allowed us to meet all statutory regulations.”

The architect specified Tobermore’s Fusion in the colour of Silver, Mayfair Flags in the colours of Silver and Sandstone and Sienna Setts in the colour of Graphite which came together to create an attractive, striking finish.

The project reached completion in September 2016 and earned widespread attention from the media across the UK and Ireland. The core feature is a permanent exhibition which features opportunities for aural, visual, physical and social interaction, opening up the subject of poetry for all. The centre is carefully curated with personal stories, artefacts, historic photographs and video recordings from family, friends, neighbours, world leaders, cultural figures and even the voice of Seamus Heaney himself reading his own poetry.

Seamus Heaney’s wife, Marie, and children, Christopher, Michael and Catherine were joined by almost 200 guests at the official opening held on September 30th 2016. Speaking at the event, Marie Heaney commented on the project: **“I have watched in amazement as it has**

Client
Mid Ulster District Council

Architect
W & M Given Architects

Main Contractor
Brendan Loughran & Sons Ltd

Groundworker
Castle Paving

Products Used:

Fusion | Silver
Sienna Setts | Graphite
Mayfair Flags | Silver & Sandstone
Mayfair Step Flags | Silver with Delineation Strip Black
Tactile Hazard Warning Flags | Buff

taken shape – from plans on a computer screen, to a construction site, and into a wonderful space.” Christopher Heaney added: **“It’s so important that the centre is in Bellaghy. Physically he (Seamus Heaney) left Bellaghy 55 years ago, but literally, creatively, imaginatively, he never really left.”**

Philip commented on the result: **“We are delighted. The Tobermore products specified enhanced the overall appearance of the scheme both on approach from the street and when viewed from inside the building.**

“We have been specifying Tobermore for many years now as the manufacturer offers our client’s a high quality product and a good range of options to suit styles and budget. The team at Tobermore are always ready to provide product advice and technical expertise when required.

“It goes without saying that W & M Given Architects will be specifying Tobermore products for future projects and we will continue to recommend these products to other specifiers and clients in the future.”

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Tobermore Head Office

2 Lisnamuck Road, Tobermore, County L'derry, BT45 5QF

Tel: 028 7964 2411 Fax: 028 7964 4145

www.tobermore.co.uk | **0844 800 5736** |    