

Creating what matters for our coastal communities

Tamar-class lifeboat station upgrades



Client: Royal National Lifeboat Institution

Location: Various locations, United Kingdom

Completion Date: 2017

Tamar-class life boats provide lifesaving services to communities throughout the UK. You never know when you or someone you know may need that lifeline in a desperate time.

Just like we all need homes to come back to, so do these incredible lifeboats after a mission out at sea. Opus and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) have been working together for over ten years now, providing state-of-the-art design and construction of Tamar-class lifeboat stations throughout the UK.

The Tamar lifeboat has a faster response time and improved ergonomics to keep the crew safer and more comfortable as it crashes through the waves. Opus recognised that new or upgraded lifeboat stations should reflect the efficiency of a lifeboat and ensured that each station was designed and constructed in regards to its individual location and the community it serves.

At RNLI Porthdinllaen in North Wales, Opus also worked closely with the RNLI and the National Trust to design a lifeboat station that would fit the outstanding natural beauty of the surrounding area. Several design challenges were overcome to ensure this, including shortening the building and increasing the curvature of the roof to create more height. This ensured it would not protrude past the cliff outline and create a more subtle addition to the landscape.

Community involvement was also crucial. A temporary staircase was built to ensure access to the beach was maintained and everyone could enjoy the peninsula. Opus also ensured construction would not adversely affect local villages and so all primary resources were delivered to site by sea; an innovative yet difficult approach.

People were at the heart of this design. Understanding their interaction with the building, and the building with the environment, meant that Opus could optimise the infrastructure to provide a first class lifeboat station for local coastal communities.

RNLI Head of Estates Capital Projects, Howard Richings, said: "We are very pleased with the end result and look forward to the new station providing many years of support to the local community and seafarers generally for many years to come."

RNLI Bembridge, on the Isle of Wight, posed a slightly different challenge. Because the building became a regular winter roost for Purple Sandpipers migrating from Scandinavia, the demolition of the lifeboat station was done in stages between bird migration seasons.

Opus has been highly recognised for its work with the RNLI. Throughout 2015, Opus won multiple awards for its work on several lifeboat stations in the UK with the common note of recognition being its sustainable design and build approach.