

BBC - Salford Quays

Customer Name:
BBC - Salford Quays

Region:
United Kingdom

Product:
Key Features, X-Loop, H530, High Rise, Sherbert Fizz, Cap & Blazer, Blast from the Past, Encode

M² installed:
31,026m²

Sustainable Services:

Design Services:
Concept Designer



The BBC's move to its new £189m headquarters on the banks of the Manchester ship canal is nearing completion. Flagship programmes including Match of the Day and Blue Peter have already taken up residence alongside the children's channel CBeebies and CBBC, BBC Radio 5 live, and BBC Sport, and plans are well underway for the BBC Breakfast team to be in its new home, part of MediaCityUK, in the Spring.

By the time the move comes to an end later this year, a whole creative community of more than 2300 people will be working out of the waterfront site known as BBC North, a major achievement which has taken eight years to complete.

The intention for the BBC to move out of London and establish a new base in the north of England was first signaled in 2004 by its Director-General Mark Thompson as part of the BBC's commitment to better serve its audiences across the UK. A 200-acre development site at Salford Quays owned by the Peel Group was selected and MediaCityUK was born.

The BBC occupies three buildings on the site: Bridge House, home to Blue Peter, Mastermind and Dragons'

Den, among others; Dock House, the new base for teams including Songs of Praise and Research & Development, and Quay House, where outputs from Radio 5 live and BBC Sport are broadcast. A number of production and media related companies have also made Salford Quays their home including ITV's Granada division, and the University of Salford has located an innovative higher education centre on the site.

The Manchester Ship Canal, an industrial wonder of the world when it was built between 1887 and 1894, provides the inspirational setting for what the BBC is hoping to achieve in its new home in the north. Just as the historic canal showcased the best in engineering talent in its time, technical innovation forms the backbone of the BBC's new premises and the whole site has been designed for the complexity of the digital age. Cutting edge technology, 24/7 newsrooms and radio networks, television platforms and purpose built studios have all been installed along with the creation of interactive websites. But the main achievement of the new state-of-the-art media complex is its ability to foster creativity and communication, something that was a key component of the design brief from day one.

ID:SR, the interior design group of award-winning architectural practice Sheppard Robson, was chosen to design the interior of the premises, the challenge being to develop a new hi-tech home for the BBC which would reflect not only the digital revolution, but also the creativity of its people and the content they generate.

With over 70 years' experience, the consultancy, which has offices spread across London, Manchester, Glasgow and Abu Dhabi and a track record of finding the right solutions for their clients, was more than up to the task.

"The environment has been designed for flexibility, efficiency and to promote an open and creative atmosphere."

The project was handed to Fleur Peck, a senior designer at ID:SR. The group was established five years ago to meet the growing demand from companies that wanted to move away from the traditional office to a more innovative and productive environment.

ID:SR combines creative skill with management and project delivery expertise, and has developed a reputation for designing environments that increase productivity while being efficient, creative and desirable. The group's approach to all its projects is to place people at the heart of the design process and to understand how they fit with the brand, vision



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"A neighbourhood of facilities has been created to allow people to select different work environments to suit their particular tasks, which may change frequently. We have also tried to make the environment adaptable to the change in technology and ways of working in the future. We briefed the designers to create a building to provoke smiles and we have seen a lot of that since moving in,"

Alan Bainbridge, Head of Workplace for Property and Facilities Management at the BBC



areas and places to brainstorm or hold team meetings.

The end result is a flexible, creative space which can contract and expand simply by moving partitioning or furniture as daily needs change or as programmes come and go."

Flooring has been an integral part of the overall design of the office and studio complex which covers 35,000 m2. Reflecting the heritage of the BBC through the colours of the original television test card, the carpet varies in each of the three buildings to create a different look and feel, as requested by staff.

"The carpets are important to creating zones and weaving a pathway across each building, particularly as we haven't used walls and ceilings to define space. We used all Interface products, selecting neutral tones in general office areas, cooler colours in locker areas and tea points, and warmer tones in collaborative areas. It is a complicated approach but it works well and helps to guide people through the buildings," Peck adds.

In a book chronicling the design of the Salford complex, BBC staff write that from the first discussions of design, through the production of beautiful furniture to the final stages of building and installation, what has stood out on this project has been the team spirit, creativity and collaboration, which is highly appropriate considering this is what the new television centre has been designed to inspire.

The BBC was committed to changing the way it worked and to building a collaborative and creative community where people can move easily between different roles and departments. With its brightly coloured open plan spaces, cosy collaboration pods, neon signs and welcoming areas on every floor, BBC North creates a different environment for staff, and meets its design vision of being a building to make people smile.

"The workshop sessions reflected the energy, the creative pooling of ideas and the commitment to the process."

Photography courtesy of Gareth Gardner

and culture of their organisation, a methodology which was essential to creating the right sort of space for the BBC.

Work began in 2007 when the Corporation encouraged its staff to think hard about the design of their new home. They were told it was not just about a place but also the challenge of enabling a greater variety of activities, from formal to informal, to take place and to improve collaboration and communication.

As with any good vibrant city, its job is to provide a backdrop that enhances diversity and dynamism. By imagining the office as a city, the ID:SR design team devised an innovative workplace that is amenity-centric rather than desk-centric and which is enlivened by the way people share its spaces.

"It was a real collaborative process and we worked closely with the BBC throughout. There were no surprises for staff," says Peck. "Technology today enables people to work in a very mobile way. The desk is no longer the main currency and the site has a huge amount of very flexible open plan space which can be used for different purposes. There are individual phone booths and quiet collaboration pods with space for one or two people and then there are break-out

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Fleur Peck, Senior Design, ID:SR



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