

Launch of Crossrail Place Retail and Roof Garden, Canary Wharf

01.05.2015

A major new shopping development and roof garden above Canary Wharf Crossrail Station has opened to the public today, ahead of the station opening in 2018. Stretching more than 300 metres along the north dock, the above ground scheme designed by Foster + Partners includes four levels of shops, cafes and restaurants, as well as extensive public gardens, which are densely planted with trees and plants, and interspersed with seating and pavilions – all partially enclosed by a timber lattice roof, which wraps around the building like a protective shell.

The gardens are accessible from ground level via two connecting bridges. The roof opens in the centre to draw in light and rain for natural irrigation, and opens along the sides and at either end to allow views of the water and surrounding streets. The spruce beams are sustainably sourced and provide a warm, natural counterpoint to the glass and steel towers of Canary Wharf. Between the beams there are air-filled plastic cushions. The partial enclosure of the space creates a comfortable environment for people to enjoy all year round, as well as providing a gentle microclimate for some of the plant species that first entered Britain through the docks.

The design of the lattice itself is a fusion of architecture and engineering. Remarkably, despite the smooth curve of the enclosure, there are only four curved timber beams in the whole structure. To seamlessly connect the straight beams, which rotate successively along the diagonals, the design team developed an innovative system of steel nodes, which resolve the twist. The visual simplicity of the smooth curving timber lattice belies the geometric complexity of the structure, which is made up of 1,418 beams and 564 nodes, 364 of which are unique. Foster + Partners' specialist modelling group helped to develop an innovative system to enable the roof components to be rapidly fabricated and accurately assembled on site. At night the structure is illuminated, creating a welcoming civic gateway to London's growing commercial district.

Lord Foster said:

"Crossrail is an important investment in infrastructure that will have benefits not only in the short term, but also for future generations. The social magnets of shopping, bars, restaurant and a public garden are also part of an enlightened partnership between the public and private domains. The building is conceived to mediate between the adjoining worlds of Canary Wharf and the local community – with its different materials and the emphasis on a softer expression and warmer materials."

Ben Scott, Partner, Foster + Partners said:

"The geometric timber lattice is designed to unify the three different functions of the building in a single architectural expression. The advantage of using timber was that it could be economically and efficiently machined to follow the complex geometry that evolved to meet the development parameters, creating a technically advanced enclosure."

For further information

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