



The ON-X factor that's future-proofing provision

The £24m ON-X Linwood Centre is championing change and placing customer needs first

Changing provision is at the heart of a new multi-million pound leisure investment that will sustain premium offering in Renfrewshire for generations to come.

The £24m ON-X Linwood Sports and Community Centre is the jewel in Renfrewshire Leisure's crown, and its completion marks the conclusion of a £42m investment programme to ensure outstanding leisure provision for the next 25 years. "Leisure in Renfrewshire has gone from strength to strength since we took on the running in 2003," says Joyce McKellar, CEO of Renfrewshire Leisure, who oversees nine wet and dry centres on the council's behalf.

The new centre, which opened its doors on 25 March 2013, offers an extensive range of community facilities including an eight-court multi-purpose sports hall, athletics track, artificial 3G pitch, multi-use/dance studios, state of the art fitness suite, group cycling studio, squash courts and a facility for adults with learning disabilities.

hitting targets

"Our biggest challenge is balancing income generation with the social needs of the community," McKellar explains. "My key driver is to reduce the subsidy

level while remaining financially viable. We've already brought the council subsidy down by 35 per cent."

In 2006, the trust developed its first strategy for the council in a bid to raise participation levels, targeting a 25 per cent increase in user numbers – a figure that has since nearly doubled, to 47 per cent.

Key to successful design and delivery at Linwood was gaining an insight into customer needs and expectations. User

The combination of lockers installed were in line with the responses from the customer survey Craftsman implemented to ensure the centre meets customer needs

and non-user surveys proved critical in collecting data and assessing how the centre should match needs with provision.

"The consultation brought out a number of important factors that were used in developing the new facilities, but one of the major areas where there was an tremendous response was on the quality of the changing facilities, particularly among women," says McKellar. "Most respondents felt our previous leisure centres did not provide changing rooms of a sufficient standard

to meet the increasing demands of the modern user. Limited accessibility and facilities for the disabled and partially-abled were also highlighted."

Renfrewshire Leisure once again joined forces with leading manufacturer Craftsman Lockers, with whom they had successfully partnered on three earlier projects to deliver a scale and quality of changing provision fit for a diverse cross-section of potential usage.

Craftsman's longstanding expertise in design and concept shaped the layout and user experience of the changing provision to meet the centre's requirements.

McKellar adds: "The position, location and comprehensive range of lockers designed by Craftsman was crucial to meet the widest cross-section of users, from

families who require an enormous locker to stow away the belongings of three or four individuals, to the partially-abled who in some cases need wheelchair access. There was also a high demand from those who wanted to store items safely but didn't need to change, so lockers positioned outside our fitness studios were key.

"Craftsman's ability to supply a variety of sizes was unmatched: from lockers for casual users who wish to stow away sports bags containing belongings



This photo: Lockers cater for all needs – from big families to singles. Photos left hand page: The centre is breaking the design and use mould

together with shoes and mobile phones; to those designed for users on their way to and from work and need to hang a suit of clothes, while also storing away sports bag and shoes; down to users who arrive pre-changed ready for their activity and just require convenient lockers to stow away car keys, mobile phones, purses or wallets. We needed the full range."

Gibbs proved pivotal in the design, drawing on his 25 years of experience to help steer the architects. "John knows what works and what doesn't," says McKellar. "He knows how to design a space to accommodate the right numbers of units and to cater for the wide demographic at our centre.

"The architects couldn't understand why we needed such a range of lockers or separate wet and dry areas, so Craftsman's guidance was invaluable in this process. Without that input, we may not have got it right."

In total, 10 separate changing areas have been installed, with two upstairs spaces dedicated solely to gym-goers. All lockers serving the downstairs leisure provision are positioned outside the changing room itself, allowing for greater functionality.

quality look and feel

The right choice of colour and material was also key, and it was Craftsman's design nous which came to the fore once more. "When dealing with wet, dry and outdoor-use facilities, you need

the right materials to ensure they last the course," says McKellar. "Robust hinges and solid construction were essential and Craftsman offered the best, most comprehensive solution."

McKellar also stood firm on the colour pallet for Linwood, wanting to ensure the centre maintains a 'classic' look and feel for customers over the years ahead. "We wanted neutral tones that wouldn't age, focusing on natural shades and wood effect. It's best for longevity and in line with our future-proofing objectives," she explains.

"I fought hard to achieve what I wanted and not bow to pressure to opt for on-trend colours. Functionality over fad was paramount. We once opted for bright orange lockers. They looked great at the time, but now the colour scheme is dated. The colour pallet for Linwood is timeless, so we won't suffer the same problem again."

She adds: "Changing rooms are at the very heart of every facility, providing two opportunities: to impress or depress. If you're not comfortable in the changing rooms, especially when partially clothed, you're prone to feeling vulnerable, with the experience proving less than pleasant. You will not return, as generally people are slow to complain, preferring simply to go elsewhere."

Craftsman delivers bespoke changing solutions for wet and dry changing

rooms for leisure centres throughout the UK, offering a complete range of lockers from:

- Family lockers able to accommodate the belongings of three to four family members
- Parent and child lockers
- Lockers for the wheelchair and ambulant abled
- Clothes hanging lockers
- Holdall lockers
- Stow and go lockers for those who come pre-changed
- Valuables lockers for mobiles, keys, etc

Every Craftsman installation is designed to incorporate the range of lockers required by your potential clients including vanity areas, bench seating, cubicles showers and WCs.

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