

# The Green Giant

**When a visitor centre is a friend to the natural heritage site to which it is dedicated rather than a rival, sustainability has come into its own. Look to Northern Ireland's geological wonder, the Giant's Causeway, for proof.**



Gentle slopes and the thundering North Atlantic are the setting for one of the most awe-inspiring natural phenomena on the Irish isle: the "Giant's Causeway" is formed by myriad hexagonal basalt columns. Tightly grouped together, they look like a ramp that leads into the sea.

Is it possible for a manmade structure to sit seamlessly beside this UN World Heritage site without destroying its serenity? The answer is yes. The Visitor Centre designed by Dublin-based architects heneghan peng is the perfect example. Carefully embedded in the hillside, this award-winning building makes use of stone columns that flank the building and lines that stretch far into the rugged cliffs above the Causeway.

The Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre breathes sustainability from the outside and lives up to the same principle on the inside: all guidelines for the planning, construction and operation of the building, reaching from the criteria for energy efficiency, through to resource consumption and durability, and as far as the integration of local artisan craftwork are in line with one objective: to make the home of the Giant a true icon of sustainable architecture.



**"The National Trust's mission is to restore places of cultural and natural interest and then 'open them up for ever, for everyone'. Therefore there was an underlying commitment to develop a project that protects the environment for ever, for everyone, too."**

Róisín Heneghan, heneghan peng Architects, Dublin (IE)

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## Water saving

# -75%

Only one fourth of the water used in standard approaches runs down the drains of the Visitor Centre. Geberit Sigma concealed cisterns 12cm with dual flush technology are part of the reason why. They are equipped with esthetic Sigma50 flush plates.

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## Durability

# 100 years

One century is the predicted life span of the Visitor Centre. Consequently, the durability of the piping systems is crucial, which is why Geberit HDPE pipes were selected for all waste and rainwater systems and Geberit Mepla pipes for the drinking water system.

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The Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre is dedicated to the impressive basalt formations at Northern Ireland's northern shore.



heneghan peng say that its design can be understood as two folds in the landscape: one upward, holding the building, and one downward, on which the carpark is placed.



Local stonemasons delivered a total of 186 columns made of black basalt. The stone was quarried near the Giant's Causeway.



The energy efficient building boasts a number of interactive exhibition areas that unlock the geology and mythology of the World Heritage Site. On top, the grass roof offers 360 degree views of the Causeway coastline (view of the lobby shortly before the opening).



Across the centuries, the peculiar hexagonal basalt columns of the Giant's Causeway have stirred the imagination of residents and travellers. Legend says that they were carved from the coast by the mighty giant, Finn McCool.