

Being Brunel

The 'Being Brunel' project is a unique new museum to preserve the legacy of Isambard Kingdom Brunel and which is helping to maintain Bristol as a destination of choice for heritage and culture.

The museum, built in the existing SS Great Britain dock yard and joined by a link bridge to the original Grade II listed dock office (Brunel's one-time drawing office), has been designed to reflect the historic nature of the nearby wharf buildings and in sympathy with the surrounding developments.



An inordinate number of challenges were overcome to deliver the building on the exact location of Brunel's former office. The project involved complex logistical challenges during the construction, whilst undertaking major works including piled foundations, structural steelwork, roofing, cladding and a major internal fit out to create a unique and inspirational, interactive visitor experience. Construction was completed within a live museum, over a historic harbour wall, bound between the floating harbour and the SS Great Britain ship and undertaken whilst accommodating over 150,000 visitors to the main attraction.

The successful delivery of the project on time, within budget to the specified quality and with no compromise to health and safety standards was the result of a clear understanding of the project goals, excellent communication, detailed planning and a strong team ethos. It was the passion, determination and shared goal of the team which successfully completed the new museum on time, within budget and with an exemplary health and safety record.

Clarkebond's re-engineering of a design by others greatly reduced the amount of steel used, reduced excavations and arisings to be sent to waste, halved the number of vehicle movements during the construction stage of the project, thereby reducing carbon emissions accordingly, and saved £500k for the client.



"Being Brunel has exceeded all our expectations. In the first three months of operation it attracted over 75,000 visitors. Our consultants team did a great job on what was a tricky project with many constraints – not least because we were open for business throughout the construction period! We were particularly pleased with the work of Clarkebond who redesigned the foundations and steel frame which enabled us to bring the scheme within budget and it was much easier to build." Mike Day, Client Project Manager, SS Great Britain Trust.

The Guardian included the new Being Brunel museum in its top 10 national museums for 2018.