Seaview Café – The walk through

The Project from Watco's side

Snapshot of Watco Systems

In the meat trade, Watco is known as refrigerated counter suppliers, but we have so much more to offer. For many years, we have provided the full design and turnkey project package to customers who appreciate the benefits of our 'real world' knowledge of the trade, 'showcase' quality of presentation and 'get it done right' focus in our project management. Last year, we restructured the business, separating out environmental control and service contracts. We rebranded the specialist counters and shopfitting division as Watco Systems.

The merging of Mearns T McCaskie with The Seaview Café next door is a good example of how close relationships and a willingness to go the extra distance delivered a project that was not just what was wanted – but was hoped it could be. Last month, we gave Nigel and Helen Ovens' story.

This month, we bring you a project walk-through that takes you 'behind the scenes' written by Watco Systems, who designed and delivered the project as a complete turnkey operation. It may be useful as a reference for any SFMTA member planning a refit in their current shop or extending their premises.

The Opportunity

The Seaview Café traded for many years next door to the butcher shop. Nigel and Helen had always thought that it could be an opportunity. With the recent market trend toward integrating butchery with meals – hot counters, farm shop cafes, meal packs – the thought was turning into 'what if' plans. At last, at the beginning of this year, they were able to purchase the premises!

Now what? Make clear plans and find the people to make it happen.

The Brief
The requirement was to integrate the two businesses, with a walk-through access to the café during day time trading. A side entrance from the car park was to be added because even Wemyss Bay sometimes has rainy days.

The design challenge was to integrate the customer flow between the two shops and to have a servery which would accommodate daytime trading as well as exclusive evening dining.

Inside, these changes required a complete rethink of the kitchen and preparation facilities and the front of house presentation and customer flow.
Outside, a new frontage and signage was required to give an integrated look to the whole thing.

This required a coordinated mix of designers, builders, plumbers, electricians, tilers, equipment suppliers, fitters, decorators plus working with the local Planning Department and Building Control. All working to time and controlling costs.

Nigel and Helen talked to several companies coming at the project from their individual angles. Watco were included because we had fitted out the retail and production areas of the original shop some 2 years ago.

This request was taken by us as a testament to the work we had previously done for them. We were delighted, and, though the project required far more than refrigerated counters, we resolved to show our full capability in action.

Planning

After discussing the project, we were asked to come up with some design ideas and customer flows to integrate the two shops and their operations. We worked through several approaches and costings to find a practical way forward that satisfied the brief in terms of facilities, look, timings and costs.

After the original discussion drawing and the usual 3 or 4 development drawings we had a design module to present to Planning and Building Control. The shop front required a hoarding which extended onto the pavement, requiring a permit from the Roads authority.

The focus was always on the marriage of great looks and efficient operations. We kept a keen eye on the details so that the new works would marry with the rest and look designed in, not just added on.

Planning liked the scheme with the new side porch entrance and rubber stamped it almost immediately. The café premises required bringing up to the latest Building Control standards, so required more effort.

To get a Building Warrant, you must comply fully throughout the premises. Even to make a minor change, all aspects of compliance must be met and inherited problems must be corrected. Along with structural issues, this included UV values, airflow, electrical, insulation/energy management, combustibles, access for partially sighted customers, disabled toilets, non slip floor coverings, doors and barriers. Quite a list, with input required from specialist Energy Consultants and Structural Engineers for analysis, design and reports.

Different Councils have different rules and requirements. Our integrated operations mean that everything is covered and there is no buck passing between contractors if something needs done to get approval.

The Works
With a goal of clean, efficient work and minimum upset to the continuing butcher shop trade, the first work was to build the shopfront. Red sandstone and dark wood were used to match the existing shop fascia.

The kitchen had to be radically changed to suit both day café and evening dining menus. The old saying applies, if you ask 10 chefs to design a kitchen you will get 10 different designs. Fortunately, we have been down this road many times and were able to find a kitchen layout with room to accommodate the future chefs requirements.

A glazed conservatory style side entrance was chosen for exclusive evening trading. Having a nice entrance also required revision of the car park access, layout with proper levels and drainage.

A lovely feature of the work is the sliding door between the shop and café. This was custom built by a specialist company in Ireland and fitted by Watco.

Work commenced on 11 June and finished 28 June, a total of only 18 days all-in. Just before starting work, July's heavy rain started, causing flooding from the car park due to unknown problems from collapsed drains. Nightmare! However, our integrated approach and site works discipline, we were able to juggle things to deliver the project as planned.

Conclusion
I don't want to sound immodest, but this is what we do, and we are very good at it. Stepping beyond counter supply can be challenging, but Nigel and Helen were very good clients, with an understanding of the size of the project and flexibility in thinking to help us with the changes required by Building Control and the weather. It is rewarding to deliver the dream to a client who appreciates the extra work we put in to bring it all together for his business.

Some Key Facts

- From brief to completion took 3 months.
- From start to finish, 16 sets of drawings were produced using our 3D CAD system.
- Planning permission achieved from the outset.
- Building Standards approval achieved in time for target start date, including necessary upgrades and energy compliance.
- Tight cost control and 'up front' contingency planning were in place to avoid surprises. This really paid off when the heavy rain delayed key works.
- All works completed in 18 days, despite delays due to collapsed drains in torrential rain.
- Shop traded as usual throughout.
- The 'keyest' fact of all: Café turnover has doubled!

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