

## **Millboard takes centre stage in Suzie Jewell's 'Children's Garden' at Kew**

Kew Gardens recently cut the ribbon on an 'active learning' play-space designed by world-renowned Landscape Architect, Suzie Jewell. As the biggest project in Kew's recent history, Jewell's ambitious 'Children's Garden' has transformed a previously underused part of the site into four interactive gardens themed around the elements. The renovated area is the size of 40 tennis courts and encourages children to learn and explore the concepts of earth, air, sun and water.

Jewell needed to source materials for the garden's extensive walkways, seating and cladding that would stand up to the footfall of 3 million visitors a year and be sympathetic to Kew's ecological objectives. Kew is a UNESCO World Heritage Site with a mission to preserve the Earth's natural resources. The attraction's collections include 27,000 living species, 8.5 million preserved specimens and a comprehensive seed library. Kew's corporate remit also includes a goal to protect endangered species and to discover new ones. With this in mind, Jewell's garden had to prioritise sustainable products.

Millboard produces the world's only hand-moulded polyurethane wood-alternative decking and its corporate carbon footprint has been rigorously and independently tested to ensure minimal impact on the environment. Millboard decking was therefore an excellent fit for Kew's uncompromising standards.

Additionally, Millboard decking also fulfilled Kew's need for a low-maintenance, high-contact surface. Jewell opted to use it to add resilience to the garden's walkways and play areas, stating that 'having previously specified Millboard products on design projects for schools, I knew that I could rely on the range for its durability and anti-slip properties, on top of its natural aesthetic.'

The organic, highly tactile qualities of Weathered Oak decking are in keeping with the characterful charm of the natural setting and have given Jewell's team the design flexibility they needed. Jewell said that, 'the black hues of these boards provide a good backdrop for foliage plants, allowing their vibrant colours to really shine through. The Children's Garden incorporates an amphitheatre design with curved benches; we achieved a good radius by simply bending the fascia boards to create a seamless finish that's not always possible with timber. The Millboard decking was installed just as easily as real wood, and facilitated techniques like tapered cuts, which help to create that flawless finish we were looking for. It blends really well.'

Millboard's Projects Team provided the contractor with ongoing support throughout the build and provided site visits and close collaboration with the designers and installers throughout.

The new 2.5 acre Children's Garden uses three different types of Millboard decking – Enhanced Grain in Charred Oak and Burnt Cedar, and Weathered Oak in Embered. Since the garden opened, it has proven a hit with visitors and has been described as a real complement to the world's largest and most diverse botanical attraction.