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Porthmadog House, Wales

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Porthmadog House is a replacement home on a sloping coastal site in rural North-West Wales.

The striking site enjoys views over the bay with the Irish Sea beyond, as well as over the estuary towards Snowdonia. The house therefore has a duality to it: addressing and making the most of the expansive sea views, whilst also drawing inspiration from the rugged countryside and inland landscape.

Two slate-clad volumes at ground floor level act as a barrier against the prevailing winds and rain, providing shelter and privacy to the entrance courtyard on the inland side of the site. These house more enclosed and practical spaces such as the snug, gym, plant rooms etc, whilst the more social functions sit between these heavy slate volumes. Large areas of glazing here make the space brighter and celebrate the stunning coastal views. A lighter first floor volume spans over the slate walls, creating sheltered spaces underneath to inhabit. This element is a Corten steel box, with a series of fins providing shelter, privacy and articulating the glazed façade.

The heavy slate grounds the building on the site, whilst the Corten steel offers a striking visual contrast. Both materials are a nod to the historical context of the area – with its iron foundries and slate mining – but are purposefully used in a contemporary way to complement the architecture. With such an exposed location, it was vital that we chose materials that were suitably robust, and that would weather gracefully without the need for maintenance.