

KBB | HOMES

# A space for all seasons

COVER  
HOME

Debra and John Egan made their dream a reality and built a home on the East Sussex coast. The result? A robust, natural-looking property, perfectly designed to withstand the seaside seasons as well as family get-togethers >

Words: Amy Maynard Photography: Richard Gadsby



The open-plan kitchen-living-diner was created to accommodate the couple's friends and family. The **kitchen units** are bespoke by Chartwood Design. **Floor tiles**, Domus; **worktops**, Silstone from Stonewright UK; **taps**, Vola; **boiling-water tap**, Quooker; **appliances**, Gaggenau.

### *The* FACTS

**Who?** Debra and John Egan  
**What?** A new-build beach house  
**Where?** Camber Sands, East Sussex  
**Cost?** A similar kitchen would cost from £30,000  
**Time?** Three years

Debra and John Egan were already familiar with the beautiful coast at Camber Sands in East Sussex when they got wind of a run-down beachfront property that had been bequeathed to a local church and was being put up for sale. After a bidding war, the couple secured the three-bedroom home and set about getting plans drawn up for a sleek, eco-friendly new build on the plot, complete with open-plan kitchen, great connections to the outdoors and all the mod cons to ensure maximum energy efficiency, plus another bedroom. Some years later and psychotherapist Debra and retail consultant John are now reaping the rewards of their hard work and happily split their time between a flat in London's Marylebone and the four-bedroom seaside home. It also has plenty of space for their grown-up children Charlotte and Lizzie, their partners, and Charlotte's baby Florence, to visit throughout the year. Here, Debra explains how she and John won the house and how their big plans came together...

#### How did you decide on the aesthetic of the house?

I was determined to use a local company, so I found RX Architects, based in Rye, and their contemporary design style appealed. John and I wanted to create something environmentally friendly and sustainable. We previously lived in a modern house in Switzerland, featuring lots of wood, and envisaged something along those lines. Most importantly, we wanted to maximise the views and create a very simple, self-sufficient home. I looked at how Scandinavians do beach houses and wanted to achieve that.

#### What makes the house particularly eco-friendly?

We were keen to build something that fitted with the environment and exposed nature of the site. We have used natural materials, have solar panels, a fresh-air circulating system and a ground-source heat pump. Our bills are so low.



Debra on the bespoke wooden and steel staircase, from R&E Engineers Ltd.

right The Silestone worktop, from Stonewright UK, is durable and practical.

#### Tell us about the brief for the downstairs...

We wanted it to be simple and open plan. We love to have people visit, so were after a kitchen that is spacious enough so you can be in there and no one really gets in your way. The units are arranged in an L-shape with an island in the middle, with the sink below a picture window, which has lovely views out to the coast. We kept mostly to base units, which give us plenty of storage, and then chose a shelf to keep the room feeling uncluttered. The tall bank of units houses appliances – it all flows really well. John and I like to cook so we have a built-in steam oven and boiling-water tap and there's a larder, too. The kitchen overlooks the dining table and our living area. It's a really social space with plenty of room for people to sit and relax inside and out. We like yoga and wanted a terrace big enough to do it outdoors. And when the tide is high it almost feels like being on a boat.

#### What about upstairs?

John and I were looking to continue the neutral Scandinavian feel and create an extra snug. The first floor has three bedrooms, one of them ensuite, plus a utility and family bathroom. Our master suite is on the top floor and there's a terrace up there, too, which is lovely and private. We wanted to make sure we made the most of the amazing location, so alongside the downstairs opening up to the garden, we went for a balcony on the first floor. It's amazing how many people walking past on the beach want to talk – it took some getting used to.

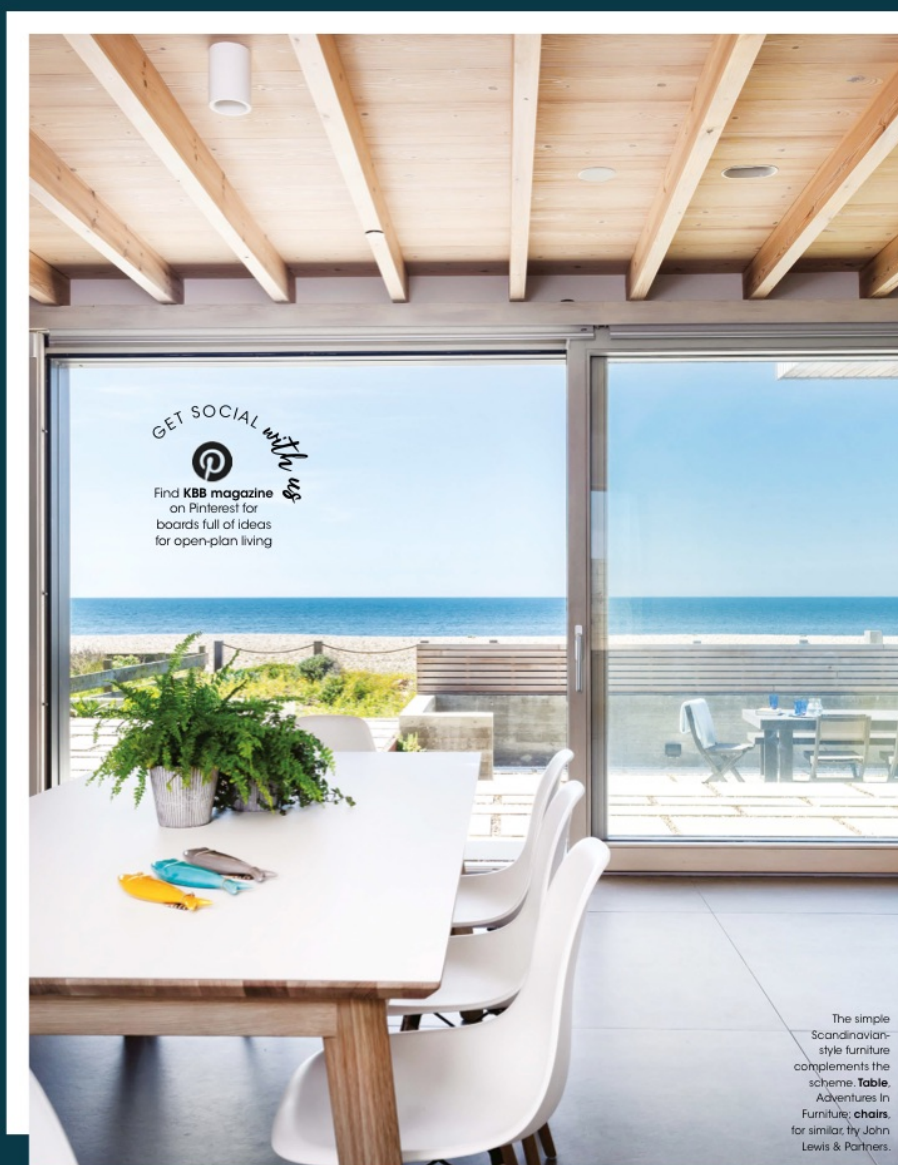
#### What's the best thing about the beach house?

When we are at our flat in London, I can't wait to visit. The summer is magical and I love to swim in the water – although somehow I prefer the winter months. I love a roaring fire and the wild sea. Everyone who comes to the beach is in a good mood, it's a very happy place.

The Egan's house is available for holiday lets. Visit [the-sea-house.com](http://the-sea-house.com) >







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The simple  
Scandinavian-  
style furniture  
complements the  
scheme. **Table**,  
Adventures In  
Furniture; **chairs**,  
for similar, by John  
Lewis & Partners.



The modular sofa, from Ikea, is the perfect fit for the living space. The paint throughout is Strong White from Farrow & Ball. Leather chair, West Elm.

## The PLANS

Debra and John wanted an open-plan kitchen-living-diner in their new-build home, with a master bedroom on the second floor.

**1 The kitchen** has been designed to allow functional prep space with natural light over the worktop, a more sociable area at the island and a framed view of the sea from the sink.

**2 Lost voids** have been used for clever storage solutions – for example the media unit sits flush into the wall under the stair recess.

**3 The master suite** has been designed on the top floor to allow complete privacy and a feeling of separation from the main spaces.



## SOURCEBOOK

**Architect** iRX Architects 01797

217220 [irxarchitects.com](http://irxarchitects.com)

**Kitchen and bathroom units**

Chartwood Design 07545 238800

[chartwooddesign.com](http://chartwooddesign.com)

**Kitchen worktops** Stonewright UK

01233 650944 [stonewrightuk.com](http://stonewrightuk.com)

**Kitchen tap** Vola [home.vola.com](http://home.vola.com)

**Boiling-water tap** Quooker 0345

833 3555 [quooker.co.uk](http://quooker.co.uk)

**Floor tiles** Domus 020 8481 9500

[domusgroup.com](http://domusgroup.com)

**Appliances** Gaggenau

[gaggenau.com](http://gaggenau.com)

For full stockist information,  
see page 142 >





*Rob Pollard, RX Architects*  
**PROJECT LOWDOWN**

"The focus on sustainability was at the forefront when drawing up plans for Debra and John's new house. The building is passively heated and cooled by a pair of 90m-deep bore holes, which act as a ground-source heat pump. They take energy from the ground and turn it into warmth for the house, but the process also can be reversed to cool it. There is an integrated mechanical ventilation with heat recovery system that constantly allows fresh air in; solar panels on the roof; and the property is highly insulated and air tight with heavy-duty triple glazing. All of this together results in extremely low running costs and CO2 emissions. The setting presented some design challenges. The high winds and driving rain are important factors to consider when designing on the beach. The sand and salt air can be very corrosive, so careful consideration of materials was needed."



The wood-burning stove by Dik Geurts is set into a concrete chimney breast that runs through the property.



## home style

1 Cosima Cer bench, from £583, Adventure In Furniture, [aif.london](http://aif.london) 2 Muuto Unfold pendant in Beige Green, £159, Nest, [nest.co.uk](http://nest.co.uk) 3 Victoria and Albert The Cole Collection Geo navy cereal bowl, £10, Kitchen Craft, [kitchencraft.co.uk](http://kitchencraft.co.uk) 4 Vertical stripe basket, £55, Braided Rug Company, [braided-rug.co.uk](http://braided-rug.co.uk) 5 Nona yellow set of four dinner plates, £40, Habitat, [habitat.co.uk](http://habitat.co.uk) 6 Rive Droite bistro table, £150, and set of two bistro chairs in Clay, £60, Garden Trading, [gardentrading.co.uk](http://gardentrading.co.uk) 7 Decorative metal palm leaf tray, £35, Cult Furniture, [cultfurniture.com](http://cultfurniture.com) 8 Thibaut industrial-style bar stool in black steel and Chicory, £119, Swoon, [swooneditions.com](http://swooneditions.com) 9 Siam chair in white, £362.50, Sweetpea & Willow, [sweetpeaandwillow.com](http://sweetpeaandwillow.com) 10 Twist Off Road matt porcelain floor tiles, £34.95 per sq m, Original Style, [originalstyle.com](http://originalstyle.com) 11 Urja yellow cushion, £55, Chandan Whittle, [chandanwhittle.com](http://chandanwhittle.com) 12 Strong White, £46.50 for 2.5 litres of Estate Emulsion, Farrow & Ball, [farrow-ball.com](http://farrow-ball.com) 13 Round kitchen mixer in gold and black, around £317 (AUS\$579), Meir Australia, [meir.com](http://meir.com) 14 Gronlind five-seat corner sofa in Tallmyra medium grey, £1195, Ikea, [ikea.com](http://ikea.com)