

INTO Excellence Awards Submission –
Open House Category

Heritage Regeneration in the Heart of St Helier, Jersey

Objective

To prevent the demolition of one of St Helier's most important remaining group of modest C18 and C19 buildings and find a sustainable solution for their long term preservation and future usage, including public access and enjoyment.



HIGHLIGHTS OF PROJECT:

1.

Having an alternative and feasible vision to prevent loss of historic buildings.

2.

Establishing key partnerships and securing support of national organisations.

3.

Classic example of a successful heritage led regeneration which secures public access and enjoyment.

Approach

To secure and demonstrate public support for the retention of the buildings so that both the owners of the site, The Channel Islands Co-operative Society, and the States of Jersey Planning Department would consider an alternative heritage led regeneration scheme. The Trust worked with Save Jersey's Heritage, to establish a professional team including an Architect, Quantity Surveyor, Chartered Surveyor and conservation consultant (all volunteers) to develop such a scheme which was economically feasible. This was then published in a brochure and launched to both the public and local media at the Parish Hall.

Support was also secured from a number of national organisations including INTO, The Prince's Regeneration Trust and The Georgian Group to emphasise that the project was of interest to national conservation groups outside the Island.

A petition was staged though Change.org which easily engaged the public at no cost to the Trust.

Following on from the campaign the following progress was made:-

- A States of Jersey debate supported the principle of safeguarding the buildings.
- Planning agreement was secured for the historic buildings to be saved
- Three of the historic buildings were gifted to the Trust for the sum of £1 by the Channel Islands Cooperative Society.
- Unfortunately two historic buildings were lost to the Channel Islands Cooperative Society to develop the rest of the site for a supermarket and Premier Inn.

£750,000 was secured though bequests to the Trust towards renovation costs of £1.4m.



Summary

After a 10 year long journey of campaigning and 18 months of renovation the three derelict buildings known colloquially as the Foot Buildings have been transformed into three apartments, a café and a local art gallery studio.

None of this would have been possible without a great deal of support and team work. From the initial campaigning with Save Jersey's Heritage, to the donation of the buildings from the Channel Islands Co-operative Society, to the generous financial bequests, to the architectural guidance of historic building consultants and the informed guidance of our engineers, Quantity Surveyors, Buildings Contractors and the excellent craftsmanship of the Trust's Properties Team.

The Trust properties border a renovated Pitt Street which has been resurfaced and transformed into a "Street of Light" as part of a Percentage for Art scheme financed by the Co-operative Society, who have also opened a Co-operative grocery store, with a new Premier Inn occupying the other corner of the site.

A stroll along the Street of Light leads you to "Lockes" Café serving food and coffee al fresco, an Art Shop displaying local art works and 3 apartments full of period detail and character with families 'living above the shop'. This enables a wider audience to experience built heritage as part of their everyday lives, as historic buildings provide a hugely important resource for new small startup businesses and creative enterprises.

Without doubt this project has come at a high price in relation to the Trust's limited resources, but it serves as an example of how partnerships can deliver successful heritage regeneration for St Helier. It is no longer acceptable or justifiable for developers to simply argue that historic buildings have to be demolished to make way for large scale development. With some imagination, compromise and good design, it is possible to safeguard our heritage, as well as provide scope for new build.

Whilst the total cost of renovation has been high for the Trust £1.4m, The Trust is now benefiting from rental income from the Lockes café, the three residential flats and the art gallery which will generate in the region of £80,000 per annum securing a regular and sustainable income for the Trust. This together with a successful heritage led campaign and regeneration programme demonstrates how creative thinking, campaigning, sheer determination and team work can make heritage assets more accessible and relevant in today's society.



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