A new dawn for St Columb’s Hall as future is



Conal McFeely (St Columb’s Hall Trust), Anne-Marie Gallagher (St Columb’s Hall Trust), Dr Paul Mullan (the Heritage Fund) and Helen Quigley (St Columb’s Hall Trust) inside St Columb's Hall.

An iconic venue that has been the backdrop to the political and cultural history of Derry/Londonderry will be re-awakened thanks to £751,727 National Lottery funding.

The Grade A listed St Columb’s Hall, first opened in 1886, is situated in the historic city's heart. Through their Aurora project, St Columb’s Hall Trust will undertake necessary restoration works to make the building safe and accessible, removing its at-risk status.

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>
> *Dr Paul Mullan, Northern Ireland Director, The National Lottery Heritage Fund*

The front of a stately building

St Columb's Hall in Derry/Londonderry

A platform for performance and activism

Often referred to as ‘the People’s Hall’, the space was immensely popular in its heyday. It attracted some of the world’s most iconic thinkers and performers, including:

- **Eleanor Marx-Aveling**, daughter of Karl Marx, who spoke at the Hall in 1889 to encourage workers to join their local union.
- **Emmeline Pankhurst**, who campaigned for women’s right to vote in a speech in 1910.
- **Éamon De Valera**, who rallied supporters to the cause of independence in 1924.
- Local tenors **Josef Locke and John McCormack**, who performed to sell out audiences.
- International artists **Roy Orbison, Chubby Checker, Ruby Murray and Val Doonican**.

More recently, the hit TV series **Derry Girls** filmed there.

Conal McFeely, Chairperson of St Columb’s Hall Trust, said: “One hundred and thirty four years after the first 'grand concert' was held in February 1889, it is apt that the great cultural events that were once a regular occurrence at the Hall will return again. All thanks to National Lottery players.

Large group of people gathered in historic photo

A large group gathers in 1886 as St Columb's Hall foundation stone is laid.

Re-establishing community connections

An exciting set of heritage activities will reconnect the community to the cherished venue. The Aurora project will work with people of all ages to research the hall’s heritage and plan for its future.

Conal McFeely said: “Part of our new and sustainable future is looking forward but also recording and acknowledging the efforts of our community in nurturing this wonderful asset over many years.”

Net zero ambitions

St Columb’s Hall will eventually re-open as a full-time, net zero events venue that demonstrates what is achievable in a heritage building.

Urgent repairs to the stonework and parapet levels will be carried out and three apprentices will learn heritage maintenance and restoration skills critical for maintaining the Hall into the future.

Dr Paul Mullan, Northern Ireland Director at the Heritage Fund, said*:* “St Columb’s Hall’s heritage and the experiences of its audiences and visitors live long in the memory. It’s exciting to anticipate a new chapter where employment, new skills, activities and events are on the horizon.”

Get involved

To take part in activities at St Columb’s Hall, sign up through the Aurora project.

Stay updated about our news in Northern Ireland

To stay updated about news of our Northern Ireland projects and funding:

- follow us on Twitter and Facebook
- sign up to our newsletter and select the ‘Northern Ireland’ option
- keep an eye on our dedicated Northern Ireland web page



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Ardal O’Hanlon presents the An Tobar team with their National Lottery Award. Credit: Bill Smyth Photography.



ry Project of the Year

Cleveland Pools, Bath. Credit: Historic England Archive



al Lottery support

Restoring and preserving the history of the Grand Opera House