Historic hotel is the first Heritage Enterprise venue



The ballroom at the Northern Counties building

Derry/Londonderry's historic Northern Counties building will reopen today as The Bishop's Gate Hotel following a £784,000 HLF grant.

The Northern Counties, which has sat vacant and derelict since 2006, has been brought back to life thanks to investment through HLF's Heritage Enterprise programme. Today's official opening of the 31-bedroom hotel, situated in the heart of the historic walled city, marks both a major milestone both for the regeneration of Derry/Londonderry and the Heritage Enterprise scheme.

The plan to transform the Northern Counties was the first to secure a Heritage Enterprise award in 2014. Now, with the major construction and restoration work completed, this much-loved but neglected building will be brought back into use as an economic asset for the city.

[quote=Ben Greener, HLF's Historic Environment Policy Advisor]"By bringing much-loved but derelict buildings back into use as viable businesses, Heritage Enterprise projects provide an economic shot-in-the-arm for those places which need it most."[/quote]

Heritage Enterprise is designed to help when the cost of restoring a historic building is so high that additional support is needed to make the project economically viable. In this case, HLF's investment has ensured that vital repairs and

conservation work to the 18th-century building can take place, enabling experienced businesses to move in and occupy the newly created commercial spaces.

The HLF grant is also supporting jobs, training opportunities and enhancing Derry/Londonderry's tourism offer. Over 130 people have been employed during the construction phase and the hotel itself will create up to 60 new jobs, greatly boosting the local economy. The hotel hopes to draw more visitors to this part of the city, sparking further regeneration across the nearby Cathedral Quarter.

Ben Greener, HLF's Historic Environment Policy Advisor, said: "In 2013, HLF introduced Heritage Enterprise to enable local people to save the buildings that they love. But this funding was never about simply saving a building for the sake of it. By bringing much-loved but derelict buildings back into use as viable businesses, Heritage Enterprise projects provide an economic shot-in-the-arm for those places which need it most. The Bishop's Gate Hotel is a great example of how HLF investment transforms unproductive eyesores into economic assets - bringing jobs, investment and renewed hope to Derry/Londonderry and beyond."

More on Heritage Enterprise

A wide range of projects across the UK have benefited from over £80million of Heritage Enterprise funding since 2013, helping to create attractive, thriving spaces for business and enterprise that people want to work and invest in. The programme is helping to create over 620 jobs and more than 19,000 trainee opportunities. It has also helped leverage millions of pounds of additional funding from government, local authorities and the private sector.

More information about Heritage Enterprise can be found on the Heritage Enterprise programme page.