

The Florence Institute shortlisted for prestigious architecture awards

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The Florence Institute in Liverpool is in the running for two major awards. The newly renovated visitor attraction is shortlisted for a prestigious Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Award, as well as a Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Building Conservation Award.

The Florence Institute, known locally as The Florrie, is believed to be the oldest surviving purpose-built boys club in the UK. It fell out of use in the 1980s and suffered over 20 years of neglect and vandalism, to a point of near collapse. The restoration project, largely funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) conserved the original building fabric and used the building's heritage to guide its regeneration as a contemporary community asset.

The restoration project was driven by the local community and volunteers who established the Florence Institute Trust, who operate and maintain the building. Designed to benefit the community, the building now provides a number of flexible uses including managed workspace for local business start-ups, a grand hall for events, community and social spaces including the original gym with a particular focus for youth activities, a café, crèche and a heritage resource centre.

Architect Robert Chambers, from Purcell, commented: "A phoenix from the ashes, The Florrie combines the finest of the old with contemporary design to make sure that it thrives in the 21st Century. Thanks to the quality of the original building and the dedication of the Florence Institute Trust and design team, the original fabric has survived fire, vandalism and neglect to become part of a now thriving community building. It is also testimony to the resolve and passion of the committed group of local people who sought to save the Florrie from ruin and demolition."

Denise Bernard, Chair of The Florence Institute Trust Ltd, stated: "This really has been a long journey for us all. I can recall back to the very first efforts to bring new life back to The Florrie in the mid 90s as a member of the first community steering group. After the major fire in 1999 which was catastrophic, all of our efforts to that date went up in smoke along with the building. The second campaign started in the early 2000s when Florrie was listed as a 'Building at Risk' and featured on the Liverpool Echo's 'Stop The Rot Campaign'. By 2005, a new charity was set up to take the project from a feasibility to a reality. My fellow trustees and I took that challenge with both hands and after some seven years, through tenacity and unity, our beloved Florrie was lovingly restored and re-opened. Our thanks go to the truly remarkable team involved – Professional Team (Purcell, Buro Four, Tweeds, 2020Liverpool, PLB); Main Contractor (William Anelays) and our Funders (HLF, ERDF, NWDA, The Tudor Trust, Garfield Weston, AHF and Liverpool City Council); who enabled this resurrection to happen."

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: "We are delighted that the Florrie has been shortlisted for this prestigious award. It is a reflection on the high-quality of the project, the hard work and dedication from everyone involved and the far-reaching benefits the project has delivered for local people. The Florrie has been given a new lease of life and is back in its rightful place - firmly at the heart of the community- and we at HLF are incredibly proud to have played our part as a funder."

The Florrie has already received two awards, including the IHBC North West Award for Conservation and the Civic Trust Community Recognition Award.

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) regional awards will be presented on 12th June 2013. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) awards for the North West will be announced on 9 May 2013.

Notes to editors

For over six decades, Purcell has been involved in the care and development of some of the best loved buildings and places in the UK and abroad. Their ambition is to create inspiring and enduring architecture both in the conservation of historic structures and the design of contemporary new buildings. From start to finish, their expertise includes funding and planning advice, heritage consultancy, conservation and architectural design across eight sectors.

Spread across 11 UK regional studios and one studio in Hong Kong, the talented team has the local knowledge and sector expertise to handle projects of all types and sizes. They actively seek opportunities that stand out, that will best benefit our clients, the community and the environment.

HLF awarded the Florrie a grant of £4.2million.

Further information

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