Unused All Souls Bolton transformed into state-of



On 6 December 2014, All Souls Church in Bolton will reopen to the public, revealing the results of a £4.9million scheme which has been 10 years in the making. The regeneration project recently won an English Heritage Angel Award for The Best Rescue of Any Other Type of Historic Building or Site and the Churches Conservation Trust is confident that All Souls, with its dramatic new design, will be a leading example of how a modern community space fit for the 21st century can be created within a once-neglected heritage building.

The project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) with a grant of £4.3m, the Churches Conservation Trust, English Heritage and Bolton Council, juxtaposes the original Grade II* listed Victorian architecture with two futuristic white pods erected inside the church, giving the building another 100 years of life by transforming it into a state-of-the-art community building for people of all faiths and none.

The church will be open from 9am–10pm daily, with a coffee shop on the ground floor and an at-table restaurant service during peak hours. Other floors host a mix of event and tenanted office space, with a flexible main large conference room that can also be used as a dance studio or cinema thanks to the building's music and film license. National educational charity Beanstalk is the first tenant.

Crispin Truman, Chief Executive of The Churches Conservation Trust, said: "When an important urban church like All Souls lies unloved and in danger, we have a duty not only to save it, but also to bring it back into use at the heart of its

community. This £4.9m regeneration project is the most ambitious and innovative in the 46-year history of The Churches Conservation Trust, and I am proud that after a decade of work this beautiful Victorian building has not only been saved, but also found a sustainable purpose that will see local people coming through the doors every day."

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said: "As the main funder of this innovative regeneration project we're delighted to see how effectively an unused church like All Souls has been transformed into a state-of-the-art facility for a wealth of community activities. It's a great example of how, with creative thought and strong partnerships, a much loved historic building can be reinvigorated and turned into something that serves the needs of those who live around it."

For the first time ever, visitors will be able to get up and close with the historic interior of the church via high level walkways designed to celebrate its architectural features. The new design will allow visitors to get much closer to the windows, war memorials and amazing timber roof of the church.

Nick Berry, OMI architects, said: "The form making in the new design is not arbitrary, but has connections with both the church and is local environs. The pods are rooted in a careful consideration of the building and its surroundings, and its link to the original 'urban grain.' The new design is also faithful to the church's original pillar free design - the pods are set back from the church entrance and their design enables an entirely unobstructed view of the church's east end ensuring uninterrupted views of the chapel and choir."

A typical example of the 200 urban churches featured on English Heritage's *at Risk Register*, All Souls, Bolton stood neglected, closed and facing a £1.5m repair bill. Only 2-3 people a year were visiting and it was a symbol of the decline of the northern industrial town. But local resident and All Souls Bolton Chair, Inayat Omarji, worked with The Churches Conservation Trust to change its fortune.

Inayat Omarji said: "We wanted to make the building useful to every person in the community and sustainable in the long term. Not only will the space be partially used as a future centre for heritage learning. There will be films exploring local history on interactive screens and a 'history wall' of community mementos and artefacts, and the building site itself has even been a location for teaching and promoting traditional heritage craft to members of the local community."

Throughout the construction programme, the National Heritage Training Group funded six paid training placements to local Bolton residents, on top of a series of free technical days for the general public, which focused on key heritage conservation skills.

This unique scheme is the latest innovative heritage regeneration project from The Churches Conservation Trust, which seeks to find sustainable uses for historic churches. It follows on from the success of St Pauls Church, Bristol, into a circus school. Their next major project is the transformation of St Mary at the Quay, Ipswich, into a wellbeing heritage centre, due to open in early 2016.

Notes to Editors

About All Souls' Church, Bolton

All Souls' Church was once a hub of the community in the Crompton area of Bolton. It was built in 1881 by an evangelical mill owner for a town of predominantly cotton mill workers. The 20th century saw a sharp decline in the British cotton industry, and the congregation gradually dwindled, whilst the area became increasingly multicultural. The church closed in 1986. Neglected, vandalised and plundered for its lead it fell into disrepair for two decades until The Churches Conservation Trust teamed up with the local to restore it to its pivotal role at the heart of Bolton.

The church will be open from 9am–10pm daily, with a coffee shop on the ground floor and an at-table restaurant service during peak hours. The other floors have a mix of event and tenanted office space, with a large flexible conference room on the first floor that can be used as a dance studio or cinema. The building will be run by a new charity, All Souls Bolton, and will also have a music and film license. Beanstalk, the national educational charity, is the first tenant.

- For information on the project so far, visit the Visit Churches website
- For more on the future of All Souls Bolton, visit the official All Souls website

About The Churches Conservation Trust

The Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) is the national charity protecting historic churches at risk. The charity has saved over 347 beautiful buildings which attract almost two million visitors a year. The CCT collection includes irreplaceable examples of architecture, archaeology and art from 1,000 years of English history.

The Trust is the operator of the third largest heritage estate in charitable ownership in the UK and has an international award-winning reputation in heritage conservation and regeneration. All CCT churches are listed, mostly Grade I and II*, and some are Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

Without the care of the CCT, the buildings they look after might have disappeared entirely. Instead they are enjoyed as social, tourism, educational or cultural resources, kept open, in use, and living once again in the heart of communities.

Established under Ecclesiastical Law on 1 April 1969 the charity receives its churches in the form of vestings from the Church Commissioners. All the CCT's churches remain consecrated and are used for occasional worship.

Further information
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