National Trust's new conservation studio at Knole



Conservator Carmen Video at work in Knole's new conservation studio James Dobson

A conservation studio at Knole in Kent is now open thanks to a National Lottery grant of £7.75million.

Knole, one of Britain's most complete historic houses, has a colourful past as an archbishop's palace, the home of the Sackville family for 400 years and the inspiration for Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando*.

Major project

The new conservation studio is part of a £19.8m building, conservation and restoration project to rescue the property from centuries of decay.

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Dame Helen Ghosh, the National Trust's Director-General, said: "Knole is one of the Trust's most important houses and this is an exciting moment where we can begin to open new spaces within this vast property to tell the story of its occupants and outstanding collections.

Fascinating items

Items from Knole's collection that will be conserved in the studio include:

- The famous 17th-century Knole sofa which sparked endless copies around the world
- The Royal 'Stool of Easement', an early form of 'loo' from the French 'lieux d'aisance', thought to have been used by Charles II

Ros Kerslake, HLF Chief Executive, said: "Our support has helped the National Trust successfully complete major restoration and reinterpretation work at one of the UK's most unusual and dramatic historic houses.

"Skills training is an integral part of the majority of projects we fund and thanks to the National Lottery, the new conservation studio will reflect that as part of the wider 'Inspired by Knole' project. Visitors will now be able to see a number of exhibits and rooms as well as watch conservation happening in real time."

More showrooms to open

Four important showrooms are also re-opening following completion of the first phase of building and restoration work.



Knole's dramatic Gatehouse Tower National Trust/Robert Morris

Knole's Gatehouse Tower opens to public for first time