

CUPOLA

TYNE & WEAR Building Preservation Trust **NEWSLETTER** SUMMER 2020

A warm welcome to our latest newsletter, it's been a while since our last.

We've been rather busy concentrating on the buildings, meaning less time to focus on our members, so to make amends we've written a communication strategy to focus our minds on getting more information about our work out there.

We've also condensed the newsletter format to two pages so we can issue these more frequently in future. If you have any queries about projects or membership, please contact our new Office Manager Corrina at: corrina@twbpt.org.uk

High Street West Sunderland

The start of the year was extremely positive for our three properties on High St West, Sunderland with funding from Architectural Heritage Fund, Sunderland City Council, Historic England, Pilgrim Trust and Garfield Weston Foundation.

On 6th January the contractor started work on a £750,000 phase of work to restore the shells and bring the ground floor units back to life. Covid 19 then led to a seven week closure of the site to protect the workforce and respond to the closure of supply chains for materials. We are now back on site and rebuilding momentum.

Progress on site has also been slow due to the condition of the middle building. In the early 1800's the first floor of the main building was removed to create a double height department store. The building was then extended backwards and they actually built off the garden walls to create a rear box. Structural issues have then been evident with a number of attempts to strengthen the building and finally steelwork was inserted in the 1930's to hold the building up.

Leave a building like this derelict for a decade and you will start to see problems. The picture shows the successful insertion of a steel box beam that will hold the roof of the building and stabilise the rotten second floor. This crane had inches to spare when driving into the space and has allowed us to save more historic fabric than initially planned.



Dunston Staiths

Can you believe this year marks 30 years since the 1990 Garden Festival? We had a packed open season planned, but then coronavirus arrived ...

And, while we were all busy dealing with the pandemic, arsonists struck in May resulting in a fire which burnt out a large section of the restored top deck making it impassable. Due to the structural damage, we have had to cordon it off completely until repairs can be funded, so sadly Staiths will remain closed for the foreseeable future.

Previously our application to Historic England for funding to do some urgent repairs over winter, was not successful. The change of focus to supporting failing high streets, unfortunately meant our bid was no longer deemed a priority. The future was looking bleak.

So, we had to have a rethink ... and the good news (finally!) follows a workshop with stakeholders held back in December, which has borne fruit - there is light at the end of the tunnel in our new partnership with the National Trust.

Supported by Gateshead Council and Historic England, The National Trust will work in partnership with TWBPT and Staiths Friends to produce a long-term plan to help secure a sustainable future for this much-loved structure which will include hopefully removing it from the Heritage at Risk Register.

The National Trust is delivering its strategic vision to work with partners to find solutions to challenges in the historic and natural environment which one organisation can't tackle alone. The National Trusts 'Playing Our Part' and 'Urban Places' strategies will see the Trust working more collaboratively with a range of partners to explore new approaches and find solutions. TWBPT will remain the freehold owners of the Staiths throughout this period. The partnership will work to enhance the iconic status of Dunston Staiths to grow people's love, enjoyment and their connection thus securing the future for the Staiths.



The biggest conservation charity in Europe, The National Trust has over a hundred years' experience of looking after the nation's coastline, historic sites, countryside and green spaces. The organisation is committed to supporting urban heritage projects in Gateshead such as at Dunston Staiths. Through this work it aims to strengthen the linkages between the river, the Riverside Park and the Staiths in order to increase the number of visitors, improve the facilities and enhance the visitor experience.

While Excelsior Club meetings are on hold currently, since the fire key-holders have been holding virtual 'Zoom' meetings to sort security, access for inspections, etc., and what an amazing job they are doing! Donations are flooding in to the fundraising campaign, thanks to excellent press coverage and the fact that so many people just love the Staiths!

We have had a number of donations over the past year specifically for new decking boards (with inscribed plaques) and we are looking at installing some over land on the lower deck when we carry out repairs, as we don't have the funds for scaffolding and H&S equipment required for installations at height over water currently.

Go to the fundraising page and www.facebook.com/Staiths/ for updates.



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