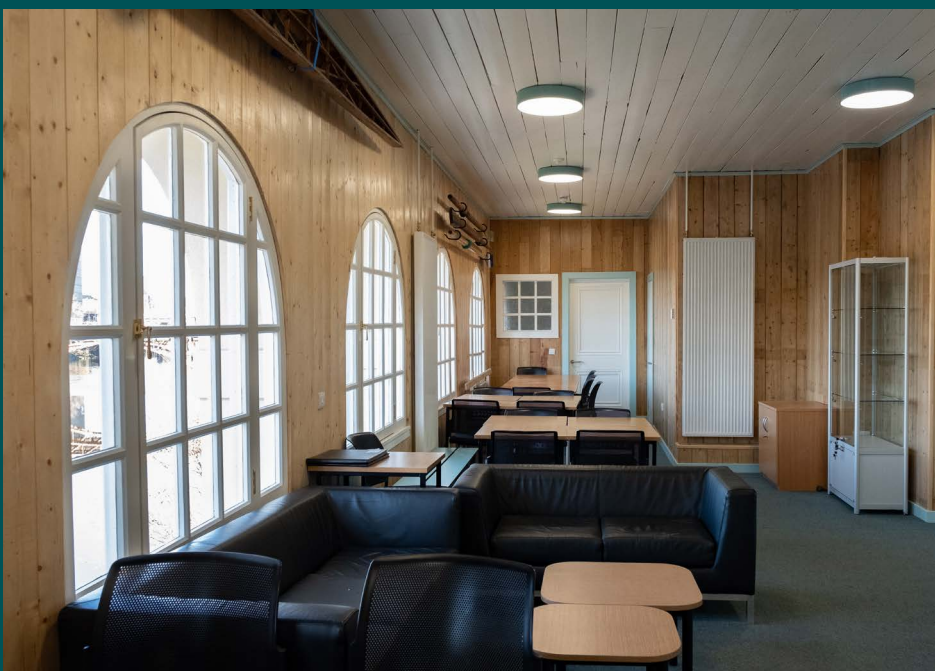
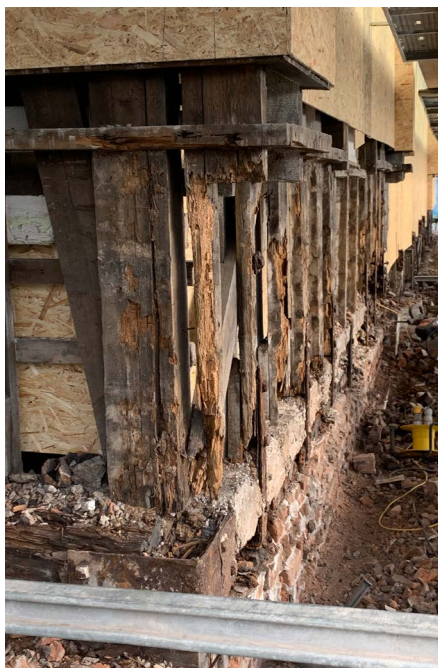




Heritage
Trust
Network

West Boathouse, Glasgow Building Preservation Trust

Founded in 1982, Glasgow Building Preservation Trust is a charity that repairs and repurposes historic buildings by converting them for viable, sustainable new uses. They work with community groups, charities, local authorities and social enterprises to help give new life to old buildings, taking on some of the most challenging projects that no one else is willing or able to tackle.



Photographs from top left: wet rot at the southwest corner of the building; boatbuilders from Glasgow Disability Alliance with one of the skiffs they built (both © GBPT); the boathouse after renovation; and the renovated interior of the clubroom (both © David Collie).

THE WEST BOATHOUSE

Glasgow Green, shaped by the Clyde, has been the heart of the city's sporting life and home to its rowing community for over 200 years. Situated on the north bank, just upstream from the tidal weir, is the West Boathouse. Built in 1905 by City Surveyor A. B. McDonald, the boathouse stands out along the river. While austere from Glasgow Green, it dramatically rises from the banks when viewed from the water. Its arched windows, recessed eaves, and cantilevered balconies reflect the popularity of rowing in the early twentieth century, when regattas drew large crowds and influential members helped secure its prime location.

THE PROJECT

By the late 1990s, Glasgow City Council, who own the building, were becoming increasingly concerned with the condition of the West Boathouse. Historically, the resident clubs had carried out essential repairs and maintenance, but the building now faced significant structural problems. In 2015, Glasgow Building Preservation Trust (GBPT) began working with the rowing clubs and Glasgow City Council to explore options to save the building.

Time was running short: surveys of the building revealed the below-ground timber foundations were deteriorating rapidly. Of the original 30 timber foundation piles, 28 had wholly rotted through. The exterior cladding was in danger of collapse, and the roof leaked like a sieve. Interior facilities were outdated, and the accessibility of the building was, by modern standards, very poor.

After several years of hard work and generous funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, Glasgow City Council and many others, the £2.8 million 'Rejuvenation of the West Boathouse Project' got underway in 2019. This included an extensive community engagement programme, with a focus on river and sporting heritage.

The capital works included:

Adaptations

- Removal of the internal party-wall to open up spaces, consolidate circulation and create shared accommodation and facilities.

- Making the building accessible for all users, with a central protected stair and lift enclosure providing access to the upper floor with accessible facilities.
- Enhancing the environmental performance of the building with an efficient service installation and an insulated envelope.
- A pontoon to improve access to the river and alterations to the perimeter fencing to improve safety on the riverbank.

Conservation repairs

- Replacement of timber piles and sub-structure with concrete piles and ground beams to future-proof the timber superstructure from riverbank subsidence.
- Repairs to the unique timber structure.
- Replacing non-original masonry and render cladding with a lightweight flexible render and reinstating the original quoin details, lost since 1914.
- Replacing non-original 'courtrai' roof tiles with new clay tiles to match original details.
- Repairing original timber windows and doors, with a few replacements on a like-for-like basis.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

While sporting heritage lay at the core of the project, the story of the river upstream of the weir – the 'rowing reach' – provided the most compelling and accessible vehicle for wider audience engagement. The engagement and outreach programme took a holistic approach to heritage, with activities and approaches

designed to blend the cultural and natural heritage.

From 2019 to 2023, over a thousand volunteers contributed almost four thousand hours of their time to a range of projects that included boat building with Glasgow Disability Alliance, biodiversity monitoring and litter picks, developing nature walks with The Conservation Volunteers, filmmaking with local schoolchildren, celebrating the sporting heritage of the city's east end, and cataloguing and digitising the rowing clubs' heritage collections.

CHALLENGES

Like many other projects, significant delays and disruptions due to the Covid-19 pandemic had a major impact on the capital works and community engagement programme. There were also nationwide materials and skills shortages to contend with. Careful planning, value engineering, and supportive funders ensured the project was able to continue to completion, and the overall costs did not rise substantially.

THE FUTURE

The future of the West Boathouse extends beyond its physical restoration. Sustainability initiatives will anchor its ongoing legacy, with a focus on river conservation and responsible stewardship and widening access to both the building and the sport of rowing.

For more information, visit:
westboathouse.org.uk
www.gbpt.org

Members can discover more
case studies in our online Toolkit.

To find out more about becoming a member,
talk to our team or visit:
www.heritagetrustnetwork.org.uk

If you would like your project to feature as a case study email:
admin@heritagetrustnetwork.org.uk



Case study funded by:



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA

Heritage Trust Network is a charity registered in England and Wales, Charity No. 1167662,
and Scotland, Charity No. SC047537. Registered as a Company in England, No. 09943640.

Text and photography by Glasgow Building Preservation Trust.

Designed by www.ruskinlane.co.uk and printed on 100% recycled paper.

Map data © 2024 Google

