

The Piece Hall

Halifax

The Transformation Project

The Piece Hall Transformation Project in Halifax was a multi-million pound, Calderdale Council-led scheme to revitalise the unique, Grade I Listed Piece Hall and its courtyard. This project now forms the heart of the cultural quarter in Halifax and is a key driver for culture-led regeneration of the town centre and wider area.

The Piece Hall transformation was made possible by funding from the Council, a generous £7 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund – thanks to National Lottery players – and support from the Garfield Weston Foundation and the Wolfson Foundation.

The conservation strategy for The Piece Hall was to protect, reveal and enhance its most significant surviving elements while allowing the alteration and conversion of other features to accommodate viable new uses. Where interventions have been made they are of appropriate quality in their own right and contemporary in execution, recognising that history must be made in the 21st century as well as respected.

The development work included fabric conservation and restoration; installation of essential building services infrastructure; alterations to suit its new commercial and public uses and the creation of state of the art interpretation and education spaces.

At the heart of the project was the redevelopment of the central courtyard and the result is an attractive and thriving town square and events venue surrounded by a range of high quality, distinctive shops and cafes: a vibrant arena from morning to night, whether people are there for business, pleasure, entertainment, learning, participation or relaxation.

An independent charity, The Piece Hall Trust, was set up to run The Piece Hall for public benefit and to ensure the sustainable future of this magnificent building.

The courtyard's significance is founded on its extraordinary sense of place and the main aims of the new courtyard design were to deliver a design that is a disciplined and organised, simple and elegant, sensitive intervention in keeping with the distinctive character of The Piece Hall and celebrating its unique qualities. The concept for the new courtyard is a "square within a square". The sloping ground levels of the site were adjusted to create a large and flexible flat area in the centre of the courtyard, capable of accommodating as many events of all scales as possible. The terraced steps accommodating the changes in level around the central flat area are gathering places and great places to watch events from. All areas of the courtyard are accessible to those with disabilities or with prams or push chairs and ramps have been designed with shallow gradients that do not require handrails. The water features in opposite corners of the courtyard echo the springs and rivers which characterise Calderdale and the textile industry they generated. They also animate the space with sound and movement and have proven very popular with children as play areas.

A new entrance to the courtyard has also been formed in its east range and the courtyard now has entrances on all four sides, integrating it seamlessly with the surrounding town.

There is vehicular access to the courtyard to facilitate the installation of events infrastructure and a new underground utility services infrastructure has been installed to ensure The Piece Hall Trust can deliver events flexibly. A new lighting installation brings the courtyard to life at night and celebrates the architecture of the surrounding facades. A ground source heat pump has also been installed under the courtyard to service the adjacent new Central Library and Archives.

