

The Piece Hall

Halifax

One of the Greatest Town Squares in the World

The Piece Hall courtyard is an oasis at the centre of an urban realm designated as an outstanding conservation area. It serves the people of Halifax and visitors to Calderdale as an accessible public space and a venue for concerts, markets and performance events. The transformation, which involved public consultation throughout development, echoes the history of the building and restores the courtyard to its place at the heart of town, as a forum for all communities to share and enjoy.

The Piece Hall Trust's year-round programme of events has been devised to appeal to diverse audiences from across Calderdale, the north and beyond and retail and heritage spaces within the building aim to deliver an inclusive offer, responding to feedback from tenants, visitors and members of the public at every stage.

The project has physically broken down barriers to access by providing breakthroughs to the Orange Box young people's centre, Square Chapel Arts Centre and, through the creation of a new fourth gateway into the courtyard, to improve access from public transport and to provide a link to the new Central Library and Archives and Calderdale Industrial Museum. This creates a route through The Piece Hall to other cultural venues and town centre retailers. The courtyard offers seating, water features and views of Halifax's rural setting as well as shopping, dining and entertainment experiences. It is both vibrant and tranquil. The design includes a ground source heat pump to provide sustainable power for the Central Library and Archives, and teams from architecture, engineering, landscaping and heritage were all involved in setting the goals for the transformation.

The Piece Hall project has catalysed culture-led regeneration in Halifax. This multi-million-pound project, which attracted significant HLF funding and support from the Garfield Weston and Wolfson Foundations, sits beside a £6m Arts Council England supported capital project to redevelop Square Chapel Arts Centre and a new 21st Century Library and Archives. The cultural quarter development is part of a wider place-making scheme that has attracted a multi-million-pound investment for transport in Calderdale, with £40m earmarked for Halifax town centre. This infrastructure work includes pedestrian access to the town centre from public transport hubs.

The scheme has realised the potential of The Piece Hall and unlocked a sense of possibility that has genuinely changed how people feel about the town and themselves, as people who live and work here. A regular comment from the public is 'now we have somewhere to be proud of.'

The Piece Hall re-opened on 1 August 2017, and nearly 23,000 people came to celebrate on this historic day. The Piece Hall Trust's programme of free 'Welcome' events over three weekends in August attracted audiences of over 80,000 with nearly 300,000 visiting in the first month. The events attracted national media coverage with a reach of over 150m. Special previews were arranged for community groups, such as 150 refugees and people newly arrived in the UK who visited the installation Architects of Air: Albesia. During the first six months, The Piece Hall has attracted footfall of nearly 1.5m – meaning the Trust will far exceed the expected 1.6m footfall for the year. During August, 84% of day-trippers visiting The Piece Hall said that it was the main reason for their visit to Halifax. The recorded footfall for the five week Christmas Festival was 330,000 with a range of high profile events planned for 2018.

