



Press Release
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Dockyard's heritage building rated top sustainable structure in triple awards win

A Grade I listed building, originally used by dockyard workers to make rigging for warships in the 19th century, has been ranked top in three categories of a prestigious architecture awards programme.

The Fitted Rigging House at The Historic Dockyard Chatham won The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) South East Sustainability Award 2021 for its £8.2m preservation project. Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust was also named overall regional winner and Client of the Year.

The renovation has secured a sustainable future for the Trust's 80-acre site and enhanced facilities for visitors, volunteers and its nationally significant collection.

Richard Morsley, Chief Executive, Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust said: "We are delighted that the redevelopment of the Fitted Rigging House has been recognised by RIBA South East Awards 2021. This project exemplifies the Historic Dockyard Chatham's approach to preserving our unique heritage estate through the creative re-use and adaptation of historic buildings, reinforcing our belief that the most sustainable buildings are those which already exist."

Once a dilapidated, empty, post-industrial site, The Historic Dockyard Chatham is now a thriving, well-restored, world-class heritage visitor attraction.

Through creating new rental spaces for commercial tenancy, the two-year development has significantly increased the Trust's rental income and brought self-generated income into balance with the revenue costs of operating the site and the Trust's charitable activities.

Mr Morsley continued: “Working closely with Baynes and Mitchell Architects and supported by Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and a range of other charitable Trusts and Foundations, has allowed us to transform what was a significant heritage liability into an outstanding, award winning, asset.

“At The Historic Dockyard Chatham, we continue to strive for nothing less than excellence. Through our strategy of ‘Preservation Through Re-use’ we will continue to protect and develop this internationally significant heritage site, supporting our financial self-sustainability whilst enriching the experience of everybody who works, visits, lives and learns here.”

The Trust has worked tirelessly to create a whole range of facilities for public benefit to compliment the already highly successful commercial tenancy spaces. The Fitted Rigging House Project has enhanced the visitor experience in the 19th and 20th Century galleries (Steam, Steel and Submarines); created a new Volunteer Centre to greatly improve the work and rest facilities for 300 + volunteers; and enabled the Dockyard’s library and archive to be rehoused in appropriate conditions, improving accessibility for researchers and visitors.

A new Volunteer Centre marks an important step forward in enhancing facilities for the Trust’s volunteer workforce, who undertake a wide range of activities including operating the historic railway, maintenance of the historic warships, archive research, visitor support and a whole host of other activities.

The RIBA Awards and prizes have championed and celebrated the best architecture in the UK and around the world for the last 50 years.

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MORE PRESS INFORMATION

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Notes to Editors

About Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust

The Historic Dockyard Chatham has over 100 buildings and structures, including 47 Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The site is in the stewardship of the independent charity, Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust (No. 292101).

The Trust's dual objectives of education and preservation are achieved by a strategy of preservation through reuse. Some of the buildings are open to visitors; others are occupied by residential tenants, businesses, and faculties of the University of Kent.

As a fully accredited museum, the Trust collects, preserves, researches and exhibits objects and materials connected with the history of the dockyard and its people. It studies the development of Royal Navy warship design, construction and the use of the River Medway by the Royal Navy. The Historic Dockyard Chatham presents unrivalled status as the most complete and best-preserved dockyard of the Age of Sail anywhere in the world. It immerses audiences in a mighty feat of preservation, innovation education and heritage. It offers access to the ships that shaped the world, from a Victorian antislavery sailing ship, to a Second World War Destroyer and a Cold War submarine as well as the stories of the people who made them. From historic buildings, including the Commissioner's House and officers' quarters to the remarkable Victorian ropery, where the rigging for HMS *Victory* was made, to its collection of maritime archaeology, the Dockyard forms an indispensable part of Britain's naval history and its national heritage.

Visitors to and users of The Historic Dockyard Chatham are fundamental to its purpose and the economic reuse of the site and its buildings. Its staff and volunteers play a vital role in providing a high level of service and customer care. The Trust is also involved in the ongoing regeneration of Medway and The Thames Gateway, with Culture and Heritage at its heart.

As part of the Trust's strategy of "Preservation through re-use" recent projects have secured the long-term financial sustainability (on a revenue basis) of the wider Historic Dockyard site. The economic outputs from the new uses of the recently opened Fitted Rigging House as well as other activities across the site will bring the total annual contribution made to Medway's economy to £26.3m in 2019, building on the 2012 estimate of £16m (64% growth).