

# **HISTORIC COVENTRY**

## **A VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

### **A BOLD AMBITION**

Historic Coventry Trust was founded as the Charterhouse Coventry Preservation Trust in 2012. Initially there was a singular vision, to restore the Charterhouse Estate and open it to the public. The Trust has since grown in ambition and scope.

Now, the Trust has a bold new mission: to act as the champion of all heritage at risk in Coventry and to become its permanent guardian. To acquire, restore, reuse and regenerate Coventry's heritage buildings for the benefit of the public and to ensure a sustainable future for each building. With clear leadership, Historic Coventry will become a haven for the city's heritage in perpetuity – a local 'National Trust'.

By making the most of the city's ancient and modern heritage assets, the Trust will make a significant contribution to Coventry's economic, social and cultural growth. This innovative large scale approach will make heritage a key element in the regeneration of the city and the improvement of its image.

By focusing first on nationally significant heritage assets, especially those currently at risk, Historic Coventry will help boost civic pride and improve understanding of its unique heritage, attracting new investment through tourism and culture, and supporting Coventry's economic ambitions into the future.

Historic Coventry's core task may be to protect the buildings of the past, but its vision is firmly focused on the future.

### **THE FORGOTTEN CAPITAL**

Coventry has a rich and compelling history – often overlooked by those visiting Kenilworth, Warwick or Stratford in search of historic Warwickshire.

Emerging from the Forest of Arden in the Saxon period, and brought to prominence by the Benedictine monastery founded by Leofric and Godiva, Coventry was the centre of national affairs throughout the medieval period. The city has twice held Parliament, been home to the courts of 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century kings and hosted Henry VII, Henry VIII, Mary I, Elizabeth I and James II.

As the regional capital of the Midlands, and the effective Capital of England at times during the Wars of the Roses, Coventry is a city steeped in heritage. Largely forgotten for 300 years, the city re-emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a centre for the manufacture of bicycles, armaments and motor cars. The Blitz and the post war development of modern Coventry consumed much of the ancient city, yet many of its buildings still remain, although dislocated, forgotten or underused. The post war redevelopment of the city that led the world in design and hope for Peace and Reconciliation provides a powerful layer of more recent history that is an important part of Coventry's story. Whilst other major cities have used their history to their advantage, until now Coventry's has been largely overlooked.

The Trust's view is that there doesn't need to be a choice between heritage buildings and a modern, growing city. Regeneration including the reuse of our historic assets can protect our heritage, deliver growth and make the city more interesting. The vision is to protect what remains of the last 1,000 years of Coventry's history, maintaining it for the next 1,000 and beyond, but also to make it a key element of the city's growth, not a barrier.

## **WHY COVENTRY?**

Coventry sits at the heart of Warwickshire – a county rich in heritage and history. Tourists from across the world flock to destinations such as Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwick, contributing £1.5bn to the West Midlands economy in heritage tourism alone. With the tourism market currently booming, there is an opportunity for Coventry to benefit from, and contribute to, this growth.

The city's location, at the centre of the country, puts 40m visitors within 2 hours travel time, making Coventry ideally placed to cater for growing numbers of tourists from both the UK and overseas. Current visitor numbers are very low compared to comparable cities and the potential for growth is substantial.

## **A CREDIBLE, SUSTAINABLE PLAN**

The key factor for any heritage organisation is the generation of sustainable revenue to maintain the buildings. The Trust's solution to the revenue issue is permanent income from an estate of restored heritage property that funds maintenance and the Trust's running costs across the portfolio. The Trust is both a charity and a social enterprise that like a property investment company uses the revenue generated from buildings in economic use to generate income. The income is used to fund the shortfall from less viable buildings in more social use, education and engagement with the community. The aim is to generate a revenue surplus that can be used to fund future restoration of buildings at risk.

The Trust has a very long term view. It aims to take over the freehold ownership of as much of the city's heritage as possible, with the portfolio growing over time. Much of this may be let on long leases to commercial owners, but the freehold will give the Trust control over maintenance and provide capital injections for future generations when long leases expire. During the initial period whilst properties are being restored, the Trust will need support from heritage agencies, but within five years it plans to be self-sufficient, covering costs.

This is a long-term plan, with a long-term sustainable future.

## **CLEAR LEADERSHIP**

Historic Coventry has a team of local and national experts committed to delivering this ambitious vision, with extensive experience of partnership regeneration projects, cultural programmes and financial planning.

The Board of Trustees includes representative the public, private and higher education sectors including Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Coventry University and The Prince's Foundation. A Strategic Board is planned, to include the city's major institutions and business leaders, which will input into the business plan and ensure long term resilience and support.

Supported by a willing team of volunteers, the local community, and expert consultants as required, the Historic Coventry team is ideally placed to deliver our vision.

## **THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN**

The 14<sup>th</sup> century Charterhouse sits at the heart of the planned 70 acre Heritage Park, which is the Trust's flagship project. A Grade 1 listed site of national importance, The Charterhouse is the only Carthusian monastery in the UK to have survived with any intact interior features, which include one of the country's finest Medieval paintings. Converted into accommodation for the Elizabethan Court by Robert Dudley, who commissioned another two stunning wall paintings, The Charterhouse was gifted to the people of Coventry in 1940 as a museum but has never been open to the public.

The Trust acquired The Charterhouse in 2013 and has worked up detailed plans for its restoration as a visitor attraction with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Subject to securing the necessary match funding, work on an £8m project will commence in 2018. The visitor destination will showcase the rich history of the building from the Carthusian monks through to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. With a new café and planned conference venue, The Charterhouse will offer an outstanding resource for business and the community with on-site learning, event programmes and family activities.

The Charterhouse forms the centrepiece of the wider 70 acre Heritage Park, which includes the Grade 1 Arboretum Cemetery, designed by Joseph Paxton in 1846, and a viaduct designed by Robert Stephenson in 1838 on the world's first major railway. The overall park includes a 2 mile riverside and woodland walk through a landscape rich in wildlife.

## **#THISISCOVENTRY**

Coventry has become successful in its bid to be UK City of Culture 2021, which will act as a platform for the city to show the UK what we can offer. The Trust is a firm partner in supporting the bid and delivering its projects. Coventry's heritage will play a huge part in the year of culture which provides a timeline driving project delivery by 2021.

There is a new momentum in the city. A new energy and cultural impetus that has brought together the public and private sectors, artists and industry which will persist and Historic Coventry will continue to play a leading role.