

## NEW GATE ARTS &amp; CULTURE CENTRE, LONDONDERRY

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## QMAC COMPLETES £1.7M REDEVELOPMENT OF NEW GATE ARTS & CULTURE CENTRE

QMAC CONSTRUCTION SUCCESSFULLY REVITALISES NEW GATE ARTS CENTRE, BLENDING HERITAGE PRESERVATION WITH MODERN FUNCTIONALITY...

❖ The £1.7m redevelopment of New Gate Arts & Culture Centre in the Fountain Estate area of Londonderry by QMAC Construction Ltd, marks a significant milestone in urban heritage revitalisation. The Department for Communities initiated the venture in 2016 to establish 20-22 Hawkin Street as a cultural hub for the North West Cultural Partnership (NWCP). The expansion aimed to accommodate growing demand for cultural programmes and services, necessitating the redevelopment and extension of the existing building. QMAC Construction Ltd was selected through a competitive tender process by Derry City & Strabane District Council to execute the project under a NEC3 Option A contract. Work involved the refurbishment, alterations and the construction of an extension to the

existing arts centre to provide space for a new theatre, café, dance studio, multi-purpose rooms, office space and rooftop terrace. The project is due to be awarded the targeted BREEAM 'Very Good' rating. As the redevelopment of the building unfolded, each aspect was meticulously approached to honour its historical significance and ensure a seamless integration of modern elements. To address the unique challenges posed by the aging structure, a heritage approach was adopted from the outset. This decision laid the foundation for preserving the building's character while accommodating the extensive renovation work required. One crucial consideration was the acoustics within the space. To ensure optimal sound quality, a consultant was enlisted to design and implement solutions that met reverberation requirements, enhancing the

overall auditory experience. Among the standout features was the installation of a large bi-folding acoustic door, crafted with copper-coloured anodised aluminum sheeting to complement the building's brick façade. Sourcing this specialist component proved challenging, with only one supplier in Europe capable of meeting the project's exact specifications. This was etched to produce the required finish. A steel frame door with aluminium panels was installed to provide access to the rear yard. This had a brushed anodised perforated bronze finish to match the cladding panels. Alterations to the drainage system required a full redesign to optimise efficiency and prevent potential issues. Similarly, the construction of the three-story steel frame extension required

adjustments to accommodate the complexities of the infill site. The restoration of the 9-inch thick external walls presented its own set of challenges. The original sand and cement lime render were removed. On the inside the finish was made good. For the external side, a mesh was installed followed by a lime render. Collaboration with the Structural Engineer was essential to address loose brickwork and ensure structural integrity. Throughout the project, a high specification of construction was delivered, with a focus on implementing modern amenities such as underfloor heating while preserving the building's heritage elements. Temporary works played a significant role in facilitating the construction process. The Structural Engineer acted as Temporary Works Designer and the Contract Manager as Temporary Works Coordinator. Dust, noise and vibration were all monitored as the site was in an urban area with neighbouring residents. In addition to meeting technical challenges, the project met social value criteria by engaging local supply chain members, delivering community presentations and hosting site visits from community groups.

Heritage preservation efforts extended to restoring doors, refurbishing windows, and revitalising a brass letterbox, underscoring the commitment to honouring the building's rich history. A render and lead design with blockwork and steel upstands for the dance studio balcony was identified by the site management team as liable to cause future damp ingress. It was therefore redesigned accordingly in consultation with the Architect and accepted. A period of significant inflation was experienced during the construction period. This became a risk factor which was managed daily along with material lead-times to protect the Critical Path. The achievement of a Flemish bond feature in the brickwork served as a testament to QMAC's commitment to craftsmanship and attention to detail.

### COMPLETION

Commenting on the project, Jack Bothwell, Contracts Manager at QMAC Construction Ltd, said, "Overall, this was a challenging project. It involved many aspects including the restoration and refurbishment of an old building, the integration of new

services, the construction of a modern extension to marry with the existing building, the specialist fit-out of a theatre space to meet acoustics requirements, working within a confined footprint with neighbouring residents and restricted space for material storage - all within a dedicated Conservation Area. The key was pre-planning the construction sequence using weekly activity plans, as well as assigning site management and supply chain members who were each experienced in heritage projects. We wish NWCP every success for the future."

### PROJECT TEAM...

<b>Client:</b> North West Cultural Partnership
<b>Main Contractor:</b> QMAC Construction Ltd
<b>Architect:</b> McGurk Architects
<b>Structural Engineer:</b> Design ID
<b>NEC Project Manager:</b> Faithful + Gould
<b>Mechanical Contractor:</b> Mooney Mechanical Installations Ltd
<b>Electrical Contractor:</b> KMDL Engineering NI Ltd