

## Whitehaven property given new lease of life

A WHITEHAVEN town centre property has received a new lease of life thanks to a transformational heritage scheme.

32 James Street, which has stood vacant for over 15 years, will soon reopen as a new retail unit following a £160,000 refurbishment, assisted by a £112,000 grant through the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI).

The work on the 18th century building has resulted in the creation of a shop on the ground floor and a three-bedroom flat on the upper floors. Work included structural support, window repairs, a new shop front, renewed heating, lighting and plumbing and the introduction of mobility access to the premises.

The property is located between Taste café and Seven hair salon and the new business is set to open in the spring. The work was carried out by local builder Ian Harvey, who has considerable knowledge of working on heritage projects.

It is owned in partnership by three sisters. John Cowan, the husband of one of the owners Fiona Cowan, said: "Through the funding we have been able to completely refurbish the building turning it into a ground floor business premises with a three bedroom flat upstairs. The property has been vacant for over 15 years and this money has enabled us to bring the building up to standard, and create a new business premises for the town."

The THI brings heritage properties back into use by helping applicants sympathetically repair their properties using traditional methods and materials. It is partnership led by Copeland Council and, thanks to National Lottery players, receives almost 50 per cent of its funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund with the balance from Copeland Council, Britain's Energy Coast and Cumbria County Council.

A total of five properties in the Market Place/James Street area of town have now been renovated as part of the project, including The Foyer, New Hong Kong, Timeless Beauty and Little Whims, with a further five to be completed in the next year.

Mike Starkie, Mayor of Copeland, said: "The THI has been a transformational scheme for Whitehaven and it is wonderful to see another project come to fruition, and it is rewarding to see another long-term empty property being brought back into use.

"The Market Place and James Street area of town, for which the THI money was granted, has enjoyed a new lease of life thanks to this innovative scheme."

Councillor Mike McVeigh, Copeland's Heritage Champion, added: "Our historic buildings are some of Whitehaven's biggest assets, and not only preserving but enhancing them is another major boost; both to the regeneration of the town centre and to assist the creation of new businesses."

Kerry Maxwell OBE, Chairman of the THI Stakeholder Partnership, said: "It's wonderful to see the whole square revitalised, and fantastic to see another building back in use and another business open in the town."



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