



**Seventeen  
Nineteen**

## **Seventeen Nineteen – Holy Trinity Sunderland Frequently Asked Questions**

### **ABOUT THE PROJECT**

#### **What is the project Vision:**

*The Holy Trinity Regeneration project will reconnect the city with its past by transforming Holy Trinity into a cultural and heritage venue that brings the stories of the church and Old Sunderland to life through interpretation, events and performances.*

Project outcomes:

- Establish a thriving new venue in Sunderland for culture, heritage and learning.
- Repair and conserve Holy Trinity, saving it for future generations.
- Adapt the building for increased use and provide it with a sustainable business plan.
- Increase its use and income through new events, activities and wider audience participation.
- Celebrate and mark the 300th anniversary of Holy Trinity
- Provide two apprentice opportunities with the contractor and deliver a craft skills training programme, increasing the skills and knowledge of target audiences and improving employability.
- With the community co-produce an engaging and creative activity programme that explores storytelling in all its forms.
- Deliver a range of new interpretation materials, products and experiences.
- Provide a training and development programme for new volunteers and deliver a step change in volunteer numbers.
- Through partnership work, lever in investment to an economically deprived area and change perceptions of heritage amongst the local community.

#### **What will the space be when it reopens?**

We are creating a new cultural and heritage visitor destination in the very heart of 'Old Sunderland' - the birth of the city as we know it today. It will be a welcoming, warm place for everyone with a love of Sunderland, heritage and culture - somewhere where the stories of Old Sunderland can come alive through beautiful interpretation and a vibrant programme of events and activities; - a space to hire and inspire all who come through the doors.

#### **What can the community do there?**

##### **Enjoy a range of activities to learn about the stories of Old Sunderland:**

- Cabinet of Curiosities - Using the Vestry safe as space for precious Old Sunderland objects, alongside donated objects from the local community
- We will programme a series of heritage walks, talks and storytelling sessions for various audience groups.
- Sounds of Old Sunderland - A series of sound recordings will be available to listen to on site which explore different aspects of the area's heritage

##### **Adults, families and children can take part in the Holy Trinity education programme:**

- A mix of adult confidence building activities and events, including performance, Community Choirs and Movement Workshops
- Church Mice Tales - A family trail around the church exploring the stories of Holy Trinity and Old Sunderland.
- A schools programme that links Holy Trinity closely with curriculum subjects such as history, English (storytelling) geography, art and design.

##### **A place for the local community to drop in and enjoy:**

- The space can be accessed by community members and visitors to the area who are welcome to enjoy the church as a social space.



**Churches  
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- Meet up with friends and neighbours at a 'Bring your lunch, grab a coffee' lunchtime social or performance
- Take part in a series of memories / reminiscence events or take time out of the day for reflection in the lady chapel.

### **A place to attend and enjoy for a range of performances:**

- Gigs and concerts from a mixture of local and national artists
- Community Art Commissions - exhibiting community art that interprets the stories of Sunderland
- Theatre performances (plays, spoken word, dance) and community workshops

### **Spaces to hire for group or individual use:**

- The nave for a celebration or a concert
- The vestry for a community meeting or special dinner
- The library for a family activity or a story classroom

### **For all to take part in annual events, which are part of the citywide cultural offer:**

- Christmas by Candlelight and New Year Celebration
- We Love the Georgians Week
- Heritage open days

### **A chance to volunteer, learning new skills and connecting with others:**

- Volunteer Training Programme - we aim to provide all volunteers with the opportunity of developing their skills and learning
- An opportunity for young people to get involved with the running of Holy Trinity and to sit on our Advisory Panel
- Volunteers will be able to learn conservation skills and work with objects held at Holy Trinity and at other CCT sites

### **How is the site managed?**

- By 1 full time Centre Manager (Tracey Mienie), supported by 1 full time Participation and Engagement Officer (to be recruited at the start of 2020).
- Some events and activity supported by seasonal staff
- Dedicated team of volunteers to help with day to day running and activity, alongside 'micro-volunteer projects' that are time limited and concentrate on specific tasks such as research, fundraising, marketing etc.

### **What is the space going to be called?**

Seventeen Nineteen; Holy Trinity will always be the name of the church, which is still a consecrated building. To save the building, and bring it back into use, its main purpose will no longer be as an active place of worship. We are aiming to find a name that will reflect its new use, so that people associate the name with that new use.

At the CCT we have successfully done this with other regeneration projects, for example, St Mary at the Quay is now Quay Place. In Sunderland, the regenerated fire station is called The Engine Rooms. We are not trying to forget that Holy Trinity was once an active place of worship (that's key to the story we are trying to tell). We would like to provide a brand identity that captures and embraces the heritage of the site that lets people know it is now a community space for cultural exploration, heritage learning and a performance space.

### **What is the history of Holy Trinity East End?**

Holy Trinity is located on Church Street in Sunderland's East End. It was completed in 1719 as the port's first parish church and at the time was at centre of the town of Sunderland. At different times in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the building also hosted the council rooms, the magistrate's court, the first public library for the town and the town's fire engine.





By 1851 the town of Sunderland had spread West, and the area around Holy Trinity church had become the 'East End' of the town.

The Church of England closed the Grade I listed church for worship in 1988. Shortly afterwards it came into the care of The Churches Conservation Trust (CCT), the national heritage charity protecting historic churches at risk.

Despite an investment by CCT of almost £500,000 on repairs and maintenance, the building was placed on Historic England's Heritage at Risk register in 2014.

To find a sustainable future for the building and to bring it back into daily public use, The Churches Conservation Trust has been working in partnership with local people and Sunderland-based organisations since 2012. The project partners include Sunderland City Council, The Cultural Spring, Sunderland Business Partnership, ATG Creative Learning team at Sunderland Empire Theatre, City of Sunderland College, University of Sunderland and Sunderland Music Education Hub to develop a sustainable future for the building as a multi-use cultural and community centre.

Following a local and national fundraising campaign in 2017, the plans for the building won an award of £2.8 million from National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to bring Holy Trinity back into use. Without this investment the building would have had to be closed permanently and was at risk of being lost entirely.

CCT are also a major partner in the Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) working with Sunderland City Council, Tyne and Wear Preservation Trust, Historic England and Sunderland Heritage Forum to revive historic Sunderland and reconnect it with the modern city centre. The aim of the HAZ is to help rejuvenate and unlock the potential of the area to help it achieve sustainable growth and includes an intensive programme of research, repair and regeneration, alongside community projects encouraging local people to get involved.

### **Who is the CCT and why are they responsible for Holy Trinity?**

The Churches Conservation Trust is the national charity protecting churches at risk for over 50 years. We care for the churches vested in us by the Church Commissioners of the Church of England. Led by our award winning Regeneration and Conservation team, repairing the damage from sometimes years of neglect, and work with local communities to bring them alive again.

Holy Trinity came into our care in 1988, when the local parish could no longer continue to use it as a place of worship, or afford to maintain it. Between 1988 and 2016 CCT has spent £461,133 on vital repairs, but this historic Grade 1 listed building required a much larger investment to carry out all the repairs needed to make it safe for the future and save for future generations.

### **Why were the pews removed from Holy Trinity?**

53 pews were removed from the church in 2018 following local consultations regarding preferred new uses. These pews were not the original Georgian box pews, but subsequent 'modern' early 20<sup>th</sup> century bench pews which we believe were installed in 1935.

The removal of nave seating allows for a variety of flexible seating arrangements and increased access for wheelchairs, pushchairs and people with limited mobility. The pews were removed in order to free up floor space for multiple and mixed uses, e.g. workshops and classes, rehearsals, performances, and concerts, and to allow greater access throughout the building.

Removal of pews from working and former churches is increasingly common practice, as communities require more flexible seating arrangements and improved access.





In order to remove the 20<sup>th</sup>-century pews, CCT consulted with over 500 local people, Historic England and Church of England, including the local vicar, and sought permission from Sunderland City Council in accordance with listed building planning law.

### **How were local people consulted?**

Over a period of five years from 2013 to 2018, over 500 local people were consulted on their ideas for new uses for the building, which informed the new use plans for Holy Trinity.

Design plans, including the removal of the pews, have been on display at both the church and the Back on the Map community centre since 2013. In summer 2016 there was a consultation event with the architect on site to answer any queries from the local community.

### **Why were the pews not disposed of locally?**

As part of our exploration of disposal options, we approached a range of interested parties including the Diocesan Advisory Committee, the national Church of England Contents Register, and representatives on our Holy Trinity Advisory Group. In the absence of interest we then approached local architectural salvage companies; however the only firm offer to take the pews came from Church Antiques, a reputable national company specialising in ecclesiastical furniture.

### **What happened to the pews?**

The pews were sold to an established dealer in ecclesiastic furniture. The money that was raised from the sale was put toward the funds needed to adapt the building for community use and restoration of highly significant historical items such as the 1719 William Etty font.

### **Why is the organ being removed?**

The organ in its present state is the work of H J Nelson & Co of Durham and dates from 1936. A composite instrument, it is reputed to contain material from an earlier organ installed secondhand in 1889 by Alfred Monk, which came from Crouch Hill Presbyterian Church. This instrument was located in the same position as the present one and superseded an organ built by John Davies of Bishopswearmouth in 1827, which was sited at the rear of the west gallery.

Although previously Grade II listed, the organ was de-listed in 2017 following a review by the British Institute of Organ Studies (BIOS), the UK's independent expert body for pipe organs. This concluded that rather than an instrument built by Henry John Nelson in 1936, as was previously thought, the organ is a composite instrument most likely brought together by H J Nelson's sons in the year after Nelson's death at a time of considerable economic stringency in the North-East. (Full report available to interested parties.)

The organ is not regularly used at present and there is no requirement for it in the proposed, locally and nationally-endorsed Seventeen Nineteen project plans. In its advice, BIOS indicated that the instrument is of low significance and it would not have any objection to the removal of the organ from Holy Trinity.





The position of the organ in the church presents significant challenges to the proposed repairs of the historic fabric of the building. The organ is located against the north wall and close to the east wall preventing access (N) and impeding access (E) to the fabric of the walls and window. These areas of the building require urgent remedial work to treat damp and water ingress.

The long-term care costs for the organ jeopardised the long-term sustainability of the site. An onsite consultation with a local contractor established that the organ would need to be removed to undertake building works. They commented that if the organ was just removed and not reinstalled (at Holy Trinity or elsewhere), the cost of removal would be significantly cheaper, as each part does not have to be catalogued and noted for later reassembly.

Initial cost estimates included the following options:

- Take down, store and reinstall including overhauling - £312,000
- Take down, store and reinstall - £97,500
- Allowance for works to organ (taking down and making good) - £55,000

Given the cost constraints of the project, CCT felt it could not justify the additional expenses associated with removing, storing and reinstalling the organ, even without the costs of overhauling. Furthermore, the area freed up by the removal of the organ benefits the overall regeneration scheme by enhancing the flexibility and utility of the space within the site.

Following consultation with BIOS, it has therefore been decided to remove the organ from the site in order to make way for necessary repairs to the building fabric and future activities planned as part of this project

### **What happened to the Holy Trinity organ?**

Once listed building consent was granted the disposal policy started and the organ was listed both nationally and internationally. Through an expression of interest, 3 offers were considered and in February 2021 approval was granted with the full backing of the Conservation Committee for organ to go to a new home with the parish community at the Basilica of Christ the King, Poala, Malta. The organ was packaged and shipped to Scilly, Italy under the care and guidance Master organ builder Giuseppe Mastrovalerio where it is to be re-built before being installed in Malta.

### **Did you receive any financial reward for the organ and where did it go?**

Yes we did. The condition of the organ transfer to the new owner was that they paid Instrumente Ladach €2500 for out of pocket expenses incurred for documenting the organ for listing.

We also suggested that a donation could be made for the conservation of the Rector Gray memorial. We also as part of the transfer stated that the new owner would be responsible for packaging, removal, shipping and insurance along with any further storage fee's beyond March 2021.

The parish community in Malta gave a donation of €8500 towards the Rector Gray memorial and €500 that will go towards capturing and sharing the concert and dedication service.

### **What happened to the font?**

Initial conservation preparation works were undertaken by Crick-Smith Ltd specialists in paint analysis, architectural paint research and conservation of historic paint schemes – this included





some very time consuming and intricate research into the historic paint schemes in all areas of the church including the William Etty Font.

Small paint samples were gathered from different areas of the font and sent to the lab for analysis where the original paint schemes were uncovered and documented.

These original paint colours were matched and mixed locally so the font could be restored to its original colour schemes later in the project.

On inspection some minor areas of repair were discovered including replacing the bird's feet on the font cover.

Initially the font was securely protected within a wooden structure in the narthex in its original position by the appointed contractor, so no harm would come to it during restoration works. The contractor worked around the protection, and planned works to the font were programme to happen in situ.

During floor works in the narthex area it was discovered that the font was unstable, and foundations were compromised. A decision to sensitively move the font to protect it from damage was taken. The font base was moved to secure storage locally and the font cover moved off-site to Skillingtons Workshop (Skillingtons are specialists in conservation, repair, and restoration works to pieces of art / statues etc).

The font base is due to be given a light clean. The font cover has been repaired and restored in line with the Cricksmiths conservation and paint report and together with the base will be moved back to its original positions in the narthex when building works in this area are complete.

### **What happened to all the items in the church?**

All items in Holy Trinity at the point of vesting are listed on the Assessment of Significance – an historical document that listed all contents of the church (in Oct 1988), these are categorised into High, Medium, Low Significance, and a copy is filed in CCT's archive.

*The Statement of Significance\*\* describes the building as a whole and as various elements. It'll summarise what each contributes to the character of the building, especially those areas or elements that you're planning to change or remove.*

*This information helps put proposals in context and enable decision-makers and advisory bodies to understand the impact of what you want to achieve. It may also help them to suggest alternative, less damaging, ways to meet needs.*

*The Statement of Need sets out the reasons why you want to do particular things. This includes how they'll benefit the community and why you need to do them in the way you're proposing. It'll also explain what other options you considered and why you rejected them. For example, as well as explaining why you need a new kitchen facility, it'll also explain why the kitchen should be placed in the location you've chosen.*

**\*\*<https://historicensland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/places-of-worship/making-changes-to-your-place-of-worship/principles-for-making-changes/assessing-significance/>**

Over the years, many items have been 'left' in the church. Just before the contract took charge of the site in 2019, project staff undertook a Decant project (part of CCT's Disposal Policy) this involved listing all items in the church at this time. Items were cross reference with the original inventory and collated into areas of significance.

Items of high, medium significance are listed and reported to the Conservation Committee to engage them to make informed decisions regarding future use and actions.





Items that have been donated – local research was undertaken and items were returned to owners where possible.

Items broken, of no or little value – were donated to charity shops and / or recycled.

Items of low and (some) medium significant items were offered first to our own collection of churches, then to other parishes / Dioceses, and finally through advertising following the approved disposal process over the course of 9 months.

Church Antiques bought all of the church pews and money from this sale has gone towards the restoration works.

A small number of pews were retained and have been recycled for use in the church to house learning resources for families.

Other items were bought as a job lot by Cyril Naylor following the advertisement to disposal items.

Ecclesiastical items including altar cloths were donated to the parish church St Ignatius, Hendon to be used in regular worship services. The main altar cloth (cream and gold) will be washed by a volunteer from St Ignatius and returned to the Holy Trinity altar on completion of works.

Larger and high significance items have been removed from site into safe storage and will return to the building on completion of works. Although some items such as the Eagle lecture will be stored safely on site and may not be viewable publicly due to the very delicate condition, and to protect it for future generations.

### **Is the war memorial returning?**

Yes! The war memorial was removed along with the Lady Chapel to enable works to take place in this area including installing new windows, brick work and plaster repairs, redecoration. After reinforcements to the foundation / floor area in the Nave the Lady Chapel has been reinstated and the War memorial will be given a light conservation clean and returned to its original position at the end of the contract.

The Lady Chapel will be a place of quiet contemplation and will also be used by the worshipping congregation for their services once we reopen. The choir stall pews have been refurbished by expert craftsmen and are being reallocated into this space along with the altar, and a new votive candle holder so local people can light a candle to remember all those who are no longer with us.

Originally, there were 3 WW1 War Memorial books in the city containing all the names of those who sadly lost their lives. One in local studies, one in the mayor's office and one in Holy Trinity, unfortunately this copy was not in the church on vesting but as part of our work to uncover hidden history we have had the memorial book reprinted and this will be on display in this space along with the wall memorial.

### **What will happen next at Holy Trinity in East End?**

Becoming Seventeen Nineteen - due for restoration completion in the autumn of 2021 by our award winning Regeneration team it will reconnect Sunderland with its past by transforming Holy Trinity into a new cultural venue that brings the heritage of the church and the old town to life through storytelling, interpretation, innovative events and performances. We will deliver urgent and vital conservation and adaptation works, coupled with a public craft skills training programme.

### **How do the plans for the building involve local people?**

These works will re-establish the church as a central part of Sunderland's people's lives and it will be a key project in the city's culture-led regeneration.

As part of the project's consultation process the Holy Trinity Advisory Group was set up, comprising representatives from a range of local organisations to provide advice in specific areas during the





delivery of the Seventeen Nineteen project. They act as an advocate for the project and provide advice to project staff on raising the profile of Seventeen Nineteen as a multi-purpose venue for the City of Sunderland. Still offering individual support to the project in their organisational capacities and are part of the future programming delivery.

Project staff network regularly with local organisations working right across the city and the region who support collaborative working. Those organisations at the very heart of communities like the East End have been instrumental in ensuring our plans within the building for learning, events and activities are relevant, and engaging.

Other groups/partners that we regularly update include:

- Newly formed Heritage Sunderland Partnership – of which Tracey Mienie our Centre manager is the current chair
- Sunderland Old Township Heritage Society
- Sunderland Heritage Forum
- VCS East Area Network
- Elected Members Hendon Ward
- Heritage Action Zone partners
- Sunderland wellbeing network
- Sunderland Cultural Education Partnership
- Sunderland Learning Group
- Heritage Lottery Fund North East (and other project funders)
- Sunderland City Council
- Lord Lieutenant Tyne and Wear
- Sunderland Business Partnership
- Living Histories North East
- The Donnison School
- Sunderland Maritime Heritage
- The Sunderland Antiquarian Society

The restrictions from covid have seen us engaging in a different way. While we would normally have delivered engagement and had many cups of tea and coffee with the lovely community throughout the last year, we have had to do things a little bit differently. A steep learning curve for the team but we have hosted weekly digital picnics via Facebook live and created a heritage at home craft pack to help combat isolation during this period, delivered hybrid school sessions, a digital Christmas concert and managed to recruit a number of curious and canny volunteers.

### **What can we do at Seventeen Nineteen once it opens?**

Launching in Autumn 2021 offering a stunning and unique setting where people can meet, discover and connect with themselves and others. An artistic outlet, educational wonderland, gig venue, break-out space and unconventional meeting place, that special occasion and celebration event space – Seventeen Nineteen is celebrating history while making way for new memories.

By re-imagining the past through fresh perspectives and interactive performances, we're creating the stories of the future and putting our living history on the map. We want our visitors to discover Sunderland's hidden stories, explore the space's possibilities and celebrate their living history. Instead of conforming to stereotypes, we're changing perceptions and creating a welcoming space for imagination and discovery.

By collaborating with the community and surrounding cultural networks, our vibrant, multifaceted space is one that brings people together – to meet, make, learn, perform and explore. We firmly believe in remembering where you've come from to move forward, so our space inspires contemplation as well as creativity. Proud of our history, but optimistic and curious about the future – Seventeen Nineteen is turning the past into new possibilities.







By uncovering the hidden possibilities of Seventeen Nineteen, we're creating new connections and bringing the community together through regeneration, reminiscence and pride. Our project is far from isolated. Sunderland's heritage and cultural network allows us to open a gateway to vibrant activities and create new opportunities for locals as well as curious visitors. Through joint initiatives and passionate partnerships, we can shout about our history from the towers and proudly put our living history on the map!

With so much to learn and discover, we're excited to surprise people with this magnificent space in our city by the sea.