



Scottish
Historic
Buildings
Trust

Custom House, Leith

Learn more about this significant A-listed building and help to secure its future for the benefit of the people of Leith, Edinburgh and beyond



Historic image of Custom House



Front elevation of Custom House



Pediment detail

Leith is located on the shore of the Firth of Forth and has been a seaport since at least the 13th century. It is a place where people have arrived and departed over the centuries including significant historical figures such as Mary Queen of Scots and George IV. Leith has a longstanding maritime tradition and today it is a vibrant district with a creative culture.

Custom houses were built in major ports for the payment of dues on goods traded through them. Leith's Custom House is the oldest in Scotland and set a high standard for others to follow. The A-listed Georgian building was designed by Robert Reid in a neo-classical style and was constructed between 1810-12 with alterations by William Burns in 1825.

Custom House was acquired by the City of Edinburgh in Spring 2015, through its Common Good Fund from National Museums Scotland who had used the building as storage with no public access for over 30 years.

Scottish Historic Buildings Trust, a national charity saving buildings at risk for everyone, is working to develop a project which will breathe new life into Custom House for the benefit of you and future generations by giving this building the presence it deserves back in the heart of Leith. In spring this year SHBT hosted an oral history project to capture the memories of former Custom House workers whose stories have taught us more about how this monumental building operated within the wider port of Leith.

In the short term, the building can provide interim venues for a wide range of activities by the local community and others whilst we develop the Capital Project to see the building fully restored. The Cruiser Store (behind the main building) will provide much needed space for local craftspeople and makers whilst the Custom House will provide space for artists, studios and local businesses and much more as we explore the future potential of the building.

SHBT's first step is to undertake a Feasibility Study which will be done following extensive consultation to explore the potential uses and users that the building can accommodate. This will be worked up to a fully costed scheme for the Capital Project which will include restoring the building to its former glory, installing new energy-efficient services, undertaking alterations and provision of facilities to ensure that the building is fit for purpose in the 21st century.

SHBT is at the start of our fundraising campaign to save this important building and have a long way to go.

If you are able to help the campaign by donating, recommending the building to potential tenants or by hiring it for your special event, we can move forward with the confidence that people care very much about Custom House. With your help this building will once again become an important public building in the heart of Leith.

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Scottish Historic Buildings Trust is a charity registered in Scotland, number SC034507

If you are able to help our campaign by donating to the Custom House project, please complete and return a donation form, call our office or visit our website for more information.

