

Heritage responds -
**Taking positive action
on climate change**

Case study

St Marylebone Parish Church

Sir Robert McAlpine

The refurbishment of the Grade I St Marylebone Changing Lives scheme is delivering one of London's most community-engaged heritage projects. With a focus on apprenticeships, Sir Robert McAlpine, a leading UK construction and civil engineering company, has facilitated employment for those starting out their heritage careers with an opportunity to hone their skills through practical application. This ensures traditional heritage skills are preserved, existing building stock can be reused, restored and repurposed, rather than demolished, having a positive impact on embodied carbon.

Image:

Sam Wilson

St Marylebone Parish Church and the Building Crafts College have worked closely with Sir Robert McAlpine to facilitate an on-the-job craft training programme for several final-year masonry and carpentry students, providing those individuals experience and an opportunity to hone their trade, ensuring these skills are preserved in the future.

Sir Robert McAlpine is also facilitating craft open days as part of this project, both as a curriculum engagement activity for pupils and students, but also for local residents and the public. The days combine site visits and roof tours, specialist demonstrations and hands-on immersive practical sessions in relevant skills with our trades on site.

One of Sir Robert McAlpine's package managers on site, Sam Wilson, is a former apprentice and is also currently studying a degree in Historic Building Conservation with the Building Crafts College. His involvement allows the project to showcase how traditional skills can interface with modern methods of construction such as 3D modelling to the new generation of skilled tradespeople.

Along with other distinguished speakers, Sir Robert McAlpine has discussed at industry events and conferences what we need to do as an industry to make traditional craft skills for historic buildings more accessible, ensuring existing building stock is cared for and repurposed. It is important that we are living what we are saying on each one of our sites.

As part of our wider sustainability strategy, Sir Robert McAlpine has committed to achieving a level of Social Value Return on Investment (SROI) on all projects, demonstrating our commitment to making a difference to the individuals, society and communities in which we work.

In ensuring these traditional heritage skills are preserved, Sir Robert McAlpine is helping to ensure that that existing building stock can be reused, restored and repurposed, rather than demolished. This in turn should have a positive impact on embodied carbon emissions, where research has shown that demolishing a historic building and replacing it with a new building can result in greater carbon emissions by 2050.

The Social Value Return on Investment resulting from these engagements and activities is calculated through an independent third-party tool, with the output forming part of the project Socio-Economic and Environmental impact report at project completion.

Partial funding by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, along with strong links between St Marylebone Parish Church and the Building Crafts College, enabled positive early-stage engagement. This ensured the most suitable candidates from the College's carpentry and masonry students were able to be put forward to work on the project.

Our built historic environment forms an important part of our past, present and future. Historically the decisions to repair and maintain existing building stock have been focussed on their heritage and cultural significance, with the social and economic value being highlighted more recently. It is now becoming clear that the environmental value of these buildings, particularly in relation to carbon emissions, is key to meet the 2050 carbon emissions targets.

