

Refurbishment Works to start at Bideford Town Hall and former Library as Local Contractor Appointed

Torrige District Council has announced today that works are due to start this week on the refurbishment of Bideford Town Hall and former Library.

Bideford based, Westcountry Maintenance Services, has been appointed to manage the project which is expected to take around 14 months. The refurbishment plans cover the entire ground floor of the Town Hall and Library; as well as essential works to protect the heritage of this prominent listed building.

The extensive works include replacing the roof and renovating the towers on the main structure. The old library will be adapted to host a new fitness centre, which will be managed by Active Torrige, whilst the upper floors will retain their existing commercial and community uses. This includes welcoming Bideford Town Council back to its former offices, restoring their presence in the town centre.

Once renovated, the ground floor will also provide a co-working facility, consisting of three open plan co-working spaces, a meeting room, a manager's office and ancillary facilities, including a break-out space. The former single storey toilet blocks added to the original structure will be replaced with fit-for-purpose showers and toilets. A new platform lift will also be installed to improve accessibility for building users.

Other works include improving secondary glazing to the windows for energy and acoustic performance, upgrading internal doors for fire safety and repairs to the retaining wall at the rear next to Nunnery Walk.

There will also be general conservation, repair and maintenance work to the listed building, including masonry repairs, to ensure it keeps the existing character of the façade, albeit with some minor additional signage.

Councillor Ken James, Leader of Torrige District Council, said:

"I am delighted that work is now underway to breathe new life into this historic landmark building after years of underuse. There is very much a need for creating more spaces that support improving health and wellbeing in Torrige and this is a fantastic opportunity for us to do so using a building that is desperately in need of renovation."

Chris Keeble, Manager, Active Torrige, said:

"It is a "very exciting" time for leisure services in the district. We are now looking forward to being able to take a longer-term view of the strategy for leisure provision

in Torridge, so that we can continue to grow and expand our services to suit the needs of our communities."

"By adapting the site at the Old Library, we will be able to deliver a state-of-the-art gym that meets public demand. Many of our fitness classes are already fully booked, and with membership continuing to increase, the additional facility will provide much-needed capacity. By offsetting popular classes from existing Active Torridge facilities, we will free up space to expand our programme and offer an even wider range of fitness sessions and activities for residents."

Matt Westaway, Contracts Director, WMS Ltd, said:

"We are incredibly proud to have been selected to deliver this important project within our own community. Buildings such as the Town Hall are integral to the character, heritage and identity of our town, and we are committed to preserving its significance as a cherished local landmark. This project presents a unique opportunity to celebrate and protect the building's rich history while ensuring its long-term future. Through the sensitive restoration of its historic fabric and the introduction of a state-of-the-art gym facility, we look forward to playing our part in bringing new purpose and vitality to this remarkable building."

We will providing regular updates on progress on site, so please check out our social media pages and website for further details.