

# Royal Revue

## Progress - September 2006

### The restoration contract

Work on this challenging £8m restoration is well under way with the Lead Officer confident that the highest risk period has now passed.

Head of Property Management for Harrogate Borough Council, Martin Weeks, has vast experience of major construction projects. But, he says that planning this restoration has been one of the most difficult he has worked on: yet the project is now going well and this is down to having a high quality design team and contractor, the right contract strategy and all the investigative work which was undertaken. There is a real partnership between the council, its project team and the contractor, HBG, all working together for a successful outcome.

*"This is a beautiful old building with a lot of things waiting in the wings to go wrong. However, the council was insistent that whatever work we could achieve on this restoration could never go beyond the £8m that had been put into the pot by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the council. So we had to do a lot of work before we ever got to the stage where we could let this 61 week contract."*



Construction work is underway to waterproof and stabilize the structure. This will be the location of the new toilets for ladies.

Risk assessments had identified that most of the unknown problems should have come to light during the first four to five months of the contract.

*"The highest risk period has now nearly passed", added Martin. "The extensive investigation of the structure earlier on has paid dividends. We don't expect to find any major hidden defects now and the contingency sums we set aside at the start of the contract are being used at a lower rate than we had anticipated. This is good news because it means that within the capped budget of £8 million we should be able to achieve a bigger restoration than we originally thought."*

After four months of work on site, progress on the restoration contract continues to be good and council leader, Councillor Mike Gardner, is pleased with the way the contract is sticking to its timetable and that financially things are progressing well.

He said: *"We agreed to a carefully managed project which meant that some large sections of the work were deferred until we had confidence that we could afford to add them back in. A large proportion of the works that were being held back in this way, to make sure we stayed within budget, are now being released as the project team is gaining in certainty that there are no large, hidden problems. With the Restoration Trust's majestic efforts on fund-raising, we are also looking at a broader scope of work. However, as we are doing more than we originally planned, we may not finish the contract at the original anticipated time. But, for once, delayed completion means good news. The Royal Hall will probably re-open in late 2007."*



Scaffolding in the main auditorium to provide access for paint scrapings to be taken from the original ceiling. This is needed to establish the original decoration colours to ensure authentic redecoration. Floor protection and dust screens together with dust extraction systems are in place.

## The Royal Hall Restoration Trust

Chaired by Lilian Mina, the Restoration Trust has set themselves a target of raising an additional £1.8m which is needed to re-instate a number of important works that are currently excluded from the core project because of lack of funding.

The decorative restoration of the Hall's interior is the Trust's main aim said Lilian: *"The main reason for the Royal Hall's Grade II\* listed status was its magnificent interior and we want to see as much of it as possible being restored. This is what is called the soft architecture (drapes, carpets etc). We also want to see the refurbishment of the dressing rooms and reinstatement of a period bar. Following a very successful fund-raising visit by the Trust's Patron, HRH The Prince of Wales, the Trust's in-hand and pledged funds currently stand at a little under £900,000."*



*Removal of the original failed concrete to the Upper Circle nears completion behind protective screens. The original steel beams will be retained.*

## The contractor

One of the country's largest construction groups, HBG Construction Limited, was awarded the contract to undertake this restoration project.

HBG, which has local offices in Leeds, has just completed a successful £12m restoration of Sheffield City Hall and has worked on many high profile projects including the transformation of the Baltic Flour Mill at Gateshead into an eye-catching art centre.

The company's appointment followed a rigorous competitive tendering process carried out by the council's project team with support from Turner & Townsend who are our external project managers and cost consultants. The team was diligent in assessing the tenders and the council is confident that the proposals submitted by HBG are in line with the council's expectations.

HBG Project Manager Geoff Wright is delighted with progress on site so far. *"We are exactly where we predicted we would be when work started in April 2006. We have been able to successfully integrate with the operation of HIC exhibitions, deal with additional works and collectively with the council and the design team, overcome the problems restoration of the 100 year old building has presented to us."*



*Following demolition of this structurally unsafe area, work is under way to provide new dressing rooms at the lower level, and restore the conservatory and ambulatory at the higher level. The ambulatory is the corridor encircling the building and this was originally used for 'promenading'. Reconstruction of this facility is a key feature for restoring the architectural integrity of the building.*

### Useful websites

Harrogate Borough Council

[www.harrogate.gov.uk](http://www.harrogate.gov.uk)

The Royal Hall Restoration Trust

[www.royalhall.org](http://www.royalhall.org)

HBG Construction Ltd

[www.hbgc.co.uk](http://www.hbgc.co.uk)

Harrogate International Centre

[www.harrogateinternationalcentre.co.uk](http://www.harrogateinternationalcentre.co.uk)