

Heritage Lincolnshire: 116 High Street, Boston

Heritage Lincolnshire is a charitable trust, which since 1991 has undertaken a range of activities in the promotion and conservation of Lincolnshire's heritage. The trust incorporates a building preservation trust, saving a succession of historic buildings at risk of dereliction and able to undertake difficult building projects, raising funds to repair listed buildings and finding appropriate new uses for them.

In 2008 the Trust was approached by English Heritage, as 116 High Street had been on its at risk register for 15 years. The local community also wanted to see this Grade II* listed building restored. Built in the late 17th century, the house was owned by wealthy merchant William Garfit II who founded it as Lincolnshire's first private bank in 1754. After the building was sold in 1893 it became the Lincolnshire Diocesan Home for Fallen Women, and later a potato merchants offices.

After investigating plans to turn the property into residential or commercial space, the decision was taken to turn the property into office and training space for start-up businesses in the Boston area, one of the most deprived wards in Lincolnshire. ERDF funding was applied for at the start of 2010 and received in March 2011.

The total project value was £2.4 million, with £416,480 received from ERDF, at an intervention rate of 25 percent. Match funding came from English Heritage, who contributed just under £1 million, Heritage Lottery Fund who provided £650,000, the John Paul Getty Junior Charitable Trust, the Architectural Heritage Fund, the Pilgrim

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Trust, Lincolnshire County Council and Boston Borough Council. The ERDF funding received helped bring additional value to the project by adding some new build units to the rear, making the scheme as a whole financially viable.

Building work on 116 High Street finished in November 2012 and the property was sold to the Trust's partner Lincolnshire Community Foundation in July 2013. As a restoration charity the Trust routinely has in place agreed disposal of property when it restores projects. The ERDF team worked with Heritage Lincolnshire to ensure that the grant contract allowed for this planned disposal.

Alongside the support of the ERDF team and its solicitor, the Trust also received lots of support from Lincolnshire County Council, especially in regard to applying for ERDF funding, equalities and demographics research and undertaking claims.

In regard to the ERDF application process, the Trust found the process complicated, especially because of their limited capacity, but the support they received very useful. Alongside the length of the application process, with the Trust amending the application multiple times to meet guidance, as new versions were published, it also had to learn the language of ERDF so that its application made sense to both the Trust and those assessing the application.

In regard to contract management, the Trust found its contract manager very supportive, straightforward to work with and contactable at any time. In regard to the MCIS online claim system, introduced during the project, the Trust received training on using the system and support from the contract manager as they learnt how to use it.

By having multiple funders for the project with different eligibility criteria and guidelines to meet, the Trust had to balance different deadlines for spending the funding; the project architect producing multiple plans; and multiple cash flow records and matching up from a main cash flow record. Due to the additional expense of using highly skilled conservation expertise to restore the building, fees for some parts of the project had to be capped for their ERDF proportion, topped up by English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Trust learnt several lessons throughout the course of the project, including learning about the ERDF eligibility criteria and procurement process. The project also enabled the Trust to keep up to date on professional standards in fundraising, economic development and how to present information to funders.

In regard to the future, the trust feels more confident in applying for further ERDF funding under the 2014-20 programme, as although its restoration work does not easily meet the funding criteria as its not a new build capital project, they want to bring more external funding into Lincolnshire and believe that the local enterprise partnerships covering the county will have greater understanding of the area and its needs.

For further information on Heritage Lincolnshire visit www.lincsheritage.org.

“We found the ERDF process challenging, but it brought essential funding for our project and useful experience for our staff. The achievement of breathing new life into the building and High Street area of Boston made it all worthwhile.” **Liz Bates, Chief Executive and Project Manager, Heritage Lincolnshire**

