

Restoration drama on waterfront

It has been hailed as one of the most important regeneration schemes in Wakefield's history and tomorrow it will take a step closer to completion. **Ian Briggs** reports.

"THIS neglected part of the city will be transformed and will become a truly wonderful, invigorating and stimulating place to live, work and spend time at," says Oliver Quarmby of developer CTP St James.

"It is tremendously exciting. We cannot wait to get started." Mr Quarmby is talking about the £100m redevelopment of Wakefield's historic waterfront into a mixed-use development of office, residential and leisure buildings over 10 acres.

At the heart of the rejuvenation of the waterfront will be a £26m art gallery to showcase work by sculptor Dame Barbara Hepworth in the city of her birth.

The gallery will also provide space for the creative arts, bars, cafés and restaurants.

Tomorrow, the first phase of the project, which will see offices created by converting the Grade II*-listed late 18th-century Calder and Hebble Navigation Warehouse, will be officially launched, while on Saturday, 58 apartments will be marketed, with investors having the chance to reserve property.

The restoration of the warehouse will involve retaining as much of the original character, and two units on the ground floor will provide a waterside setting for potential pub or restaurant occupiers.



The proposed Wakefield Waterfront scheme.

The three upper levels will be converted to approximately 16,000 sq ft of offices.

The office launch will be attended by representatives from Yorkshire Forward, British Waterways, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council and the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber.

Outline planning permission for the whole project was secured in December 2004 by CTP St James and co-developers British Waterways, and detailed planning permission for the first phase was granted last November.

A separate application was also approved last November for two new office buildings of 15,300 sq ft and 17,800 sq ft.

The European Regional Development Fund has also released £8.1m to support the project, and Yorkshire Forward is giving £9m to kick-start the massive scheme.

The grants are to be used for highways, flood-defence works, landscaping and repairs to historic buildings.

David Topham, of the project's developer CTP St James, said: "We are extremely excited about

this project getting underway and delivering the first phase of an imaginative mixed-use scheme, which will not only provide beautiful, unique river settings for occupiers and residents, but will also offer so much to Wakefield.

"We truly believe that our scheme will add a new dimension to the city's urban renaissance."

Mr Quarmby said: "The first phase will establish the quality of our designs and set out our ambition for the waterfront which will become a new part of the city with its own unique

character and ambience – much like our award-winning Round Foundry in Leeds."

Richard Curtis, development manager at British Waterways, said: "British Waterways is involved as the lead in a number of regeneration schemes and we are delighted to see Wakefield is using the waterway as a catalyst for community benefit.

"Wakefield Waterfront will be a prestigious development which will open up a previously neglected area of the city, bringing a new vitality and setting an example for other

regeneration schemes to follow."

BDP are the architects for the Calder & Hebble project, while FaulknerBrowns are responsible for the new offices and residential buildings.

The completed development will also feature public spaces and formal gardens.

King Sturge will be the letting agents for both commercial and residential aspects of the project, with Hill Woolhouse working with King Sturge on the commercial side.

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