

Observatory House is ready for restoration

Collective Gallery on Calton Hill are set to restore Observatory House which sits just next door.

The 18th century house forms one corner of the site and was formerly home to the astronomers who worked in the observatory. It has been let until 2015 by Vivat Trust but now Collective will upgrade the house and create two apartments there which can be let either separately or as one house.

Collective Architecture who designed the site as it currently stands will take the lead on the restoration project. which was shortlisted for the RIAS Best Building in Scotland Award in 2019.

Plans submitted by the architects for Listed Building Consent include the retention of historic interior features such as the 'whispering room' on the first floor, a re-modelling of the interior spaces and a unique decorative finish which will draw on commissions from artists and makers based in Scotland.

The restoration of Observatory House follows Collective Architecture's design of the Lookout, the unique new hilltop restaurant run by Collective's restaurant partners the Gardener's Cottage.

Kate Gray, Director of Collective, said: "Observatory House is a gem of a building in an incredible location. Though this is a challenging time for Collective as we emerge from an

extended closure and are struggling with the loss of expected income, it is even more important that we move forward with plans to complete the full integration of our historic site. As a charity, we are dependent on fundraising and income generation to deliver our mission to bring people together around contemporary art. Giving Observatory House a new lease of life as a lettable space will allow us to generate income that will help keep Collective freely accessible to all."

Emma Fairhurst, lead architect on the project, Collective Architecture, said: "We're very excited to be returning to Calton Hill and working with Collective once again. Observatory House is a beautiful building, full of character and interest. We plan to keep the rooms simple and calm and to retain the feeling of the House as a retreat, overlooking the busy city below. When complete, the restored House will offer a fusion of gothic architecture, modern interiors, contemporary art, and exquisite local cuisine."

Renovations to the house are set to begin early in 2021, subject to a fundraising campaign and following the appointment of a suitable contractor. It is hoped both apartments in the House will be available to book from summer 2021.