

# England's grandest country house saved for nation

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Wentworth Woodhouse - England's largest privately owned home - has been safeguarded for the future following years of uncertainty and decline.

Image



Facade of Wentworth Woodhouse

Located near Rotherham in South Yorkshire, Wentworth Woodhouse is exceptional in both architecture and scale. Built by the Marquesses of Rockingham between 1725 and 1750, the east front is believed to be the longest of any English country house, at more than 180m. The main house is believed to have more than 200 rooms, with a run of state rooms behind the east front centring on the spectacular, double-height Marble Salon, considered to be one of the finest early 18th-century interiors in England.

A grant of £3.5million from the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) has provided the Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust (WWPT) with the final piece of the financial jigsaw needed to purchase the property. WWPT has now bought the house, its outstanding collection of classical statuary and the surrounding grounds of 83 acres for a total of £7m.

The sale will open a new chapter in the story of the house. As well as welcoming visitors to the richly decorated rooms in the house, WWPT's longer-term plan is to: restore the gardens with the help of volunteers; attract local businesses to

work in offices to be created in the stables; and work with local people to explore and describe its exceptionally rich history, telling some of the many colourful stories associated with the house.

Heritage Minister Tracey Crouch said: "The UK's heritage is world renowned for its unique variety and Wentworth Woodhouse is a fantastic example of our historic architecture that deserves to be protected for the future. This Government funding will not only help preserve the building for visitors to enjoy, but it will also be a vital link in the community, creating a business hub and jobs that will benefit the local area."

The Chair of the Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust (WWPT), local businesswoman Julie Kenny, said: "This is the culmination of five years very hard work and has been made possible by the support of many different charities, government bodies and individuals, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is great news for the people of Rotherham and for everyone who cares about historic buildings."

Kenny added: "We are grateful to the Newbold family for their part in ensuring the survival of the house, and to the funding bodies who have made the transfer possible. These include the National Heritage Memorial Fund, The Monument Trust, Sir Siegmund Warburg's Voluntary Settlement, the J Paul Getty Jr Charitable Trust, Art Fund, together with donations from the Fitzwilliam Amenity Trust and Lady Juliet Tadgell. The Trust has been given significant support by Historic England, the Architectural Heritage Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. The Trust will also receive invaluable support and guidance from the National Trust for a period of three years. All these contributors share our determination to give Wentworth Woodhouse a secure future, so it can play a part in the economic and cultural regeneration of Rotherham and the wider South Yorkshire region.

"We would like to send our appreciation to John Healey MP who helped open doors for discussions with Ministers and civil servants. We also appreciate the important cross party support from John Healey and Robert Jenrick MP who helped us put the Trust's case personally to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Above all we are grateful to the Chancellor who shares our enthusiasm for the house, and who announced a special allocation of £7.6m for repairs in his Autumn Statement in 2016. This will enable work to start this year."

Chief Executive of NHMF Ros Kerslake said: "Wentworth Woodhouse is an incredibly important piece of our national heritage, which is why the trustees of

the National Heritage Memorial Fund agreed £3.5m funding that has now helped secure its future for the nation. As well as ensuring the house and grounds are open to the public, the Trust's ambitious plans will create jobs, apprenticeships, training and volunteering opportunities for many years to come."

## **The History**

Wentworth Woodhouse was given its massive Palladian front in 1734 by the 2nd Marquess of Rockingham, twice Prime Minister.

Soon after the end of World War II much of the house was let to the Local Authority on a long lease, the family remained in occupation of part whilst The Lady Mabel Training Centre for PT teachers and then Sheffield Polytechnic took up residence. When the costs became too burdensome the entire house was sold in a bid to secure its future. Two private owners took up the challenge, first Wensley Haydon-Baillie, followed by the Newbold family. Both owners were dedicated custodians of Wentworth Woodhouse, but found they needed to pass the baton on to others.

In 2012 Marcus Binney, the Executive President of SAVE Britain's Heritage, initiated a campaign to transfer the house to a specially constituted Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust.

The WWPT has now bought the house, its outstanding collection of classical statuary and the surrounding grounds of 83 acres for £7m.

## **The future**

In 2013 the total cost of repairs to Wentworth Woodhouse was estimated at £42m. Following the sale there will now be a public appeal to help raise money towards this cost.

Most importantly, the Trust is happy to announce that parts of Wentworth Woodhouse will continue to be open to public while phased repairs continue.

## **Notes to editors**

### **SAVE**

SAVE Britain's Heritage has been campaigning for historic buildings since its formation in 1975 by a group of architects, journalists and planners. It is a strong,

independent voice in conservation, free to respond rapidly to emergencies and to speak out loud for the historic built environment. SAVE has led the campaign for Wentworth Woodhouse since 2011.

The rescue plan devised by SAVE has been drawn up with leading country house experts and entrepreneurs, including Mr Kit Martin, well known for his country house transformations, and Roger Tempest who has pioneered the use of estate buildings for office purposes at Broughton Hall.

## **Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust**

The Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust will build on the pioneering work of current owners the Newbold family, who opened the house to pre-booked visitors for the first time on a regular basis, by establishing an annual Clifford Newbold lecture.

The trustees of the Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust are: The Duke of Devonshire, Lady Juliet Tadgell, Sir Philip Naylor-Leyland, Julie Kenny (Chair), Timothy Cooke, Martin Drury, and Merlin Waterson