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Call in for Whitechapel Bell Foundry Planning Application

Re-Form Heritage and Factum Foundation are pleased and encouraged by the news that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, has called in the planning decision on the Whitechapel Bell Foundry.

The historic Whitechapel Bell Foundry is Britain's oldest single-purpose industrial building where Big Ben, the Liberty Bell, Bow Bells and many of the world's great bells were made. Developer Raycliff Whitechapel LLP, the current owners, submitted a planning application to convert the site into a boutique hotel and hospitality venue, which Tower Hamlets Development Committee voted to approve in November despite significant concerns about the suitability of the proposal by thousands of individuals and heritage organisations. The call in means that the Raycliff Whitechapel LLP planning application will now be subject to a public inquiry.

A campaign to save the site by reinstating foundry activity in Whitechapel has local, national and international support. A partnership between Factum Foundation and Re-Form Heritage has been formed to deliver a financially viable 21st-century foundry. The partnership draws upon Re-Form Heritage's experience regenerating unique industrial heritage sites and Factum Foundation's internationally renowned preservation and training work that merges new technology and craft skills.

Responding to the announcement, Adam Lowe of Factum Foundation said:

"We aim to reinvent the Bell foundry in Whitechapel as a unique working environment; using the latest output, software and moulding technologies to cast bells for a global market, building an archive of 3D and acoustic recordings of great bells around the country, creating bell related sculptures with artists like Grayson Perry wanting to revitalise the foundry, celebrating the history of traditional bell casting techniques with Nigel Taylor who had forty years of experience at Whitechapel Bell Foundry, building connections with the V&A, the Bartlett Workshops and the historical casting expert Andrew Lacey to provide innovative educational resources and offering apprenticeships and training in an area where wealth and poverty sit side by side."



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Clare Wood, Chief Executive of Re-Form Heritage said:

“This is one of the UK’s most important heritage sites and is the centre of a 450-year tradition of casting and founding in Whitechapel. Traditions such as these create the identity of an area and deserve to be valued and respected. The partnership between Re-Form Heritage and Factum Foundation honours the history of creative and manufacturing innovation in Whitechapel and builds upon this in a relevant and sensitive way. We look forward to engaging with the public inquiry process following this very welcome announcement.”

Notes to Editors:

Re-Form Heritage

Re-Form Heritage is a registered charity which specialises in the restoration and rejuvenation of historic buildings at risk of decay or demolition. Re-Form Heritage transforms these historic buildings into local assets, creating job opportunities and catalysing wider social and economic benefit.

Re-Form Heritage is the new name for the charity formerly known as the United Kingdom Historic Building Preservation Trust (UKHBPT). Charity number: 1059662.

www.re-form.org

Factum Foundation

Factum Foundation for Digital Technology in Conservation is a not-for-profit organisation founded by Adam Lowe in 2009. Factum Foundation works closely with its sister company Factum Arte (created in 2001), a multi-disciplinary workshop mediating the complex boundary between technology and contemporary art.

<http://www.factumfoundation.org/>

Further Information

For further information related to this press release, please email news@re-form.org – or call 07956888432