

# Mascott Construction to begin refit of Belfast's iconic Custom House

Work is to begin this month to refurbish and fit-out Custom House, one of Belfast's most iconic listed buildings.

It will be transformed into grade A office accommodation by Mascott Construction, with work set to be completed by June 2022.

Custom House was acquired last year by Straidorn Properties, the property investment arm of local businessman Neil McKibbin and his family, who have made an overall investment of £7.5 million to refurbish the 58,000 square feet of space.

The company has worked with architects Todd to develop the building for office use while maintaining its architectural heritage.

Jonathan Payne, Managing Director of Mascott, said the project will support local jobs.

"We are absolutely delighted with our appointment for this prestigious project," he said. "It demonstrates a commitment and support to the local construction industry by Straidorn.

"This project will offer employment for up to 100 people throughout its construction period, bringing local skills to a local project for a local client."

Located at Custom House Square in central Belfast, the Grade B+ listed building was designed by Sir Charles Lanyon, one of Belfast's leading architects and built by D & J Fulton between 1854 and 1857. It is viewed as one of the finest neoclassical buildings in Belfast and represents a strong link to the city's industrial heritage.

Neil McKibbin, director of Straidorn Properties, welcomed the start of the project.

“We are really pleased to be able to engage Mascott to start work on the refurbishment of one of Belfast’s grandest buildings,” he said. “Custom House is of huge historic and strategic importance to the city and for our business, and our investment demonstrates our confidence both in Belfast’s office market and in the city itself.”

While the building has undergone phases of remodelling throughout its history, Custom House has a number of period features, such as its original staircase, extensive lobby areas and a number of decorative carvings, including figures of Neptune, Mercury and Britannia and others representing Manufacture, Peace, Commerce and Industry.

All four floors of Custom House will be included in the current refurbishment project, which will deliver a new coworking space on the ground floor, a vaulted communal room, private phone booths and meeting pods, lounges, a private dining area, showers and changing rooms, and a range of different sized offices.

Mascott said the refurbishment and fit out project aims to enhance the character and space in the existing building – such as the grand entrance lobby, feature rooms, classical windows and cornicing – while adding new personality and an industrial twist to the interior design.

The first and second floors will be based around a central staircase, with an entrance reception room, and the upper “Commissioners room”, while the third-floor offices and mezzanine with exposed trusses will have an industrial loft aesthetic that will remain in keeping with the building’s classical features.