

STROMNESS STUDIOS ORKNEY

MINIMAL INTERVENTION CASE STUDY

USE AND ADAPTATION OF LISTED BUILDINGS



HISTORIC
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Stromness Studios

Minimal interventions and early action bring an old library back into use as a creative arts centre.

The building that now houses Stromness Studios was originally Orkney's first public library. The library was built in 1905, thanks to money left to the town by Marjory Skea. Mrs Skea was a wealthy local landowner. She was also known as Marjory Corrigan during her brief five year marriage, before she was widowed. The inscription on the western gable of the building records both names.

The library building looks very much like the houses around it, and could be mistaken for a private home. It is traditionally built, with Tudor-gothic details and a lot of surviving original features. [It is listed at category C.](#)

After more than a century of use, Stromness Library closed in 2015. It belongs to Orkney Islands Council as a [Common Good](#) asset - intended to be cared for on behalf of the community.

Because the Council knew that the building was going to be empty, they were in a good position to start trying to find a solution before it was urgent. They ran a community consultation with input from Council departments, community groups, and local arts organisations.



Solisquoy Printmakers print workshop ©WASPS

The next step was to approach [WASPS Studios](#), who are specialists in creating spaces for artists, makers and creators. The Council asked them to turn the library in to a studio for [Solisquoy Printmakers](#).

The building was in good condition, partly because it hadn't been left standing empty after the library moved out. It only needed some minor repairs to bring it back into use. These included works on the roof and replacing the guttering.



HELLHOLE ROAD



Above:
View of the ground floor of the Stromness library after it was vacated ©WASPS

Below:
View of the same ground floor after Solisquoy Printmakers moved in ©WASPS



The building also needed some upgrades to its facilities to make it a viable workspace for artists. WASPS improved the heating system and put in draft proofing to make the space more comfortable to work in, but also to reduce its energy use. They installed new sinks, and upgraded the toilet facilities to make them more accessible.

The final part of the scheme was to partition the rooms and decorate them. This created four studios for individual artists and makers, and one printmaking workshop for Solisquoy Printmakers.

The building also now has attic storage space above.

The Council is letting the library to WASPS on a 125 year lease, for a nominal amount.

This has secured the long term use and survival of a much loved community building. The building is now more efficient, and the changes made to split up the space can easily be reversed. The project has given the local artist community their own space, meaning they don't have to rely on services on mainland Scotland.



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Artist working in the
Stromness Studios
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