



Media release

14 October 2020

Work begins on Turner Contemporary improvements

Work has begun on a scheme to improve the facilities of Turner Contemporary following the appointment of WW Martin Ltd, the Ramsgate-based construction company.

The gallery is now closed until February 2021 while the works take place, which will enable it to increase its financial resilience and provide a better experience for the thousands of visitors that Turner Contemporary welcomes each year. In February 2021, the gallery will reopen for its 10th Anniversary celebrations with a programme of new exhibitions and learning activities.

The works follow almost 10 successful years of operation, in which Turner Contemporary has attracted 3.5million visits and established an international reputation for artistic and learning excellence.

The gallery has been a catalyst for the social and economic regeneration of Margate and East Kent. In 2019, the gallery brought the world-famous Turner Prize 2019 to Kent, and saw significantly increased visits during the autumn season, whilst generating international press coverage for Margate and Kent.

The gallery's national significance was recognised as it was announced that the building was to be featured on the new £20 note which launched in February 2020. This summer, Turner Contemporary opened with new measures in place and welcomed over 24,000 visits from 22 July – 7 September.

The enhancements being made include a redesigned retail area which will showcase products and artworks from the gallery's creative community, new and additional toilet facilities, new café furniture, installation of lighter doors to each of the galleries and faster Wi-Fi. The CCTV system will be upgraded, and a new finishing kitchen will improve the capacity of the café and enable it to stay open during events.

Improving the environmental efficiency of the building is central to the building works, including the replacement of halogen lighting with LED lighting which will greatly reduce electricity consumption and costs.

KCC is contributing £1.28 million towards the capital scheme with £495,000 coming from Arts Council England. These works have been in planning since 2018 and follow a period of scoping and consultation with the public and industry experts.

Mike Hill, KCC's Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, said: "KCC is supporting these important works to Turner Contemporary to build on the outstanding success of the gallery since it opened almost 10 years ago.

"These improvements will not only improve the experience that thousands of visitors enjoy every year; they will secure the sustainability of the gallery which will in turn boost the local economy in Margate and the surrounding areas."

Clive Stevens, Chair of Turner Contemporary, said: "It's fantastic that works have begun here at Turner Contemporary. We are pleased to be working with a locally based contractor to realise the capital improvements, funded by Kent County Council and Arts Council England.

"This comes ahead of our tenth anniversary year in 2021, when there is an exciting programme of exhibitions planned to mark the gallery's birthday. 2021 will be an opportunity to celebrate the phenomenal impact that Turner Contemporary has had on Margate, Thanet and Kent, and look ahead to the next decade. As the sector at large faces challenges in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, this project aims to support the gallery's future and recognises the vital role that arts and creativity play in our society."

WW Martin Director Mike Darling said: "As a Kent contractor, we are delighted to be working at Turner Contemporary. To undertake a programme of improvement works in what is widely recognised as a landmark building in Kent is an exciting opportunity for our business."

Hedley Swain, Area Director, South East, Arts Council England, said: "Turner Contemporary is a wonderful gallery that has contributed so much to both Margate and Kent, not just for illustrating the vital role that arts and culture can play in our communities, but also for the positive economic impact that it drives. It is great to see that these works have now started, helping to support the gallery's long-term future."

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