



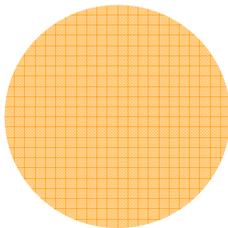
Newsletter 11th May 2003
Volume 1, Issue 2

Outside the Box

St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust
www.sigbox.co.uk

Distant signal in view from the signal box:

- Condition survey completed
- Architect appointed
- Feasibility study underway



Slowly but surely!

Welcome to the second newsletter of the St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust. Since the first newsletter in February some progress has been made!

The Architectural Heritage Fund have awarded us a grant to carry out a feasibility study into the restoration of the signal box.

We have appointed Melanie Canaway as our Architect for the project. She has excellent heritage building credentials.

The first step for the feasibility study was 'opening the box' to see what's inside. More below...

A RICS valuer has been to inspect the box and seems to feel it has no commercial value unless gutted - which is not unexpected but will be included in the feasibility study.

The Charity Commission are still in discussion with us about our charitable status. They are not sure there will be any public benefit to restoring the box!

We now have a good number of volunteers who have offered to help on both the signaling and the decorating works. Many thanks to all of you - a meeting will be arranged on site as soon as the box is safe.

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AHF Grant

The Architectural Heritage Fund have awarded us a grant of £3,300 which is approximately 75% of the cost of the Feasibility study. This was awarded 1st April. The remaining 25% must come from our own funds. We are nearly there, so have instructed an architect to start on the condition survey.

If anyone has spare cash they want to contribute to the Feasibility study fund, please don't hesitate!

The feasibility study will tell us if it's possible to save the signal box.

The Architect

Melanie Canaway of MJCT Architects, St Albans has been appointed after a competitive tendering process.

She is a member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. One of her recent projects was as project architect for the North Front of Grade 1 listed Stowe House in Buckinghamshire. A £4.5m project.

Our signal box is in good hands!

St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust is a Company limited by guarantee registered in England No. 04653488.
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This one places a detonator on the track!

Inside the box

The Condition survey took place in brilliant sunshine on 31st March. Many of the trustees were able to climb the ladder and root around in all the smashed glass on the floor. The main findings were.....

Every single pane of glass is broken.

The roof must be stripped and replaced.

All eight of the main support posts are rotten at ground level and need underpinning and repair.

The stairs need rebuilding from scratch.

The paintwork probably contains lead.

There are no main sewer connections.

The ground floor is not empty as previously believed but full of weights and levers.

All signaling equipment has gone.

And on the positive side.....

The signal levers themselves are in good condition.

The box is still standing.

Please send us your thoughts on the use of the ground floor before we get too far with the feasibility study. There are mixed views about leaving it intact.

In the press

An article appeared in the St Albans Review this month stating...

'Green light for signal box refit - A derelict signal box built more than 100 years ago is set for a revamp thanks to a £3,300 grant from the Architectural Heritage Fund.

The money, given to the St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust will enable the group to open the listed building to the public.

Abandoned for the last quarter of a century, the two storey building has been untouched for the last decade but was declared a historic monument in 1979'.

Other news

A RICS qualified valuer from Kikby Diamond in St Albans inspected the signal box to give us some indication of any commercial possibilities. Network Rail will be pleased to know that the value is negative. They would have to pay someone to take it on! Any commercial value would only be realised if it were completely gutted.

No sign of the lease yet. We expect to see it when we have sent Network Rail a copy of the condition report.

It's not easy becoming a charity! Although we can't see anyone gaining any private benefit from the project, the Charity Commission are taking some convincing. But we'll get there!



"On the positive side, the box is still standing!"



Lots of bits down here

Become a 'friend' of the Signal Box

We need all the friends we can get! If you've not already signed up as friend, please don't hesitate. We also have a growing number of volunteers hoping to get 'stuck in' to the signaling, decorating, gardening, etc. work. If you can help please let us know. A few hours a month is all we need.

We've not had a volunteer's meeting yet, due to the danger of wandering on to the midland main line. But as soon as the site is secure, (hopefully before the summer is over) a meeting will be arranged to see what needs to be done and do it!

see www.sigbox.co.uk