

2 April 2024

A SCOTTISH FIRST FOR MACKINTOSH'S HILL HOUSE AS IT BECOMES AN 'INTERNATIONAL ICONIC HOUSE'

Helensburgh's Hill House, designed in 1902 by Charles Rennie Mackintosh for publisher Walter Blackie, achieved another breakthrough this week, when it became the first Scottish dwelling to be listed on the prestigious and influential International Iconic Houses website www.iconichouses.org

The website features nearly 200 twentieth century modernist houses open to the public throughout the world, including properties and studios linked to many celebrated architects of the last century including Frank Lloyd Wright, Alvar Alto, Arne Jacobsen, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Antoni Gaudí.

The Iconic Houses Network provides opportunities for members to directly contact their opposite numbers across international borders through online forums and workshops, as well as bi-annual conferences, to discuss and share experience and new learning.

Until the addition of the Hill House, only four UK buildings had been admitted into the network, three of which were in London and the fourth, at Derngate in Nottingham, was another Mackintosh design (<https://www.78derngate.org.uk/>).

The Hill House is owned and cared for by the National Trust for Scotland, the country's largest conservation charity. Since 2018, the Trust has embarked on an ambitious conservation programme to arrest deterioration of the property caused by decades of water penetration thanks to west coast wind and rain combined with problematic materials used by Mackintosh for external weather proofing.

The Hill House is currently shielded by a protective steel box structure, which is allowing its fabric to be dried out in controlled conditions prior to a long-term solution to moisture ingress being applied, with preparatory works for this already underway.

Inclusion in the Iconic Houses Network is welcomed by the Trust as its experts are especially interested to learn from international peers about conservation methodologies and innovation in concrete and cement structures.

Liz Davidson, the National Trust for Scotland's Hill House Project Director said:

"We are thrilled to have the Hill House included within this prestigious group of buildings and to have the opportunity to link with their expert curators and researchers.

"We now have access to the very best of international thinking and discoveries in terms of how to maintain, repair, present and interpret modernist architecture at both a material science level and through the incorporation of new technology including digital access.

"As we are just the fifth member of the group from the UK, it also means that domestic dwellings designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh now make up 40% of the UK's 20th century iconic buildings in the network."

Natascha Drabbe, Founder of the Iconic Houses Network said:

"Iconic Houses is proud that The Hill House, this masterpiece by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, one of the best-known representatives of the Arts and Crafts movement, can now be counted among its members.

"It is an extremely interesting addition, especially in the discussion of how to restore these monuments and preserve them for the future. It is the only house where you can temporarily walk along at gutter level and see in detail how it was built and we are eagerly looking forward to returning when the house has been restored to its former glory."

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. The Hill House was constructed in Helensburgh between 1902–04 based on a commission given to Charles Rennie Mackintosh by publisher Walter Blackie.
2. The radical design of the house was a great influence on German and Austrian architects, including Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus movement, and in turn can be said to have been pivotal in the direction of modern architecture in the 20th century.
3. Blackie lived in the Hill House until his death in 1953 and it was eventually acquired by the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS) in 1972 (having been Grade A listed the year before) and the National Trust for Scotland in 1982.
4. The Getty Foundation awarded NTS £95,000 in 2015 to come up with a solution to the water ingress that had been damaging the Hill House for decades. A 'containment' interim solution was arrived at in 2017 through a proposal to build a sheltering box over the property; ground was broken to construct a 165-tonne steel frame and chainmail structure in December 2018 and it was then opened to the public on 7 June 2019.
5. Surveys conducted in 2022 and 2023 have shown that the box is doing its job in drying out the Hill House and work is progressing to complete the process and employ a solution to water ingress with the box due to be removed by 2028.
6. The Iconic Houses Network was founded by Natascha Drabbe and launched in 2012 at the Schindler House in Los Angeles. It is the international membership-supported nonprofit network connecting architecturally significant houses and artists' homes and studios from the 20th century that are open to the public as house museum. The platform also focuses on advocacy, preservation, house museum management

and cooperation. The Iconic Houses Foundation is registered as a Public Benefit Organization (ANBI) at the Dutch Tax and Customs Administration:
www.iconichouses.org

About the National Trust for Scotland

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland's largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland's magnificent heritage.

Over the last 90 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them.

In March 2022, the National Trust for Scotland launched *Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone*, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity over the coming decade. From speaking up for Scotland's heritage which doesn't have a voice, to improving the lives and wellbeing of people across the country, and responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis, the Trust will build on its work in recent years to grow its impact and conserve and restore more of Scotland's heritage, as it moves towards its centenary in 2031.

Scotland's largest membership organisation, the National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work.

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit www.nts.org.uk.

The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.