

High Knoll Fort update

There was good news for High Knoll recently as the National Trust and the Public Works department successfully worked together to reopen the fort to the public again, to enable guided tours for passengers of the Queen Mary 2 cruise ship.

The first phase of the High Knoll improvement plan saw the repair and painting of the gate and railings, the clearance and repair of the access road and the removal of shrubs and weeds that were damaging the historic walls. Safety signs are also being installed.

'Because the fort has been closed for several years it was looking very overgrown and dilapidated. A lot of hard work was needed to get it up to an acceptable standard, and thanks are due to those staff from Public Works and the National Trust who were willing to work nights and weekends to get the job done,' says National Trust Director Jamie Roberts.

The priority now is to High Knoll open on a full-time basis. The fort remains closed to the public because the southern section – where two sections of wall collapsed in 2007 – remains unsafe. Not only are the collapsed sections a potential danger, but there are worrying signs that more sections of wall are at risk of collapse.

In order to get High Knoll safe for public use the southern half of the fort needs to be fenced off. Special fencing which is in keeping with the historic fort is currently being constructed locally, and should be installed in the next few weeks. Initially the fort is likely to be open on a restricted basis, until longer term arrangements can be agreed. The full restoration of High Knoll, including the rebuilding of the collapsed walls, is a significant restoration project that is likely to take several years. Funding still needs to be found for this. One option is to use the trainees from the recent Heritage Construction training project.



'The Round Tower, showing newly painted railings'

The money raised by the Community Spirit project is now safely in a bank account and earning interest. The recent visit of the Queen Mary 2 raised additional funds: Director of the National Trust Jamie Roberts took groups on guided tours of the fort, with the cost of entry going towards the restoration fund. The Community Spirit money will go towards the improvement of visitor facilities at High Knoll Fort, such as picnic tables and seating. Improved signage and interpretation is being funded through the new Tourism Development Plan.

The National Trust is currently working with the Tourism Department on plans for an official opening event at High Knoll Fort later this year. The event is planned to take place during St Helena Tourism's biennial '**Festival of Arts and Culture**' (3rd-17th December 2010), which is a celebration of Saint heritage with local music, art, food crafts and products. Further details of the opening event will be announced in the next few months.



'Passengers of the QM2 are shown around by the National Trust Director.'