



# Mastic Asphalt Crowns The Harris, Preston

The 'Heritage Project of the Year' at the Mastic Asphalt Council (MAC) Awards 2025 was The Harris completed by MAC contractor member NRA Roofing and Flooring Services.

The Harris is a museum, art gallery and library in the heart of Preston. Mastic asphalt was used for the sympathetic restoration of the 130-year-old Grade I listed building to ensure its preservation for future generations.

A cherished cultural institution since Edmund Harris, a Preston lawyer left £300,000 for its construction, opening in 1893, the roof refurbishment was part of the £16 million ambitious 'Harris Your Place' project to restore and reimagine the Harris as a 21st century cultural learning space.

Renovation work was carried out over three years and as part of this, over 100,000 collection objects were removed from the building and placed into safe storage. The main contractor for the project was Conlon Construction and NRA Roofing

and Flooring Services carried out the roof refurbishment.

Mastic asphalt was chosen for the roof refurbishment at the Harris, as like many heritage buildings, it was originally protected with asphalt. NRA Roofing and Flooring Services stripped the roof back to its original concrete deck and re-roofed the structure with a system comprising two coats of mastic asphalt backed with a 20-year warranty. Totalling an area comprising 950m<sup>2</sup>, two coats of solar reflective white paint were applied to the top surface to provide additional UV protection.

## Sustainability in Action

This was a fantastic example of recycling and sustainability in action as the existing mastic asphalt was taken up and reused. A total of 55 tonnes of mastic asphalt was stripped off and 55 tonnes of asphalt was put back.

There were some highly challenging logistical issues to overcome during the roof refurbishment which was carried out over an 18-week period.

With no crane, all the stripped up and new mastic asphalt was lifted via hoist. NRA Roofing and Flooring Services also had to deal with some tricky detail work due to mechanical and engineering plant on the roof.

Craig Chaplin, Director of NRA Roofing and Flooring Services said: "This was an extremely challenging project logistically, but the finished result looks fantastic. Mastic asphalt was ideal as it is so hard-wearing and enabled other trades such as scaffolding to work at the same time as we were re-roofing the building. We're proud to have played a key part in this historic project."

Following the refurbishment, The Harris reopened in September 2025.

## Mastic Asphalt for Heritage

What makes mastic asphalt so appealing for heritage projects - from local restorations to maintaining internationally renowned buildings - is its suitability, performance and appearance, which is in keeping

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with the stonework of these prestigious structures. More faithful to tradition than virtually any other roofing system, modern polymer modified mastic asphalt provides a far more effective waterproofing material.

One of the most renowned heritage applications of mastic asphalt can be found at London's St Paul's Cathedral. Mastic asphalt was first laid in 1906 on the Stone Gallery that circles the Cathedral dome and it provided a remarkable 111 years' weatherproof protection before it required refurbishment by MAC contractor member Sussex Asphalte.

Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament and the Bank of England all have mastic asphalt roofs that have lasted for more than 100 years. Although mastic asphalt is renowned for use on heritage buildings, it is equally likely to be found on modern buildings, especially town centre and large shopping centre developments built using traditional construction methods. Both Bluewater in Kent and Birmingham's Bullring have mastic asphalt roofs.