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Maintaining A Historic Past

WESTMINSTER HALL

Helping Westminster Hall Write New Pages In History

As part of the Houses of Parliament ongoing restoration works, we were contracted to carry out an extensive scaffold access package to the inside of Westminster Hall, incorporating the external roof lantern.

Westminster Hall is the oldest building on the parliamentary estate carrying more than 900 years of fascinating history. Set to play a prominent part in future events, Westminster Hall has been transformed to befit its 21st century standing in the world. As part of the Palace of Westminster situated on the north bank of the River Thames in the City of Westminster, this special place has been the site of crucial episodes in the UK's history, such as the trial of Charles I, coronation banquets, the lying-in-state of monarchs and prime ministers and addresses by world leaders. The oak hammer-beam roof in Westminster Hall, commissioned by Richard II in 1393, is the largest in Northern Europe, spanning more than 20 metres. A steel frame structure, installed by Sir Frank Baines between 1913 and 1922 to reinforce the roof, made the access system possible to undertake the project works.

The main works in Westminster Hall comprised two parts. The first element involved the meticulous conservation of the internal roof trusses sited 28m above ground level. The second involved the deconstruction and restoration of the external roof lantern.

We were under no illusions about this project's significance and historical importance from the outset. Westminster Hall's interior is steeped in history, and just about everything contained within it is irreplaceable. During the planning stage, no stone was left unturned to the extent that we created a full-scale, proof of concept mock-up at our head office. This fully functioning scaffolding structure for one of the Westminster Hall roof space's internal bays was lifted and lowered with the client and relevant stakeholders in attendance.

Once appointed, we immediately consulted with our system scaffold partners, HAKI UK, and co-developed a lightweight access solution built at ground level and lifted into position via purpose-built hoists made in Germany specifically for the contract.

We successfully constructed and installed a single roof truss bay through meticulous diligence, including off-site working prototypes for practice in a single weekend possession. Once raised, the scaffolding rig remained suspended on the hoists. As a secondary precautionary measure, the structure was held in position by a series of purpose-made chains connected to a series of node points within the roof structure.

Hanging a scaffold by hoists and chains 28m in the air was challenging given the complicated design brief. The scaffolding was in preparation for large-scale conservation, and refurbishment work and great care had to be taken given the historical importance of such an iconic building. Being part of this project has been a privilege from start to finish for everyone involved.

CLIENT	•	MITIE
PROJECT	•	WESTMINSTER HALL
LOCATION	•	PALACE OF WESTMINSTER, LONDON SW1P 3JX

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The roof structure within Westminster Hall comprises 14 individual bays, 12 of which were suspended via purpose-built HAKI access rigs. The smaller bays at either end of the Hall had to be constructed from ground level, which presented an additional challenge as a criterion was to ensure that the scaffolds were as 'invisible' as possible. Achieving this with the suspended rigs was not such a challenge, as when lifted into their highest position were barely visible from the hall floor.

To disguise the scaffold at ground level and minimise the visual impact of the scaffold's appearance, we created a printed screen fixed to the scaffold that mirrored the Hall's existing walls and features to create a pleasing aesthetic for the thousands of visitors that visit the site every week.

Operatives involved in this significant project were trained and competent in rigging, slinging, scaffolding, HAKI system trained & MEWP trained.

Westminster Hall dates back to 1099 & is part of the Westminster UNESCO World Heritage Site.

KEY PROJECT FACTS

- **£750K WORTH OF BESPOKE HAKI COMPONENTS.**
- **BESPOKE HOISTS MADE IN GERMANY.**
- **BESPOKE SECONDARY SUPPORT CHAINS.**
- **SECURITY VETTED & CLEARED OPERATIVES.**
- **BAY 0 & 14 SCAFFOLDS CLAD IN FABRIC TO MATCH BUILDING SURROUNDS.**
- **FIRE-RATED MATERIALS.**
- **OUT OF HOURS WORKING FOR INSTALLATION & REMOVAL.**
- **ALL OPERATIVES EXPLICITLY TRAINED FOR THE TASK.**

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