

PRESS RELEASE

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BASEPOINT TRANSFORMS CHATHAM JOINERS' SHOP INTO BUSINESS CENTRE *Workshop where Oval Office desk was hand-built becomes hub for SMEs*

A £3.5 million development project resulting from an established Basepoint/SEEDA partnership has saved a scheduled ancient monument in the historic dockyard of Chatham – the Joiners' Shop – and transformed it into a modern business centre. The exterior of the building [right] has been carefully restored to its original 18th century grandeur, but step inside [below] and you firmly enter the 21st century and home to dozens of local businesses privileged to occupy such a landmark premises.



The new business centre, developed and managed by Basepoint on the site of the 200 year-old naval workshop, opened on 5 January. The timing was fortuitous as the Joiners' Shop has a unique link with the new political landscape in America: this was the site where skilled carpenters hand-built the impressive Oval Office desk used by US presidents – including the 44th incumbent Barack Obama – using timber from the warship HMS Resolute after she was decommissioned.

Centre manager Allison Sweeney commented: "We have had a very exciting three weeks here so far, with a key handover ceremony and a special feature on local television news highlighting the magnificent White House desk – made on this very site – where Barak Obama now sits! Our first licensees are delighted with the space and we are generating lots of interest from potential clients too. I am sure this is going to become a thriving business base."



Five licensees were quick to move into the Joiners' Shop as soon as it opened, with another two due to take up space in February. Local design and marketing agency The Helm has rented three units; Liquid Blue Designs, a newly-formed partnership of laser technology engravers, is occupying one unit; and family-run JM Electricals is now also based at the Joiners' Shop. Unitas, a small business that works in the field of architecture and design, and Purchase Antiques, a company which restores furniture, have both made the new Basepoint centre their operations hub.

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unique workspaces



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great people

Allison and some of her Basepoint colleagues have been out and about in Greenwich Market, handing out leaflets and generating interest from prospective businesses while giving a history lesson at the same time. The listed Joiners' Shop was built in the late 18th century to support the construction of Admiral Nelson's ships of the line in Chatham dockyards. Now under the stewardship of the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, SEEDA and the local council, this historic site has been preserved and revived as a centre for modern creative industries as part of the regeneration of the entire Chatham maritime area.

During the renovation process, builders discovered an old pit on the site and called in a team of archeologists to investigate. They unearthed a number of everyday items such as shoes and lunch tins dating from the late 18th century, which are going on display in the next-door museum. The pit — now protected by a glass panel and back lit — remains on view as an object of historical interest.

Enquiries are always welcome from businesses interested in moving to the Joiners' Shop Basepoint centre. Please contact Allison Sweeney for further information on 01634 816004.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

Basepoint specialises in the development and operation of managed business, innovation and enterprise centres. These centres provide comprehensive accommodation and support infrastructure packages to new and early-stage companies within a supportive and secure environment. The company operates both wholly- and part-owned centres as well as managing facilities on behalf of public sector bodies. Group operations currently extend across Southern England and the Midlands, with additional opportunities under assessment across the UK.

Basepoint is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the ACT Foundation, a leading grant-making charity dedicated to improving the quality of life of those in need. The ACT Foundation derives its income from a substantial and diversified property portfolio of which Basepoint is a major constituent.

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Media contacts may be addressed to:

Allison Sweeney
The Joiners' Shop — Basepoint Chatham
01634 816004
allisonsweeney@basepoint.co.uk

Catharine Esmat
ClearLine Communications Ltd
01962 820358
catharine@clearlinecommunications.co.uk