

## Press Release

### Nicholas Groves-Raines calls for removal of VAT on repairs to existing buildings to encourage their retention and reuse.

Nicholas Groves-Raines, FRIAS, RIBA, RSUA, RIAI, Director at Edinburgh based Groves-Raines Architects Studios Ltd., receives an MBE for services to Architecture, Heritage and Conservation.

Architect calls for Government intervention to abolish VAT on repairs to existing buildings thus cutting down on carbon by saving and repurposing them.

Career in architecture spanning over 50 years has seen Groves-Raines rescue and restore some of Scotland's finest historic buildings as well as deliver significant architectural projects across the UK and in Ireland.



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The contribution of one of Scotland's leading architects has been recognised in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours list as Nicholas Groves-Raines is awarded an MBE for services to Architecture, Heritage and Conservation. A co-director of Groves-Raines Architects Studios alongside his wife Kristín Hannesdóttir, son Gunnar, Zoë Alston, and Stewart Stirling, he has over 50 years' experience of an extraordinary variety of conservation and development projects.

Born in 1940 in Bangor Co. Down, Nick spent his time as a student of Architecture at Edinburgh College of Art in the 1960s. This period was set against the backdrop of city and town centre clearances across Scotland and the UK. Historic buildings were demolished to make way for shopping centres and other new developments. Railing against the pervading culture of the time, Nick's passion for preservation and restoration of existing buildings has fuelled a career which has seen him play an integral role in protecting Scotland's historic built environment whilst also working on award winning architectural projects in Ireland and the UK.

Practices that are commonplace today, including a focus on sustainability and reducing the carbon footprint of developments, have been integral to Nick's practice since the 1970s. In particular the concept of 'embedded energy' of existing buildings, which recognises the work and materials already contained within a building, has been a key to his practise' approach to projects over many years.

Today, as Nick is recognised for services to Architecture, Heritage and Conservation, he calls on the Government to abolish VAT on repair costs for existing buildings, allowing more of our heritage of buildings to be retained and repurposed.

"A lot has changed since I began working as an architect. There was little appreciation within the profession for old buildings and the fabric of whole townscapes were destroyed in the 'slum' clearances of the 1960s and 1970s. As a young architect I wanted to push back against this. I was fired up to record a number of these buildings that have since been lost. In an effort to counter this wanton waste I determined to take on some development projects of my own at a time when architects weren't allowed to take on developments. I resolved to acquire a number of threatened historic buildings, as it seemed the only way to save them.

Today there is a greater appreciation for our historic buildings but despite this progress there is still much we can do to protect and restore our built environment. Sustainability in architecture has to start with the restoration of existing buildings. Keeping what we have and reusing it is one of the best ways to save carbon. The greatest impact on this would be to remove the 20% VAT rate that applies to repair on existing buildings. As a private individual taking on an old building, you are being hammered with an 20% additional cost on what is already a costly exercise. By removing VAT on repairs more people would be encouraged to restore existing buildings and breathe new life into the traditional/vernacular heritage across the country."



Nick's drive and determination to rescue historic buildings saw him take on developments risking his own money on numerous projects to save buildings neglected by city councils and preservation organisations. This included Robertson Close in Edinburgh, an early 18th Century tenement, that was marked for demolition by the City Council before Nick stepped in, bought it for the princely sum of £1.00 and refurbished it, creating 7 flats. This project was subsequently listed by Historic Scotland. Developments in deprived areas of Glasgow and Kilmarnock followed, earning the Practice and the development company Steinhuis Ltd the affectionate denomination 'The Department for Lost Causes'. The personal risk and entrepreneurship involved also saw Nick save a number of buildings which then became family homes as well as office spaces for the architectural practice. These included Moubray House, Peffermill House, Liberton House and Lambs House in Edinburgh as well as the Lees Stables in Coldstream and Edinample Castle in Perthshire.

Nick is a former trustee of the National Trust for Scotland and a former board member of the Queen's Hall. Over the past few years, he has given his free time to various voluntary organisations, particularly in Leith, advising on conservation matters. In 2017 Nick was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS), being described by the then President Stewart Henderson as 'a saviour of historic buildings'.

Nick continues to work as a director of Groves-Raines Architects Studios (GRAS) and is currently involved with a number of refurbishment projects in Sutherland, Shetland and other parts of Scotland. These projects include old hunting lodges on behalf of Wildland Ltd. giving Nick the opportunity to reuse and repurpose existing buildings and introducing cutting edge contemporary interventions, whilst also working in the traditional vernacular style and where possible, restoring these buildings as they were originally built.

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## Notes to Editors

Nicholas Groves Raines, FRIAS, RIBA, RSUA, RIAI was born in May 1940 in County Down, Ireland. He studied architecture at Edinburgh College of Art. By 1981, he had his own practice, specialising in the conservation and re-use of historic and listed buildings. Groves-Raines and his Icelandic architect wife, Kristin Hannesdottir, have acquired and restored a succession of historic properties in Edinburgh as their family home; namely Moubray House (1972), Peffermill House (1980), Liberton House (1997) and Lamb's House (2010). Beyond Edinburgh, the couple also restored Edinample Castle in Perthshire and the Lees Stables in Coldstream as well as smaller country properties.

The work of the practice ranges from castles, mansions, theatres, hotels, private houses, visitor centres, churches, museums, housing, health centres etc.; many are listed. The practice has won numerous awards in Scotland and Ireland, Europe and America. For more information see [gras.co](http://gras.co)

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## UK Cabinet Office MBE Citation

Nicholas Groves-Raines, FRIAS, RIBA, RSUA, RIAI

Director, Groves-Raines Architects. For services to Architecture, Heritage and Conservation

- He is one of Scotland's greatest ever architects, renowned for his life-long work of rescuing and restoring Scotland's finest historic buildings, a true labour of love.
- Throughout his working life he has consistently looked past flaws that have become excuses for allowing properties to fall into disrepair, finding innovative ideas to restore these landmarks to their former glory.
- He has had a huge impact on Scotland's architectural landscape. He combines architectural excellence with the personal endeavour of saving, restoring and re-using many important historic buildings.
- His long list of successes testifies to his personal passion for historic buildings, a profound belief in their importance as touchstones of our shared history and his extraordinary personal commitment and engagement.
- When heritage buildings are at risk, it is often a long and expensive process to save them, he has consistently dedicated his free time, and expertise to assisting with many charitable and community organisations such as the National Trust for Scotland.
- His expertise, freely given, has resulted in numerous successes. In personal and professional capacity, he has repeatedly demonstrated the ambition and entrepreneurial spirit to find a way to successfully reuse and restore architectural heritage.