

HIGHLAND CINEMA

Role: Principal Contractor **Client: Highland Cinema**

3b construction successfully delivered the new Highland Cinema in Fort William, creating a vibrant entertainment venue on the former site of the town hall, which was destroyed by fire in the 1970s. Championed by Highland businessman and investor Angus MacDonald, the development was designed to provide a modern community hub where residents and visitors can enjoy films, food and refreshments throughout the year, particularly during the long winter evenings.

Working to a fast-paced programme, on a town centre site, our in-house teams carried out all elements of the build, including reinforced concrete basement walls, structural steel frames for the two cinema auditoriums and the café, along with the installation of roof and wall cladding to achieve a weather-tight building. By drawing on our integrated construction capabilities, we streamlined project delivery, reduced lead times and maintained momentum throughout every stage of the build.

The completed cinema has become a valuable addition to Fort William, supporting the local economy while providing a modern, high-quality leisure destination that will serve the community and visitors for years to come.












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PROJECTS – SKILLS & EXPERIENCE

3b were appointed as the main contractor to deliver the new Highland Cinema in the centre of Fort William. The project involved the demolition of an existing town-centre building and its replacement with a new two-screen cinema incorporating a café/restaurant, commercial kitchen and bar.

The project was delivered on a highly constrained hillside town-centre site, requiring careful planning and coordination due to the proximity of neighbouring properties, existing public areas and the surrounding streetscape. The building incorporated a reinforced concrete basement excavated into the hillside, with a structural steel frame constructed above to form the building's distinctive triple-pitched structure.

A key consideration throughout the project was the acoustic performance of the building. The external envelope and cladding systems were designed and installed to meet the stringent acoustic requirements associated with cinema use, while also managing the impact of the building on adjacent properties. The external elevations incorporated a combination of natural stone rubble walling and aluminium glazed screens, carefully selected to complement the character of Fort William and integrate the new development into the existing townscape.

A substantial entrance canopy was also installed to provide weather protection for customers queuing outside the cinema, particularly during busy movie screenings. The external works were completed with full landscaping to ensure that the finished development blended appropriately with the surrounding streetscape.

Internally, 3b delivered the café/restaurant facilities, including a fully fitted commercial kitchen to serve the operation. We also constructed the timber bar and restaurant servery, together with timber rafters and feature timber cladding to the café area. These specialist timber elements were manufactured off site and subsequently transported to site and carefully screened into their final positions. This approach enabled greater control over quality, programme and finish while minimising disruption within the constrained site.

The mechanical and electrical installation was particularly complex due to the specialist ventilation and environmental requirements associated with the cinema auditoriums, café/restaurant and commercial kitchen. The project also incorporated a highly complex Audio Visual installation, requiring close coordination between the building fabric, specialist cinema systems, electrical services and other trades to ensure the facilities were fully operational and fit for purpose.

Throughout the construction period, 3b operated within a live town-centre environment, maintaining safe access and managing interfaces with members of the public, neighbouring properties and various community stakeholders. This required careful consideration of logistics, deliveries, site access, noise, working hours and the impact of construction activities on the surrounding area.

Duration: 80 weeks