

Hennebique: The Sleeping Giant Awakens

29 March 2024



The Ports of Genoa historic headquarters of Palazzo San Giorgio provided the backdrop to the signing ceremony of the concessionary contract between Hennebique s.r.l., the dedicated company composed of Vitali S.p.A. and Roncello Capital S.r.l., and the Western Ligurian Sea Port Authority, to resurrect and refurbish Genoa's former grain silos, a masterpiece of Art Deco industrial architecture.

The 90-year concession will pave the way for the extensive redevelopment of the landmark building, located along the Old Port waterfront, which has been derelict for decades. The preliminaries in the planned construction works are now due to start by mid-April, including stripping-out, to prepare for the start of the sustainable urban drainage operations and far-reaching demolition works scheduled for July .

The redevelopment plan

Derelict since the 1980s, in 2019 the Liguria Region, Western Ligurian Sea Port Authority, City of Genoa and Heritage Council, in collaboration with the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Genoa, signed a framework agreement to establish the criteria for the redevelopment of Hennebique. In June 2019 the Port Authority called a tender for the 90-year concession, awarded to the Vitali SpA and Roncello Capital Srl Group, with the strict requirement to preserve the distinctive façade of the landmark building. The project was subsequently incorporated in the Major Investment Programme for the Recovery and Development of the Port and the City of Genoa ("Genoa Decree" Law 109/2018), in the aftermath of the collapse of the Morandi Bridge. In December 2020 the Preliminary Deed was signed between the Port Authority and the real estate infrastructure group to complete the final design and commence the preliminaries in the construction works of the far-reaching restructuring plan of Hennebique. The facility is set to be reconverted into a mixed-use hub combining offices, hospitality services, arts centre and museum, and a selection of retail outlets, flanked by bars and restaurants located along the waterfront and on the panoramic terrace. In addition, westside the area will accommodate a range of cruise services in relation to its proximity to the passenger terminals. The redevelopment of Hennebique has been designed to complete the urban regeneration of the Old Port and to become the focal point of the pedestrian promenade which will serve as a unifying element and provide seamless public access across the Old Port, westside from the Ponte dei Mille cruise hub, eastside to the New Levante Waterfront.

Hennebique in the past

Dating from 1901, the former grain silos "Hennebique" was the first facility in Italy to have been constructed in reinforced concrete, as patented by the engineer Francois Hennebique in 1892, and over the years the monumental building has become a magnificent landmark of Genoa's waterfront. A striking example of Art Deco architecture, which was conceived and functioned as a well-engineered industrial machine equipped to unload and store grain, the Hennebique silos formed an integral part

of the technological and infrastructure process which revolutionised Genoa at the turn of the 20th century. Strategically nestled in the heart of the old town and historical port, the refurbished Hennebique will represent the final step in the completion of the large-scale redevelopment of the urban waterfront, integrating the Old Port with the adjacent vibrant cruise and ferry hub. Given its striking structural characteristics, on 4 April 2007, the Italian Ministry of Culture declared the building a "Site of historical and artistic interest" and "an important example of industrial architecture in Genoa".