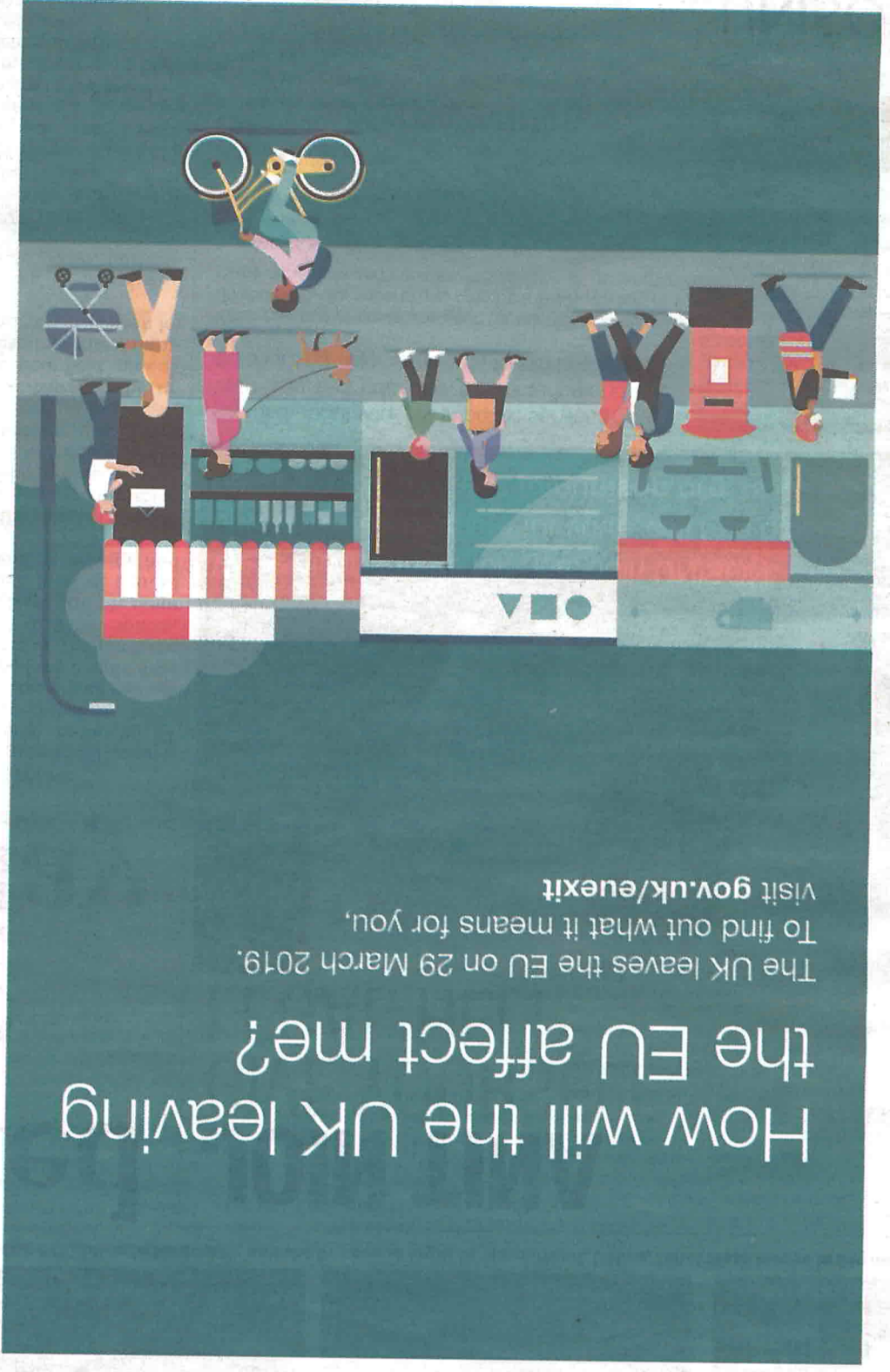


Transformation of Victorian loos into bar to begin



UK LEAVES THE EU 29.03.19



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> The Bigg Market loos are set for a major transformation

LEISURE entrepreneur's plans to flush out a new generation of visitors to the Bigg Market loos are set to come to life within weeks. Steve Blair first revealed his ambitions to transform the famous 19th Century public conveniences into a mini bar last year, having been in discussions with Newcastle City Council to re-amp the empty 'flying saucer' building for two years.

The 30-year-old engineer from Newcastle is to convert the cubicles into a trendy drinking establishment. Now it has been revealed that building work will start in a matter of weeks on the former Gentlemen's WC building, as part of business improvement district NE1 Ltd's National Lottery Heritage Fund regeneration of the Bigg Market historic quarter.

The Victorian toilet buildings will be completely refurbished, replacing the roof with a modern zinc and glass structure and stripping out all the fixtures and fittings, with the work expected to be completed in the summer. The building will be renovated ready for commercial use, including a new electrical supply to the property, with Mr Blair's team fitting out the interior as a cafe and wine bar.

NE1 Ltd, which is championing the area's redevelopment with National Lottery Heritage Funding and support from Newcastle City Council, has completed the rest of the public realm works, upgrading the Bigg Market by replacing tired and distressed street furniture, new street lighting, additional trees and also creating four level terraced areas for events and markets. The project will now shift its focus to the listed buildings in the area.

A total of 15 eligible properties in the Bigg Market were originally identified as part of the application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2016 and the owners have been contacted and encouraged to apply for grants to restore their buildings and shop fronts. Grants are still available from the programme to renovate buildings and property owners still have the opportunity to apply.

"With the £100m redevelopment of the old Newgate Street Shopping Centre, just up the road, this part of the city is now attracting unprecedented levels of investment."

"The Bigg Market is one of the most loved parts of the city centre and although it did start to look a bit shabby it's now undergoing an exciting renovation that will add another dimension to what Newcastle city centre has to offer."

"Council staff have worked extremely hard in their quest for a suitable tenant and never gave up. The announcement that this intriguing building will become a cafe/wine bar is great news."