National Museum of Scotland unveils dramatic transformation

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National Museums Scotland has completed a highly ambitious redevelopment returning a listed Victorian building to its original glory, creating spectacular new public spaces and revealing the wonderful collections. The centrepiece of a 15-year masterplan, the project has taken just over three years to complete with fundraising efforts exceeding target by almost £1million.

Sixteen new galleries take visitors on an inspirational journey through the wonders of nature, the cultures of the world and the excitement of science and discovery. Over 8,000 objects have been selected for the new galleries, 80% of which go on display for the first time in generations. Pioneering Scots who revolutionised the modern world are introduced through their innovations, inventions and possessions, including John Logie Baird, Sir Alexander Fleming and the chemist Joseph Black.

Sir Angus Grossart, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, National Museums Scotland, said: “The reopening of the National Museum of Scotland, on time and within budget is a tremendous achievement as importantly it allows us to liberate the strengths of our great collections and mobilise their great potential for dynamic development.

“Our collections tell great stories about the world, how Scots saw that world, and the disproportionate impact they had upon it. The intellectual and collecting impact of the Scottish diaspora has been profound. It is an inspiring story which has captured the imagination of our many supporters who have helped us achieve our aspirations and to whom we are profoundly grateful.”

Working with award-winning Scottish architect Gareth Hoskins and internationally acclaimed exhibition designer Ralph Appelbaum, National Museums Scotland has also restored remarkable Victorian architecture, created sixteen new galleries, a major gallery to host international exhibitions, a three-storey learning centre and a spectacular new street-level stone-vaulted entrance hall.

Glass elevators carry visitors from the entrance hall to the stunning Grand Gallery, a light-filled space housing the UK’s single largest museum installation, the Window on the World: a four-storey, 18-metre high display of over 800 objects.

Dr Gordon Rintoul, Director, National Museums Scotland, said: “This is a proud moment in the history of a great museum – the climax of a once-in-a-lifetime transformation through which we have rediscovered our exceptional collections, and breathed new life into a beautiful building. The result is a new National Museum of Scotland – a place where the cultures of Scotland and the world meet, and the arts and sciences connect. We look forward to sharing the results with our visitors now and those of many generations to come.”

The £47.4million redevelopment, has been jointly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (£17.8million), and the Scottish Government (£16million), with a further £13.6million from private sources.

Fiona Hyslop, Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, said: “The reopening of the

National Museum of Scotland is one of the nation's cultural highlights of 2011. The transformed Museum, displaying its exceptional collections, is truly spectacular. A must-see attraction for local and international visitors alike, the new National Museum of Scotland promotes the best of Scotland and our contributions to the world.

"I'm delighted that the Scottish Government has been able to contribute to this successful project, which will allow visitors from home and across the globe to enjoy an inspirational and memorable experience."

Colin McLean, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Scotland, said: "Held dear in the hearts of many Scots through memories of childhood visits, the National Museum of Scotland has undergone a glorious transformation which will surprise and delight all those that enter its stone-vaulted doors. It has taken the Museum to a world-class level showcasing Scotland at its best while making a significant contribution to our culture, society and tourist economy. The Heritage Lottery Fund is very proud to have been a partner in helping make this happen and looks forward to the National Museum entertaining, educating and inspiring generations to come."

The transformation project is the centrepiece of an ambitious £70million masterplan launched in 2004 to redevelop the museum complex. Further phased development will deliver 11 more galleries and complete the overall vision by 2020.

Notes to editors

National Museums Scotland has over four million items in its collections and the largest body of curatorial and conservation expertise in the country. The group includes:

- National Museum of Scotland (formerly the Royal Museum and the Museum of Scotland)
- National Museum of Flight
- National War Museum
- National Museum of Rural Life
- National Museum of Costume.

Further information

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