

Sara Hilton, Head of HLF North West and Maria Balshaw, Director of the Whitworth in Manchester

The Whitworth Art Gallery, at The University of Manchester has been awarded £8million by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) towards the long-awaited extension designed by leading architects MUMA.

This development will transform the gallery - one of The University of Manchester's best-loved cultural treasures - creating a new experience that can be shared by visitors from across the local community with those coming from further afield.

At the heart of the project is an elegant 21st-century extension that will double the size of the public space at the gallery. An art garden will be created and new main entrance will welcome visitors directly from Whitworth Park.

A new north wing will embrace the park, housing a landscape gallery where Whitworth's internationally important artworks will be displayed. Alongside this will be new study centre where visitors of all ages will be able to explore and learn about these wonderful collections. A promenade gallery will lead to the south wing, comprising a new café and a learning studio opening into the art garden.

Exhibition spaces on the first floor will be revitalised, and the Edwardian staircases will be opened up creating a spectacular prelude to the grand hall. Three large barrel ceiling exhibition galleries will also increase the gallery space, including new windows that will open up views across Whitworth Park.

Over the last five years the number of visitors to the 120-year old Whitworth Art Gallery have doubled to 170,000.

This £12million development will open up a staggering 396m2 of new gallery space and doubling the artwork on display, whilst creating a beautiful and inspiring environment where visitors from near and far can enjoy these magnificent collections.

Director, Maria Balshaw, says of the Heritage Lottery Fund grant: “We are delighted to have this investment which will enable us to make our vision for the Whitworth a reality. We’ve been developing our plans for over three years and can’t wait to start on the real thing. The project will create a gallery that’s truly fit for the 21st century and which we know our visitors are going to love”.

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: “The Heritage Lottery Fund award will bring a vital transformation to the Whitworth Art Gallery, opening it up to the park and its neighbouring communities, and offering new opportunities for visitors to explore and enjoy. The gallery will be revitalised, creating new spaces that will allow more of these magnificent collections to be shared with the public.”

Notes to editors

The Whitworth Art Gallery is part of the University of Manchester. It is home to internationally renowned collections of modern art, textiles, watercolours, prints, drawings and sculpture. Created in 1908 as the first English gallery in a park, the Whitworth is today developing a new vision for the role of a university gallery, and is forging stronger connections between park, community and landscape through this development and extension.

Since 2005 the Whitworth’s audience has increased by 112%. The formal learning programme currently serves 12,000 primary and secondary school pupils annually. The new dedicated learning studio will allow us to increase this by nearly 20%. Informal learning programmes, currently reaching around 30,000 people of all ages, will extend to serve an additional 15,000. The project will allow us to increase overall visitor figures to 250,000 by 2014.

The Whitworth is raising the additional £4million for the project from a range of sources, including the University of Manchester, which has committed £1 million. A fundraising campaign has been launched which allows individuals and companies to donate to the project. For more information contact jo.beggs@@manchester.ac.uk

The Whitworth found architect MUMA (McInnes, Usher, McKnight Architects) through a RIBA architectural competition in 2009 which attracted 139 international entries from around the world. MUMA was established in 2000 and since then has delivered a number of high profile, public arts projects. All of their public projects have been secured through winning architectural design competitions, and each completed project has won national and international awards.

MUMA’s new Medieval & Renaissance Galleries at The Victoria & Albert Museum opened in December 2009 to critical acclaim, attracting interest from around the world. The project has since won numerous awards including RIBA, British Construction Industry, D&AD and World Architecture Festival awards, as well as the British Design Awards’ ‘Architecture Achievement of the Year’.

MUMA’s projects are typified by a sensitive response to their context with rational and efficient strategic decisions informing the plan. Each project demonstrates an on-going fascination with light, views and composition and an interest in the highly crafted use of materials and structure.

The project will offer model of how museums can be environmentally sustainable. Engineers Buro Happold have incorporated innovative energy saving elements into the project which will help reduce the Gallery's CO2 outputs by 10%, despite increasing the size of the building by a third.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK, including over £500million to the North West alone.

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