Unprecedented expansion for the National Portrait



Visitors enjoying the National Portrait Gallery's 18th-century galleries Simon Mooney

London's National Portrait Gallery (NPG) has been awarded £9.4million from The National Lottery for its 'Inspiring People: Transforming our National Portrait Gallery' project.

Loved and admired not just for its wonderful collection but also as a centre for serious debate about how best we engage with our national identity, the NPG will undertake its biggest programme of development since its opening in 1856. Back then it was the world’s first portrait gallery.

Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director of the National Portrait Gallery, said: “We are very grateful for the vital support of HLF, which crucially represents, as we do, people nationwide. This major grant thanks to National Lottery players enables the biggest transformation the gallery has ever undertaken. We are going to make ourselves an essential place for everyone to feel part of the culture they have been born into, chosen, or are seeking to understand, to become a truly national gallery for all.”

Extensive modernisation programme

There will be new gallery spaces, including the East Wing, and an introductory gallery space to give visitors immediate access to the collection on arrival. A Learning Centre with a number of studio and breakout spaces, lunch room and

cloakroom are also planned. Combined with an additional larger step-free entrance into the main lobby the current capacity is set to be doubled.

Home to over 12,000 portraits

The NPG's collection contains over 12,000 portraits of the most influential people in British history. There will be a major re-display of the collection, extended activities for schools, families, young people and students, a volunteering programme and new partnerships with museums and organisations throughout the UK.

[quote=Sir Peter Luff, Chair of HLF]"We are particularly pleased that this funding will also be used to increase the gallery's reach across the UK."[/quote]

Sir Peter Luff, Chair of HLF, said: "We are particularly pleased that this funding will also be used to increase the gallery's reach across the UK by working closely with a number of cultural institutions, from South Wales to Sheffield, and with a focus on young people, families and those with special needs."

Further fundraising

The gallery has already embarked on its fundraising activities and work is scheduled to start later this year. It aims to reach its target of £35.5m by March 2019 so it can complete the project by 2022.



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Albert Jonas and John Xiniwe of the African Choir, by the London Stereoscopic Company, 1891 Hulton Archive/Getty Images



new photographic exhibition

Self-portrait by Van Dyck, 1640-1 Copyright: Philip Mould & Co

Grant helps to save Van Dyck's last self-portrait