# £10million Lottery grant awarded for Art Gallery redevelopment

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Aberdeen City Council has already committed £10million from its Non-Housing Capital Fund towards the overall cost of the project, and has also agreed to underwrite a public and philanthropic fundraising campaign for the remaining £10million needed.

The £30million scheme to improve the Art Gallery, Cowdray Hall and Memorial Court secured planning permission and listed building consent last autumn and has won the backing of Historic Scotland.

Aberdeen City Council Leader, Councillor Jenny Laing, said: “I am thoroughly delighted that HLF has supported the scheme with this sizeable capital grant – the only one to be awarded in Scotland in the latest round of awards. Investment in the art gallery and its collections will ensure that this great city’s artistic heritage is protected and enhanced for many years to come.

“We are now embarking upon the fund-raising campaign to raise the rest of the capital funding required. I would urge organisations, businesses and individuals to invest in the much-loved Aberdeen gallery and the wider project so that they can say that this project was something they themselves helped to make happen.”

Deputy Council Leader Councillor, Marie Boulton, said: “The project will give us many more opportunities to display our wonderful collections, which are among the finest in the United Kingdom, bringing benefits for local people and visitors alike. The interior improvements will also thoroughly modernise the gallery and allow us to attract the best possible range of incoming exhibitions and individual exhibits.

“The art gallery has always evolved over its 130-year history and this latest renewal makes a positive contribution to the building itself and to the wider conservation area. We are adding a modern dimension with high design standards to an outstanding historic building – one which has been supported by Historic Scotland and now by the Heritage Lottery Fund.”

City Council Director of Education Culture and Sport, Gayle Gorman, said: “Improving our art gallery is an essential building block in our long-term ‘Shaping Aberdeen’ programme to enhance the city to make it even better.

“The art gallery is already one of our finest assets and the sensitive proposals which have been brought forward will make it even better. They will transform it into a must-see venue, with fine exhibitions and life-long educational facilities for people of all ages.”

Colin McLean, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland, said: “HLF is delighted to support this transformational project which will give the north east of Scotland a world-class cultural centre worthy of the exceptional art works it will house. This substantial investment reflects HLF’s aims of increasing cultural opportunities across the country and creating new ways for people to engage with their heritage.

“This historic building will bring the past up-to-date with dynamic displays and contemporary interpretation. It will not only attract more tourists to the area but will benefit the wider community as they explore and enjoy their rich heritage in

a gallery of which they can be proud.”

The project involves new educational facilities to create opportunities for all to learn more about the arts, and the planned sensitive upgrading of the Cowdray Hall will create a fine new performance space for audiences and performers.

The war memorial will also be carefully treated to reflect both its role as a space for quiet contemplation and as a civic space to honour the sacrifices made on behalf of the community.

The programme for the construction and fit-out works to the Art Gallery and Cowdray Hall will enable the buildings to re-open in 2017. Meantime, the construction of a Museums Collections Centre in the Northfield regeneration area will allow art works and historical objects to be stored during construction.

Interior plans include the creation of 21 gallery spaces in place of the existing 11, a 500 square metre space in which to showcase international-quality exhibitions, and a community gallery in a new wing at the rear of the building. Exterior plans involve removing the pitched roofs and skylights behind the parapets of the main building and adding a new storey of accommodation for temporary galleries and a learning zone.

Anyone interested in finding out more about contributing to the fund-raising campaign can contact Art Gallery & Museums manager Christine Rew, email info@aagm.co.uk.

**Notes to editors**

The A-listed Art Gallery is an outstanding two-storey block of Renaissance-style buildings, constructed in polished grey granite ashlar, with pink Corennie granite detailing. It was designed by A Marshall Mackenzie, opening in 1885, and was extended in 1905. The War Memorial and Cowdray Hall were opened in 1926. In 1937, the Regional Museum opened in the basement below the Cowdray Hall. The James McBey Print Room and Art Library opened in 1961 and is used as a reference library.

The fabric of the main gallery needs urgent attention and requires significant repair and replacement of roofs and skylights. There are problems with water ingress and associated damage to the building fabric, resulting in risks to the collection. The lack of thermal barriers and insulation in the roof space is also a major contributor to environmental problems.

The Cowdray Hall is in better condition but suffers from similar roof issues, and water ingress makes the basement unusable. The interior needs complete redecoration, and new lighting and servicing systems are urgently required.