Transformation of Scottish National Gallery given

Architects' image of east elevation of Scottish National Gallery Hoskins Architects

A HLF first-round pass was announced in March 2015, and following a recent meeting of the HLF trustees, full support for the award has now been confirmed.

The £16.8m extension will radically improve access to the SNG's world-class collection of Scottish art. Preparation is due to begin in September 2016, with construction work commencing on site in January 2017 and continuing until summer 2018. The new space will be open to the public in autumn of that year.

The planned redevelopment of the SNG, entitled Celebrating Scotland's Art, will triple the exhibition space available to the Scottish collection, vastly improve visitor access and circulation throughout the SNG complex, and create a more sympathetic setting and entrance for the SNG within the East Princes St Gardens.

?Designed by the celebrated Scottish architect William Henry Playfair (1790-1857) and situated right in the heart of Edinburgh, the SNG is the most popular UK art gallery outside of London, attracting over 1.4m visitors in 2015/16.

It is home to the world's finest collection of historic Scottish art, rich in the works of incomparable artists such as Allan Ramsay, Sir Henry Raeburn and Sir David Wilkie, as well as many, many others. The completion of this project will give this wonderful resource the prominence it deserves, and enable the NGS to engage visitors and highlight the history,

significance and impact of Scottish art, both nationally and internationally, to a much wider audience.

The new displays will tell the story of Scottish art from the 17th to the mid-20th century (including the Scottish Colourists), within a clear chronological framework, while also exploring themes of wider cultural relevance. The presentation will be regularly refreshed with the addition of dynamic and changing displays drawn from the riches of the collection, including the outstanding holding of Scottish graphic art.

This project will mark a fundamental change in the way the Gallery presents historical Scottish art.

Michael Clarke, Director of the SNG and the project's director, said: "We are absolutely delighted that the Project has received the full and generous support of HLF. Scotland's historic art will at last be displayed in a space that will do it justice and enable our visitors from home and abroad to appreciate fully its many and distinctive qualities. Our world-famous collections, displayed in our historic and sympathetically remodelled Gallery, will reinforce our position as one of Scotland's 'must see' attractions."

Lucy Casot, Head of HLF Scotland, said: "We are delighted that thanks to the National Lottery playing public, the most important collection of Scottish Art in the world will have a home worthy of its impressive heritage. This project will breathe new life into the collection so that it can bring joy and inspiration to national and international visitors. Importantly, it will also reach out to schools and community groups across the country so that they too can learn from and enjoy these national treasures."

One of Scotland's leading architectural practices, Hoskins Architects, which has been widely praised for a number of high-profile designs in the arts and cultural sector, including the award-winning redevelopment of the National Museum of Scotland, was appointed to the SNG project in 2014.

Before his untimely death earlier this year, the firm's founder, Gareth Hoskins OBE, created an outstanding design for the project which will be taken forward by the firm's director Chris Coleman-Smith. The plans will stand, as will other major projects designed by Gareth Hoskins both in this country and abroad, as a memorial to his exceptional talent.

The design will open up a suite of new gallery spaces which, for the first time, will be directly accessible from East Princes St Gardens, and will utilise former office, print room and storage space to maximise the area given to the new displays. The space will be enhanced by natural light and will also offer stunning views into the Gardens and the city beyond. Circulation throughout the entire SNG complex will be rationalised and radically improved, and sympathetic landscaping will integrate the SNG with the Gardens, significantly enhancing this important part of Edinburgh's World Heritage Site.

The terrace outside the Gallery will be substantially expanded and a new pathway created. Access to the Gardens as a whole will be much improved, with major enhancements to disabled access. These ambitious plans are currently with City of Edinburgh Council for consideration.

In January of this year the National Galleries of Scotland Bill was passed by the Scottish Parliament to allow the transfer of a narrow strip of common good land in East Princes St Gardens to the NGS. Incorporating this strip - a steep, grassy bank between the pedestrian walkway and the windows of the Gallery's office accommodation – will create a new elevation which aligns with that of the existing visitor facilities at Gardens level.

As well as contributing to the increase in exhibition space within the Gallery it will also create a wider footpath at the level above, which is a busy and often congested pedestrian thoroughfare. The increased connectivity between

Edinburgh's Old and New Towns, from Princes Street and the Royal Mile, at both the Gardens and street level, will be of great benefit to the city as a whole.

During the renovation, the SNG will remain open to the public with access to the main floor rooms, which are largely unaffected by the redevelopment plans. During the redevelopment and on opening, there will be an extensive programme of activity, which will give the National Galleries a chance to involve the community in the project and dramatically improve learning opportunities, especially for schools and families.

Notes to editors

Hoskins Architects

The practice has worked with a wide range of cultural organisations including the Victoria & Albert Museum, National Museums Scotland and the National Theatre for Scotland and is currently working with the Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh, Aberdeen Art Gallery, Strawberry Fields in Liverpool and Bird College of Arts in London. Further afield the practice designed Scotland's pavilion for the Venice Biennale in 2008 and recently won the international competitions for the Landesmuseum in Schleswig Holstein, the redevelopment of the Berlin State Library and the World Museum in Vienna.

Scottish National Gallery

Designed by the architect William Henry Playfair (1790-1857), the Scottish National Gallery and the adjacent Royal Scottish Academy building stand in the heart of Edinburgh. Although originally built as separate structures, their histories have long been intertwined, and since the completion of the Playfair Project in 2004, they have been physically joined by the underground link, which contains a number of important visitor facilities and is entered via East Princes St Gardens.

The National Galleries of Scotland (NGS) cares for, develops, researches and displays the national collection of Scottish and international fine art and, with a lively and innovative programme of exhibitions, education and publications, aims to engage, inform and inspire the broadest possible public.

Architecture

Playfair was Scotland's leading architect of his era and was responsible for a number of Edinburgh buildings, although his two galleries on The Mound are generally regarded as his finest. These two classical temples to the arts achieved a picturesque harmony with the dramatic backdrop of Edinburgh Castle.

The most recent phase in The Mound's history saw the completion of the underground link between the Royal Scottish Academy building (RSA) and the Scottish National Gallery. Award-winning architects John Miller and Partners rose to the challenge of developing the site for modern use, and refurbishing the RSA. This is now a world-class exhibition space, while the underground facilities created include the Clore Education Centre, a 200-seat lecture theatre and cinema, an IT Gallery and a 120-seat restaurant.

Further information

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