

Portrait Gallery project awarded £2m by The Scottish Government

The world's first purpose-built portrait gallery is a step closer to opening again to the public as the Scottish Government confirms an additional £2 million to renovate and revitalise the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

The Portrait Gallery which closed for refurbishment in 2008 can now finish building work to restore original features and open up the space for new programmes and activities. Today's announcement allows the National Galleries of Scotland to take forward their next fundraising drive before the completed Portrait Gallery opens on November 30, 2011.

Minister for Culture Fiona Hyslop said:

"The renovated National Portrait Gallery will be a celebration of Scottish art, culture and history displaying one of our most valued collections in an impressive and innovative space in time for the Year of Creativity in 2012.

"We have been a strong supporter of the redevelopment of the Portrait Gallery and I am pleased to commit this additional support to complete the building work, enabling the National Galleries to move to their next fundraising phase.

"The National Galleries of Scotland is vitally important to our tourist economy welcoming over 1.28 million visitors in 2010, 65 per cent from outside Edinburgh and 26 per cent from overseas. In 2010, the National Galleries' two sites, the National Gallery Complex and the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art together were the most popular visitor attraction in Scotland – today's investment serves to strengthen that position and reap the benefits of associated tourism spend.

“There is no doubt that the revitalised Portrait Gallery will be a major draw for audiences at home to explore the faces that frame Scotland’s story, indeed members of the public have already contributed significantly to fundraising efforts.

“I welcome the target to double visitor numbers to the Portrait Gallery in the first year. Visitors old and new will be impressed by the transformation that has taken place, doubling the gallery space and allowing this exceptional collection to be displayed to its fullest potential.”

John Leighton, Director-General of the National Galleries of Scotland commented:

“The revitalisation of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery has been a top priority for NGS. The project is fully on track and the building is set to re-open on time later this year. The transformation within the building is simply stunning and we are delighted that this boost in funding from Government will now enable us to concentrate on raising funds for the new programmes, activities and displays at the Portrait Gallery.”

This funding of £2 million comes from the Scottish Government’s Culture capital budget for 2010-11.

The Scottish Government announced funding of £5.1 million towards the redevelopment of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in 2007.