

Ground-breaking ceremony at The Himalayan Centre for Arts and Culture

New Himalayan Centre for Arts and Culture to breathe new life into Dr Bell's Swimming Pool

The first step in transforming the former Dr. Bell's Swimming Pool in Leith into a national centre for arts and culture will be taken this afternoon at the ground-breaking ceremony for the new Himalayan Centre for Arts and Culture. This represents the fruits of 18 months of planning and fundraising, and the start of the building phase of a project which will breath new life in to a much-loved, at-risk, Victoria listed building at the heart of Leith, and save it as a community asset for future generations. The Himalayan Centre will be a unique combination of a community hub and international arts and cultural venue.

Special guests at the ground breaking ceremony will include:

Dr Suresh Chalise, Ambassador of Nepal in the UK

Mr Humza Yousaf, MSP, Minister for External Affairs & International Development

Mrs Sunita Poddar, Honorary Consul General of Nepal in Scotland

Mr Mark Lazarowicz MP for Edinburgh North & Leith

Mr Malcolm Chisolm, MSP, Edinburgh Northern & Leith

This £1m project is supported by awards from Scottish Investment Fund, Climate Challenge Fund, Jessica Trust, The Melting Pot, CEMVO, and community donors and investors. [Hardies Property & Construction Consultants](#) have partnered the

Himalayan Centre team throughout the surveying and planning phases, and are project managing the construction through to completion.

Vision – aspiration

The Himalayan Centre for Arts and Culture will be an inspirational beacon for Edinburgh that brings together local and diverse communities, particularly addressing the needs of minority groups in Edinburgh, supporting artists and also encouraging visitors and artists from around the world. The Himalayan Centre aims to promote well-being, greater awareness, connectivity and understanding between communities encouraging community participation, a wide range of public engagement in the arts, celebrating difference through the sharing of the diverse arts and cultural heritage of the Himalayan region. The Himalayan Centre aims to inspire future generations.

Mission – What we are going to do?

The centre will be a vibrant cultural hub, unique in Scotland, recognised for its approach in bringing people together to share different and rich cultures through a creative arts programme. Integral to this programme will be a high quality creative learning programme, including interventions with a range of artists and community groups of all ages, social and cultural backgrounds. The Himalayan Centre will offer a curated performance programme including dance, drama, music, visual arts and cultural celebrations, and so contribute to Edinburgh's vision to be the world city of festivals. Leith Festival 2013 opens tomorrow at the nearby Kirkgate Shopping Centre, and the Himalayan Centre looks forward to playing its part as a venue for this festival in future years.

Background

This pioneering project was initiated by members of the Nepal Scotland Association to address a much-felt need for a

community asset to provide individuals and groups with facilities and opportunities to improve their quality of life and promote understanding. The Himalayan Centre for Arts and Culture continues to be strongly supported by the Nepalese community, as well as other communities with links to the Himalayan region, and seeks to bring people together through the sharing of arts, heritage and rich cultures that are represented in Leith, Edinburgh and Scotland. The Himalayan Centre is inclusive, welcoming people from all cultural backgrounds, and will be a vibrant cultural space and voice for the area. The sharing of arts and culture from throughout the Himalayan region will be integrated with the diverse local communities of Leith, and wider Edinburgh.

Minister for External Affairs & International Development, Humza Yousaf MSP, said:- “The historic Dr Bell’s swimming pool has been a part of Edinburgh life for more than a hundred years and I look forward to that continuing when it reopens as the new Himalayan Centre.

“Edinburgh is home to one of Scotland’s largest Nepalese populations and the Centre will be a real asset for that community – a place for Nepalese people from across the city and across Scotland to come together and celebrate their culture, heritage and traditions.

“I am sure, though, that the Himalayan Centre – in the heart of Leith – will have much wider appeal. It is a facility for the whole community, for people of all cultures and faiths, reflecting modern Scottish society.

“The Scottish Government values the contribution the Nepalese and other communities make to our nation. We are grateful for the important role they play in shaping the Scotland we wish to become.”