

The Great Tapestry of Scotland to have a permanent home



The Scottish Borders Council reached a momentous agreement today at a full meeting of Councillors held in Hawick. After a full year of careful consideration of proposals from across the country, a site in the Scottish Borders has been confirmed as the preferred option for a permanent home for THE GREAT TAPESTRY OF SCOTLAND, one of Scotland's greatest works of art and a remarkable telling of our nation's story.

Scotland's people's historian and Borders man, Alistair Moffat; the author, Alexander McCall Smith; and the artist, Andrew Crummy created this project which was transformed from artwork to stitched masterpiece by Dorie Wilkie and 1000+ volunteer stitchers from across Scotland, many of them from the Borders area. Councillors for the area voted overwhelmingly to approve a move forward and business studies will now be carried out.

For 18 days at the end of summer, queues snaked around Holyrood as people stood patiently for one and a half hours in the rain. None were waiting to listen to a debate or First Minister's questions. All were desperate to go no further than the foyer where the tapestry was on display. From September 4th, 2013, the public flocked in large number to see the first showing of The Great Tapestry of Scotland. It is the longest stitched tapestry ever made anywhere in the world with 160 vivid embroidered panels and it tells the story of a nation. In less than three weeks more than 50,000 people came to marvel at it.

And now The Great Tapestry of Scotland is a step closer to finding a permanent base. Scottish Borders Council has today agreed with Alexander McCall Smith and Alistair Moffat, the co-chairmen of the tapestry trust that work should begin in earnest. The Leader of Scottish Borders Council, David Parker, has identified the key site for a new building designed to house this work of art. It will stand on a green field adjacent to Tweedbank Station, the terminus for the new Waverley Line. People from all over Scotland will be able to board a 'train to the tapestry', and lying midway between the arterial roads, the A7 and A68, the Tweedbank site is easily accessible by road.

The Great Tapestry of Scotland is currently on tour, having completed a record-breaking run in Aberdeen where 53,000 people came to see it, so many in fact that the gallery was forced to schedule late opening nights and weekend hours. It is currently on show in Paisley at Anchor Mill where 10,000+ are expected to view it in just four weeks. It returns to the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh on 1 July for 11 weeks. A permanent home in the Borders will be very appropriate, a stunning piece of embroidery finding its place in a region where textile production has formed part of its history and its future.

The business studies required by the council will be completed later this year. If these prove the case for a move to the Borders, the new home for the Tapestry is expected to bring a boost to tourism and education in the area.

David Parker, Leader of Scottish Borders Council said:-“The Great Tapestry of Scotland is a very special and unique work of art. It will become a treasured historical Scottish masterpiece and has the potential to be a very significant visitor attraction. Locating it in Tweedbank in a purpose built facility will truly showcase this magnificent tapestry and the story that it tells of the 420 million years of Scottish history. Its location at the Tweedbank Station will

afford many visitors a fantastic opportunity to take the train to the tapestry and also to view other Borders attractions such as Abbotsford, Bowhill and the Borders abbeys. We are at an early stage of the project's development but I can see no reason why we can't deliver something very special for the Scottish Borders."

Alistair Moffat commented:"By any measure the Great Tapestry of Scotland is a cultural phenomenon. Massively popular, with queues winding around each venue it has visited, it reaches right across Scotland to appeal to all Scots. It tells our nation's story, the story of a people, in the most vivid manner imaginable. All of the love and care that went into its making shines out to enrapture and set a glow on the faces of all who see it. It has been a privilege to write the narrative, decide what should be included, but nothing prepared me for the first time I saw it last September in the Scottish Parliament. I wept.

"For all that experience in one place, for the achievement of the stitchers in bringing our ancestors out of the darkness of the past and for the evident glory in the creation of one of the greatest works of art ever made in Scotland, I wept like a bairn – tears of joy, relief, gratitude and pride. It was moving almost beyond words to see the wonders that the Scottish people are capable of bringing forth. And as a Borderer I am delighted that Scottish Borders Council have had the vision to back the project to build a permanent home for this remarkable object at Tweedbank. The tapestry began its journey four years ago in the Borders as I started to make notes on what it might show and it is fitting that it should come full circle, that it should come back home."

Alexander McCall Smith:-"When we started this project we very much hoped that we would be able to find the Tapestry a home that would be worthy of it. We hoped – but we were not sure. Now we have this magnificent offer from the Borders and our hopes are fulfilled. The Borders region is rich in history and

it is entirely fitting that this great work of art celebrating the history of Scotland should be housed there. I am confident that this will become one of the greatest tourist attractions in Scotland and will give immense pleasure not only to visitors to our country but also to Scots themselves.

“This is, quite simply, the best news we could possibly have and I am most grateful to the Borders Council for showing such vision. I am also most grateful to my co-chairman, Alistair Moffat, whose love and knowledge of the Borders has helped to bring this splendid result about. All of us are delighted – the artist, Andrew Crummy, Dorie Wilkie and her team of stitchers, and the trustees of this marvellous, wonderful project: this is a great outcome for all members of the team.”

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