

# Council to sell part of Princes Street Gardens to National Gallery

✘ The council have been asked to sell a corner of Princes Street Gardens to the National Galleries of Scotland. It is a very little corner of the gardens, a strip about 5 metres wide, but it will make a big difference for the gallery who plan to use it for a terrace and new pathway arrangement outside, while inside the building the aim is to increase space for exhibits.

✘ At higher level the area running alongside the galleries at the foot of The Mound will be extended and the council hopes that the redesign of the steps, footpaths and the new gallery extension will all add to the way the Old and New Towns connect at this point.

Princes Street Gardens is Common Good Land which can only be sold if The Scottish Parliament agrees to pass a bill to allow the sale, or a variation to a 1991 Act of Parliament is agreed to by the Court of Session. There is some precedent as the same procedure had to be gone through last time the gallery was extended in 2004 when the Playfair Project was built.

If the proposal is given the green light by councillors on the Finance and Resources Committee next week then the procedure to release the land will begin and negotiations on a price will also be hammered out. The Gallery has already said it will meet the costs of the legislative change including the council's legal fees.





A spokesman for The National Galleries of Scotland said: “The Scottish National Gallery is currently in the process of finalising plans to transform the visitor experience and the presentation of the Scottish collections at its buildings on The Mound.

“Part of the proposal includes pushing a boundary wall out slightly to align with the Weston Link building. This is a small move (an extension of 5m) but it would bring major benefits for visitors to the Gallery and to the public circulating in this area.

“The proposal is to transform spaces that are currently used for offices into additional new gallery spaces and to make it possible for visitors to have access to the collection from the garden level. This slight rearrangement will help resolve the convoluted and confusing visitor journey around the buildings on The Mound.

“It would also provide the benefit of creating both a new landscaped public pathway and terrace at the gardens level, connecting the NGS complex more readily with the Gardens and an increased public walkway at the precinct level above, improving the width and amenity of the current north south pedestrian route between Princes Street, the Playfair Steps and the Old Town.

“The aim of this project is to position the NGS as an excellent resource for the appreciation and promotion of Scottish Art. The NGS hope to work with Edinburgh City Council to create a world-class visitor attraction at the heart of the capital.”

NGS has appointed a design team led by Gareth Hoskins Architects who will draw up the design and plans for expansion of the Scottish Wing into the gardens. Historic Scotland and Edinburgh World Heritage are said to be supportive of the plans.