

# Five things you need to know today Edinburgh!



**Royal High School – could it be a concert hall?**

**Lorne Street residents could be saved by Port of Leith Housing Association**

**Edinburgh Award for Sir Tom Farmer**

**Win £10,000 of business funding**

**Winter Lights**

Plans now unveiled show how the Royal High School Preservation Trust (RHSPT) intends to create a spectacular concert hall within the old Royal High School buildings in Edinburgh.

The Trust, which hopes to move St Mary's Music School into the historic Thomas Hamilton building on Calton Hill, will submit its detailed planning application to the City of Edinburgh Council later this week.

Central to the proposals, fully funded by the philanthropic Dunard Fund, is the creation of three new public performance spaces, including a 300-seat concert hall in the former debating chamber – thus providing the music school the opportunity to build its unique status nationally and internationally, while allowing many more people access to this unique piece of Scotland's heritage.

A new, grand, but highly contemporary foyer will be created beneath the concert hall for ticketing, bar and cloakrooms. When not in use by the public, this can also serve as a multi-function space for the school, avoiding the need to constantly re-configure the main hall.

Stairways or lifts on either side of the foyer will rise beneath original cupola to the fully restored main hall, which will feature flanking stairs as per Thomas Hamilton's original designs. The concert hall, itself, will be fitted with the very latest hydraulic seating to achieve a range of configurations for full orchestral performances through to more intimate recitals.

A new public entrance, grand terraces and the addition of new and near invisible school buildings to the east and north protect both the integrity and setting of the Hamilton masterpiece.

William Gray Muir, Chairman of The Royal High School Preservation Trust, said:

"The Trust believes that the former Royal High School should return to its rightful position at the cultural heart of Edinburgh and we are simply delighted with the designs prepared by Richard Murphy Architects. These not only give us three new public performance spaces and a state-of-the-art new home for St Mary's Music School but they also ensure that the building's dramatic setting is both protected and enhanced.

"Our plans are focused on both preserving this exceptional building while bringing forward progressive, innovative designs to give it a modern and sustainable use."

He added:

"We fully recognise that the City of Edinburgh Council is not currently in a position to accept our offer due to its existing commitment to a commercial development. However, we have consulted widely and believe that our plans satisfy the need for conservation, public access, a culturally suitable and economically sustainable use. Therefore, if the commercial application were refused, the Trust is poised and ready to enter any new competitive process to acquire the building for St Mary's Music School. Such a process could be completed in a

matter of months.”

Dr Kenneth Taylor, Headteacher of St Mary’s Music School, said:

“This is an exciting and wonderful opportunity to further develop St Mary’s Music School with its unique position as Scotland’s only independent specialist music school. Moving to the former Royal High School building would provide us with the performance and rehearsal space we aspire to and would enable us to broaden and extend the outreach activities we currently offer to the wider community.

“The new site will allow for future expansion and a high-profile location will make the school more visible in Scotland, the UK and internationally. It will provide a concert hall of historic importance for the school, external concerts and as a potential venue in the Edinburgh International Festival.

“We are conscious that this will only succeed if the local authority opts to reject planning approval for an alternative commercial proposal for the site. We are confident that the RHSPT’s proposal provides a far closer match with the architectural and cultural significance of the unique site and are hopeful that councillors will agree.”



The Trustees of the Miss Agnes Hunter Trust have announced that Port of Leith Housing Association (PoLHA) is to take the lead to negotiate the potential acquisition of its remaining property portfolio in Lorne Street, Leith.

PoLHA will be undertaking a detailed condition survey of the properties over the next two to three months ahead of negotiations over a potential sale of the remaining flats.

In November, the Trustees of the Miss Agnes Hunter Trust

extended the moratorium of serving “no fault” notices to quit until 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016, to allow time to explore the various options that may allow the Trust to sell its properties without having to ask tenants to leave their homes. These include a purchase of the properties by a housing association or by a newly formed tenants’ co-operative.

Miss Agnes Hunter’s Trust is a grant-making Charitable Trust set up by her Will in 1954 with the sole purpose of financially assisting charitable organisations which support health and social welfare in Scotland.

The Trust’s charitable purposes are to make financial grants to registered charities which support people suffering from arthritis and cancer, physical disability and mental health problems or learning disabilities, or which provide youth education and training. Currently grants amount to around £350,000 each year.

The Trust has provided support to a number of charities in Edinburgh active in the fields of cancer, epilepsy, disability and deafness, including several in North Edinburgh and Leith.

The Board of Trustees took the unanimous decision in January 2015 to sell the property portfolio in a rolling programme over the next three to four years.

The decision was taken as for some time the costs of managing and maintaining the property portfolio have been rising as the property has aged and management costs have increased. This has occurred at the same time as the number of applications for grants has been increasing particularly from charities whose statutory funding has been withdrawn or reduced.

In the financial period April 2013 – March 2014 the Trust approved 50 grants with a total value of £331,683. In the same financial period the expenses of managing and maintaining the property portfolio, which provides most of the Trust’s income,

rose to £424,450.

The Trustees considered that their primary obligation under charity law was to make as generous grants as possible and to ensure that the income of the Trust was maximised to this end, but adopting an approach which would seek to minimise the effect on tenants.

Commenting on the announcement, Walter Thomson, Chairman of the Trustees of the Miss Agnes Hunter Trust, said:

“The Trustees are acutely aware that it is real people and families that will be affected by any decision and look forward to working with PoLHA with a view to finding a possible solution that could satisfy all parties involved.”

Keith Anderson, Chief Executive of PoLHA, commented:

“As the main provider of affordable housing in Leith, the Association is very pleased to be working with the Trust and with the Lorne Community Association to investigate a solution to retaining these homes for affordable rent in the long term.”

Cllr Cammy Day, Vice-Convenor of City of Edinburgh Council’s Health, Social Care and Housing Committee, said:

“I’m really pleased to see the Agnes Hunter Trust working with Port of Leith Housing Association to negotiate a potential buy out of the remaining properties, and allowing tenants to remain in their homes and in their community. The efforts of the tenants in working with the Council, Trustees and Housing Associations is to be commended. In addition to this we will continue to support the option of a local co-operative with tenants.”



The Edinburgh entrepreneur and philanthropist Sir Tom Farmer has been named as the ninth person to receive the prestigious

Edinburgh Award.



Sir Tom has been selected to receive the accolade from a shortlist of nominations cast by the Edinburgh public. He will receive an engraved Loving Cup from the city's Lord Provost at a ceremony within the City Chambers in early 2016.

The Leith-born 75 year-old began his career at 15 at a local tyre firm before famously founding one of Europe's largest and best known automotive repair businesses, Kwik Fit. He is the current major shareholder of Hibernian Football Club and is Chancellor of Queen Margaret University.

The [Edinburgh Award](#) will go some way towards recognising Sir Tom's generous philanthropic contribution to the city. His handprints will be immortalised on a flagstone in the City Chambers quadrangle alongside those of previous recipients Ian Rankin, JK Rowling, George Kerr, Sir Chris Hoy, Professor Peter Higgs, Elizabeth Blackadder, Professor Richard Demarco and Tom Gilzean.

Edinburgh's Lord Provost Donald Wilson, said: "Sir Tom is not only an inspiring businessman but a champion of education, a keen philanthropist and a real believer in community spirit. Most importantly for this award, he is a passionate ambassador for Scotland's great capital city.

"Sir Tom kindly donated a nativity scene to the city 12 years ago which, this Christmas, can be found nestled in St Andrew Square. He has constantly given back to this city and has made a significant difference to countless charities from the Salvation Army to Mary's Meals, which provides school meals for children in deprived areas around the world.

"It is a delight to announce Sir Tom as the ninth person to be presented with the Edinburgh Award. He really has made an outstanding contribution to the Capital, and this award is the

city's way of recognising all that he has achieved."

Sir Tom Farmer added: "It is a great honour for me to receive the Edinburgh Award. Edinburgh is the city of my birth and I am overwhelmed that I have been chosen to receive this prestigious recognition.

"I wish to thank those who nominated me and the judging panel. I must also thank my wife Anne and my family and friends who have supported and encouraged me all throughout my life."



Business Gateway has £10,000 on offer if you have an idea about combining your business with another one. This is what they say about their Collaboration Prize:

### ***What is the Collaboration Prize?***

*Have you ever considered collaborating with other businesses to help your business grow? Setting up a consortium co-operative could help you take advantage of bigger business opportunities allowing you to collaborate on activities such as marketing, tendering, innovating or exporting.*

*If you apply for the Collaboration Prize 2015 you could access the support you need to get started.*

*The Prize will be awarded to up to five winners, £5,000 in cash to implement their idea, as well as Co-operative Development Scotland support to set up as a consortium co-operative and £5,000 consultancy support from Scottish Enterprise or Highlands and Islands Enterprise.*

### ***Find out more today***

*Businesses can apply for the prize at [www.scottish-enterprise.com/collaborationprize](http://www.scottish-enterprise.com/collaborationprize)*

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Cyrenians Communities and Gardens would like to invite you to their Magical Winter Wonderland.

“Join us for a wander through the gardens, a glass of mulled apple juice, and the chance to buy some home-made festive crafts and produce. All are welcome.”

Royal Edinburgh Community Gardens, Growing Space, Royal Edinburgh Hospital Friday 18 December 2015 3:30 – 5:00pm

[Free tickets here.](#)



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