

# Five days notice and now Inverleith House is closed



Only five days ago the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh explained in a fairly terse news release what would happen to its arts space and gallery at Inverleith House :

*After considerable consideration the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) has accepted that, in the interests of prioritising its core mission To explore, conserve and explain the world of plants for a better future, it must be pragmatic about the overall diversity of its wider commitments.*

*As part of this, Inverleith House will no longer be dedicated to the display of contemporary art, and RBGE is looking at options for the alternative use of the building. RBGE will continue to use both the overall setting of the Garden and other existing indoor spaces to engage our visitors with art in the Garden environment. No member of staff will lose their job in the adjustment. The intention is very much that we intend to retain our reputation as an art venue across the board, be it for botanical art, illustration, performance, photography, sculpture and contemporary art.*

*Through this change the organisation will remove the various inevitable financial risks attached to running a high-profile gallery. It will also free-up resources to concentrate more fully on its scientific and horticultural research and conservation work and provide greater scope to encourage public engagement with the environment.*

Inverleith House closed its doors today Sunday 23 October 2016.

Some who are affected by the closure held a vigil this afternoon outside the house which only a few months ago was a site for part of the British Art Show 8, and where until today a show celebrating its thirty year history was staged.

*Moving words from [@Alex\\_Neon\\_John](#) outside Inverleith House, just before it closed its doors this afternoon. What a sad day. [pic.twitter.com/NfuPXFvCl6](http://pic.twitter.com/NfuPXFvCl6)*

– Rachael Cloughton (@RCloughton) [October 23, 2016](#)

*A lot of people at [@inverleithhouse](#) today. Will it make any difference? [pic.twitter.com/K6egXraDA5](http://pic.twitter.com/K6egXraDA5)*

– Phil Miller (@PhilipJEMiller) [October 23, 2016](#)

There is a [petition on the 38degrees website](#) which arts critic Joyce McMillan set up on hearing the news and over 6,500 people have already signed. McMillan explained why she thinks it is necessary to keep the arts space open:

“Inverleith House, in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, has been a much-loved and deeply valued public arts space in Edinburgh for well over half a century, first as the home of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, then under the management of the Royal Botanic Garden itself.

“Given the importance of the gallery as an iconic location in Edinburgh, and a much-loved space both for the people of the city and for international visitors, it seems outrageous that the RBGE management should seek to close it at just a few days’ notice, and without public consultation, apparently with a view to exploiting it for more commercially rewarding purposes.”

Funding from Creative Scotland for the year 2014-15 amounted to £69,500.

**And only last year the arts body said this when making £80,000 of further funding available:**

**“The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh will run four major projects comprising two landmark exhibitions, 30th Anniversary texts and the commissioning of a key strategic report. The Garden will co-host the presentation of Hayward Touring’s British Art Show 8 in Edinburgh and present a group exhibition celebrating the 30th anniversary of Inverleith House’s internationally acclaimed programme of exhibitions. Commissioned texts will celebrate all of the exhibitions presented at Inverleith House from 1986 to 2016, spanning contemporary art and botanical science. There will also be a strategic element to the award with the commissioning of an independent Strategic Report informing the development of a sustainable model for the continued presentation of world-class contemporary art exhibitions at Inverleith House,**

***from 2016 to 2021.”***

It would appear to us that some of that award must now be reclaimable by Creative Scotland if the objectives for which it was made are no longer achievable.

Councillor Lesley Hinds has given her support by suggesting she will table an emergency motion at this week's full council meeting. She sent out an email which said :”‘I share your concern regarding the closure of Inverleith House as a contemporary art gallery. I have contacted the Head of Place and the Leader of the Council to get in touch with RBG to halt the closure. Consultation needs to be carried out and to give a few days notice of this closure is unacceptable. I will let you know the outcome of the Council's action.”

Given that the doors have now closed at Inverleith House it is difficult to know what the council can do.