

National Galleries of Scotland – major building project now starting

The National Galleries of Scotland are expanding with a new public space linking the galleries to Princes Street Gardens and a new coffee shop by Christmas.

There will be new displays throughout the gallery as a result of research with visitors.

The good news is that the gallery will remain open throughout the building phase, although the Playfair Steps will be closed throughout. The Mound precinct will be open apart from early 2019 and will be available as the site for the Christmas market.

This will create a new setting in the heart of Edinburgh's World Heritage site for the world's greatest collection of Scottish art hung in a new suite of galleries.

You will now be able to walk in through a new main entrance formed in Princes Street Gardens into a newly created light-filled space. The gallery curators are creating new displays drawn from the Scottish and international collection throughout the entire Gallery. Stories about figures such as Allan Ramsay, Gavin Hamilton and Sir David Wilkie will be told in a more modern and appealing way.

The plans drawn up by Hoskins Architects envisage a series of large windows, running the length of the new gardens-level façade, which will fill the galleries with light and colour, and offer spectacular views over one of the most celebrated cityscapes in the world. Extensive new landscaping in the gardens will radically improve access to this much-loved part of the city, and the project will also create a larger shop,

brand new café and more accessible restaurant.

The £22 million project will be paid for in part by contributions from The National Lottery Heritage Lottery Fund (£4.94 million) and The Scottish Government (£5.5 million). [When we reported the news two years ago the project was estimated at £16.8 million](#) so the price has gone up in the meantime.



Sir John Leighton, Director-General of the National Galleries of Scotland and Dr Tricia Allerston, Co-Director, Scottish National Gallery Project in Princes St Gardens with the Galleries behind. Photo Neil Hanna

Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs Fiona Hyslop, said: “This exciting project will further enhance our nation’s profile and raise the international profile of our world-class galleries, ensuring that visitors in Scotland and from all over the world can enjoy our arts and cultural heritage. I am very pleased that the Scottish Government will contribute £5.5 million towards ensuring that the Scottish National Gallery gives the national collection of Scottish artworks the prominence and public access it deserves.”



Dr Tricia Allerston, Co-Director, Scottish National Gallery Project and Sir John Leighton, Director-General of the National Galleries of Scotland in Princes St Gardens with the Galleries behind. Photo Neil Hanna

Sir John Leighton, Director-General of the National Galleries of Scotland, said: “This is a hugely exciting time for us, as we see our ambitious plans for the Scottish National Gallery getting underway. We will create the perfect showcase for the nation’s extraordinary collection of Scottish art, giving it room to breathe and showing it off with real pride to the world.

“This ambitious project will completely transform the experience of our visitors, creating a National Gallery that is even more open, engaging and inviting with new presentations of Scotland’s art in a setting that will be truly world-class. All will be welcome whether to come in and immerse themselves in the highly romantic paintings of the Scottish Highlands, to take part in a family day or just to linger, enjoy the views and maybe pick up one of our sketch pads.”



The new entrance to the galleries will be in Princes Street Gardens



All the galleries will have a new look