

# East Princes Street Gardens are open again

National Galleries Scotland (NGS) have completed their work to create a new accessible path in East Princes Street Gardens has been opened to the public, the first milestones in the redevelopment of the Scottish National Gallery.

The path has been created to make it easier for those with mobility issues, prams and pushchairs to cross through the gardens. Access through the east gardens was previously only via steep gradients, steps and rough paths, and the galleries hope that this new route will improve the flow through the gardens for all users.

The Mound Precinct and the top of East Princes Street Gardens opened in July, in line with the NGS commitment to have these areas ready on time for the Festival Fringe.

The Scottish Café & Restaurant opened on Sunday afternoon, with bookings available from next week, which will be followed by the opening of the Gardens Entrance to the galleries and the Gallery shop in the coming weeks. Espresso, a new quick service café run by Contini, opened in the foyer of the Mound entrance to the gallery at the beginning of July.

Parts of East Princes Street Gardens and the Mound Precinct were closed while extensive work was carried out to create this new accessible path, along with new landscaping and wider steps leading down to the Gardens level of the Scottish National Gallery.

The work forms part of a major redevelopment to create new gallery space dedicated to the world's largest collection of Scottish art and to improve accessibility.

As part of the landscaping work in the gardens, turf will be

laid in the lower levels of the garden in the next couple of weeks, with grass seeding having already been planted on the slopes. The grass will take several weeks to fully grow and during this time, and temporary barriers will be in place for extra care and protection. In the meantime we will co-ordinate with the City of Edinburgh Council's parks department to advise when it can be used, to ensure the best start for these newly landscaped areas.

John Leighton, Director-General of the National Galleries of Scotland, said: *"I am pleased to announce that the new accessible path in East Princes Street Gardens is open, along with the Mound Precinct, which opened in July.*

*"East Princes Street Gardens is an extremely important public space for the city and it is essential that this resource is accessible for all. I want to offer my thanks to the public, particularly those who live or work in Edinburgh, for their patience while we carried out this important work.*

*"Our vision, as part of our wider redevelopment plans, is for the Scottish National Gallery to be a space that everyone can enjoy and where we can showcase art in a whole new light.*

*"With The Scottish Cafe & Restaurant also opening, we look forward to the Gardens Entrance and the Gallery shop opening later this month."*

Riona McMorrow, Acting Head of The National Heritage Lottery Fund in Scotland, said: *"Until today, it's been a struggle for people with pushchairs or with mobility issues to access either the gardens or Scotland's incredible art galleries in the centre of Edinburgh. Thanks to players of The National Lottery, the National Galleries and all the many exciting activities that are planned will be open to many more people. The paths and new restaurant are a great start to a very exciting project."*

During this phase of work the National Galleries of Scotland

also planted 22 new trees, with species chosen to complement existing trees in the wider gardens, as agreed with the Council. The trees are between 4.5 metres and 6.5 metres in height, and will grow to full maturity of the species selected.

In addition, the National Galleries of Scotland donated a further 30 trees, which were planted earlier this year by The Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust and the City of Edinburgh Council, in West Princes Street Gardens, Lauriston Castle grounds, Saughton Walled Garden and other areas of East Princes Street Gardens.

The vision for the project has been driven by the National Galleries of Scotland's ambition to ensure that the widest number of people can enjoy our art and activities.

To accommodate increasing visitor numbers, the gardens entrance to the Scottish National Gallery will become the main route into the gallery once the project is complete.

Work will now focus on the interior of the building to create exciting new gallery space at the Scottish National Gallery. By early 2021 we'll reveal a stunning new suite of galleries, bursting with light and colour, and with new views out onto the gardens.

The new galleries, in former gallery, office and storage space, will be accessed directly from the Gardens Entrance for the first time. They will showcase the National Galleries of Scotland's amazingly rich collection of historic Scottish art, which contains masterpieces by Sir Henry Raeburn, Anne Redpath, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Phoebe Anna Traquair and the group of artists known as The Glasgow Boys.

The project is supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Scottish Government and the Wolfson Foundation.

