

Construction to begin at Macmillan Square next month – construction contract agreed

A £15m contract for a new community hub at Macmillan Square, in partnership with North Edinburgh Arts, as part of the City of Edinburgh Council's ongoing multi-million pound regeneration programme in North Edinburgh, [was approved at Thursday's Finance and Resources Committee.](#)

Councillors agreed the project will now enter the construction phase which will be carried out by Robertson Construction Group (Robertson), following its successful completion of the demolition of Muirhouse Library.

Designed by Richard Murphy Architects, The Hub will be the first of its kind in Edinburgh. It will be a place to learn, work, meet people, develop new skills and have fun. The state-of-the-art shared building will accommodate an early years centre for 185 children, a new library and will provide much needed additional studio, work and office space for North Edinburgh Arts ensuring that it continues to be at the centre of a creative, connected and inspired community.

The community hub is the focal point of one of the most

significant urban regeneration projects in Scotland, tackling poverty and inequality in the area. It will be the flagship building at Macmillan Square which is currently being developed to provide a new civic public area, 154 affordable homes and 13 retail units. Over £200 million of public and private sector investment has been committed to revitalising the area for the wider community. Some of this has already been delivered at Craigroyston High School, Pennywell All Care Centre and over half of the planned 1,000 new homes.

The North Edinburgh Regeneration project is recognised as a model of good practice in urban regeneration having won national awards for design, place making and community engagement. The new hub benefits from £2 million Scottish Government Regeneration Capital Grants Fund, secured through a partnership with NEA.



Front Entrance and aerial view

The charity's land and building was recently brought into community ownership following the completion of a Community Asset Transfer with The City of Edinburgh Council, supported by the Scottish Government's Scottish Land Fund. Complementing the Council's new library, early years centre and affordable housing, the new hub will include arts and learning together

under one roof. This will be a striking new building offering the community in North Edinburgh an extensive range of services.

It will include new enterprise, workshop, learning and creative studio space, alongside an expanded café, youth area and shared atrium.

Work to demolish the former Muirhouse Library started in October 2021 and following Thursday's decision, construction on the new hub will start next month. The project will also include a comprehensive package of additional community benefits shaped by the local community and delivered by Robertson. Whilst the hub is under construction the library will operate from nearby Edinburgh College in Granton.



Leslie Hind Chair of North Edinburgh Arts. Photo: © 2022, Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

Chair of NEA, Lesley Hinds, said: "This new capital project will allow the organisation to flourish, alongside Council provision, and bring a first-class facility to Macmillan

Square. NEA is a special place for the community of North Edinburgh and has been a trusted community anchor providing emergency food and support throughout the pandemic. Thanks also to the Councillors, MSPS and MP who have continued to support NEA both in the Council and in the community and it is this enthusiasm shown by our community has kept us going through some difficult times. We're looking forward to building on this support to bring a truly inspirational place to the heart of Muirhouse."

Last summer on a walk about the area, Lesley explained what this project will do for the area:



Aerial view from the west



Photo Robin Mair

City of Edinburgh Council Leader, Adam McVey said: “The new building is an important part of the £200million regeneration of Pennywell and Muirhouse that’s already seen significant investment by the Council and its partners, including Scottish Government to build new Council houses and affordable homes to build a community with strong local facilities in line with our aspirations for 20-minute neighbourhoods. Jointly led by the Council and North Edinburgh Arts, this is a great example of community empowerment showing how great value can be added to an area while supporting our landmark priorities as a Council to end poverty in Edinburgh by 2030, as well as enhancing wellbeing and equality for our residents.” Key aspects include the new local library which we hope will act as a community living room, open and accessible to everyone. The new building also creates the opportunity to work closely with the new nursery to have as much interaction with the children, parents and staff as possible – providing tailored events and sessions especially for those using and working in the nursery.”

Council Depute Leader, Cammy Day said: "The North Edinburgh Regeneration project is a major success story for the area, for the city and for Scotland and it's so exciting to see this final element hitting a major milestone. This joint project with North Edinburgh Arts will create a unique facility at the heart of the community. The new Early Learning and Childcare Centre will provide quality and accessible early years spaces for local children. This will allow us to meet our commitments to making early years provision more flexible, to fit family needs, and deliver 1,140 hours a year of free early learning and childcare for all three- and four-year olds and eligible two-year olds." "As part of the wider regeneration of this area we're delivering 1,000 affordable homes as part of our pledge to deliver 20,000 affordable new homes in the city by 2027, which will make a substantial difference for people seeking a safe and permanent place to call home in Scotland's Capital."

Regional Managing Director, Robertson Construction – Central East, David Cairns, added: "Having worked closely with City of Edinburgh Council over the last 24 months to assist bringing Macmillan Square forward, we are delighted to be the contractor of choice to make this innovative vision by the Council a reality. The building will undoubtedly be a fantastic facility for the community when complete and our planned programme of community benefits during the construction phase will bring further benefits to the area socially, economically and environmentally long after the building is completed." "The new library will give an opportunity to create joint activities with the other services – providing summer activities, expanding bookbug and storytime sessions, to creating more adult learning opportunities. In addition, the local library will be a trusted and welcoming community space, a place people feel comfortable using as individuals or as a connected group: a place of connection. The community hub will offer young people a place to develop skills, confidence and self-esteem, a safe and inspiring place

for local families and children, and a place where older people will feel part of a connected and supportive community. This accessible, welcoming and much needed community space uses environment-friendly build and innovative design techniques. The re-developed and extended venue reflects current community aspirations, whilst being flexible enough to respond to future changes in demand.

Certain events will continue to be provided in the Muirhouse area. For further details about opening hours and what's on [visit the City of Edinburgh Council's Muirhouse Library page here](#). North Edinburgh Arts will continue to support arts, culture and the community from a range of locations including West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre, West Pilton Park, the North Edinburgh Arts Garden and The Old Co-Op on Pennywell Road amongst others.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic NEA offered over 35 hours of creative workshops each week, most with a family focus, alongside a wide range of other events from singing groups to circus skills workshops, exhibitions, community theatre, film clubs, and festival events. The venue was also home to Muirhouse Link Up, North Edinburgh Drug and Alcohol Centre, and the Tinderbox Orchestra, all working to serve the most disadvantaged children, families and individuals in the North Edinburgh area.

The extended NEA will house eight additional studio spaces, a social enterprise café with seating for 70, a fully kitted out Community Shed, and offer more office space and facilities for community organisations. Research by Community Enterprise in 2019 showed local support at 96% for the Community buy-out and development of NEA.



Photo Robin Mair