

# New public garden to be created at former Royal High

The long awaited development of the former Royal High School promises to deliver the first new public garden in Edinburgh for two centuries, but that is not strictly true.

While the scale of the garden is large, it is not the first in two centuries. A public “physic” garden was created at Abbey Strand next to Holyrood Palace just three years ago. The garden was officially opened in October 2021 by HRH King Charles who had a hand in overseeing [the designs for the renovated buildings at the gates of The Palace of Holyroodhouse as well as the gardens](#). That garden has three distinct areas, each representing a phase in the Palace’s 900-year history – and it is open to the public every day. It is a beautiful peaceful spot to have a quiet lunch or just take some time out from the bustle of the city.

Nestled under Calton Hill and next to the expansive, though private, Regent Terrace Gardens, the new public garden space will be designed by “world renowned landscape garden designer”, Tom Stuart-Smith. He will collaborate with the Edinburgh based firm of landscape architects, OPEN to create a “beautiful space with outstanding views”.

The gardens with their own dynamic ecosystem will be open every day and will be free to enter for everyone. The developer says this will be the first time a public garden has

been created in Edinburgh since Princes Street Gardens opened in 1820.

The building has been empty for more than half a century, and the [planning battles](#) have subsided as plans to create the National Centre for Music progress. The building will be used for learning music and listening to music of all kinds.

## East and West Gardens

The plants in the garden at the National Centre for Music will provide food sources for local wildlife, and it is intended this will help some endangered species to survive. The area will be split into East and West gardens, with the West featuring native trees like Scots pine, Birch and Rowan. In the East garden flowers will prevail with a large pergola along the Belvedere wall which is one of the original features of the Thomas Hamilton building.



Mr Stuart-Smith said: “Edinburgh’s unique blend of urban architecture and dramatic landscape puts it in a league with cities like Athens and San Francisco. Our design aims to highlight this extraordinary setting while creating a tranquil

retreat within the bustling city.

“The West and East gardens, though distinct in character, work in harmony to complement each other and the stunning architecture of the Royal High School building. This site is truly exceptional – the views are spectacular, and the landscape is unparalleled. It’s a rare opportunity for a landscape designer to work on such site, and I’m confident that our plans will resonate with Edinburgh’s residents and visitors alike.”

Grant MacKenzie, Executive Director of the Royal High School Preservation Trust said: “Making the most of the outdoor space at the Royal High School building is a key part of our vision and we’re delighted to be unveiling our plans. These gardens will be the first new public garden space in Edinburgh city centre for centuries and they will become an area for everyone to enjoy. We want it to be a place for everyone to have access to and enjoy, and where better to take in such unrivalled views of the city than in a calming, tranquil garden environment.”















