

Multi million pound backing for the new National Centre for Music

The Royal High School Preservation Trust (RHSPT) has announced it is to receive up to £5 million in funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The body which is now behind the National Centre for Music at the Thomas Hamilton building, having ditched its plans to create a new home for St Mary's Music School there, says this is a significant funding package. Other plans for a Rosewood Hotel on this site fell foul to planning wrangles – although the hotel might well have been open by now.

The funding will be made as an initial award of £437,046 to be used towards development planning and costs. The RHSPT says it is confident that a further £4,562,147 will then be made available for the charity to put towards the longer-term delivery of the project, with both organisations working closely together.

The former Royal High School on Calton Hill, empty for more than half a century is an A listed building built in 1826 and plans are said to be “advanced” to transform the building into the National Centre for Music, a new destination venue and “place for creative exchange for communities across Scotland and visitors to the city”. The backers of the project believe it will have a significant economic impact on both the Edinburgh and wider Scottish economy – creating jobs,

apprenticeships and volunteering opportunities.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund monies will support vital work in the initial development stage of the project. This includes further investigative surveys and works to the site, additional consultation with communities and stakeholders to refine the activity plan, heritage interpretation design and plans to evaluate the project.

Carol Nimmo, Chair of the Royal High School Preservation Trust said: "This project will create a unique environment, unlike anything in Edinburgh at the moment. It will preserve the history and heritage of one of the city and nation's most prestigious buildings, giving it a re-birth fitting for 21st century city residents and visitors.

"The redevelopment will create a National Centre for Music encompassing three performance spaces, rehearsal rooms, a recording studio, interpretation and learning spaces, while a new café and public landscaped gardens with stunning views across the city will provide an unparalleled cultural experience. We look forward to welcoming around 290,000 visitors every year and thank The National Lottery Heritage Fund for its support for this exciting project.

Jenny Jamison, Creative Director for the new National Centre for Music said: "We are continuing to develop the National Centre for Music concept and this funding allows us to move on with our plans at pace. Our vision is to be an energising force in the Scottish music sector, creating an inspiring environment in the unique setting of this treasured building – where Scottish musical history will be made."

The announcement coincides with Heritage Treasures Day which spotlights the diverse range of heritage projects across the UK which have been saved thanks to funding from National Lottery players over the past 30 years.

Eilish McGuinness, Chief Executive, The National Lottery

Heritage Fund, said: “It is wonderful to start the New Year investing in projects that are saving heritage treasures across the UK, with decades of shared memories these exceptional buildings will be repurposed for the 21st century at the centre of communities and places. From this iconic architectural landmark within Edinburgh’s World Heritage site and a monumental Victorian water tower in Colchester to Kingsley Hall in Bristol’s Old Market – we are working with those who care for heritage transforming historic gems and positively adding to wellbeing and educational opportunities for young people, making heritage the focus of communities, places and the UK economy.

“Thanks to money raised from National Lottery players over the last 30 years, we have awarded £3.3bn to more than 10,300 historic building and monument projects for the long-term, helping to ensure heritage is valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future.”

Initial exploration works are now underway in the building with full construction due to begin in summer 2025 for completion and opening in summer 2027. Work on the [garden spaces](#), which have been design by iconic landscape architect, Tom Stuart-Smith is also due to commence later this year.

