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PUBLIC OPINION POLL SHOWS OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR OLD ROYAL HIGH BECOMING A MUSIC SCHOOL

New research shows overwhelming public support for plans to make the Old Royal High the new home of Scotland's national music school.

In an in-home survey carried out by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Royal High School Preservation Trust, which presented both the rival hotel and music school proposals to over 500 residents across every Edinburgh postcode, 81 per cent preferred the option to establish St Mary's Music School at the site of the iconic Thomas Hamilton building on Calton Hill.

Only 10 per cent said they preferred the proposals for an international hotel.

Carried out independently, the Ipsos MORI survey provides the clearest and most robust evidence to date of public opinion on the benefits and drawbacks of the rival plans for the former Royal High School.

Unprompted, 68 per cent of those surveyed felt that the main benefit of the proposals for a national music school at the old Royal High School site was that it would nurture Scottish talent; 41 per cent felt that the use was in keeping with the building's original use; and 36 per cent said that it would improve Edinburgh's reputation.

65 per cent saw no disadvantages to the music school proposal. 41 per cent were 'very favourable'. 5 per cent expressed an unfavourable view, with less than half of one per cent 'very unfavourable'.

In contrast, when presented with the hotel proposals, the greatest benefit was seen as increasing tourism (42 per cent). The other benefits were perceived as employment opportunities at the hotel (28 per cent) and boosting the economy (27 per cent). The greatest drawbacks were 'unattractive design' (44 per cent) and that 'Edinburgh doesn't need another hotel' (42 per cent).

Overall, 67 per cent had an unfavourable view of the hotel proposal, including 21 per cent who were 'very unfavourable'. 4 per cent were 'very favourable' towards the hotel.

William Gray Muir is the Chairman of the Royal High School Preservation Trust (RHSPT), which commissioned the survey. Set up in 2015 to conserve and protect the former Royal High School building by finding an appropriate and sustainable public use, the Trust launched the Perfect Harmony campaign last month to highlight the benefits of moving St Mary's Music School to the Old Royal High. The campaign holds its first musical rally later this week at the Canongate Kirk (June 22) which is open to the public.

He said:

"The survey shows overwhelming support for our plans for a national music school at the Old Royal High School.

"We thought it important to take an objective reading of public opinion using the strict social research methodologies favoured by government. For that reason we asked Ipsos

MORI to present both our proposals and those for the hotel along with both sets of designs as part of face-to-face home-based interviews. So this is a survey people can trust.

“The vast majority of the people of Edinburgh do not want another hotel at this site and there is little enthusiasm for the perceived benefits. Instead they see the exciting opportunities that a national music school within the prestigious and historic surroundings of one of our most important buildings would bring in terms of nurturing young talent and cultural heritage.

“The Old Royal High is our finest example of democratic architecture. It was built for public use and our proposals would ensure that it stays that way.”

The Perfect Harmony campaign will run until a final decision is made on the future of the rival hotel development, which has already been refused planning permission by the City of Edinburgh Council. The developers now have two sets of plans on the table, the most recent of which received over 3,100 objections when made public earlier this year.

The plans to establish Scotland’s national music school at the site, including 280-seat concert hall and public garden, have received both planning and listed building consent.

Notes to Editors

Ipsos MORI interviewed a representative quota sample of 505 Edinburgh residents (aged 16 and over). The sample was proportionately stratified by postcode sector. Fieldwork for the survey was carried out between 22 April 2017 and 9 June 2017. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in residents’ homes using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). The data have been weighted by sex, age, working status and education using 2016 City of Edinburgh Council and 2011 Census statistics.

Ipsos MORI is a leading independent research agency and have accreditations in the international standards for market research (ISO 20252, Quality Management systems (ISO 9001) and information security (ISO 270011). In addition, they are a company partner of the Market Research Society, applying their professional code of conduct to their organisation as whole.

Perfect Harmony Music Rally: Canongate Kirk, Thursday June 22, 2017. Time: 6.30pm for 7.00pm start. Close 8.30pm. Free to attend www.rhspt.org

Perfect Harmony

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