

For immediate release

NEW TRUST SUBMITS SCHOOL PLANS FOR FORMER ROYAL HIGH

A newly formed Scottish charitable trust has submitted proposals to the City of Edinburgh Council to restore the Old Royal High School, one of the most important buildings within Edinburgh's World Heritage Site as a new home for St Mary's Music School, Scotland's leading specialist music school.

Under the proposals, The Royal High School Preservation Trust (RHSPT) wishes to conserve the iconic Thomas Hamilton masterpiece and secure its long term future by restoring its original use as a place for educating young people from across Scotland and beyond. The RHSPT believes that aligning the conservation of the former Royal High School buildings with ongoing plans to find a suitable site for St Mary's Music School will create a fitting and lasting legacy for the site as a focal point for cultural excellence in the Capital.

The Proposal of Application Notice submitted to the Council this week signals the beginning of a process of formal consultation with St Mary's Music School, city, community and planning representatives, together with arts, education and heritage organisations, to bring forward detailed plans later this year. Crucially, the Trustees of the RHSPT will be seeking to ensure that final proposals for the site deliver an outcome that is in keeping with Edinburgh's rich cultural and historical heritage, but which also presents an economically sustainable future.

William Gray Muir, Chairman of the Royal High School Preservation Trust said:

"Our aim is the preservation and enhancement of an endangered architectural masterpiece, not just in the context of the City of Edinburgh but Scotland as a whole. Our ardent wish is to achieve this by maintaining the Old Royal High buildings as a school, the purpose for which they were built, and ensure its future use as a vibrant and unique academic institution. What could be more appropriate than making it home to a national treasure like St Mary's Music School?"

It is expected that the relocation of St Mary's Music School to the former Royal High School buildings would be ideal for providing the additional teaching and performance space it requires for a growing student body, while allowing it to extend its popular programme of Saturday music classes for Edinburgh children.

He added:

"St Mary's Music School would breathe life into the building again, making full and imaginative use of its wonderful spaces, filling the rooms with music: a literal rejuvenation of Thomas Hamilton's world-class monument of the Edinburgh Enlightenment. We look forward to outlining our detailed plans for the site soon."

The RHSPT has the financial backing of the philanthropic Dunard Fund, which has committed funds to underwrite the restoration of the Old Royal High School's listed buildings and provide world class facilities for the music school.

Notes to Editors:

- **The Royal High School Preservation Trust** was formed in 2015 to seek to purchase the former Royal High School, for restoration to use as a music school. The Trust has sufficient funds committed and underwritten from private benefactors to ensure both the restoration of the listed buildings and the creation of world class facilities for the music school.

The Trust is chaired by William Gray Muir, a Trustee of both Edinburgh World Heritage Trust and the Penicuik House Preservation Trust. His business specialises in finding new uses for historic buildings.

Other Trustees include:

Richard Austin, WS is a Trustee of the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland and a former pupil of the Royal High School.

Ray Entwistle is Chairman of Hampden and Co, the new private bank about to open doors in Charlotte Square and the St James's area in London. He is a former Chairman of the Scottish Civic Trust which annually, through My Place Awards, has rewarded local organisations that have organised restoration of listed buildings in Scotland for ongoing sustainable use by the community.

Carol Colburn Grigor is an American philanthropist and former concert pianist. Through Dunard Fund, her family's charitable giving is focused on music, heritage and the environment. Mrs Grigor has received recognition for cultural achievements as a Commander of the British Empire (CBE), a Prince of Wales Medal for Philanthropy and the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

Colin Liddell is an accredited specialist in Charity Law and his firm, J. & H. Mitchell W.S. of Pitlochry, provides a full range of legal services particularly for charities throughout Scotland. He is Chair of Pitlochry Festival Theatre and a Trustee of a number of other charities.

Peter Thierfeldt is a Trustee of Dunard Fund and Edinburgh World Heritage Trust. His firm, Partnership Matters, provides management and fundraising consultancy for cultural, educational and heritage charities across the UK.

- **St Mary's Music School** is Scotland's only independent specialist music school offering a world class standard of musical and academic education to musically gifted children aged 9-19 years in an inspiring, inclusive and supportive environment. It is also the Choir School of St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh. It is co-educational, non-denominational and has day and boarding pupils from across Scotland and beyond – England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Europe and internationally.

Entry to the school is by audition and assessment, based on musical ability and potential, regardless of personal financial circumstances. Scottish Government funding, up to 100 per cent, is available through the Aided Places Scheme to assist with the cost of tuition and boarding fees. The school is funded by the Scottish Government, fees, private donations and rental income generated by the school.

The school has outgrown its Grosvenor Crescent premises and is currently actively considering whether to extend its existing building or move elsewhere in Edinburgh

- **Thomas Hamilton's Royal High School** is one of the finest examples of Greek Revival architecture in Scotland. Designed by a leading architect of the early 19th century, its unique and powerful combination of setting, massing and masterful use of classical architectural language cemented Edinburgh's reputation as the Athens of the North and alluded to the academic aspiration and achievement of both the school and Scotland as a nation.

All enquiries, please call: Elizabeth Lambley, Indigo, 0131 554 1230.

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