

Press Release

Friday 12 June 2020

National Portrait Gallery to go ahead with scheduled closure as works begin on *Inspiring People* redevelopment

Critically Acclaimed David Hockney: Drawing from Life exhibition will be staged again in a transformed National Portrait Gallery



Proposed North Façade entrance and forecourt. Jamie Fobert Architects / image by Forbes Massie Studio.

The National Portrait Gallery will close as planned from the 29 June 2020 until spring 2023 while essential building works take place on the Gallery's *Inspiring People* redevelopment project. While the building in London is closed, hundreds of portraits from the Collection will be shared across the UK through an exciting programme of partnerships and collaborations, supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and a major grant from Art Fund.

The Gallery will offer visitors another opportunity to see the critically acclaimed *David Hockney: Drawing from Life* by staging the exhibition again when the Gallery re-opens, and *Cecil Beaton's Bright Young Things* will tour in the UK, with dates to be confirmed when possible.

Inspiring People is the National Portrait Gallery's biggest ever development since the building in St Martin's Place opened in 1896. The project will see a transformed National Portrait Gallery, including a comprehensive re-presentation of the Gallery's Collection from the Tudors to now across 40 refurbished galleries, combined with a complete refurbishment of the building, restoring historic features, creating a new and more welcoming visitor entrance and public forecourt on the building's North Façade, and enhancing the Gallery's accessibility.

The Gallery, which shut its doors on the 18 March due to the Coronavirus pandemic, had hoped to re-open to visitors before the scheduled closure, but in line with UK government guidelines the building will now remain closed throughout June in order to help contain the spread of the virus and ensure the safety of visitors and staff.

Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director, National Portrait Gallery London said: “We had very much hoped we would be able to re-open the Gallery to visitors before our refurbishment commenced, but sadly it is now clear that this won’t be possible. We understand how disappointing this will be for many people who had planned to visit the Gallery for a final time and for those who didn’t have the opportunity to see our acclaimed exhibitions, but we are pleased to be able to announce that we will restage the David Hockney show when the Gallery re-opens and that *Cecil Beaton’s Bright Young Things* will tour in the UK as planned. During our closure, we will continue to find ways to make our Collection available to as many people as possible, creating new and engaging content online, including a new film of our galleries, and sharing works across the UK through an innovative programme of partnerships and collaborations. We look forward to staying connected with all our audiences throughout the redevelopment period through these and to welcoming them back to the transformed Gallery in London in 2023.”

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Notes to Editors

Inspiring People

Inspiring People is the National Portrait Gallery’s biggest ever development since the building in St Martin’s Place opened in 1896. The project, supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund will see a transformed National Portrait Gallery, including a comprehensive re-display and re-interpretation of the Gallery’s Collection from the Tudors to now across 40 refurbished galleries, combined with a complete refurbishment of the building, restoring historic features, creating a new and more welcoming visitor entrance and public forecourt on the building’s North Façade, and enhancing the Gallery’s accessibility.

The designs by Jamie Fobert Architects, working in partnership with Purcell, will also see the return of the Gallery’s East Wing to public use as the new Weston Wing, including restoring the original gallery spaces, the creation of new retail and catering facilities and its own dedicated entrance at street level; and a new Learning Centre for visitors of all ages with studios, breakout spaces and high quality practical facilities. The Gallery’s existing entrance will also remain, with new step-free access.

In order to complete the project efficiently and to safeguard visitors, members of staff and the Collection, the Gallery in St Martin’s Place will temporarily close to the public from 29 June 2020 until spring 2023, while essential building works take place. During this time the Gallery will share its unique Collection of portraits with the nation in a major programme of activities across the UK, supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and a major new grant from Art Fund. Beginning in 2020, this ambitious nationwide programme will show hundreds of works from the National Portrait Gallery’s Collection, some of which are rarely loaned, through a series of partnerships and collaborations during the period of redevelopment.

National Portrait Gallery

The National Portrait Gallery was founded in 1856 to encourage through portraiture the appreciation and understanding of the people who have made and are making British history and culture. Today it promotes engagement with portraiture in all media to a wide-ranging public by conserving, growing and sharing the world’s largest collection of portraits.

www.npg.org.uk

About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we **Inspire, lead** and **resource** the UK’s heritage to create **positive and lasting change** for people and communities, now and in the future. www.HeritageFund.org.uk.

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Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. It provides millions of pounds every year to help museums to acquire and share works of art across the UK, further the professional development of their curators, and inspire more people to visit and enjoy their public programmes. Art Fund is independently funded, supported by the 159,000 members who buy the National Art Pass, who enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places, 50% off major exhibitions, and receive Art Quarterly magazine. Art Fund also supports museums through its annual prize, Art Fund Museum of the Year, which was won by St Fagans National Museum of History, Cardiff, in 2019, and through a range of digital platforms. www.artfund.org