

£4.2m funding to save St Peter's Seminary

23/03/2016



NVA's Hinterland at the St Peter's Seminary Alaisdair Smith

HLF awarded funding of £3,806,000 to arts organisation NVA to carry out the project, while Creative Scotland confirmed a National Lottery funding award of £400,000 towards the project. The Seminary is currently the centrepiece of a sell-out public art event, marking the launch of the Festival of Architecture and is a key highlight of the Year of Innovation, Architecture & Design.

Regarded as one of Europe's greatest modernist buildings, St Peter's Seminary near Helensburgh opened as a training centre for young priests in 1966 - its ground-breaking architecture was designed by Isi Metzstein and Andy McMillan of Gillespie, Kidd and Coia. It closed its doors in 1980 and has lain abandoned since, with the effects of the elements and vandalism contributing to its now ruinous state.

This major investment will see key elements of the building restored while others will be consolidated to allow the public safe access to large-scale events and performance as well as to smaller community activities. The triple-height chapel will be partially restored and converted into a 600-capacity venue while the former sacristy and crypt will be a focal point for exhibitions.

The transformation will include the 104-acre rural estate surrounding the architectural masterpiece – an estate which includes the remains of the 15th-century Kilmahew Castle. A path network based on the original 19th-century designed landscape will be reinstated, historic bridges restored and the

Victorian walled garden brought back into productive use, bringing the site back to life and encouraging new audiences to visit. It is expected that over 200 people will become involved as volunteers.

Lucy Casot, Head of HLF Scotland, said: “After 25 years of decline, this ground-breaking project has the potential to save an internationally significant building, exploiting its commanding presence to produce an exceptional arts venue. Its appeal will attract new audiences from near and far. Its transformed estate will become a natural haven for the local community to explore, enjoy and be proud of.

“We are delighted that, thanks to players of the National Lottery, we can help mark the launch of Scotland’s Festival of Architecture by funding St Peter’s Seminary. Highly regarded across the world, it is a unique record of its time which is in very real danger of being lost.”

Philip Deverell, Director of Strategy at Creative Scotland, said: “We are thrilled to be supporting the vision of NVA to bring this iconic and well-loved building back to life as an exciting and ambitious creative space for future generations to discover and enjoy. The recent success of the Hinterland festival held at St Peter’s highlighted how important the building is to both the people of Scotland and the international architectural community. It seems fitting that in this the Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design that we have taken steps to secure the future of this hugely significant building.”

Angus Farquhar, Creative Director of NVA, said: “This is a historic moment in the life of St Peter’s Seminary. We are now able to start work on its permanent transformation into an international cultural centre that will speak to the creative life of Europe. After the overwhelming response to Hinterland, our first major animation of the site and the new name for Kilmahew/St Peter’s, we have real hope that our vision for progressive, socially-focused art will connect strongly with people and together we will forge a new place for public art and its significance in the world. We thank HLF and Creative Scotland for joining us in the vision and ambition for the site and investing in its future.”

Brian McLaren, Chair of NVA, said: “We are delighted that HLF and Creative Scotland has today awarded this very significant investment into the revitalisation of St Peter’s Seminary and Kilmahew Estate. After eight years of vision and hard work by NVA, world class design input from the design team and incredible support from private donors, funders and members of the local community, this investment now helps to secure a new future for this extraordinary place.

“The plans for the site will create a truly unique place where audiences and visitors can experience culture, learning and celebration of the site’s remarkable heritage in genuinely new ways. We thank HLF for this invaluable support, and look forward to working with all of our partners to make these plans a reality.”

In 2013, HLF awarded NVA a development grant of £565,000 to develop the St Peter's Seminary project.

Notes to editors

Hinterland

NVA's Hinterland, a large-scale light and music night-time event, launched the Festival of Architecture 2016 on 18 March at St Peter's Seminary near Helensburgh, presenting a key highlight of the Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design. Find out more on the [Hinterland website](#).

Creative Scotland

Creative Scotland is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland on behalf of everyone who lives, works or visits there. They enable people and organisations to work in and experience the arts, screen and creative industries in Scotland by helping others to develop great ideas and bring them to life. They distribute funding provided by the Scottish Government and the National Lottery. For further information about Creative Scotland please visit [our website](#).

The funding from Creative Scotland is in addition to an initial stage one capital funding award committed in 2013 of £100,000 to enable NVA to develop their proposal.

NVA

NVA's mission is to make powerful public art that reaffirms people's connection to built and natural heritage.

The company has produced many unusual and dynamic interventions in extraordinary landscapes over the last 20 years. Light, sound and collective movement have been incorporated into the mountains of Skye, city lighting festivals and international cultural events including the 2012 Cultural Olympiad and the Tour de France – Grand Départ in Yorkshire in 2014.

NVA has produced ambitious proposals to resuscitate St Peter's Seminary, a decaying modernist icon in the West of Scotland and the surrounding semi-ancient woodland. This £7m capital investment is a deeply exciting prospect for cultural and leisure audiences in Scotland, the UK and internationally. In November 2014, a design team comprising Avanti Architects, ERZ Landscape Architects and NORD Architecture (Brian McGinlay) was appointed to take the proposals forward. An innovative approach to heritage conservation combining partial restoration, consolidation and new design will restore the entire site as the most significant new cultural resource and large-scale arts venue of this century. Read more the [NVA website](#).

Further information

- HLF: Shiona Mackay on tel: 07779 142890, Rebecca Lamm on tel:0207 591 6027 or Simon Oliver on tel: 0207 591 6032 or via email: simon.oliver@hlf.org.uk
- Creative Scotland: Sophie Bambrough on tel: 0131 523 0015, mobile: 07747606146 and via email: sophie.bambrough@creativescotland.com
- NVA: Susie Gray on tel: 0131 202 6220, mobile: 07834 073 795 or via email: susie@thecornershoppr.com