

## SERVICE UPDATE

<b><u>Name of Service:</u></b>	City Growth
<b><u>Date:</u></b>	7 February 2019
<b><u>Title of Update:</u></b>	Aberdeen Art Gallery
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### **UPDATE:**

#### **1. Current progress**

1.1 The main construction works are nearing practical completion with only a very small number of critical outstanding actions to be closed out. Looking ahead and taking a positive outlook, the redevelopment fit-out programme is currently planned to commence mid-February 2019. Initially this will require preparatory works before the actual collections installation can commence. These include floor protection works, fit-out of fixed furniture such as café and retail counters and fittings, installation of display cases and preparation of gallery display spaces.

#### **2. Re-opening / launch**

2.1 The Art Gallery is therefore planned to re-open to the public in Autumn 2019, following a comprehensive marketing and communications plan designed to generate a sense of excitement and anticipation. A multi-layered strategy has been developed and this will commence in earnest six months prior to the re-opening.

2.2 This high-impact re-opening will be enjoyed by the maximum numbers of local people, building on the strong sense of local pride in the gallery and its collections, and generating positive exposure for the Council.

#### **3. What will be achieved**

##### **3.1 A place for everyone**

3.1.1 The revitalised gallery complex (comprising the Art Gallery, Cowdray Hall and Remembrance Hall) will be the city's key cultural venue, creating an exceptional centre for music and art in the centre of the city.

3.1.2 Architectural interventions, including a passenger lift, have imaginatively improved access for all and increased connectivity across the site, whilst retaining the unique character of the buildings. Enhanced visitor facilities include two destination cafes and two sales points selling a unique retail assortment.

##### **3.2 Content rich**

3.2.1 More of Aberdeen's outstanding collections will be on display, interpreted in fresh new ways, including widespread use of digital technology, for visitors of

different ages and from diverse backgrounds.

3.2.2 The previous 11 collection galleries will increase in number to 21, with a strong thematic approach making for a coherent visit with plenty to see. The topics are based on visitor feedback and extensive consultation. The wide variety and changing in-gallery themes will encourage repeat visits.

3.2.3 Amongst the interpretive approaches are interactives encouraging visitors to use their own creative skills, *+Music* [a unique 'app' which allows visitors to listen to a carefully curated playlist specific to each room] and a digital Collections Wall to explore the collections in more depth through multi-layered interaction.

### **3.3 Always something new to see and do**

3.3.1 A varied and engaging programme of exhibitions and events is planned, including opportunities to see world-class exhibitions. The creation of an additional 500m<sup>2</sup> for special exhibitions will enable a vibrant programme of 10 exhibitions a year with a complementary programme of weekly talks and events. The new ground floor learning space and top floor seminar room will enhance the learning opportunities for all ages.

## **4. Ambitious launch programme**

4.1 The launch programme of events and exhibitions will capture the imagination and set the standard for future programming. In the main exhibition galleries we open with a captivating exhibition of contemporary photography, signalling the quality of work that will be exhibited in this space.

4.2 In the ground floor galleries an exhibition entitled 'Alchemy' featuring artwork by local school pupils will launch the G2 space. This space is designed to give local artists, communities and students the opportunity to exhibit in their gallery. The adjacent gallery, G3, opens with an important loan, 'Le Passeur' (The Ferryman) by William Stott, presented as part of a partnership with the Tate.

4.3 The full line-up of exhibitions and events will be released publicly in line with the marketing and communications strategy when the opening date is announced.

## **5. Visitor figures**

5.1 This welcoming and revitalised building is projected to receive 235,000 visitors per annum steady state, with this figure increasing further in response to exceptionally popular exhibitions. This places the revitalised gallery as North-East Scotland's premier art gallery and amongst the top 10 museums and galleries in Scotland, in the company of Kelvingrove, Scottish National Gallery, Museum of Scotland and V&A Dundee.

5.2 The projected visitor segmentation is:

50% local market

25% domestic market

21% international market

4% educational market

This represents an 11.8% penetration rate of total visitor market and 42% uplift in visitor penetration from baseline average figures achieved prior to closure.

## **6. Destination market**

6.1 The Regional Economic Development strategy highlights that the development of the visitor economy is fundamental to Aberdeen's future direction and economy. By combining art, heritage, culture and music, the Art Gallery complex has a pivotal role in positioning Aberdeen as leisure destination and responding positively to the current tourism trends of more people taking shorter breaks; inter-generational travel; mixing work with leisure; a desire for authenticity and a drive to explore unique aspects of Scotland's culture. Destination development will link the Art Gallery with other investments such as TECA, Provost Skene's House, the Science Centre and Greyhope Bay, strengthening the city's tourism product and stimulating growth in visitor demand.

## **7. Destination facilities**

7.1 Comparator analysis indicates that visitors expect a high-quality catering and retail offer at museums and galleries to enhance the visitor experience. The revitalised gallery will have two catering options, a ground floor café [52 covers], as part of the visitor arrival sequence and a roof-top café-bar [24 covers + 24 seasonal covers outside on Dome Terrace] with stunning views of Union Terrace Gardens and Schoolhill. We expect these cafés to become destinations in their own right.

7.2 A bespoke and distinctive retail offer will be sold from two shops, one situated on the ground floor and the other next to the Exhibitions Galleries on the top floor, which will stock merchandise relating to the current special exhibition. At both sites the retail offer will feature work by local makers and artists, unique merchandise based on the collections and a choice of price points to appeal to the widest possible range of visitors. Based on an average spend per head of £1.56 the shops are projected to achieve £127,000 net income in the first 12 months trading.

7.3 Improvements to the Cowdray Hall facilities, particularly the performers' spaces, and an enhanced physical connection to the Art Gallery and Schoolhill entrance means this previously under-used space will be poised to reach its full potential for small-scale events, music and performance.

7.4 Various spaces across the site lend themselves to a range of corporate and private hire opportunities including events, receptions, networking occasions and conferences. £77,000 income is projected in year 2 if these corporate hire opportunities reach their full potential.