

North Edinburgh Arts to become community owned hub

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As part of the ongoing regeneration programme around MacMillan Square, North Edinburgh Arts (NEA) has been granted full community ownership in a community asset transfer from the City of Edinburgh Council. With the additional transfer of a plot of land to the north of the organisation's venue, NEA is now in a position to lead on the development of an extended creative and community hub for the area, working in partnership with the Council.

Bringing the organisation, established in 1998, into community ownership and working to extend the facilities will make sure this dynamic community venue is fit for purpose for the next two decades. New enterprise, workshop, learning space and creative studios are planned, alongside a dedicated youth area, expanded café, and shared atrium all working to complement the Council's adjoining library and early year's provision.

NEA carried out extensive consultation to gauge support for the project with 96% of respondents in favour. The organisation offers local residents a place to relax, explore, learn, meet, share, volunteer and have fun in. Last year over 40,000 visits were made to the venue once described by STV as 'a bright bubble behind Muirhouse shopping centre'. NEA is based in the heart of Muirhouse and their current venue incorporates two studios, a 96 seat theatre, recording studio, gallery, offices and the pop in community café with children's play area leading onto a large garden. NEA offers a safe, comfortable and creative space for people of all ages to develop within.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic over 30 hours of creative workshops were on offer each week, most with a family focus, alongside a wide range of other events from singing groups to circus skills workshops, exhibitions, community theatre, film clubs, and festival events. The venue is also home to Muirhouse Link Up, Firstport Social Enterprise, North Edinburgh Drug and Alcohol Centre, and the Tinderbox Orchestra, all working to serve the most disadvantaged children, families and individuals in the North Edinburgh area.

Chair of NEA, Lesley Hinds, said: "NEA has won five national awards in the last six years for place making and creative projects. This new capital project will allow the organisation to flourish, alongside Council provision, and bring a first class facility to Macmillan Square. NEA is a special place for the community of North Edinburgh and has been a trusted community anchor providing emergency food and support throughout the COVID lockdown. The granting of the Community Asset Transfer from the Council is the first step on our next exciting journey."

Director Kate Wimpress added "The bright blue NEA building has been a beacon of hope for many throughout the lockdown. Alongside our COVID activity of the last four months we have been working closely with Council colleagues to share and establish our vision of a world class creative hub for the next generation of North Edinburgh residents. Today's endorsement from the Council takes us one step closer to this vision becoming a reality."

For more information, please contact Kate Wimpress director@northedinburgharts.co.uk

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