

PORTRAIT OF THE NATION PROJECT RECEIVES £2 MILLION GRANT FROM MONUMENT TRUST

The National Galleries of Scotland is delighted to announce a £2 million boost to its *Portrait of the Nation* project, the ambitious scheme that will transform the Scottish National Portrait Gallery (SNPG) over the next two years. News of this generous award, which has been made by The Monument Trust, a Sainsbury Family Charitable Trust, comes in the week that building contractors moved into the Gallery, and work began in earnest on the refurbishment. In the two years since fundraising for *Portrait of the Nation* began, the campaign has built up a tremendous momentum, with very positive and generous responses from a number of trusts and private individuals. The Monument Trust grant puts the figure raised to date at more than 80 percent of the £17.6 million total, and builds upon the contributions of other major funders, such as the Scottish Government, which committed £5.1 million in December 2007, and the Heritage Lottery Fund, which confirmed its grant of £4.8 million in March 2009.

Speaking of the award by The Monument Trust, James Holloway, Director of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, said: “*We are extremely grateful to The Monument Trust for its wholehearted endorsement of **Portrait of the Nation**. Their generous contribution puts us within reach of our £17.6 million target, and brings us much closer to realising the ambitious plans we have for the Gallery. We closed our doors back in March, and after months of meticulous planning, and the careful removal of our collection, it has been very exciting this week to see our Building contractors, BAM Construction, move into the gallery, and to witness the beginnings of the transformation they will help us to realise.*”

Portrait of the Nation will involve the repair, conservation and creative adaptation of the SNPG, a magnificent Arts and Crafts building which opened in 1889, as the first purpose-built national portrait gallery in the world. The project will increase by 50 percent the amount of gallery space within the building, as well as creating a range of new visitor facilities. *Portrait of the Nation* will also reinvent the way in which the national collection is displayed, illustrating the richness of Scotland’s history and culture with a dynamic programme of exhibitions, and placing a new emphasis on photography and Scottish art. The building was handed over to BAM Construction on 2 November, and work will continue for the next two years. The refurbished Gallery is due to re-open in autumn 2011.

John Leighton, Director-General, National Galleries of Scotland (NGS) has added: ‘***Portrait of the Nation** will be a very significant development for the National Galleries of Scotland. Following this refurbishment we will at last be able to make effective use of one of the most outstanding buildings in Edinburgh. More importantly, the project will enable the wonderful collections to be presented in a coherent and understandable way, appealing to a wide range of new national and international audiences. We are very grateful to The Monument Trust for this generous contribution, which gives us the opportunity to let this much-loved institution reach its full potential.*’

The NGS recently launched a unique fundraising initiative in support of *Portrait of the Nation*, which gives members of the public the chance to associate their name (or that of a loved one) with a very special element in the Portrait Gallery's decorative scheme. At the heart of the campaign, known as *Gallery of Stars*, is William Hole's beautifully detailed mural mapping the night sky, painted in the late 1890s, which decorates the ceiling of the Gallery's magnificent entrance hall. From Friday 2 October, visitors to the National Galleries' website (www.nationalgalleries.org/stars) have been able to navigate their way amongst the 47 constellations - comprising 2,222 individual stars - contained within Hole's vision of the firmament, and claim for themselves their own little piece of heaven.

For further information please contact the National Galleries of Scotland press office on 0131 624 6325 or pressinfo@nationalgalleries.org

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Notes to Editors:

Key objectives of *Portrait of the Nation*:

Portrait of the Nation has three sets of objectives – for our Audiences, Collections and Building - which will deliver a range of specific outcomes.

Audiences

- increase visitor figures by 50% to 300,000 a year
- introduce education facilities including:
 - a multi-purpose Education Suite, suitable for a variety of groups
 - a Seminar Room
 - a new Education and Events Programme
 - a new Resource and Learning Centre on the 1st floor
- introduce New Media interpretation facilities throughout the building
- create a Visitor Hub with a new shop, café, entrance desk and information point

Collections

- display 50% more works of art
- introduce a new approach to the display and interpretation of the collection, with regularly changing exhibitions based around 5 key areas: *Reformation, Empire, Enlightenment, Modernity* and *Contemporary*.
- create a helpful Introductory Gallery
- create a permanent gallery for the Scottish National Photography Collection
- provide a focus for Scottish art, including a Contemporary Scotland Gallery

Building

- restore original features, re-open parts of the building closed to the public and reinstate the top-lit galleries on the 2nd floor
- create 50% more gallery space
- create new visitor services