



£600,000 boost for University of Leicester's New Galleries Appeal

The University of Leicester's plans to provide the city with a new home for contemporary visual arts have taken a significant step forward with the news that Arts Council England has agreed to provide £600,000 towards the capital costs of the project.

The New Galleries Wing will be an extension to Embrace Arts, the University's inclusive, multi-use arts venue at the Richard Attenborough centre on Lancaster Road. It will provide a number of interlinked spaces, all open to the general public, to showcase the best in contemporary visual art and sculpture

It is hoped the new wing will be opened by early 2015, subject to the University of Leicester raising the remaining £900,000 of the £1.5 million cost.

"This is a significant – and very welcome – milestone for the project," commented Professor Sir Robert Burgess, the University's Vice-Chancellor. "We are extremely grateful to Arts Council England for its endorsement of our vision to create a national centre of excellence for inclusive arts practice in Leicester, to be enjoyed by local people and visitors to the city alike."

Peter Knott, Director, Arts Council England said: "Arts Council is delighted Embrace Arts has been successful in its application, which will allow them to extend their existing gallery space for the display and interpretation of contemporary visual art.

"They have a strong history of promotion and engagement by and for disabled people in the arts but their current exhibition space is extremely limited. Our investment, which is conditional on the rest of the funding being secured, will allow them to build two flexible gallery spaces and a sculpture court.

"This will increase access for audiences and really add something to the already vibrant arts and cultural scene in Leicester."

Sir Peter Soulsby, the City Mayor, said he was pleased to have supported the application to Arts Council with a letter endorsing the University's plans for the new gallery. He said: "This will be another great quality cultural attraction in Leicester. Added to the amazing discovery of Richard III, it further strengthens Leicester's claim to become a City of Culture."

Professor Sir Robert Burgess said: "We have already secured almost £400,000 through our Development Team's Breaking Barriers Appeal. We have been delighted with the positive response we have had so far from trusts and foundations – and from our own graduates, whose donations resulted in the highest amount we have ever raised in our annual alumni appeal. With decisions on some major applications due over the next few

months, we are really hopeful that we can have the new gallery open for 2015.”

The extension to Embrace Arts will provide an additional 400 square metres of gallery space, increasing the size of the building by 50%. Originally known as The Richard Attenborough Centre for Arts and Disability, the building was the result of a campaign championed and led by Lord (then Sir Richard) Attenborough. It was officially opened on 27 May 1997 by HRH Diana, The Princess of Wales as one of her last public engagements before her untimely death.

“We are one of only two purpose-built accessible arts centres in the East Midlands for the promotion of arts and disability,” said Embrace Arts co-director Michaela Butter. “This new development will similarly be fully accessible and use the latest in technology, enabling disabled and non-disabled audiences to enjoy the very best of the contemporary arts in new and exciting ways.”

“The original plans for the building had allowed for a more ambitious gallery space than was possible at the time,” Michaela explained, “so we are delighted that we can now take that vision forward 17 years since it first opened.”

“In developing our plans we have worked closely with other visual arts providers, artists, community groups, disabled people and others, and will continue to do so,” she added, “to ensure we create a great place where everyone can enjoy and get involved in high-quality arts.”

The funding boost has been greeted with enthusiasm by, among others, Hugo Worthy, exhibitions officer – contemporary art at New Walk Museum & Art Gallery, who said: “I am thrilled that Embrace has secured this funding. It is a key addition to Leicester’s visual art ecology and will provide amazing new opportunities to see and experience contemporary art.”

Eric Rosoman of The Great Central Gallery & Studios said: “This new gallery space will help to bridge the gap between local artist-run spaces and museum exhibitions. We look forward to their exhibitions with interest and excitement.”

Embrace Arts is located at the Richard Attenborough centre on Lancaster Road near the fire station (LE1 7HA). More information is available at www.embracearts.co.uk

[Ends]

Notes to Editors:



Image 1

A glass front to the new gallery space adjoining the existing Embrace Arts' building at the University of Leicester on Lancaster Road will create a light and airy space for the display of contemporary sculpture and art with an outdoor sculpture court (Image credit: Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios).



Image 2

The main space in the new gallery will be double height, allowing the University of Leicester's Embrace Arts to bring large-scale artwork to Leicester for the first time (Image credit: Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios).

Further details on this release are available from Gillian Garratt, Marketing Manager, Embrace Arts, email gg81@leicester.ac.uk.

Embrace Arts

Embrace Arts offers opportunities to everyone to participate without barriers in ways that challenge and inspire. Its welcoming performance area, dance and art studios, gallery and bright foyer space enable people to engage with the arts as audiences, performers and learners.

Embrace Arts fosters inclusive arts practice for artists, audiences and participants across

all its performing and visual arts programming, both within the venue and in its outreach activities. Supported by the University of Leicester and Arts Council England and with Lord Attenborough as its patron, it currently engages with more than 45,000 people annually from the city, county and further afield.

Embrace Arts, Richard Attenborough centre, Lancaster Road, Leicester LE1 7HA. Box office: 0116 252 2455; e-mail: arts-centre@le.ac.uk.

Arts Council England

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