

## Moray Council / Elgin Town Hall for the Community: Moray Cultural Quarter: Elgin Town Hall

### Overview:

The Cultural Quarter is one of eight strategic projects designed to maximise Moray's future economic competitiveness which make up the Moray Growth Deal. The Cultural Quarter will redevelop two important B-Listed buildings in the heart of Elgin to create a connected, accessible and inspirational cultural centre and leverage private sector investment for a new city centre hotel. Phase 1 of the Cultural Quarter is the refurbishment and extension of Elgin Town Hall to create an accessible regional hub for the performing arts, entertainment, creative industries, and the community. Elgin Town Hall is a B Listed building in the centre of Elgin, owned by The Moray Council and operated by Registered Charity Elgin Town Hall for the Community. Delivered between 2024 and 2026, the project will build on the current success of the Town Hall, increasing organisational sustainability and delivering significant economic, social and physical regeneration outcomes which benefit both Elgin and the wider region. The indicative cost of the redevelopment is £15,884,100. The request from RCGF is £2,500,000/£2,000,000. The project has match funding of £12,773,056 from Moray Growth Deal investment partners (Scottish Govt., UK Govt., Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Moray Council) and the remaining balance of £1,111,044 / £611,044 will be sought from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other suitable heritage funders.

### Background:

**Elgin Town Hall** is a council owned asset which has been successfully managed by Registered Charity and Company Limited by Guarantee, [Elgin Town Hall for the Community](#), since 2018. The project has great support from the community, with over 60,000 visits via regular weekly and monthly community bookings in the year since July 2022, and a further 23,352 visitors to large events in the main auditorium. In addition to a small team of paid staff and sessional bar staff, the Charity is supported by 46 regular volunteers.

### What this project will actually deliver & regeneration outcomes

The renovation will deliver improved visibility, access and circulation in the building, improved backstage, meetings, events and screening facilities, sound/film recording facilities, and segregated performances spaces, including a new studio in addition to an enhanced auditorium. Updating the already popular Elgin Town Hall will enable the venue and Elgin to take its rightful place as the third major cultural centre in a row of important Northern capitals, all one hour apart, making activity more accessible to local residents whilst encouraging people from neighbouring cities and beyond to travel to Moray for cultural activity.

**Economic** – Underpinning the MGD is the strategic objective that the area is seen as particularly attractive for young people, professionals and families, providing opportunities for them to pursue challenging and rewarding careers while enjoying the benefits of an exceptional, connected and cultural environment in which to live, work and relax. The cultural and evening economy are cited by major employers such as the NHS as a big factor in attracting employees, whilst a recent survey by Highlands and Islands Enterprise found that limitations in the cultural offer and services was a major factor for young people leaving the region to pursue study and careers elsewhere. The redevelopment of Elgin Town Hall is a key opportunity for physical regeneration to support social and economic change. Improving the appearance, profile and enhancing the offer at Elgin Town Hall can change perceptions of the building and pique interest in the facilities and programme from local people as well as visitors and passers-by. In addition to this, the current layout of the building is restrictive and with some basic alterations Elgin Town Hall could become more usable, flexible and customer friendly. Alterations will increase income generating opportunities increasing the usable space and number/types of activity which the hall could

be used for, and supporting the ongoing financial sustainability and growth of the organisation.

**Environmental** – Elgin Town Hall is a Grade B Listed modernist Town Hall designed by William Kininmonth circa 1965. It contains ancillary spaces, lesser halls and foyer that wrap around the main hall with stage, stalls and balcony. The building's layout undermines its potential flexibility, operational and energy efficiency due to lack of acoustic and physical separation between the Main hall and surrounding ancillary spaces. A Conservation Architect will be appointed to address how these issues can be overcome whilst remaining sensitive to the listing and unique character of the building, whilst minimising environmental impact. Works will include exploring renewable energy options (an appraisal of solar potential had already been completed), insulation and how the improvement of separation and flow around the building could improve operational performance in terms of energy use.

**Social** – The existing Elgin Town Hall is well used as a performance venue and events include theatre, conferences, concerts, and participatory workshops and meetings. However, the current building is no longer able to accommodate the volume or range of activity required to satisfy audience demand and support ongoing sustainability of the venue. The project will build on the significant existing success of Elgin Town Hall, increasing the floor area to include the provision of a new Studio/ "black box performance and rehearsal space, along with new practice & rehearsal rooms, the potential of a film/music recording space and better visitor facilities. The upgrade will enhance the venue to attract larger touring companies therefore increasing the choice and range of cultural activity available to local people as well as opportunities for young people, professionals and students in the area to enjoy cultural activities and performances. Alongside performance events the building acts as hub for a large number of local community groups and it is envisaged the upgraded accommodation will provide enhanced facilities to support the increasing demand and to maintain financial viability.

The upgraded Elgin Town Hall will provide a high-profile visual symbol that will act as a significant catalyst for economic growth, job creation, renewed civic pride, and destination tourism, creative and commercial development for Elgin. As such, the redevelopment will lay a strong foundation for regeneration and an enhanced environment in which all MGD projects can flourish, helping to attract and retain talent whilst increasing tourism and supporting the success of new city centre homes, business incubation, and enhanced student and resident experiences.

### **Total Cost**

£15,884,100 with £12,773,056 secured MGD match funding, a request from RCGF of an estimated £2m and match funding to be confirmed in due course.

### **Timeframes for securing other funding**

Moray Growth Deal Full Business Case – Q4 2023-24

National Lottery Heritage Fund – Stage 1 March 2024; Stage 2 Dec 2024

### **Timescales and objectives**

May 2023 – March 2024 Full Business Case Development

July 2023 – Dec 2024 Development work - Architectural and professional services

Oct 2024 – Dec 2024 Works contract let

Jan 2025 – July 2026 Capital Works

December 2026 - Operational