

Press release

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Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre launches today in Glasgow

The Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre opens today in Garnethill Synagogue, enabling new audiences to find out about the Category A listed building, unique archive collections and aspects of Scottish Jewish history and culture. Visitors will discover the history and the experiences of Jewish people in Scotland over 200 years and learn how the development of Scotland has been impacted by Jewish immigration.

The Centre is a partnership project between the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre (SJAC), Garnethill Synagogue Preservation Trust (GSPT) alongside Garnethill Hebrew Congregation - all based in Garnethill Synagogue.

Nearly £530,000 in capital funds has been invested, resulting in a modern and welcoming centre with new interpretative displays, a study room housing a specialist reference library, digital research resources and a school visit facility. Major building restoration and renovation work in the lower level of the synagogue has improved public access to underused spaces.

New displays now reveal the history of Glasgow's Jewish community, and explore the period from 1933 to the 1950s when Scotland responded to events in Nazi Germany and took in a number of refugees.

School students visiting will be working with interactive learning kits, based on Holocaust-era refugee collections held in our Archives. These resources follow the experiences of refugees [Dorrieth Sim (née Oppenheim), Ernst Marchand and Hilda Goldwag] who fled from Nazi Germany and occupied Europe, and found a safe haven here in Scotland before the outbreak of the Second World War. Students will be able to reflect on wider issues of citizenship, democracy, persecution and belonging, through the refugees' experiences.

In addition to increasing visibility of the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre's collections, the Centre will expand public access to the historic Category A listed Garnethill Synagogue through regular tours. Visitors will be able to appreciate its beautiful architecture and learn about its history.

The new Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre website www.sjhc.org.uk is launched today, featuring a short film showcasing the Centre and including details on how to book a guided tour of the building or organise a school visit. A weekend activities programme will offer a wide range of public events. All access is designed under Covid-19 safe visiting protocols. The new Centre can be used for training, educational courses, seminars and workshops.

The capital works have been funded by generous grants from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, The Association of Jewish Refugees, The Wolfson Family Charitable Trust, The Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany, Edinburgh, The

Community Security Trust and the Architectural Heritage Fund - William Grant Foundation.

Key to the development has been the creation of the post of SJHC Manager, Kerry Patterson who took up the post in April 2021. The recruitment and training of new volunteers to help deliver the new public services has now resumed in line with Covid-19 restrictions.

The project partners plan to create a new SCIO to take on the operational management of the Centre following the launch, taking over the reins from the project Working Group with trustees from SJAC and GSPT and additional independent trustees.

To give the Centre the best possible start, a small group of volunteers, led by Delivery Phase Working Group member Harvey Livingston and SJAC volunteer Jack Silverstone, set themselves the task of raising £300,000 to fund the Heritage Centre Manager salary, marketing and running costs for the first five years of operation after the NLHF grant expires. To date, they have secured pledges totalling over £280,000.

More about the project and its funders

Deborah Haase, Delivery Phase Project director: “It’s been a long journey! We started planning in 2014 and had some hold ups on the way - when we had to find additional funds as repair works were more extensive than anticipated, then Covid-19 lockdown - but all the capital funders and partners have been patient and so supportive. We now look forward to welcoming visitors and to showing the contribution of the Jewish community to life in Scotland. There is something of interest to everyone here.”

Susan Siegel, Chair of Garnethill Synagogue Preservation Trust: “Garnethill Synagogue is ideally placed for the new Centre. The synagogue is of great architectural interest and for the past thirty-five years it has also been the home of the Archives Centre. The Centre brings into focus fascinating stories about people associated with Garnethill Synagogue, who contributed so much towards the modern City of Glasgow.”

Kerry Patterson, SJHC Manager: “The Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre is an important resource for Scotland. By enabling greater access to the collections and encouraging an understanding of the history of Jewish immigration and the contributions of the Jewish community to Scottish life, we hope to contribute to furthering equality and diversity and promoting inclusion.”

Susan Hodgins, daughter of child refugee Dorrith Sim: “The new Heritage Centre is about learning and understanding. My mother’s raison d’être was to make sure that people never forgot about the experiences of the refugees. The displays are not just about Judaism, they’re about people, about life.”

Harvey Kaplan, Director of the SJAC: “We can now meet the demand for access to the Scottish Holocaust-era collections and bring these collections to local and international audiences. The new display on the experiences of people who found sanctuary in Scotland shows how Scottish people rallied to support refugees.”

Harvey Livingston, SJAC Hon Treasurer, revenue fundraiser: “Our sincere thanks go to The Pears Foundation, The Goldberg Family Trust, Inverclyde Council and all who have made donations and pledges of support to the Centre start up fund. We are most grateful and plan to acknowledge all the donors in the Centre.”

Caroline Clark, Director Scotland of The National Lottery Heritage Fund: “The opportunities for learning from this internationally important archive are immense. Thanks to support from National Lottery players, untold stories of Glasgow’s Jewish community are now open to all to explore. We applaud all involved for their commitment to delivering this significant project, which will share and preserve this heritage for future generations.

Michael Newman, Chief Executive of The Association of Jewish Refugees: “As the largest dedicated funder of programmes and projects which promote teaching and learning about the Holocaust in the UK, the AJR is delighted to support this important initiative to bring a first-of-its-kind Holocaust learning centre to Scotland, and we wish it much success. On behalf of our members we are committed to preserving the memory of those who perished while also helping to create opportunities for all sectors of society to learn about the lives of the refugees and survivors.”

Paul Ramsbottom, Chief Executive of the Wolfson Family Charitable Trust: “The Wolfson Family Charitable Trust is a charity that funds within the Jewish community in the UK. This is an exciting, important project: among things bringing to life through the archive the rich story of the community in Scotland – a country that welcomed the Wolfson family when they arrived in the 1890s.”

Dr. Andreas Zimmer, German Consul General in Scotland: “Until February 2021 Germany held the Chairmanship of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). One of the key messages of our Chairmanship was “to remember and learn from the atrocities of the past if we truly are to contribute to creating a world without hatred, discrimination and ultimately genocide.

In this context we must challenge distortion and denial of the Holocaust. I am very pleased that the German Consulate General Edinburgh could contribute to the excellent and important project, the Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre incorporating the Scottish Holocaust-era Study Centre. If we take our responsibility seriously, we owe it to the victims and to ourselves to openly and honestly face our past and to prevent discrimination, antisemitism and hate crimes today.”

Amanda Bomszyk, Northern Regional Director, The Community Security Trust: “CST assists Jewish communities across the UK to develop, enhance and maintain protective security measures that help to facilitate active Jewish lives. The new Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre will stand testament to the Jewish communal contribution to Scottish society and CST is proud to have supported its redevelopment with direct funding from our Security Enhancement Project.”

For further information, images and interviews, please contact:

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

THE HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND

About the National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we **Inspire, lead** and **resource** the UK's heritage to create **positive and lasting change** for people and communities, now and in the future. www.HeritageFund.org.uk.

SCOTTISH JEWISH ARCHIVES CENTRE (SJAC)

A charity founded in 1987 that collects historical material relating to the experience of Jewish people in Scotland dating back over 200 years. SJAC's diverse collections come from current and former Jewish communities in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Tayside/Fife, Aberdeen, Greenock, Inverness, Falkirk, Ayr and Dunfermline. Volunteers are at the heart of SJAC, researching, cataloguing, guiding visitors, fundraising, assisting researchers and organising events and activities. www.sjac.org.uk

GARNETHILL SYNAGOGUE and GARNETHILL SYNAGOGUE PRESERVATION TRUST (GSPT)

The synagogue building opened on its hill top site in Garnethill in 1879 - the first purpose-built synagogue in Scotland, and it is still working today. Today it is a Category A listed building and retains its original stained glass windows, furniture and fittings. It is rated in the top 10 historic synagogues in the UK - the only one in Scotland. The GSPT took over care and management of the building from the congregation in 2012. www.garnethill.org.uk

ENDS

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My days of work are Monday - Thursday

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