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## Halfway point reached by St George's in its bid to raise £5.5m for extension and upgrade

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By Robert Buckland

St George's, the iconic Bristol music venue, has reached the halfway point in its £5.5m appeal to extend and upgrade its facilities after receiving £350,000 in grants.

The project was kick-started by an initial pledge from Arts Council of £1.95m, and funds raised from a number of private donors. Now £300,000 has been pledged by the Garfield Weston Foundation and £50,000 from the J Paul Getty Jr Charitable Trust, taking it halfway towards its targetted total.

The work will provide the world-class music venue with a much-needed expansion, transforming it for visitors and securing its position as one of the country's top small concert halls.

St George's exceptional acoustics are particularly loved by classical/chamber musicians and are so good that the BBC regularly records live concerts there.



The Building a Sound Future appeal will deliver the first extension to St George's since it was designed by Sir Robert Smirke, the architect of the British Museum, and built in 1823. The new contemporary glass and stone extension by award-winning architects Patel Taylor will greatly improve facilities and provide full access to the venue for the first time.

Key features of the project are:

- A bold new contemporary extension to the core building, providing new visitor entrances
- New garden-facing café and bar
- New education and workshop spaces
- New ramped access directly into the main hall for the first time

Of the total £5.5m required to fully realise the project, £2.68m has now been secured. Further major public and private sources of funds are currently in active negotiation and a public appeal to secure the remaining funds will be launched in early spring 2015.

Initial ground works for the construction of the new extension will begin in spring 2016, with St George's remaining open throughout the majority of the build. Completion is scheduled for autumn 2017.

Director of St George's Bristol Suzanne Rolt said: "We're delighted to receive these major grants, especially at this early stage of the appeal. The total funds raised so far signify a hugely valuable endorsement of our Building a Sound Future plans for St George's Bristol, and take us a big step towards our final target."



"This project delivers our long held ambition to substantially upgrade our facilities for both artists and audiences, fully addressing the constraints of the current building, improving access and visibility, energizing artistic and educational programmes. In short it will be transformational: securing St George's future as a leading performance venue of national significance and fully supporting artistic and audience development for decades to come."