

# News release

Wednesday 16 May 2007  
Strictly embargoed until 11am 16 May 2007

## ART FUND BOOSTS CAMPAIGN TO SAVE DUMFRIES HOUSE WITH A MAJOR £2 MILLION FUNDING PLEDGE



The Art Fund, the UK's leading independent art charity, today announced that it will throw its weight behind the eleventh hour campaign by SAVE Britain's Heritage to secure Dumfries House for the nation, by underwriting the acquisition of the house and contents up to a total of £2 million. This is the largest pledge in The Art Fund's history. The Monument Trust, one of the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts, pledged £4 million towards the campaign yesterday. On Monday The Garfield Weston Foundation generously pledged £1 million in support of the campaign. This brings the total on the table so far to £7 million.

These pledges represent over a quarter of at least £25 million thought to be needed to keep both house and contents together for public enjoyment. SAVE has prepared an imaginative plan for vesting the house in an independent charitable trust which will open the house to the public as a tourist attraction, and which will use the estate in a variety of ways for the benefit of the local community, thereby acting as a catalyst for local regeneration. SAVE will be making an application to the National Heritage Memorial Fund – the Government's heritage fund of last resort – and to the Scottish Executive hoping that they will add their support. If the campaign fails the house will be sold and its contents will be auctioned separately in July.

Dumfries House, situated in Cumnock, East Ayrshire, about 50 minutes from Glasgow and 20 from Prestwick Airport, is one of the most important Georgian houses in the UK. It is an almost unique timecapsule from the time of the Scottish Enlightenment, containing an outstanding collection of untouched 18<sup>th</sup>-century furniture selected specifically for the house at the time it was built, including pieces by Thomas Chippendale and his Scottish contemporaries William Mattheie, Alexander Peter and Francis Brodie. The house has been put on the market by John Bute, the 7<sup>th</sup> Marquis of Bute; its historic furniture contents are due to be sold separately at an auction held by Christies on 12 and 13 July.

**David Barrie, Director of The Art Fund, said:** "Dumfries House is a unique and astounding survival. The house is an architectural masterpiece, containing some of the finest early Chippendale furniture and many masterpieces made by Chippendale's Scottish contemporaries. We recognise that there has been a lot of talk about this but it would be tragic if the house and its contents – together for 250 years – were to be separated. SAVE has come up with an imaginative and workable plan to prevent this from happening, and in support we've pledged the largest sum of money we've ever given to a single acquisition. In just two weeks £7 million has been raised – we really hope SAVE is able to bring the fundraising campaign to a successful conclusion shortly."

**Marcus Binney, President of SAVE Britain's Heritage said:** "Dumfries House is a unique Scottish asset – it has the potential to aid the regeneration of the Ayrshire coalfield area and provide employment and an educational resource in an area of high social deprivation. But this potential can only truly be realised if the asset is kept intact. That means keeping the house and furniture together – here we have one of the greatest Scottish patrons commissioning the greatest Scottish architects and furnishing the house with work by Edinburgh furniture makers, as

We are an independent charity committed to saving art for everyone to enjoy. Since we began in 1903, we have helped to save over 850,000 works of art. Today, some 80,000 members fund our work. In return, they receive free or reduced-price admission to many museums and galleries in the UK. This is not the only reason they join: they support us because they love art.

well as with specially-made Chippendale. Altogether it is a quite remarkable survival. Action is needed now to save this triumph of the Scottish Enlightenment for the Scottish nation.”

Described as ‘a rare architectural gem’, Dumfries House is a Palladian masterpiece, commissioned by the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Dumfries in the 1750s and designed and built by Scotland’s greatest architectural dynasty, the Adam family. Its contents, which have barely changed since 1803, include a unique collection of Rococo furniture by Thomas Chippendale – the most important to remain in private hands. Key pieces include a late George II parcel-gilt rosewood, padouk and sabicu breakfront bookcase, 1759, expected to sell for £2 - 4 million and a rare George II giltwood overmantel mirror by Chippendale with a Savonnerie tapestry panel probably woven by Thomas Moore, 1759, estimated at £500,000 - £800,000. It also contains a unique collection of furniture by the Scottish designers William Mattheie, Alexander Peter and Francis Brodie.

Experts agree that the largely unchanged and original nature of Dumfries House means that the heritage value of the house and its original furniture is immeasurably greater if they are preserved together than if they are split up. It is on the market with an estimated value of offers in excess of £6.75 million, while the value of the contents is thought to be at least £12 - 15 million. As well as preserving Dumfries House and estate intact, SAVE’s innovative proposal would use them both to transform the fortunes of the locality – Cumnock, the local town, and East Ayrshire. The plan foresees opening the house and estate to the public for the first time – the venue will lend itself brilliantly to activities such as education programmes, outward bound courses and ranger-led walks. The aim is to develop a strategy based on a strong relationship with the local community and for the estate to act as a catalyst for social, environmental and economic regeneration.

**Fiona Lees, Chief Executive, East Ayrshire Council, said:** “Dumfries Estate represents a national treasure in architectural, heritage and environmental terms. It has the potential to become a catalyst to assist in the regeneration of the former Coalfield Area within which it is located, as well as being a focus for the economic development of Ayrshire in general.

East Ayrshire Council firmly supports the move to save Dumfries House for the Nation, and today’s news that £7 million has been pledged is a tremendous development.”

**For further press information, please contact Sarah Harrison or Tanera Bryden in The Art Fund press office on 0207 225 4820/22 or Adam Wilkinson at SAVE on 020 7253 3500**

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**Notes to editors:**

- The Art Fund is the UK’s leading independent art charity. It offers grants to help UK museums and galleries enrich their collections and campaigns widely on behalf of museums and their visitors. It is entirely funded from public donations and has 80,000 members
- Since 1903 the charity has helped museums and galleries all over the UK secure 860,000 works of art for their collections. In 2006 it offered over £5 million to museums and galleries
- The Art Fund has given almost £8.5 million in grants to museums and galleries in Scotland since its inception in 1903, towards works of art costing a total of £77million, including grants of £550,000 towards the purchase of Botticelli’s *Virgin Adoring the Sleeping Christ Child*, and £500,000 towards Titian’s *Venus Anadyomene* for the National Gallery of Scotland.

- In 2006 The Art Fund unveiled one of the most significant projects in its history – a permanent ‘Skyspace’ at Yorkshire Sculpture Park by the American artist James Turrell
- In November 2006 The Art Fund published the findings from its groundbreaking research comparing the collecting ability of four UK national museums with their international counterparts which revealed that our major national museums have a tiny fraction of the spending power of some of those abroad. Visit [www.artfund.org/policyandcampaigns](http://www.artfund.org/policyandcampaigns)
- In January 2007 The Art Fund successfully led the public appeal to save JMW Turner’s *Blue Rigi* for Tate
- In April 2007 The Art Fund launched a new £5 million scheme – ‘Art Fund International’ – aimed at developing the collections of international contemporary art in UK regional museums and galleries
- Independent of government, The Art Fund is uniquely placed to campaign on behalf of public collections across the UK. It was at the forefront of the campaign for free admission in 2001, and the campaign to save the Macclesfield Psalter in 2005
- Visit the charity’s website at [www.artfund.org](http://www.artfund.org).

**SAVE Britain’s Heritage**, the conservation charity running the campaign, plans to set up an independent charitable trust which will preserve Dumfries House intact and open both house and grounds to the public. Other properties on the 1,940 acre estate would be let and profits put into an endowment fund. SAVE, which is seeking to raise a total of £25 million to cover the cost of the acquisition, repairs, administration and to set up an endowment fund, plans to approach the National Heritage Memorial Fund for a substantial grant, and to raise additional funds via private trusts and benefactors. SAVE’s campaign was instigated when The National Trust for Scotland, which had been in talks with John Bute, failed to reach an agreement on the acquisition.

#### **The Monument Trust**

The Monument Trust was established in 1965 by the late Simon Sainsbury. Since then, the Trust has made grants of over £100 million in the fields of arts and heritage, health and community care, social development and the environment.

#### **The Garfield Weston Foundation**

Founded in 1958 the Garfield Weston Foundation is a UK based, general grant-giving charity endowed by the late W Garfield Weston and members of his family. In the year to 5 April 2006, the Foundation supported 1,533 applications with grants totalling over £38 million.