



**Issued Tuesday 17 March**

## **Joint Statement between Eden Court Highlands and The Highland Council**

### **Ground-breaking partnership announced**

Eden Court is in the business of bringing people together. At the current time, due to guidance surrounding COVID-19, delivering their programme is not sustainable.

Therefore, in line with theatres across the rest of the country, Eden Court, will today, at 5pm, close to the general public. Their ambition will be to reopen as soon as possible, however we are in unprecedented times and we will continue following national guidance and directives.

Those who have bought tickets for productions and film screenings between now and 20 April will be contacted by Eden Court within the next week. Please bear with Eden Court colleagues, who will be in touch in due course.

James Mackenzie-Blackman, Chief Executive of Eden Court said: "These are unprecedented times. Eden Court needs the support of all those who know the venue, and all those who have a stake in the organisation, to support it over the coming weeks and months.

"Therefore, following discussions with the Highland Council, Eden Court staff will, over the coming days and weeks, be invited to support the delivery of Highland Council's resilience response. Many Eden Court staff have specific and unique skills that could positively benefit the Highland community in these difficult times and the board and leadership team of Eden Court are pleased to be able to enter into this unique relationship with the Council and are grateful for their support in these challenging times."

Donna Manson, Chief Executive of The Highland Council added: "We have been proactive and have come up with a very innovative solution to both address the crisis at Eden Court with the needs of our communities. This is a unique ground-breaking opportunity, the first in the UK we believe, Eden Court plays a very valuable role and we recognise the importance of the staff and the 200 jobs to the Highland economy.

“The Council owns the theatre building and it would be a huge risk and cost to the council and the public to lose such an asset. Eden Court staff have many skills and can play an important role in community resilience, addressing isolation and assisting with our education programme to minimise the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic on our communities. As more details emerge we will keep everyone updated.”

Examples of support:

- Eden Court’s Engagement team, who work with children, young people and the community, will collaborate with the Highland Council on the delivery of learning outcomes for Highland young people.
- Many Eden Court staff have experience working with vulnerable groups, these skills could be redeployed.
- Eden Court staff will work with Council staff to plan activities to tackle loneliness over the coming weeks and months.

Over the coming days Eden Court staff will undertake a skills audit to capture languages spoken and other special skills. These skills and resources will then be shared with the council to relieve pressure on their own service delivery.

ENDS

Notes for Editors -

Eden Court Highlands is a company limited by guarantee and charity registered in Scotland. It was founded by Highland Regional Council and Inverness District Council. It was incorporated in October 1977 with the following main objective:

“to promote, maintain, improve and advance public education, particularly by the encouragement of public interest in the Arts”.

The building is owned by the Highland Council.

The Board includes four Highland Council Members.