

**APPLICATION FOR PROPERTY IN CARE CLEARANCE
FOR WORKS TO STIRLING CASTLE PALACE
SUBMITTED 1 APRIL 2007**

PURPOSE

This paper provides PIC's response to the issues raised at the Board Meeting on Friday 29th June 2007.

Stirling Castle Palace Project

The Display of the Stirling Heads.

Guard House & Fort Major's House Feasibility Study.

Contents

1. Introduction
2. The Stirling Heads.
3. Display & Interpretation.
4. The Guard House & Fort Major's House.
5. Current Use.
6. Feasibility & Implications.
7. Finance.
8. Impact of Relocation.
9. Preferred alternative
10. Disability Discrimination Act (DDA 1995)
11. Remote Access
12. Virtual Tour
13. Re-created Reproduction Ceiling
14. Location
15. Consultation and Design Development
16. Costs
17. Selection of Presentation Date for the Royal Lodgings

Appended Drawings

Drawings:

Figure 1. Guard House & Fort Major's House.

Figure 2. Renaissance Gallery. Palace - Upper Floor.

1. Introduction

1.1 Following the HS Board meeting on Friday 29th June 2007, at which the PICC application for works at Stirling Castle Palace were discussed, the HS inspectors raised concerns over the visual intrusion of the proposed disabled access lift situated in the North West corner of the West Gallery of the Palace. The HS Board asked PIC to explore the options for displaying the Stirling Heads in an alternative, fully accessible location within the Castle. The Guard House & Fort Major's House in the Outer Close were raised as one possibility.

2. The Stirling Heads

2.1 The Stirling Heads are one of the largest and finest surviving collections of Renaissance wood carvings in Europe. The heads were made especially for the ceilings of James V's Royal Lodgings. The felling dates of the timbers from which they are made have been ascertained through dendrochronological testing and are consistent with the construction period for the Palace. They form an integral part, along with the exterior sculpture, of the key surviving evidence for the decoration and iconography of the Palace.

2.2 Because of their age, fragility and value the Stirling Heads require to be housed in museum display cases with appropriate environmental conditions, fire protection and security.

2.3 The Heads also require interpretation to enable visitors to appreciate them and understand their symbolism and relationship to, the architecture and external sculpture of the Palace and the decorative arts and thinking of the period.

2.4 Properly displayed and interpreted the Stirling Heads offer the potential to create the centre piece of a rich and captivating exhibition, exploring through their design and iconography, the authority and power of James V and, his royal court during the Renaissance.

3. Display & Interpretation.

3.1 One of the principles which has guided the project work at Stirling Castle since the projects inception in 1991, has been the presentation of each building in a way which clarifies and enhances its cultural significance. It is this principle which has led to the restoration of James IV's Great Hall, the refurbishment of the of the Chapel Royal and the interpretation of the great kitchens.

3.2 To create a display commensurate with the quality and significance of the Stirling Heads requires a setting of sufficient space and scale to enable them to be displayed and appreciated as a single collection. Ideally this should be within the building for which they were created.

3.3 The upper floor of the Palace has rooms of appropriate size and scale to house the entire collection of Stirling Heads and to interpret the external sculpture which forms an integral part of the decorative scheme for the Palace.

3.4 Following the Board Meeting we have explored other possible available areas within the Castle. These included the Great Hall and Chapel Royal, which were dismissed as potential gallery spaces because of the conflict with their cultural significance and current use as functions spaces. The various vaults and Queen Anne Casemates were also considered but these are both too small and too low to house the whole collection. They would require additional environmental conditioning and security which would be difficult to achieve.

3.5 Locations for a possible 'new build' gallery were also considered. The only potential area within the castle with available space is at the end of the Nether Bailey, where the temporary tapestry studio is currently located. However a gallery would require approximately four times the area of the studio and there is insufficient level space available. Preliminary discussions with HSI suggested that this location would be regarded as inappropriately obtrusive.

3.6 The Guard House and Fort Major's House, whilst being from a much later period are the only other buildings which have sufficient floor space to warrant further consideration.

4. The Guard House & Fort Major's House

Main Guard House.

4.1 Of the military buildings in the Castle the best, architecturally, is the Main Guard House, a handsome building constructed in the late eighteenth century against the Forework in the Outer Close. Between its pavilions is a three-bay loggia which fronted the guards accommodation and provided the sentinels with shelter. It occupies a site that was adapted for military use in 1689 and replaces an early 18th century guardhouse on the same site. While some of the internal divisions have been added later, it is likely that the main structural subdivisions survive, albeit with new openings and additions.

Fort Major's House.

4.2 Adjacent to the Main Guard House and also built up to the north side of the Forework, is a three-bay, two storied house built for the Storekeeper in the 19th century but known by its later use as the Fort Major's house. The original internal arrangements, around a central stair still survive.

Cultural Significance.

4.3 Both of these structures are directly related to the army occupation of the castle. Their importance lies not only in their architectural quality, which survives remarkably unaltered, but as the best surviving illustration of the day to day military operations which characterised Stirling Castle for 300 years.

4.4 In recent years many of the military alterations have been purposely stripped from the principle court buildings, in order to reinforce their cultural significance. It is equally important that the later Military history of the castle is also respected.

5. Current Use

5.1 The Guard House and Fort Major's House are currently used as a small bookshop and office accommodation for 17 staff. They also house the main Building Management System for the Castle and the central Castle floodlighting controls.

6. Feasibility & Implications.

6.1 Sketch designs and building analysis have confirmed that there is sufficient floor space to house the Stirling Heads in the Guard House and Fort Major's House. The buildings are linked at both ground and first floor and have a combined usable floor space of 180 sqm compared with the 190 sqm within the upper floor of the Palace.

6.2 Although it may be feasible to display the Stirling Heads in the Guard House and Fort Major's House there are a number of major drawbacks:

- The two linked buildings contain a series of small domestic scale rooms with low ceilings. The cellular planning means it is not possible to display the entire collection in one space, this reduces the impact of the Heads and makes it more difficult to interpret their importance as a collection.
- A presentation of the Stirling Heads in separate rooms can only be achieved by using a linear routing over two levels with the heads split up into groups in interlinked display spaces.
- The small rooms and narrow linking corridors are likely to create areas of congestion at peak periods as a linear layout does not cater for different dwell times to suit different visitors needs and can lead to bunching or queuing within the exhibition.
- In order to provide sufficient display space all of the later internal partitions will require to be removed and a number of major interventions will be necessary, including:
 - Strengthening and possible replacement of existing floors.
 - Insertion of a new stair and lift.
 - New services and fire protection measures.
- PIC Consent will be required for the interventions and whilst initial discussions with H.S.I. indicate that these would be acceptable, much more detailed design and investigation would be required before this could be confirmed. Agreement would also be required for relaxations from the Fire Office and Building Control auditor for areas of non-compliance, such as stair widths & configurations. These consents and relaxations cannot be assumed at this stage.
- A display in the Guard House & Fort Major's House dislocates the collection from the building for which it was designed.

- Locating the exhibition in the Lower Close removes the Heads from the proximity of the presented Royal Lodgings in the Palace, weakening the links between the two and creating a potential orientation problem.
- The use of the Guard House & Fort Major's House will require the relocation of staff accommodation to the Upper Floor of the Palace and the loss of public access to the upper floor and the Prince's tower.
- There is currently no suitable alternative within the Castle for the Bookshop.

7. Finance.

7.1 Capital cost

Capital costs for adapting the Guard House & Fort Major's house and relocating staff and services to the upper floor of the Palace have been estimated at an additional £960K including fees but excluding interpretation costs for which there is already a budget in the Palace Project costs.

Additional project cost estimate £960k

7.2 Running Costs

The running costs for the gallery are already included in the draft Business Plan for the Palace. However, the layout of a gallery in the Guard House & Fort Major's House spread over two floors and with a number of small rooms will require additional stewarding to provide security and visitor information than required in the upper floor of the Palace.

Additional staff costs, £35k/year

7.3 Loss of income

Removal of the book shop from the Guard House with no available alternative will reduce the annual income at Stirling Castle by £260k. After deducting the cost of goods and offsetting the savings from reduced staffing levels this results in a net loss of £60k per annum.

Net loss estimate, £60k/year

8. Impact of Relocation.

8.1 PIC's preferred option for the presentation of the Stirling Heads in the upper floor of the Palace provides a large single space, once a mess hall and later used to house the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Museum. It is ideally suited for display purposes where its large volume can accommodate the complete collection reinforcing their unique survival as a group, along with keeping the collection in the building for which it was designed.

8.2 The layout of the upper floor of the Palace also provides adequate space for an introductory exhibition on the Renaissance, and a linking exhibition on the external sculpture and medieval carving. This would be situated at the end of the exhibition before visitors exit onto the Piper's Walk to see close up, the superb sculpture of the South elevation. There is adequate space on the upper floor to provide visitors with a choice of routes, reducing the risk of congestion and allowing for different dwell times to suit different visitors' needs.

8.3 The physical proximity of the entrances to the Royal Lodgings and the Gallery reinforces the link between the presented Royal Apartments, the Stirling Heads and the external sculpture.

8.4 The visitor route to the Gallery, from the Inner Close, takes visitors into the upper West Gallery providing them with views of the Palace Sculpture, Lion's Den and the panorama to the west over the King's Knot to the Royal Hunting grounds. These views provide an appropriate introduction to James V and his remarkable Renaissance Palace and sets the scene for the main Stirling Heads gallery.

8.5 The Project Team consider that the Stirling Heads offer a unique opportunity to create a rich and captivating visitor experience that will not be realised with a fragmented display in a domestic scale military setting. Consequently to 'design down' the preferred option to enable it to be accommodated in the Guard House & Fort Major's House would fail to realise the full potential offered by 'The Crown Jewels of Stirling.'

9. Preferred alternative

9.1 The Client & Project Teams consider that whilst the Guard House & Fort Major's House could physically contain the display and interpretation of the Stirling Heads, the spatial limitations, visitor flow restrictions, additional capital and running costs, coupled with the dissociation of the Stirling Heads from the Palace, make this an unattractive alternative. We are therefore reluctant to adopt this option and, if the lift is not approved, propose that the exhibition remains on the upper floor with remote access provided in a fully accessible location.

We have therefore examined in more detail the ways in which this can be successfully achieved.

10. Disability Discrimination Act (DDA 1995)

10.1 In 2004 those parts of the DDA relating to the physical environment came into force. This makes it unlawful to treat disabled people less favourably on grounds of disability and places a set of duties on employers and service providers, including the provision to make 'reasonable adjustments' to allow access.

10.2 Under the DDA legislation all reasonable measures must be taken to ensure safe access for disabled visitors. This was considered as part of the Palace Project and evaluated in the Feasibility Studies, Building Analysis reports and the Project Overview submission.

However, Historic Building Legislation can override the DDA requirements.

11. Remote Access

11.1 There are a range of ways to introduce 'Remote Access' for disabled visitors. These include talks, guided tours and books, through to audio guides and video or interactive IT solutions. It can also involve interactive virtual tours which contain visual and audio alternatives for those with hearing and sight limitations.

11.2 To meet the needs of less able visitors, Historic Scotland have recently introduced remote access facilities at Stirling Castle, Edinburgh Castle Prisoners of War Exhibition, Jedburgh Abbey and Skara Brae. These are virtual tours which aim to provide intellectual access to areas of these sites which are not physically accessible.

11.3 Although alternative access provided by a remote facility is beneficial in providing intellectual access to properties and sites where physical access is not possible, access consultants and access groups advise that this does not offer an equitable experience to the real thing, and that the priority should always be to provide physical access for everyone where this is feasible.

11.4 Disabled visitors

During 2006-07 Historic Scotland welcomed some 600 wheelchair users to Stirling Castle and had on average received one request per day from less mobile visitors to use the courtesy vehicle to take them to the Inner Close or Nether Bailey. These numbers are likely to increase as the population ages and visitor numbers increase.

12 Virtual Tour

12.1 A virtual tour would use film, audio and text (subtitling) to create an interactive experience of the Renaissance Gallery. A 3D visualisation of the Gallery could be used to enable us to construct the same thematic groupings of the Stirling Heads as in the real Gallery and allow remote visitors to choose their own virtual route through the gallery.

12.2 Disabled visitors would also be able to select an individual Head or an object about which they would like more information and receive this information via audio and/or text. The remote access would use detailed images of the objects to enable close examination. A virtual tour would be greatly beneficial as an additional interpretation, educational and marketing tool.

12.3 For groups of disabled visitors, it would also be possible to pre-book special guided tours from either our stewarding staff or costumed interpreters.

13 Re-created Reproduction Ceiling

13.1 A key element of the presentation of the Royal Lodgings is the creation of the ceiling in the Kings Inner Hall containing 38 reproduction Stirling Heads, painted and set into a coffered ceiling. These would be accessible to all visitors and would add considerably to the experience available to disabled visitors.

14 Location

14.1 The preferred location for a virtual tour would be in the Palace Vaults. These are fully accessible and will be used to interpret various aspects of Court life, including information on the Renaissance carvings.

14.2 An alternative or additional site could be the Castle Café which already has a remote access computer terminal that could be added to, although the same level of experience would not be possible within the existing framework.

15 Consultation and Design Development

15.1 Subject to the project gaining approval we would develop the proposals for remote access involving consultation with local disabled groups. The proposals will also be included in the access audit for the full project.

16 Costs

16.1 The cost of providing remote access would depend upon the level of sophistication of the virtual tour and the number of stations provided. The current demand suggests that permanent stations and possibly two portable units for use at any location on site would be adequate. The budget for this would be in the region of £40k, similar to the current allocation for the lift.

17 Selection of presentation date for the Royal Lodgings

17.1 HSI have raised concerns about the proposed 1542 date for the presentation of Royal Lodgings. These concerns centre on the lack of documentary evidence to say when the Palace was completed, along with a lack of specific evidence as to how the lodgings may have been furnished at that time. A later date of 1554 is suggested by HSI, after Mary of Guise has become Governor.

17.2 HSI have indicated in our initial discussions that at this date the Queen's Lodgings would still have been decorated and furnished for Mary of Guise and will therefore require only very minor changes to the proposed scheme. They have also confirmed that there would be few changes to the proposals for the structural and applied decorative finishes to the King's Lodgings although all of the furniture, apart from the state bed and the wall hangings, would be removed.

17.3 We consider that this arrangement will still enable the interpretation to be based around James V and his key role in the design and construction of the Palace. We are therefore willing to accept HSI's recommendation that we use a later date for the presentation of the Lodgings.

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