

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

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101 Introduction

Since Government troops fired Linlithgow Palace in 1746 it has remained roofless, a romantic ruin overlooking Linlithgow Loch and dominating the small town of Linlithgow. As Crown property in the care of the Secretary of State for Scotland it has been maintained and consolidated from the nineteenth century up to the present day. It is open to the public and has been interpreted in a low key way with on-site interpretative panels, a colour publication and has been a vanguard of Historic Scotland sites in respect of use and interpretation by the local community. Because of its setting and ambience it is also used from time to time for functions, son e luminere, ghost walks, drama and music. Despite its historical importance, its grandeur, location and accessibility, it only attracts around 40,000 visitors a year - in truth, it underperforms in national terms.

There have been calls from time to time over the last 100 years to restore all, or part of, the Palace and make better use of it. This was resisted for various reasons but in recent years the issue has been raised again although other factors have been brought to bear:

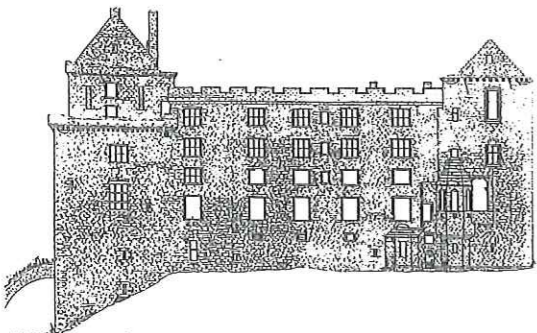
- * the availability of European, Heritage Lottery and Millennium funding which could significantly influence any funding package and hence the overall economic viability of any proposal
- * the need for Historic Scotland to become more sensitive to the economic opportunities that its properties present - in order that it can continue to move forward despite increasing financial stringency in both capital and revenue terms
- * the recognition that tourism can create jobs and wider economic benefit and that West Lothian in general, and Linlithgow Palace in particular, has enormous potential which is not as yet being exploited.

As a result Historic Scotland have reconsidered the matter and given an undertaking to the Scottish Office Minister for the Environment that it would carry out a feasibility study into whether it is possible to re-roof the North Range of the Palace (constructed 1618 - 1624) and make use of it in various ways which are compatible with its status and dignity as a Royal Palace which is presented to, and enjoyed by, the general public. It is anticipated that should the study prove it is feasible then the work would be undertaken 'around the end of the century' after current financial commitments to Edinburgh and Stirling Castles have been completed.

102 The Nature Of The Feasibility Study

Because of the wide-ranging nature of the study, including the potential of the Palace in tourism and wider economic terms, and the impact any proposals will inevitably have on the town of Linlithgow, it was appropriate for the study to be commissioned jointly by:

- * The Secretary of State for Scotland, through Historic Scotland
- * Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise Ltd
- * West Lothian Council.



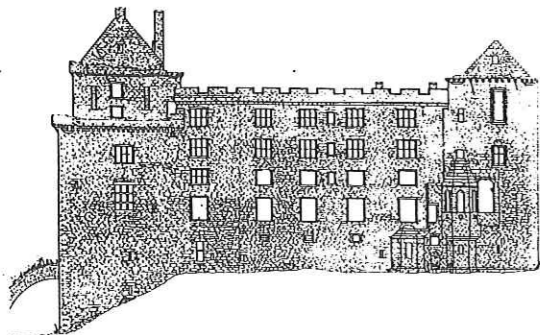
Following the submission of proposals and an interview process a multi-disciplinary consultancy team was appointed comprising:

- * Parkin Heritage and Tourism Consultants
- * Brooke Millar Peden Architects
- * Haley Sharpe Associates
- * Morham and Brotchie Partnership Quantity Surveyors
- * Ove Arup and Partners Scotland Structural Engineers
- * Retrospect Historical Services.

The brief for the study was as follows:

- * assess the technical feasibility of re-roofing the North Range, and potentially incorporating the North West corner, together with re-flooring without significant damage to the existing built fabric
- * work up architectural sketch designs, equivalent to RIBA Stage C, to illustrate how the new uses can be accommodated, with appropriate services, meeting current building regulations, fire, health and safety and accessibility legislation
- * review the range of uses that could potentially be incorporated in the North Range assessing their market demand and specific spatial, operational and management requirements
- * assess how the visitor attraction itself can be enhanced, its theme, concept and design, spatial, operational and management requirements
- * reappraise the Halcrow Fox Access Study (1995) and put forward firm proposals which will satisfy future car and coach parking requirements coupled with emergency access, disabled and construction needs
- * prepare a cost appraisal of the overall capital costs involved in the proposals coupled with a funding strategy
- * prepare an economic impact analysis applying accepted Scottish Tourism multipliers
- * prepare a business plan for the attraction which takes account of the operational viability of the project including financial forecasts and sensitivity analysis
- * prepare a PR and marketing strategy for the attraction.

The overall objective was to **IDENTIFY** a mix of uses for the North Range which are compatible with its status as a Palace, which can be **PHYSICALLY** incorporated in the structure without significant disturbance, which will significantly enhance the **TOURISM PRODUCT** and visitor numbers, can be **realistically funded**, is **viable in operational terms** and will generate **valuable economic benefit**. At the end of the day the overriding objective is to **ACHIEVE A BALANCE** which is acceptable to all the parties involved:



- * those responsible for the conservation of the nation's heritage
- * those responsible for the well-being of the town
- * those responsible for improving the tourism potential of the area
- * those responsible for the wider economic prosperity of the area.

103 The First Stage Report

The study was broken down into two stages. A First Stage Report was completed in October 1995 and set out to answer seven key questions:

- * is it technically possible to create the necessary covered space in the North Range to introduce a range of appropriate uses?
- * can the problems of access and parking requirements be satisfactorily resolved?
- * can/should Linlithgow Palace become a major landmark attraction?
- * how much will it cost and is it realistically possible to access the funding necessary?
- * is the facility capable of being viable operationally?
- * what wider benefits can be achieved from implementing this major project?

The key findings of the First Stage Report were as follows:

- * Linlithgow Palace should be presented more appropriately as one of Scotland's premier monuments and birthplace of Mary, Queen of Scots
- * it is technically feasible and desirable to re-roof the North Range and insert floors without serious impediment to the existing built fabric and to then use it for interpretative purposes and for visitor services
- * the Long Gallery should be as fully restored as research allows and be used for interpretative purposes, for functions and banquets
- * the whole Palace should be much more effectively interpreted using a wide range of techniques including major exhibitions, audio tours, costumed interpreters, events and activities and a theatrical performance for presenting the story of Mary, Queen of Scots and the Stewart dynasty
- * the facilities provided should be multi-functional, on the one hand enhancing the visitor experience and on the other, providing essential income generation to ensure overall operating viability. This should include an improved shop, a high quality coffee shop with 75 covers, an educational resource centre, meeting and seminar rooms and improved changing facilities to allow the Palace and adjacent St Michael's Church to be used more extensively for performances
- * the use of the Palace by the local community should be positively encouraged and enhanced

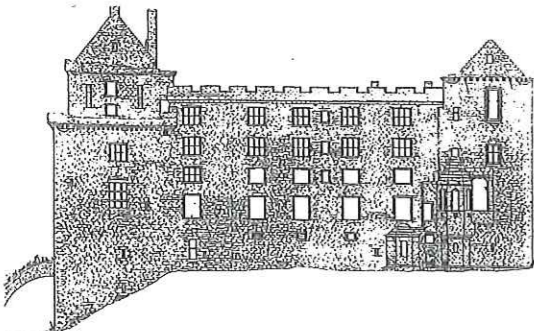
- * the Palace could realistically expect to attract up to 120,000 visitors per annum after 3 years with appropriate marketing. The target markets are the resident population in the Central Belt, the Edinburgh tourist and day visitor market, education and coach market. Special interest groups including Historic Scotland membership and the National Trust for Scotland are also very important
- * education is particularly important in relation to the new curriculum guidelines and a dedicated and properly marketed education service is proposed
- * an 'order of magnitude' capital cost for the project is £8.3m which could be realistically raised from a range of services including ERDF and Heritage Lottery
- * the initial financial appraisal suggested that the project could become viable in operating terms generating a surplus which could be reinvested in improved staffing and regularly augmenting the interpretative provision
- * an initial assessment confirmed that the project could achieve significant economic benefit for the town and surrounding area in terms of new jobs, sustaining existing jobs, training opportunities and the stimulation of new business
- * car and coach parking would best be located at Low Port on the site of the Low Port School Annexe which could be rebuilt to modern educational standards elsewhere on the school site. This area would accommodate 60-70 cars and 4 coaches with associated traffic calming and ancillary boundary works to the school site and the Low Port Centre
- * easy access by train and the linkages between the Low Port entrance to the Peel, with signposting, provide a relatively short route from the station to the Palace
- * a 'heritage' trail could be developed leading the visitor from the car park across the historic Peel to a re-created East Entrance of the Palace by means of a ramp, and following then east, the visitor would be encouraged to exit by the existing South Exit, visit St Michael's Church, walk down Kirkgate to the Tourist Information Centre, returning to their car, or the other way round, to enjoy the town along the High Street.

These proposals were welcomed by the client group and provided the basis for the second part of the study and this Final Report.

104 Final Report

The second stage of the study culminating in this report has put flesh on the bones of the proposals

- * developed the components of the attraction
- * rationalised visitor flows including the concept of the heritage trail
- * worked up the interpretative proposals
- * refined the proposals for re-roofing and re-flooring the North Range
- * refined the capital costs for the work and identified appropriate sources of funding
- * incorporated a Financial Appraisal to prove the viability of the proposals
- * assessed the wider economic benefits that can accrue from the investment



- * recommended a clear programme of action for the way ahead
- * considered the implications of a new coach and car park in relation to the existing educational facilities.

105 Acknowledgements

In the course of the study an excellent working relationship has developed between the consultants and the client team. There has been a two way dialogue on all the issues involved and the end result is a vision which is appropriate, realistic, achievable and sustainable. We must acknowledge the enormous support and encouragement given by the client team chaired by Neil Hynd (Historic Scotland) and his colleagues Chris Tabraham, John Knight and Bob Hislop, Kieran McNamara (Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise Ltd) and Marion Rennie and Stuart Eydman (West Lothian Council) without whom the study would be less comprehensive. There are also a wide range of other people we have consulted in the course of the study who have given generously of their time, expertise and advice. They are listed in Appendix A and we thank them all.