

Dean Castle Development Project



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A Brief History

Dean Castle dates from at least the 14th Century. Built by the ambitious, influential and well-travelled Boyd family, the Lords of Kilmarnock, the buildings and estate continued to be lived in and developed until the mid-1700's, when a large fire devastated the site. The Boyd family moved on shortly after and the site passed through the ownership of several important and influential people, until it was inherited by the 8th Lord Howard de Walden. From about 1905, De Walden set about re-building areas of the Castle that had fallen into disrepair. He used the Castle to display his collections of Arms and Armour, and early Musical Instruments. In 1974, the 9th Lord Howard De Walden gifted the Castle, estate and collections to the people of Kilmarnock under the stewardship of Kilmarnock and Loudoun District Council, now East Ayrshire Council. The venue has operated as a visitor attraction ever since, and is managed by East Ayrshire Leisure Trust.

The Dean Castle site comprises a number of historic buildings set around a central courtyard. These are:

The Keep

Completed around 1350, the Keep is the oldest permanent structure on the site. It was the original home and stronghold of the Boyd family, Lords of Kilmarnock. As well as being a domestic residence, the work of the Lords was done here. It contains a Great Hall, private chambers, Minstrel's Gallery, a dungeon, a guardhouse, and kitchens.

The Palace (or Place)

This building was finished around 1460 and was designed to accommodate the expanding role that the Boyd Family held in society and within political circles. The Palace comprises a large banqueting hall, private chambers, kitchens, and windows. The presence of many windows larger than those of the Keep indicate a move toward a less defensive, more diplomatic society and a method of displaying the family's wealth and power.

The Gatehouse

Built in the 1930's by Lord Howard de Walden, the style and materials used are in keeping with the rest of the buildings. Originally a janitor's house, this building now serves as office and storage space.

The Courtyard

Enclosed courtyard, with a curtain wall topped with walkways.

Conservation Unit

This is a collections conservation lab. It is situated in old laundry buildings that are positioned outside the main courtyard and historic buildings.

A New Lease of Life

Dean Castle is home to collections of objects that are of international significance. From the exquisite craftsmanship and rarity of the musical instrument collection to the Viking sword that fires the imagination, the Dean Castle collections - as well as the buildings themselves - represent over 150 years of collecting and over 1,000 years of the history of Ayrshire, its people, and beyond.

During the past few years the Keep has experienced varying degrees of water ingress, resulting in the frequent closure of the building and reduced access to the site for our visitors. Until recently this issue was manageable, however the problem has got steadily worse, with the water penetration reaching a saturated level, unable to completely dry out and resulting in mould and mortar sections flaking from the walls. With the safety of our visitors and collections at risk, the Keep was closed two years ago and the collections moved out of the building.

East Ayrshire Council commissioned a full and comprehensive stonework and lime mortar survey across all the buildings to determine the cause of the problem and to find a solution.

With funding approved from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Environment Scotland, East Ayrshire Council and East Ayrshire Leisure are now in a position to restore the Keep building as well as other buildings on-site, improve access and review the displays of the collection, exhibition programme and related activities.



The Project – Part I

Now that funding has been secured and plans approved, the main part of the Dean Castle Redevelopment and Refurbishment project will begin in January 2018.

The project can be divided into three main parts:

The Buildings: This will involve the refurbishment of the Keep, Palace, Gatehouse, Courtyard and Laundry buildings. Existing cement mortar needs to be picked out from between the stonework of all the buildings and replaced with lime mortar – this will allow the walls to ‘breathe’ and let moisture out. Because lime mortar needs specific conditions in which to set properly this work could take up to 3 years, but will be phased – Keep first, then the Palace and then the rest. Other building works will take place at the same time such as heating, lighting, asbestos removal, windows and roof-works.



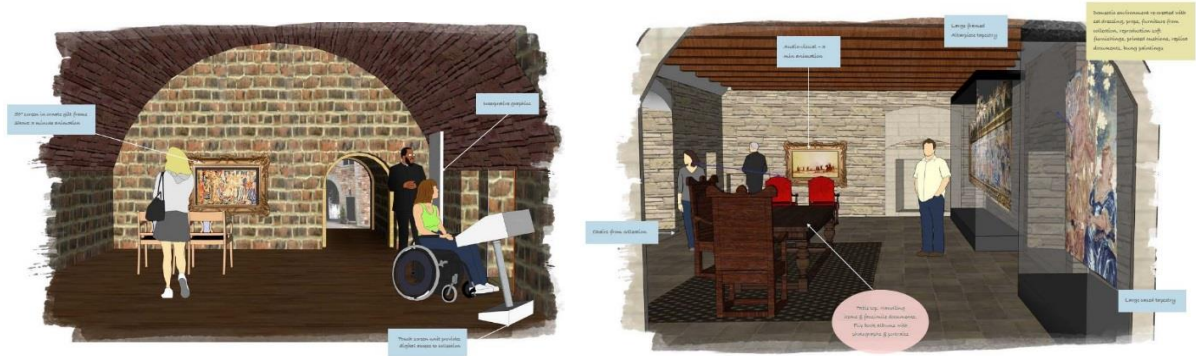
The Collections: Dean Castle is home to internationally important collections of Arms and Armour, Musical instruments and tapestries, brought to the Castle by the 8th Lord Howard de Walden. The Musical Instruments collection is also one of the collections in Scotland which is Recognised as a collection of National Significance. The Castle also houses archives of Robert Burns material and Boyd family papers, as well as a variety of textiles, photographs and other material. For the duration of the main works the most important collections will be removed to the Dick Institute, Kilmarnock to be displayed and conserved ready for their return to the Castle and their redisplay.



Exhibitions and Events: The interior of the Castle will also be redeveloped, with new display cases, new displays of the key collections, and a new programme of temporary exhibitions. Areas of the Castle which are currently not accessible to the public will be opened up, and the Courtyard will become a hub for activities and orientation. There will also be a series of workshops and events for groups and individuals to get more involved in learning about our stonework and our collections.

The Project – Part 2

The Keep – On the ground floor, a new raised floor will make the Cellar accessible to all visitors, and a specially-commissioned animated video will introduce the Castle. The rear of the Cellar will house a recreated medieval kitchen. The Great Hall above is the main display area for our impressive Arms and Armour collections. Visitors can then go upstairs to the Minstrel's Gallery, then to the Solar where they can find out about the history of the Boyd family, and then on to the battlements themselves, with superb panoramic views of the park and beyond. A camera-feed to the Cellar will allow those visitors not able to access the battlements the chance to see the views too.



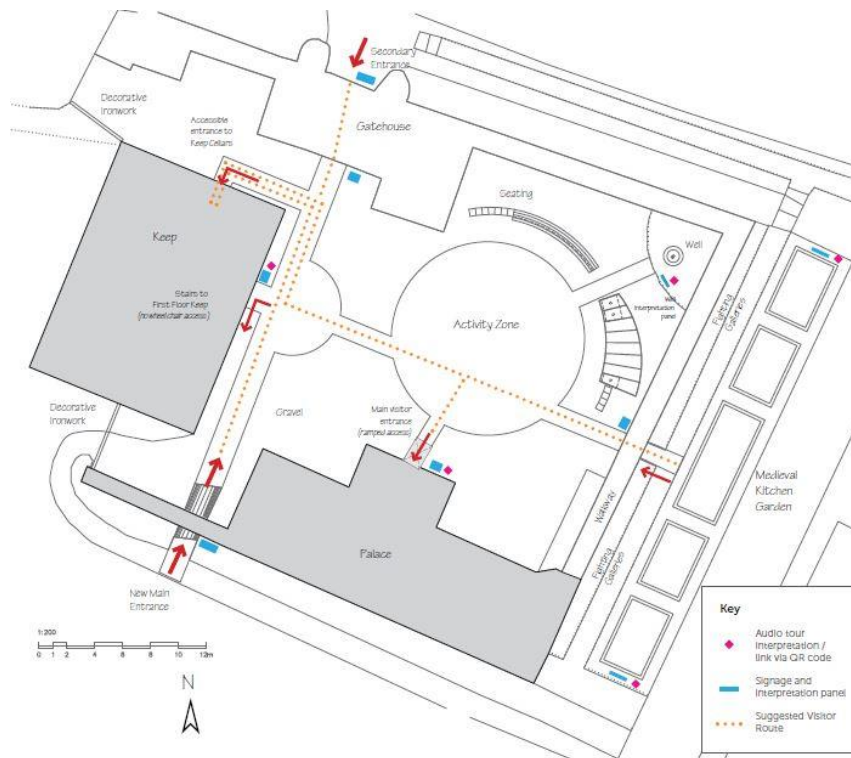
The Palace – The ground floor will house two new temporary exhibition areas, where we can show a wide-ranging, changing programme of objects from across our museum collections. The Banqueting Hall will become the home of the Musical Instrument collection, with new display cases and interactive interpretation. The Chamber will look at the history of the de Walden family.



The Project – Part 3

The Courtyard

A range of information points, seating and covered areas will allow visitors to spend time soaking up the history of the Castle, and even try on some armour. The whole area can be cleared for larger events. A brand-new public entrance is also being constructed to make it much easier for visitors to get to us and find their way about.



The Gatehouse

After refurbishment the Gatehouse will offer improved storage and office facilities for the Castle.

The Park

Don't forget the newly-redeveloped Country Park, including the Visitor Centre and Café, and the Rural Life Centre. We are also making improvements to the Car Park, driveway, lighting and signage to make your visit easier and more enjoyable.

Our Heritage, Your Castle

During the process of the securing funding and developing plans East Ayrshire Leisure and East Ayrshire Council consulted with visitors, Kilmarnock & District Access Panel and Dean Castle Focus Group. These groups and individuals from local communities have been crucial in the project development through asking questions, expressing opinions and presenting ideas. Working with local communities to share information and receive public opinion on the management of our heritage assets is an important aspect of the work of East Ayrshire Leisure. As well as being a great asset to Kilmarnock, Dean Castle and the country park welcomes visitors from around the world, and has the potential to offer much more to its local visitors as well as those from further afield. There are a number of ways in which you can take part in the project, during the refurbishment and on completion of the building work and redisplay of the collections.

Voluntary positions:

Focus Group

A core of around 12 interested individuals who expressed an interest in working with us on developing the plans for this project. It was set up as a direct consequence of recent audience survey activities, which produced extremely useful visitor and marketing data. An estimated 6 Focus Group meetings will take place throughout the lifetime of the project.

Friends of the Museum group

Alongside the Focus Group we are also looking to start a Museums Friends group that can get more involved in our high profile work that we carry out across all our museums which include: Dick Institute, Dean Castle, Burns House Museum and Library and Baird Institute. We envisage that this group would meet four times each year and could support our work in a wide range of ways covering all aspects of our museums.

Castle Champions

10 places per year – individuals who will help us promote the castle and its activities within our local communities

Gallery Attendants

2-4 places per year – to assist visitors and invigilation

Audience Research & Marketing

2 places per year

Collections

Up to 2 places per year - assist with collection care activities

Other positions:

Work Experience

Up to 2 placements per year – for local schoolchildren

Textile Team

Join our highly successful and popular team to conserve objects, create replica and handling items, and more.

Kilmarnock and District Access Panel

An existing group, managed by East Ayrshire Council, and which is made up of around 12 members of our local communities who have a range of physical access needs, or are interested in accessibility issues. The panel works us to try and ensure that policies and strategies are inclusive, and that our built environment is as accessible as it can be. If something is accessible for someone with a disability then it will most likely be accessible for the majority of visitors/users.

Paid positions:

Internships

2 x 1 year positions. For recent graduates to be a core part of our Collection Care team, working across many aspects of the project

Stonework Apprenticeships

At least 2 x 4 year positions - with the main stonework contractor

How to Get Involved / Register Your Interest

Please email your name and contact details, plus a note of how you would like to be involved to info@eastayrshireleisure.com and we will contact you with more details