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AUCKLAND CASTLE

HOME OF THE PRINCE BISHOPS

Auckland Castle Reveals Plans for New Museum

A £17m project incorporating an exciting and dramatic new museum extension will see Auckland Castle undergo its most pivotal transformation in nearly 300 years.



Scottish Wing, Auckland Castle, artist's impression

The two-storey annexe at the medieval stronghold at Bishop Auckland, County Durham, will house a unique and internationally important museum charting the history of the British Isles through objects of faith and religion.

Building work will begin at the end of next year (2015) and be completed in time for a spring 2018 opening, helping to draw upwards of 130,000 visitors a year to the castle.

The development is part of £50m plans by the charitable Auckland Castle Trust to turn the former home of the Bishops of Durham into a major heritage and visitor attraction that could ultimately create 130 full-time or equivalent jobs. David Ronn, Auckland Castle's Chief Executive, has described the proposal as, "*ambitious and innovative*," and the "*most significant alteration to the castle for nearly three centuries*," that will importantly create "*multiple opportunities*" for the area.

He added: "*This is an ancient site and a building dating back 1,000 years. To incorporate any addition into such a setting is both architecturally and historically challenging, but we are creating something extremely special here at Auckland Castle.*"

"I am hugely excited by what we are doing here and by what the future holds. We have the chance to do something exceptional for the castle and for the town of Bishop Auckland, to create an extraordinarily beautiful building that blends the past with the future and which will house a world class exhibition of 5,000 Years of Faith, charting how our spiritual beliefs have shaped Britain's history and who we are today."

The new museum will be built on to the castle's existing 16th century Scotland Wing – so-called because that is where Scottish prisoners of war were once housed – and will offer around 450 sq metres of permanent exhibition space. At the same time the Scotland Wing will be renovated along with the remainder of the castle and its state rooms.

The Auckland Castle Trust is putting £7m into the ambitious project and is working towards a submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the remaining £10m. The HLF has already awarded the project their initial support,* including a development grant of £1m. David Ronn described that support as a "*massive statement of its commitment to the scheme*." This is being spent on researching the site, surveying the buildings, carrying out archaeological investigations, designs and working with the community and stakeholders as the first step to securing the other £9m.

For more information and images, please contact rosie.marsh@flint-pr.com or call 020 3463 2081

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Auckland Castle, (Sean Elliott Photography)

Specialist conservation architect, Purcell – which has an office in Newcastle - and Niall McLaughlin Architects have been appointed to work together on the development. Planning permission has yet to be sought from Durham County Council, but both the Auckland Castle Trust and the architects have been working closely with the local authority, English Heritage, the HLF and Bishop Auckland Civic Society on the blueprints.

The proposed new extension will have the feel of a medieval tithe barn from the outside with a long, steep roof and low eaves, and will be similar in scale to the existing Scotland Wing. Inside, the building will be naturally divided into bays, emulating its ancient foundations.

The roof will be supported by a lattice of small, intricate beams, creating a breath-taking effect. Glass insets in the roof will allow light to filter in.

Robert McManners, Chairman of Bishop Auckland Civic Society, described the extension as an “*excellent design. It is not too flamboyant, the exterior sits with what is already there but at the same time it has a modern interior that works with today’s cultural thinking. It is a fitting piece of architecture.*”

Mr Ronn added: “*Tithe barns were originally designed to be communal buildings, where crops produced by different growers were stored under one roof in the village, and people would congregate as a result. This building will also have a sense of community, a different purpose but for the benefit of the people of Bishop Auckland.*”

The exhibition will concentrate on the religious convictions of the many peoples who have inhabited the British Isles over the last five millennia and cover everything from Paganism to Roman beliefs, the rise of Christianity and on to today’s multi-cultural, multi-faith society.

Running in both the new extension and the Scotland Wing, the display at what is regarded as one of the most important ecclesiastical complexes in Europe, will be broadly chronological, object rich, showcase items rarely seen outside London, and make the most of modern technology to appeal to families and academics alike. It will run alongside the site’s permanent galleries, telling the story of the Prince Bishops and the ‘palace’ they called home for 900 years until it was bought in 2012 by the philanthropist Jonathan Ruffer and handed over to the Auckland Castle Trust. Mr Ruffer’s aim is for the developments at the castle to help regenerate the town of Bishop Auckland following the closure of the coal mines and subsequent industrial decline.



David Ronn, Chief Executive of Auckland Castle

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Notes to Editors

Auckland Castle is open to the public 10.30am-4pm every day except Tuesday. Admission is £8 for adults, with children under 16 going free. Anyone who would like to take part in the castle's ongoing consultation process will receive a £4 admission refund.

For more information on Auckland Castle and the Auckland Castle Trust please visit www.aucklandcastle.org

Auckland Castle and the Auckland Castle Trust's Vision

Auckland Castle was the palace home to the Bishops of Durham for more than 800 years.

At one time the Bishop of Durham was the second most powerful man in the country after the monarch having been granted the right to raise taxes, mint coins and hold his own parliament in return for acting as a political and military leader in the North. The castle – which also includes gardens and a medieval park - is now home to many important works of art, including The Zurbaran paintings depicting Jacob and his 12 sons.

Following the castle's acquisition by financier and philanthropist Jonathan Ruffer, The Auckland Castle Trust has been established to transform the bishop's palace from an unknown and almost unvisited private dwelling into a vibrant heritage attraction. A £50 million project, it has secured backing from among others the Heritage Lottery Fund and several leading charitable organisations and now needs a final £12m to make the Trust's vision a reality.

The project will:

- Restore the castle and bring it to life, providing an inspiring experience for 150,000 visitors a year
- Drive economic and social regeneration in Bishop Auckland, attracting £3m per year into the area within five years and forming a range of opportunities for local people
- Lift people's spirits, aspirations and self-belief

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

- *HLF initial support, or a first-round pass, means the project meets HLF criteria for funding and HLF believes the project has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.
- On occasion, an applicant with a first-round pass will also be awarded development funding towards the development of their scheme.
- Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) aims to make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities across the UK and help build a resilient heritage economy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported over 365,000 projects with more than £65.5bn across the UK. www.hlf.org.uk.

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