

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Capital Programme
DATE	22 September 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Provost Skene's House progress report
REPORT NUMBER	RES/21/203
DIRECTOR	Steven Whyte
CHIEF OFFICER	John Wilson
REPORT AUTHOR	Colin Doig
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the progress of works to refurbish Provost Skene's House following the last update report of 24 March 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the progress achieved in the delivery of Provost Skene's House refurbishment and that the internal fit-out works are now nearing completion.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Council approved the budget of £3.8 million on the upgrade/ refurbishment of Provost Skene's House which is inclusive of design and construction (including fit-out). The works include repairs to the building fabric to ensure it is wind and watertight, repair/replace roofs as necessary, carry out structural repairs, and install new mechanical and electrical systems for the proposed fit-out of the 'Hall for Heroes'. The new displays will be a new attraction highlighting the life and achievements of inspirational people from Aberdeen and North East Scotland. It will offer ways to explore the rich history, international connections and amazing ingenuity of the city and region.
- 3.2 Listed Building Consent was granted on 24 December 2018
- 3.3 Building Warrant was granted on 10 September 2018

Current Status

- 3.4 Works commenced on the 22 July 2019 for the building works to be undertaken and provide the historic and iconic building with a necessary refurbishment. The works were progressing extremely well until works had to be halted in late March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and were not restarted until the end of June 2020. Delays have been compounded by some sub-contractors remaining staff on furlough causing further delays.

3.5 Due to the necessity for additional cleansing and social distancing caused by the COVID-19 pandemic the site is currently running at reduced productivity but despite these challenges the Council's Building Services had completed the majority of the building works by the end of May 2021. Refer to Appendix 1 to see some of the detailed work which has been carried out.

3.6 All work carried out externally/internally has been done in accordance with the Listed Building Consent (LBC) applicable to the building and with close co-operation with the planning department.

The external specialist contractors were selected for the works following completion of a tendering process. The masonry and roof works selected contractors were done so after consultation and approval of the Senior Planner (Conservation).

3.7 Scaffolding has been removed in its entirety. There were a small number of investigations to be carried out post removal of the scaffold to enable close out of external drainage, landscaping and data connectivity. The resulting works are now progressing towards completion.

3.8 Since the last report there has been interest in the finished appearance of the building, specifically directed at the stonework and mortar repointing.

3.9 Externally, Provost Skene's does look a little different today, but that's primarily because damaging cement-based mortar has been removed and the existing stonework has been repointed with a lime based mortar in the traditional manner.

3.10 Cement based mortars are not good for masonry buildings as they trap moisture within the walls and cause damage to stonework. At Provost Skene's House the cement pointing used in the past was also causing the bedding mortar and even some of the sandstone to fail. Traditional lime mortars are breathable, to not cause damage to stonework.

3.11 The work to the external walls not only involved the removal of the cement mortar but consolidated the stonework behind with traditional stone pinnings and lime mortar. The difference internally is striking: what was a cold and damp building feels like a much healthier and warmer environment today; ideal to protect the important timber panelling within the building. The humidity of the building has been monitored daily and is showing an improvement in readings from those previously recorded.

3.12 Prior to the application of the hot lime mortar mix a sample panel was prepared on the proposed finish. Agreement was reached on the mortar finish and mix to be used by the Planning Officer (PO), Conservation Architect (CA), Lead Architect (LA), Client Architect (CA), management of M&L and Principal Contractor (PC).

- 3.13 The lime mortar mix was carefully specified to match the original mortars used in the building, even down to hot mixing on site in the traditional manner. Moreover, the work was carried out by experienced masons.
- 3.14 A local north east specialist contractor was appointed with experience in working on historical buildings using traditional skills by highly competent stonemasons and operatives to carry out this work.
- 3.15 The appointed company is deeply committed to training for apprentices. This ensures that the investment made by ACC in this project will help not only Provost Skene's House survive into the future, but also to keep alive the traditional masonry skills needed to protect the stone heritage of the wider city.
- 3.16 It should also be noted that there were also technical problems with the east face of the building, facing towards Marischal College. In the 1950's during restoration, part of the external finished face was removed from the building (approximately middle third of the elevation) and partially rebuilt using ordinary Portland (OPC) cement. Once the above specified repair works were complete this left the third of the gable clearly having a different look to the rest of the building.
- 3.17 Having the internal and external main building works virtually complete the internal 'Hall for Heroes' fit-out commenced on 15 February 2021, and depending on COVID-19 restrictions related to working in restricted space for physical distancing, it was expected that these works would be complete by late spring/early summer 2021, however, delays caused by the covid pandemic have delayed some of the exhibits and mountings, this is now expected to be complete by September 2021.
- 3.18 Early communication has commenced with the City Growth team with regard to potential opening dates, but this will be subject to COVID-19 operating restrictions and availability of exhibits.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

Budget	Spend to date
£3.8m	£3.66M

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

- 6.1 Financial risks, project overspend: additional unforeseen issues.

- 6.2 Legal risk, statutory requirement to maintain grade A listed building. Carry out works as necessary.
- 6.3 There is still the risk of programme over-run from supply and work constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	Credibility of delivery within the city centre setting, disruption to Marischal Square development and any impact on supplier contractors for fit out.	L	Extensive procurement work undertaken to select proven and financially stable contractor. Discussions and agreements with CBRE on access/egress, site area.
Compliance	Health and Safety breaches during construction	L	Strong contractual obligations to use best Health and Safety practice. Follow Government guidelines in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic
Operational	Delay in Construction Programme	L	Consequences of delay managed through contract conditions. Effective communication between contract to manage consequences should they arise
Financial	Project costs increase as a result of Contractor Claims	H	Contract conditions define claims management processes
Reputational	Overrun of project, disruption to stake holders	L	Manage communications effectively with reasons.
Environment / Climate	Noise/dust during the construction phase	L	Keep use of power tools to a minimum/use suitable dust suppression systems as necessary

7. OUTCOMES

COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	We will increase city centre footfall through delivery of the City Centre Masterplan, Complete the refurbished Provost Skene's House

Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 1 – 10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors by 2026.</p> <p>Greater than 90% employed on the project will be paid the Living Wage as a minimum.</p> <p>The refurbishment of Provost Skene’s House shall provide another City Centre visitor attraction which shall increase footfall of the City Centre thereby supporting the local economy.</p>
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>2.1 Child Friendly City which supports all children to prosper and engage actively with their communities by 2026.</p> <p>The Council is committed to improving the key life outcomes of all people in Aberdeen City. The re-opening of Provost Skene’s House shall provide Aberdeen with another important, historical and educational facility.</p>
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	<p>The Council is committed to ensuring Aberdeen is a welcoming place to invest, live and visit. The re-opening of Provost Skene’s House contributes to this objective.</p>
Regional and City Strategies	<p>The delivery of the refurbished Provost Skene’s house aligns with the City Centre Masterplan and delivery programme by creating a cleaner, greener, better-connected, more vibrant and dynamic city centre, one that conserves heritage while embracing the new.</p>
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	<p>Compliance with all current construction legislation and policy related to the construction industry.</p>

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	An Impact Assessment screening has been carried out and an IIA is not required.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Data Protection Impact assessment screening has been undertaken and a DPIA is not necessary.

Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty	The refurbishment of Provost Skene's House shall increase the viability of Aberdeen as a vibrant, prosperous place to live, work, visit and invest.
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 Council 20 September 2016: Finance, policy and resource committee: report ECS/16/058.

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Building Works.

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Appendix 1: Building Detail Works.



Reception and shop area



The "Hall for hero's" under development (Earlier photograph)



Handmade lead rainwater hopper



The "Painted Gallery" following restoration



Completed refurbishment of the roof / chimneys



Leadwork detail of roof