



Supporting Statement: Temporary Retention of Tapestry Studio for 4 Years to Enable Scoping and Development of Accessible Learning Hub Proposals

Context

Learning. Stirling Castle is Historic Environment Scotland’s flagship site for learning, providing social benefit and contributing towards corporate aims around learning. This offer focusses on the Nether Bailey and Douglas Garden, with over 25,000 learning visitors in 2019/20.

Accessibility Issues. As a historic defensive building, there are accessibility challenges in accessing the castle. This is demonstrated by a local Additional Support Needs school highlighting accessibility as a key factor preventing them from organising or attending any visits or activities.

Renaissance Project. In order to strengthen the learning offer in an inclusive way, we are in the process of commissioning creative consultation and co-design projects with local stakeholders to understand the needs of diverse groups of learners. We plan to apply this understanding to develop proposals that both expand and improve the quality of the learning facilities offered by Stirling Castle.

Tapestry Studio – Current Situation. The Tapestry Studio was built in 2003 for tapestry weaving for the Weaving the Unicorn project under a temporary Property In Care Clearance. Scheduled Monument Clearance was granted in 2014 to extend that consent for 10 years allowing for an exhibition, and this is due to expire in November 2024.

Submission

Rationale for Temporary Retention A temporary SMC of four years would allow the Tapestry Studio to be included within Renaissance Project feasibility studies. We plan to explore options of removal, retention, and adaptation. Benefits we anticipate it might realise are shown in this diagram, and expanded on in the next page:

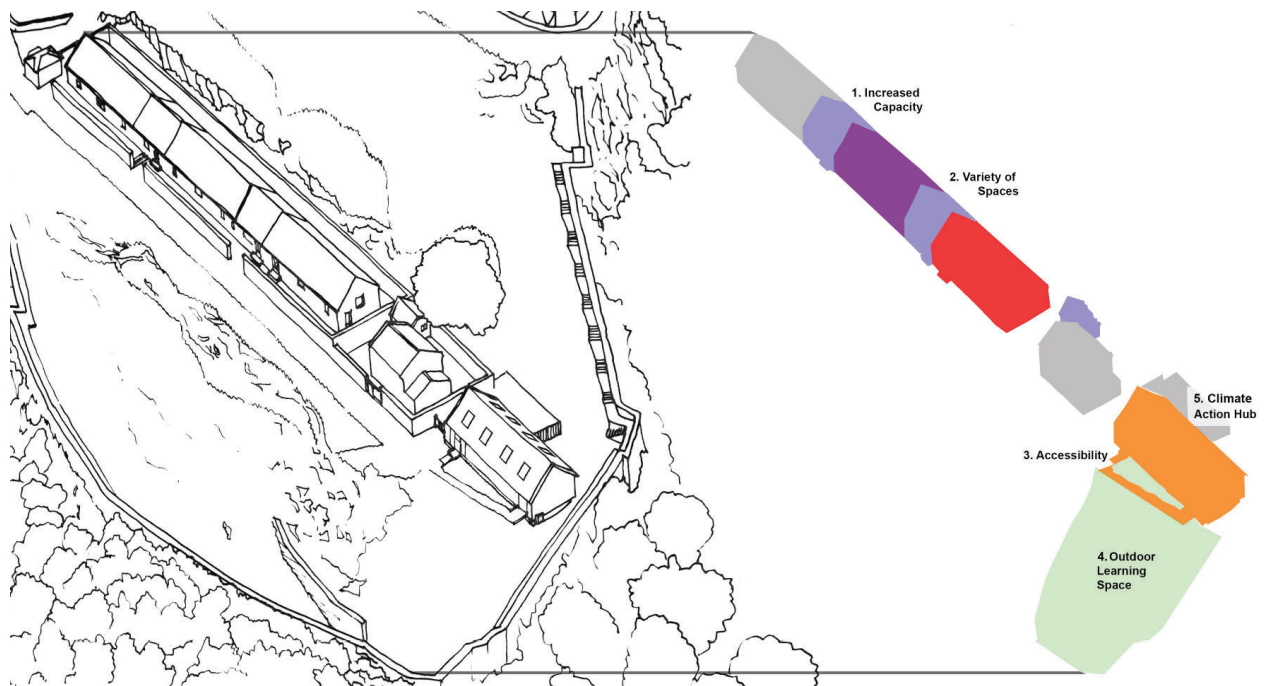


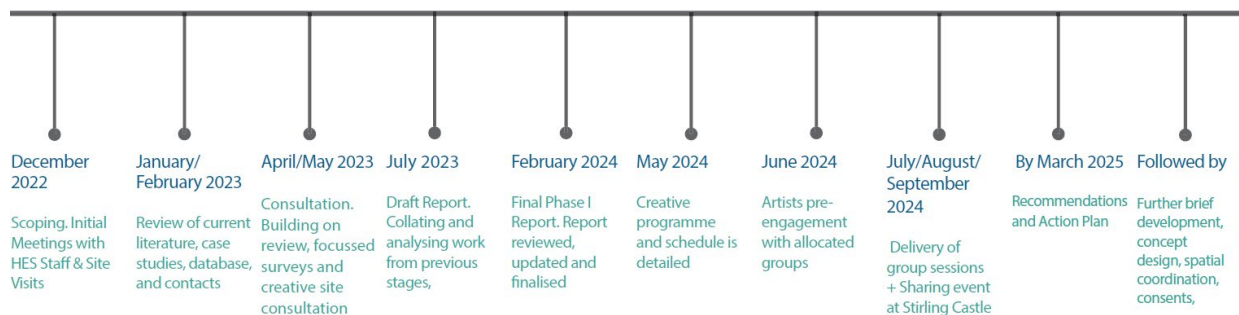
Diagram Showing Possible Drivers for Retention of Tapestry Studio



1. Additional capacity to increase the on-site learning offer through improved accessibility. As shown in grey in the diagram above, some buildings have other functions and so are out of project scope. The Tapestry Studio therefore offers the only potential in the Nether Bailey for additional space.
2. Variety of spaces to benefit diverse learners. The Renaissance Project seeks to understand a diverse range of accessibility and learning needs, from physical disabilities to neurodiversity. It may be that some needs might be better met by the Tapestry Studio than other buildings.
3. Physical Accessibility. The Tapestry Studio benefits from having been built with ramped access, whereas the other buildings currently just have stepped access.
4. Outdoor Space. The Tapestry Studio is the building best connected to green space in front, which offers opportunities for outdoor learning.
5. Climate Action Hub. The lesser significance of the Tapestry Studio, and the space created behind it, present opportunities for climate action such as supporting decarbonisation of the rest of the Nether Bailey.
6. The space could also offer multi-functional use which will benefit staff and visitors to the castle through, for example, providing extra capacity for public event days, additional space for display and interpretation, hosting creative residencies and skills demonstrations and staff training.

Next Steps & Timescales

The process below sets out the studies being done to understand a diverse range of learner needs, which will inform proposals. In addition to meeting with HES staff, site visits, literature reviews, and consultation with user groups, the next step is to undertake co-design exercises. Co-design is a best practice participatory approach, and will disproportionately benefit diverse learners who are not well catered to in standard educational offerings.



For the period of this consent and until an application is made for a permanent SMC, it is proposed that the Tapestry Studio remains in its current use, as an exhibition space.

Following the conclusion of the consultation and studies, we will develop a technical brief, concept, spatial and technical design. This will be done in close discussion with Heritage, following which we will submit for a new permanent SMC. The temporary consent would allow for this process to be undertaken in line with best practice, and maximise opportunities for the best project outcomes.