

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL11 September 2024Report by Director of EnvironmentCAPELRIG HOUSE – PROJECT UPDATE**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to update Council on the works taking place at Capelrig House, and outline the options being further explored to utilise the building following completion of improvements and renovations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that Council:
- a) Notes the improvement and renovation work that has taken place at Capelrig House; and
 - b) Notes the ongoing process to determine a future use for Capelrig House.

BACKGROUND

3. The Capelrig House improvements were previously reported to Council on [26 April 2023](#), and [25 February 2021](#).

4. Capelrig House is an 18th century Category A listed property, situated adjacent to Eastwood High School. It is the only Council owned Category A listed building / structure within East Renfrewshire. It has been vacant for a period of over 10 years, despite attempts to market the building.

5. The April 2023 paper outlined that Council funding of £1.2m was to be utilised for works to improve the fabric of the building. These works were committed to protect a historically important building within East Renfrewshire; acting as an investment in continuing the heritage and legacy of Capelrig House. By protecting the fabric of the building, it will provide an opportunity to use Capelrig House for another purpose – with officers across the Environment and Education Departments currently working on future options.

REPORT**Renovations and Improvements**

6. With Capelrig House being a Category A listed building, it is identified as representing one of the best examples of the built heritage; defined as a building of special architectural or historical interest. Listed buildings are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. Historic Environment Scotland manage the categorisation of listed buildings / structures on behalf of Scottish Ministers. As a Category A listed building, Capelrig House is considered as a building of national or international importance, either architecturally or historically; is largely unaltered; and is an outstanding example of a particular period, style or building type.

7. As a Category A listed building, any proposed alterations to Capelrig House have to be carefully considered and be both appropriate and sympathetic to the character of the building. Listed Building Consent is required to carry out any works; with the intention of ensuring that work is implemented in a sensitive manner. This will typically mean that any works on Capelrig House will require specialist materials and techniques; normally requiring to mirror original materials or methods. The aim of these protections are to guard against unsympathetic alterations, while preventing unnecessary loss or damage to historic fabric.

8. Initial surveys had identified that areas of Capelrig House were at risk of serious deterioration, had the improvement works not been carried out, rendering the building not fit for use. As the owner of a Category A building, the Council's responsibilities extend to repair and maintenance to preserve the historical / architectural importance of Capelrig, avoiding it falling into a state of disrepair.

9. The repair / renovation work carried out has been associated with roofing, external fabric, stone repairs and window repairs / replacement. The works required were identified as a result of the detailed inspection and survey. The aim of the work has been to protect the building's original state, ensuring that it is wind and watertight. Works have been carried out with the aim of conserving the original fabric as much as possible – ensuring that repairs are necessary and consistent with protecting the building.

10. Following a successful tendering exercise, Clark Contracts were awarded the contract to carry out the required renovations to Capelrig House. The project commenced on site on 10 October 2023. The project to carry out the essential repairs and refurbishment is due to be completed by the early October 2024. Works have been progressing on site, albeit the contractor has been impacted by adverse weather, as well as raw material sourcing issues and sub-contractor delays. This renovation work will come within the previously agreed budget.

Future Use Options

11. A number of options are being explored for the future use of Capelrig House. Advanced discussions had taken place with Children First over a number of years on a tenancy of Capelrig and the development of a 'Bairns Hoose' facility. However, Children First informed the Council that they were no longer able to commit to that proposal and so alternative options are now being considered by the Education Department (as the House is located within the school estate) and the Environment Department. As part of this, there is consideration on what spaces may be utilised and the implications on layouts when respective fire regulations and disability access issues are taken into account.

12. On 5 August, council officers from the Education and Environment Departments conducted a site visit. The purpose of this was to review progress of the ongoing works; but also to consider the internal space and potential uses for this.

13. While discussions on how the space(s) at Capelrig House may be utilised are ongoing, the following options are part of considerations of how to utilise the space:

- Provision of flexible learning spaces to be accessed by Eastwood High School to alleviate potential capacity pressures over the next few years;
- Social enterprise café or Council run café - with the aim of potentially supporting young people who are most at risk of not entering positive post school destinations, with in demand industry catering skills, allowing them to progress into employment; it could also increase catering options for students;
- Offering of flexible meeting spaces which can be utilised by other Council departments for meetings and seminars, as well as other organisations and third sector groups. This offers potential for enhanced community use at times, complementing existing facilities for the community.

- Offering of storage space to local volunteer groups.

14. The possible use of the building as proposed above, along with the use of the school's sports and swimming facilities at evenings and weekends, allows for considerable footfall for any catering facility provided.

15. The above list is not exhaustive, any future use of Capelrig House will consider how to best utilise the internal layout of the building, maximise the community benefit that the building could generate and potential for external funding to support costs.

16. With any new use for Capelrig House being explored, there will be costs associated with the extensive work required to the internals of the building. This will be a key factor of the options that are being considered.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

17. The Council has previously agreed general fund capital funding of £1.2m to carry out essential repairs and external refurbishment work to the Grade A listed Capelrig House.

18. Regardless of the future use of the building, there will be a requirement for extensive internal works to ensure that it is suitable for the intended purpose. Within the considerations for future use, external funding opportunities and Developer Contributions associated with relevant uses will be explored to help meet the fit-out costs.

19. As a result of Children First's withdrawal from using Capelrig House, the entirety of the building's maintenance and running costs will fall to East Renfrewshire Council. There would be ongoing budgetary implications for these upon any Department / Service utilising the space.

CONSULTATION

20. Consultation on the use of Capelrig House has included the Environment Department, the Education Department and the Health & Social Care Partnership. There has also been discussion with the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust on options on the future use of Capelrig House.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

21. The Environment and Education Departments have been working closely on potential options for the future use of Capelrig House.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

22. There are currently no staffing, property, legal, IT, Subsidy Control, equalities, sustainability or climate change implications associated with this report.

23. There will be costs incumbent upon the Council, for the internal fit-out, if the building is to be used for a Council function. The costs and access to grant funding for fit-out of the building will vary significantly depending on its use. As part of the considerations for future use, opportunities for funding for these costs will be explored.

CONCLUSION

24. Following the completion of restoration works at Capelrig House, there is a significant opportunity to use the building for a new purpose. Restoration works have been undertaken to maintain the fabric of the building in a manner that is sympathetic to its historical importance as a Category A listed property. These restorative works were identified through surveying as essential to protecting Capelrig House.

25. Council Officers across Departments will explore all opportunities for Capelrig House to be utilised. This will also include examining possibilities for funding that can assist with the internal re-fit of the building to make it suitable for modern use.

RECOMMENDATIONS

26. It is recommended that Council:

- a) Notes the improvement and renovation work that has taken place at Capelrig House; and
- b) Notes the ongoing process to determine a future use for Capelrig House.

Director of Environment

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