

Diageo lodges plans for Frasers building

Diageo has big plans for the building at the end of Princes Street that you will know as Frasers or Binns depending on your maturity. And one of those is to restore the famous Binns clock on the corner which was always such a popular place to meet.

With the promise of 160 to 180 new jobs and an expectation of around £135 million tourism spend as a result of the new attraction, this is a big development in the city centre where shops are failing.

The whisky company and the building's owner Parabola have set out some very fancy plans indeed for the seven storeys which they will turn into a £150 million global visitor experience. It is all about the experience in much the same way as The Guinness Storehouse has become a major visitor attraction in Dublin.

The plans include:

- A multi-sensory, immersive visitor experience across three floors, guiding people through the 200 year history of the brand, the art and science of whisky-making, and taking them on a journey through the flavours of Scotland.
- A flexible events space for staging music, theatre, arts and community events, making the venue part of the thriving cultural life of the city.
- A bar academy that will be a home for Diageo's award-

winning Learning for Life programme, which creates training and employment opportunities in the hospitality industry for unemployed people, and works to improve hospitality standards and promotes the responsible serving and consumption of alcohol.

- Roof-top bars with stunning views of Edinburgh Castle and across the city skyline to east, west and north, with the intention of making it one of the world's most extraordinary iconic hospitality destinations.
- At street level the plans include a significant retail space, bringing a contemporary shopping experience and interior design inspired by the Johnnie Walker retail flagship store in Madrid, which opened in November.

On the day that The Scottish Government has announced a growth of 7.8% in exports of Scotch whisky, there could hardly be a better time to be in the trade. Diageo have many years of experience in producing whisky at their distilleries all over Scotland and four of those will be linked directly to the planned Johnnie Walker venue. This will create a tour unlike any other with whisky representing the four corners of the country with our own local at Glenkinchie , Cardhu, Caol Ila and Clynelish all represented.

It is hoped that visitors to the attraction will be encouraged to travel elsewhere to far flung places in Scotland once they have seen what the whisky industry involves.



The Mac Twins with Johnnie Walker Statues on The Mound just before Edinburgh's Hogmanay. Johnnie Walker was one of the major sponsors of the event. Photo John Preece

David Cutter, Chairman of Diageo in Scotland, said: "We are incredibly excited to be able to submit our plans for the Johnnie Walker visitor experience in Edinburgh.

"The location is one of Edinburgh's most exceptional landmark buildings and we plan to restore it to its former glory as a cornerstone of the city and a thriving part of its cultural and social life.

"We have the most passionate and skilled whisky-makers in the world here in Scotland and we want to celebrate their craft and everything that is great about Scotland and whisky."

Cristina Diezhandino, Diageo Global Scotch Whisky Director, said: "Johnnie Walker is the leading international whisky brand, with truly global reach and we believe our plans will create a flagship attraction that will bring people to Scotland from the four corners of the world.

"Our ambition is to create a visitor experience that will rank

not only as one of the greatest whisky attractions of the world, but one of the greatest brand attractions in any industry, putting Scotland at the forefront of the global boom in experiential travel.”

Tony Hordon, Managing Director of Parabola, said: “At Parabola we feel like the custodians of a beautiful piece of Edinburgh real estate and we have taken great care to consider its future. 146 Princes Street represents an opportunity to deliver our core values: place, quality and destination.

“With Diageo and their vision, we believe we have a use which will not only protect the building for many years to come, but it also celebrates the building, its history, and its heritage. We are particularly excited to be working with the Diageo team given our shared values and our sheer ambition to celebrate one of Edinburgh’s great buildings.”

As well as the Edinburgh location Diageo is investing in the transformation of its other 12 distilleries and is spending £35 million in Port Ellen and Brora to reopen the distilleries there.