

Green light for Grand Theft Auto designer's Portobello home

Millionaire games developer Leslie Benzies has been granted approval to convert the former Dalriada Hotel in Portobello into a single home.

Benzies, who made his fortune as a creator on the Grand Theft Auto series, purchased the popular beachside watering hole in September for £1.3 million after it was placed on the market by owners Terry and Alison Magill at offers over £950,000.

A number of prominent licenced trade operators were interested in acquiring the property but any lingering hopes that the Dalriada would remain as a pub ended on 18 March when the city council granted planning permission for a change of use.



The proposals, lodged by agent Jennifer Dinwoodie of Pendant Interiors on behalf of Mariah Ventures Ltd, is for a six bedroom home, with extensive living and dining areas and kitchens on the ground and first floors, two bathrooms, an ensuite shower room and ensuite bathroom, and an oval office on the top floor overlooking the beach.

Benzies made his reputation as the lead developer of the global gaming success story Grand Theft Auto series which is estimated to have sold one quarter of a billion copies and grossed more than \$6 billion. In 2005 he and Rockstar Games

president Sam Houser were awarded a BAFTA Special Award, followed in 2015 by a BAFTA Fellowship, which celebrates outstanding artistic achievements in movies, television and video games.

He departed Rockstar in 2016 and launched a legal case claiming he was due \$150 million in unpaid royalties which was settled in 2019. Last September, The Telegraph reported that Mr Benzies had raised £32 million from investors to develop his new science fiction game Everywhere, which is being created by his company Build a Rocket Boy, which employs 400 staff working on the project at studios in Leith and Budapest.

The Dalriada is a B-listed Rogue Baronial villa dating from 1869 and was designed by Edinburgh architect James Campbell Walker for William Griffiths Esq. Campbell's architectural career focussed mostly on schools, churches and poorhouses and his grander projects included Dunfermline Carnegie Library and Hawick Town Hall.