

Dalkeith Palace reopening its doors to the public

An historic palace is set to open its doors to the public for the first time in 300 years under plans to create a new museum and public library at the heart of Dalkeith Country Park.

Dalkeith Palace has been a residential teaching centre for the University of Wisconsin for the last three decades.

However the university left in January after Covid-19 impacted on international students travel and owners are now planning to open it up to the public.

The Buccleuch Living Heritage Trust said the freeing up of the palace building was a “unique opportunity”.

A spokesperson said: “Within Dalkeith community and Buccleuch there is a strong feeling that the palace should open its doors so that the important shared story of the palace, town and country can be appreciated.

“It also has the potential to be a vibrant hub for creative businesses, complementary to the historic and aesthetic character of the building.”

The palace has parts that date back to medieval times but the current building was built in 1702 under the guidance of the 1st Duchess of Buccleuch and daughter in law of Charles II, Anna Buccleuch.

The Category A Listed building has played its part in Scotland's history including serving as a base for Bonnie Prince Charlie to launch his Jacobite campaign.

In the 20th century it was used as a military base and research centre before the university moved in for nearly 30 years.

The Buccleuch Trust has invested heavily in Dalkeith Country Park, where the palace sits, in recent years creating the Fort Douglas adventure play park and Restoration Yard with new jobs and paths connecting the town centre to the park.

Now it wants to bring the palace back into public use.

Midlothian Council has granted permission for a change of use of the palace from a residential college to a public facility with plans for a museum, public library, art spaces, café and offices.

The trust said: "The change of use of the palace is designed to celebrate what the palace has stood for throughout its history – a forward looking celebration of creativity and creative thinking in art, architecture, philosophy, music, design, horticulture, innovation and invention."

There are no plans for any physical alterations to the listed building.

by Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter

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