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The covers come off the historic Abbey Strand buildings at the Palace of Holyroodhouse after a year of restoration work

The newly restored exterior of the Abbey Strand buildings in the Canongate at the end of the Royal Mile in Edinburgh will soon be unveiled to reveal a new pale-pink facade. The restoration work was undertaken as part of Future Programme, a major programme of investment by The Royal Collection Trust to improve the visitor experience at the Palace of Holyroodhouse. The colour of the buildings, which was produced using traditional methods, was chosen by The Duke of Rothesay (The Prince of Wales's title when in Scotland). His Royal Highness is known for his interest in heritage buildings and, as Chairman of The Royal Collection Trust, is closely involved with the project.

For the past year, the Abbey Strand buildings had been covered with a nine-metre-high scaffold wrap, behind which the specialist restoration work was carried out. The ground and first floors will house a new Learning Centre, opening in late 2019. The buildings' new pink lime-mortar coating is a rough-cast finish that has been used in Scottish construction for hundreds of years. The pink colour was produced using mineral pigment from the red sandstones of Dumfries, which yield a red-ochre tone.

Adjacent to the buildings, a new public garden is being created, inspired by some of the earliest recorded gardens at the Palace of Holyroodhouse. Within the garden, a flowering meadow of medicinal plants will evoke the monastic gardens of Holyrood Abbey. A formal arrangement of raised flowerbeds will be planted to reflect the design of the royal gardens, as documented in a 1647 map of Edinburgh by James Gordon of Rothiemay. In addition, a physic garden will reimagine the lost 17th-century garden originally established at the Palace of Holyroodhouse by Sir Robert Sibbald and Dr Andrew Balfour, two of the founding members of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh.

Over their 500-year history, the Abbey Strand buildings have served many purposes. In 1541 they were used as a weapon store for James V of Scotland during his campaign against the English and in the 18th century they were reputedly home to Lucky Spence, the brothel keeper immortalised by the Edinburgh poet Allan Ramsay in his ballad *Lucky Spence's Last Advice*.

Tim Knox, Director of the Royal Collection, said: 'The unveiling of the restored exterior of the Abbey Strand buildings is a significant stage in our Future Programme project. The next milestone will be the opening of the Learning Centre as a place for schoolchildren, adults and the local community to engage with the Royal Collection and the 900-year history of the Palace of Holyroodhouse.'

Ends

Notes to Editors

Royal Collection Trust, a department of the Royal Household, is responsible for the care of the Royal Collection and manages the public opening of the official residences of The Queen. Income generated from admissions and from associated commercial activities contributes directly to The Royal Collection Trust, a registered charity. The aims of The Trust are the care and conservation of the Royal Collection, and the promotion of access and enjoyment through exhibitions, publications, loans and educational programmes. Royal Collection Trust's work is undertaken without public funding of any kind.

The Royal Collection is among the largest and most important art collections in the world, and one of the last great European royal collections to remain intact. It comprises almost all aspects of the fine and decorative arts, and is spread among some 15 royal residences and former residences across the UK, most of which are regularly open to the public. The Royal Collection is held in trust by the Sovereign for her successors and the nation, and is not owned by The Queen as a private individual.

Future Programme is a series of projects that will transform the experience of visiting the Palace of Holyroodhouse and Windsor Castle, official residences of Her Majesty The Queen. Funded by The Royal Collection Trust, these projects will deliver significant improvements to the way visitors are welcomed on arrival, create new Learning Centres and visitor facilities, open up new spaces and renew displays of works of art from the Royal Collection.

www.rct.uk/about/future-programme

Admission to the Palace of Holyroodhouse is managed by The Royal Collection Trust, a registered charity in England and Wales (1016972) and in Scotland (SCO39772).