

Heir B&B! Charles creates luxury bed and breakfast at Granny's beloved Highland retreat

PRINCE Charles is creating a high-end guest house at his grandmother's treasured Highland hideaway.

The Prince is converting the stables and granary at the Castle of Mey into ten luxury guest rooms – enabling visitors to experience some of the calm and charm of the property where the Queen Mother once entertained high-society friends.

The Mail on Sunday understands that Charles is being given weekly briefings ahead of the scheduled opening next April and is overseeing every detail of the project, including hand-picking the fabrics for furnishings.

In keeping with the Prince's green credentials, the new accommodation – which has been dubbed Heir B&B – will have eco-heating, and the conversion will use local materials and craftsmen, including apprentices, where possible.

Reminders of the Queen Mother, who died in 2002, will be prominent, with her ER motif engraved into the skylight of the dining room and her portrait hung on the walls.

The most northerly inhabited castle on the British mainland charmed the Queen Mother while she was visiting friends in the Highlands mourning the death of her husband, King George VI, in 1952.

Later that year, she bought the semi-derelict property, its walled garden and 24 acres and threw herself into renovating and restoring it.

Prince Charles developed a similar bond with the Caithness castle during holidays as a child, and stays there for a week every summer.

Kenneth Dunsmuir, executive director of the Prince's Foundation, said: 'His Royal Highness is trying to keep the castle going in his grandmother's

By **Holly Bancroft**

memory, drive the place forward and giving it a great future. It was nearly a ruin before the Queen Mother saved it and I think she would have been so keen to see this project.'

As well as the stables and granary conversion, a new building will be erected to act as a reception, dining room and sitting room. 'The new build is lower than the existing granary because of the Prince's concern for the view line to remain the same,' Mr Dunsmuir explained.

'At the moment we are planning the rooms, the colours, the fabrics, the lighting style and the furniture, and we get his final decision on everything. He loves the finer point of detail and that's what he thinks really makes it special.'

The castle is run by a charitable trust and money for the new development has been provided by private donors. It is hoped that income from the B&B will supplement funds from visitors to the castle, which are expected to number 29,000 this year.

Rooms will cost around £160 a night and guests will be offered dinner and breakfast made with local ingredients. If the project is successful, there are plans to use the castle and its granary as a wedding venue.

The Queen Mother's love for the castle was recorded by Godfrey Talbot, the official Royal court correspondent in 1978. He wrote: 'Even when she is in London she keeps regularly in touch with the factor of Mey about the progress of the sheep she has; the health of her herd of Aberdeen Angus cattle; and the sale of the flowers and fruit from the fine old walled garden.'



SCOTTISH HIDEAWAY: The Queen Mother in the Castle of Mey gardens in 1986

Sharia court cleric is quizzed over child rape

A MUSLIM cleric who runs Britain's largest network of sharia courts has been questioned over historic child rape allegations.

West Midlands Police are investigating claims that Sheikh Faiz-ul-Aqtab Siddiqi raped two Dutch women in the 1980s and 1990s.

He has denied the claims, which first appeared in the Dutch newspaper De Telegraaf, saying they are 'unfounded' and part of a campaign to discredit his family.

The cleric, 51, is the head of the Muslim Arbitration Tribunal, an Islamic legal service that operates a string of controversial sharia law courts across England which critics say discriminate against women.

The two women claim they were

By **Sanchez Manning**

sexually abused from the ages of 11 and 12 until they turned 16. They were sent to the UK by their parents to be educated by Sheikh Siddiqi's father, a respected Muslim scholar.

A West Midlands Police spokesman said: 'A 51-year-old man from Nuneaton has been voluntarily interviewed in relation to allegations of historical rape cases. Inquiries remain ongoing.'

Sheikh Siddiqi is also head of an Islamic college based at a stately manor in Warwickshire. He also owns a Devon holiday park where several Premiership footballers have cottages.

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