

Whisky store aims to cash in after bank left on the rocks

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AN award-winning Royal Mile bar is set to open a new "try before you buy" whisky store overlooking The Mound.

Gary Still, owner of Whiski, has applied to turn a section of a redundant Bank of Scotland branch and neighbouring Just Scottish gift store on North Bank Street into a "new concept in whisky retailing".

He said: "I'm going to split up the units in to three rooms.

"One room is going to be the whisky store selling all-Scottish produce and the idea is you select your whisky and take it through to the tasting room and sample it before you buy it.

"I'm also planning to open a small bar and bistro in store but it's going to be very low key as I want to keep it completely separate from Whiski on the Mile, which is extremely successful in its own right."

Whiski hit the headlines last summer when Oasis spent seven hours eating and drinking there before their Murrayfield gig, while the bar also served as the backdrop for an advert featuring South American supermodel Alessandra Ambrosio and Essex bricklayer turned serial celebrity philanderer Paul Sculfor shortly after it opened in 2007.

If Mr Still gets the go-ahead by council planners, he hopes to call his new place The Whiski Still and has drafted in Belford Road-based architects KBAD to design the layout.

KBAD is responsible for a string of trendy bars in the city including Orocco Pier's Antico bar in South Queensferry, Grand Cru on Hanover Street and the Voodoo Rooms on West Register Street.

He added: "It's in a fantastic location with great views of the city and it's offering something different from the usual tartan souvenir stores in the area so hopefully it will be successful."

Meanwhile, the owners of Porto & Fi deli in Newhaven have applied to turn the rest of the bank into a bistro under the name Cairn Cakes.

North Bank Street is the second former Bank of Scotland branch facing conversion to leisure in the Old Town.

Antonio Crolla, owner of Dario's on Lothian Road and Bar Napoli on Hanover Street, is also awaiting permission to turn the former Bank of Scotland on Chambers Street into a restaurant.

Bank of Scotland parent company Lloyds Banking Group has agreed to sell off 175 branches in Scotland in the coming years, as part of the state aid remedies agreed with the European Commission in the wake of the credit crunch.

The two branches awaiting a change of use in North Bank Street and Chambers Street have been merged into Bank of Scotland's new flagship branch on the Royal Mile.

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