

Report of the Director of Place
Corporate Briefing 6th January 2014
LISTED BUILDING AT RISK STRATEGY

Purpose:	To present the listed building at risk strategy
Policy Framework:	Policy Commitments Statement
Reason for Decision:	Swansea 2020 – Swansea’s Economic Regeneration Strategy To establish the listed building at risk strategy as the basis for action and ensure the full support of all Council departments in its delivery.
Consultation:	Legal, Finance, Access to Services
Recommendations that Cabinet:	
1) Approve the listed building at risk strategy	
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Access to Services Officer:	Kirsty Roderick

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 There are 515 buildings/ structures of special architectural or historic interest (collectively referred to as ‘listed buildings’) in the City and County of Swansea. These buildings and structures have been listed by Cadw at various times on behalf of the Welsh Government.
- 1.2 The vast majority of listed buildings are in beneficial use and are well maintained. However this is not the case in all instances because the owners of listed buildings are under no legal obligation to maintain their property in a good state of repair, even though it is in their interests to do so.
- 1.3 Listed buildings at risk are an issue across Wales. Typically listed buildings at risk have issues of vacancy, under-use, neglect and structural disrepair.

- 1.4 A total of 48 listed buildings are now known to be at risk in the City and County of Swansea (9.12%) as opposed to 40 buildings in 2008. This is contrary to the national situation which shows a slight reduction in the numbers of listed buildings at risk to 9% (2700 buildings) in recent years. The majority of these buildings at risk in the City and County of Swansea are industrial buildings, chapels and ancillary structures. This mirrors the national picture as identified by Cadw
- 1.5 Of the 48 listed buildings at risk, 23 are owned by the Council and the rest are privately owned. For the full details listed buildings currently considered to be at risk, please see the Listed Building at Risk Register at appendix 1.

2.0 Current situation

- 2.1 In the past year (2013) significant progress has been made in tackling a number of listed buildings at risk as set out below. The emerging draft of the strategy document which is finalised at appendix 2 has been in use by Officers during 2013 to co-ordinate and prioritise action.
- 2.2 A salary under spend in the Design and Conservation Team during 2012/13 was approved to fund condition and feasibility studies for some of the listed buildings at risk. This comprised:
 - External visual condition survey;
 - Costed outline schedule of immediately necessary 'Urgent Works' to make the building wind and weather tight and stop further deteriorating;
 - Exploration of potential sustainable end uses (including fit with potential granting funding opportunities); and
 - Costed outline schedule of works need to bring the building back into beneficial use.
- 2.3 The listed buildings and structures at risk that were the subject to these studies were:

Privately owned:

- Palace Theatre
- Danbert House
- Siloam Chapel
- Allt-y-Fanog

Council owned:

- Veranda House
- Scotts Pit
- Belvedere
- Roman Bridge
- Ivy Tower

- 2.4 These studies are not publically available because they contain commercially sensitive information. However to date, the feasibility studies for the Roman Bridge and Scotts Pit have been instrumental in helping to secure grant funding for essential restoration and repair work to these Council owned listed structures. Furthermore the feasibility

study for the Palace Theatre is underpinning the current discussions with the owner

Hafod / Morfa Copper works

- 2.5 The partnership between the Council and Swansea University has attracted significant funding for the early phases of this heritage regeneration scheme. To date, trails have been created and interpretation will be installed during 2014 and a key element of this work includes the stabilisation and consolidation of the grade II* listed Laboratory Building which was on the verge of collapse. During 2014 it is envisaged that the listed canal wall on this site will be repaired as a preliminary element of the Morfa Distributor Road project. Furthermore a longer term regeneration strategy for the entire site is being prepared by consultants.

Palace Theatre

- 2.6 Positive confidential discussions are ongoing with the owner of the Palace Theatre. This is underpinned by the condition and outline feasibility study which is outlined in paragraphs 2.2-2.4.

Albert Hall

- 2.7 Discussions are proceeding with the University of Wales Trinity St David (formerly Swansea Metropolitan University) regarding the Albert Hall on Craddock Street. The reuse of this listed building at risk has potential regeneration benefits for the immediate street and wider Kingsway area.

Danbert House

- 2.8 Confidential discussions are ongoing with regard to Danbert House in Morriston. These are being led by the Council's Empty Property Officer. The site was visited with Building Control in May 2013 to assess some high level issues and this resulted in the Fire Service dislodging part of the roof eaves that was considered to be dangerous.

Hendrefolian House

- 2.9 Discussions are also progressing with Swansea University regarding Hendrefolian House. This is one of the most significant listed building at risk by virtue of its grade II* status. The University has recently undertaken basic maintenance such as repairing the rainwater goods, clearing vegetation and roof repairs. This will slow the rate of decay, but the future use of the house is still uncertain.

Penllergaer Observatory

- 2.10 In May 2013, the Council owned Observatory building at Penllergaer was leased to the Penllergaer Trust along with a £25,000 "match funding". This will enable repairs to be undertaken and public access as part of the wider Penllergaer Valley Woods project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Scotts Pit

- 2.11 The consultancy project outlined in paragraphs 2.2-2.4 has provided a basis for a successful grant application for Landfill Tax funding (via an organisation known as WREN) to allow the Council owned grade II* listed engine house and associated scheduled remains at Scotts Pit in Birchgrove to be repaired. These funds (£31,300) are currently being accepted and the programme of works will then be drawn up.

Roman Bridge

- 2.12 The consultancy project outlined in paragraphs 2.2-2.4 has provided a basis for a successful grant application by the Clyne Valley Community Project for Landfill Tax funding (via an organisation known as Entrust) to allow the Council owned grade II listed bridge to be repaired and reopened. These funds (£42,000) are currently being accepted and the programme of works will then be drawn up.

Morfa Bridge

- 2.13 A feasibility study for this unique bridge is underway and is being led by the Bridges and Structures Team.

Loss of Bush Hotel and Libanus Chapel

- 2.14 Since January 2013 two privately owned listed buildings have been lost. These were non renewable heritage assets which provided character and a strong sense of place, however they became dangerous and a risk to public safety. The Bush Hotel was being monitored by the owners and they were in dialogue with the Council about reusing this building. However their structural engineers became concerned about the structural condition and called in Building Control which resulted in a Dangerous Structure Notice being served and as a result the building was completely demolished to ensure public safety as it had become so unstable.
- 2.15 Libanus Chapel had been partially demolished following fire damage in 2012. The condition of the remaining elements were deemed a risk to public safety and had to be completely demolished on the advice of Building Control.
- 2.16 Clearly the loss of these historic buildings is a very regrettable course of events, but it does highlight the challenges in tackling privately owned listed buildings at risk. Once a building is reported as being dangerous, the Council is duty bound to investigate and to deal with the issue if there is a risk to public safety. The Council officers in the different service units will continue to work closely together in dealing sensitively with historic buildings that become unsafe which is an inevitable consequence of lack of maintenance.

3.0 Way forward

- 3.1 The attached strategy document identifies a range of potential actions, which will vary according to individual listed building and its location.

These are spread across a number of Council service areas and reflect the positive cross departmental working that is already underway. One of the options with regard to privately owned listed buildings at risk is the use of statutory powers such as an Urgent Works Notice, however this process can result in the Council having to undertake works in default and there is no budget allocated for this at present.

- 3.2 The attached strategy document also sets out a prioritisation based on factors such as heritage status, level of risk, regeneration potential and prominence within the local community. This has informed the prioritisation to date, but it must be acknowledged that this needs to be flexible in response to further opportunities such as availability of grant funding.
- 3.3 An outline action plan is included which draws together all the current work and discussion that are underway. It is not possible to set out a definite action plan for tackling listed buildings at risk because this work area has no specific funding allocated and relies on a wide range of service areas.
- 3.4 The main actions during 2014 are likely to include:
 - Organisation of a 'heritage at risk' event in Swansea to raise awareness
 - Completion of the rebuilding of Swiss Cottage
 - Completion of the stabilisation and consolidation of the Laboratory Building
 - Commencement of repair works at Scotts Pit
 - Commencement of repair works at the Roman Bridge
 - Continuation of discussions with the owner of the Palace TheatreFor details of more actions, please refer to the listed building at risk strategy at appendix 2.

4.0 Equality and Engagement Implications

- 4.1 An EIA Screening Form has been completed with the agreed outcome that a full EIA report was not required. The screening concludes that there are primarily low impacts likely from the proposal, which in its current form is a strategic proposal to determine the way forward. Subject to the outcome of this report, it is anticipated that a full EIA may be required in due course, with regard to the individual initiatives arising from the proposal. The Screening Form is available for inspection if required.
- 4.2 The historic environment should be enjoyed by all, but often the locations of the buildings/ structures and physical features of the buildings are not accessible to all. Therefore it will be important to address innovative alternatives where physical access for all cannot be achieved.

- 4.3 Any events or awareness raising in relation to heritage at risk will need to be accessible to all through for example the choice of venue and format of the information.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There is no specific budget for tackling listed building at risk. The progress to date has been funded through co-ordinating with other Departments such as Corporate Property, through reallocating of under spend in the Design and Conservation Team during 2012/13, through working with Councillors with regard to their environmental allowances and through external grant funding bids. It is likely that this linked up and responsive approach will continue within the context of wider budget pressures.

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council has legal powers to address listed buildings at risk and these are set out in Appendix 2. The Council's Constitution sets out the body or person who has power to deal with the various issues concerning listed buildings - the Head of Economic Regeneration and Planning has delegated powers to tackle listed buildings at risk. Any action will be subject to legal consultations.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

- 1: Listed Building at Risk Register (December 2013)
2: Listed Building at Risk Strategy (December 2013)