

REPORT OF HEAD OF DISCOVERY

SUBJECT: CAREW CASTLE HOLDINGS

Projects

While there continues to be substantial ongoing expenditure on fabric maintenance (especially the Causeway) there has been no significant improvement to the “Carew Offer” for many years. A major capital injection into the holding has been a long held Members ambition with a particular focus on the removal of the portakabins from the walled garden and the provision of new reception facilities, but this has been frustrated by a whole range of reasons over many years.

It is accordingly heartening that a project has been developing which is now on the brink of delivery. Essentially the project comprises:

- Removing the portakabins and providing a new reception/retail/office/store/toilet facilities in an upgraded and enlarged former workmans store in the walled garden together with hard landscaping and interpretative opportunities within the walled garden.
- Reroofing the Lesser Hall to provide a multi-purpose covered space.
- Resurfacing and enlarging the existing car park.

The project jigsaw is complex (and not without risks) and comprises a range of interrelated pieces including:

1. **Funding** - £400,000 has been made available from Cadw (EU) and TMF with the Authority making a £200,000 capital contribution from reserves in line with Members previously agreed budgets. The external funding relates to Carew forming a hub for the interpretation of the medieval period in Cadw’s “Makers of Wales” interpretation strateg and is conditional upon our meeting a range of visitor related outcomes and completion of all works by the end of 2014.
2. **Ownership** – our Carew holdings are owned freehold by the Carew Estate – we manage the property by virtue of several leases, the longest of which expires in 2082. Our intention from the outset has been to review the arrangements and enter into one comprehensive lease for our holding on terms which more appropriately reflect the current landlord and tenant relationship and the rights and obligations of the parties. Little progress has been made in that regard but our landlord has agreed that (in addition to the existing main lease) to grant a further lease of the remainder of the holdings for a term which effectively expires contemporaneously with the main castle lease and which is of sufficient length to secure the external funding. Solicitors have been instructed on this basis.
3. **Landlord’s consent** – In addition to securing a legal interest in the land we also require our landlord’ approval to the works and this is awaited.

4. **Statutory consents** - Three separate applications (a. Lesser Hall, b. Walled Garden c. Car Park) have been submitted for planning and Scheduled Ancient Monument consents and decisions are awaited.
5. **Community involvement** – The proposals have been discussed with the Carew Castle Stakeholder Group and copies passed to the Carew Community Council and their reaction is awaited.
6. **Contractor Procurement** – The Lesser Hall roof is seen as the priority work (being the most expensive and most complex) so this has already been advertised on the Sell2Wales website inviting expressions of interest from suitable contractors. Shortlisted contractors will then be invited to submit tenders for the work which are due to be returned by the end of March 2012.
7. **Bat Licence** – Once planning consent is received a bat licence will be applied for. All of the necessary ecological investigations have been completed in this regard and a “window” of the summer of 2012 identified as being the most suitable opportunity for the work.
8. **Archaeology** – Rainwater disposal from the Lesser Hall roof will be onto an area statutorily protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Archaeological investigations are in hand to identify how rainwater discharge is best achieved.
9. **Programme** – the aim is that by early April we will :
 - Have obtained landlord’s consent for the works.
 - Have obtained planning consent for the works.
 - Have obtained Scheduled Ancient Monument consent for the works.
 - Have finalised all terms with the funding offers.
 - Have finalised the lease agreement .
 - Have community endorsement for our proposals.
 - Have identified a contractor and have cost certainty for the Lesser Hall roof works.
 - Have obtained a bat licence.
 - Have resolved the archaeological issues.

And on that basis we can then:

- Finalise the funding agreement.
- Enter into a lease.
- Award the building contract for the Lesser Hall roof.

The main building contract will be immediately let with view to works being completed during the summer of 2012 and it is proposed that the castle remains open to the public during works but part of the car park will be used as a contractors working compound.

During the summer of 2012 the walled garden proposals will be detailed and the building contract advertised with a view to the works being undertaken during the autumn/winter 2012.

The walled garden proposals will be developed on gold/silver/bronze standards so that once the costs of the Lesser Hall roof has been determined a decision can be made as to the appropriate standard for works to the walled garden scheme.

Once the walled garden works are completed the portakabins will be removed and sold, the contractor's compound in the car park removed and the resurfacing contract for the car park let. Again the quantity and quality of the work to the car park will be determined in the light of the budget remaining.

It is hoped that all works will be completed by the beginning of the 2013 season.

To get to this position has included considerable investment in officer time and c. £50,000 in external consultancy fee (architects, engineers, Quantity Surveyors, ecologists, arboriculturalists, archaeologists etc.) The jigsaw has been carefully assembled to minimise risks to the Authority but we remain in a position of uncertainty and hope that all the pieces will fall into place in time for the Lesser Hall roof contract to commence this spring.

It is **RECOMMENDED** that the project proceeds on this basis, and that as a first essential requirement, Members **AUTHORISE** the documentation of a new lease (as set out in 2 above).