

CABINET

4TH NOVEMBER 2024

KIDWELLY INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Purpose:

To update on the position with Kidwelly Industrial Museum and agree a way forward.

Recommendations / key decisions required:

To consider all options, with a recommendation to support Option 4 – Reopening the museum as a reimagined version, offering a 21st century vision that enhances and utilises all that the site offers.

Reasons:

The site operated as a museum from 1988 to 2017 to preserve Britain's earliest tinplate works and is a unique survivor of Carmarthenshire's industrial heritage. Recognised by Cadw as nationally significant, the site includes Scheduled Ancient Monuments such as the Dam, 18th century Lower Works, and Hot Rolls and Cold Rolls with their steam engines. The County Council is obligated to safeguard listed structures, including the grade II* listed Cold Rolls building, the grade II listed Boxing and Assorting Rooms, and the 160-foot chimney stack.

Cabinet Decision Required YES – 4th November, 2024

Council Decision Required NO

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:-

Cllr. Hazel Evans, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Leisure, Culture & Tourism

Directorate:

Communities

Designations:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**CABINET
4TH NOVEMBER 2024**

KIDWELLY INDUSTRIAL MUSEUM OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Kidwelly Industrial Museum closed in 2017, after which the site gradually returned to local authority control, ending the lease to The Kidwelly Heritage Centre and Tinsplate Museum Trust. In 2022-23, assessments were completed to understand the current situation on site. This report presents the recommendations of an options appraisal to start the process of deciding the authority's preferred option for the museum's long-term future. The recommendation is to complete a business plan to test the preferred option before making a firm commitment.

The options appraisal for Carmarthenshire County Council was carried out by Rob Firman Consulting, an architect specialising in refurbishments, restorations and adaptive re-use of historic buildings in the arts and culture sector. The report includes an appraisal of the site, combining key findings from prior assessments (Property Condition Survey by Atkins 2023, Preliminary Ecological Assessment by Pryce Ecological Consultants 2022, and Collection Review by Collect Connect Cymru 2022) with additional desk research, site visits, and meetings with museum service managers.

The study identified four potential options:

Option 1 – Disposal of the museum and its contents

Option 2 – Mothballing the museum and its contents

Option 3 – Reopening the museum in its existing format with existing content

Option 4 – Reopening the museum as a reimagined version, offering a 21st century vision that enhances and utilises all that the site offers.

The impact of each option is evaluated from several perspectives, including economy, historic preservation, ecology, and society, including a SWOT analysis, task-based activity plan, indicative timescale and cost headings. The full Options Appraisal Study and a summary of its key points are annexed to this report with the Property Condition Survey.

- Option 1 is considered **not viable** due to low market interest in museums and the conditions attached to the site associated with its historic significance.
- Option 2 is considered **viable** as a positive move from the present situation and enables more time for planning. This is not a long-term option but a stepping-stone to other options.
- Option 3 is considered **viable** because it enables movement beyond the present situation, meets public demand for the museum to reopen, but is not a long-term, standalone option because it perpetuates the known limitations of the present offer.
- Option 4 is the **preferred option** because it presents a long-term option for the museum with increased opportunities for development funding and lower ongoing revenue costs associated with more options for income generation.

Option 4 envisions a people-centred museum, highlighting Carmarthenshire’s industrial heritage, which is crucial to the county’s unique character and economic development. The museum will explore the global impact of the tinplate industry, including imperial expansion, international technology and design flow, and Kidwelly’s role as an early pioneer of tinplate working in Wales. The museum will also consider the industry's societal and environmental impacts over two centuries. The proposed governance includes local authority management and the formation of an educational charity to create a centre for research, training, and learning. The vision includes generating all energy on-site from sustainable sources, restoring listed buildings with improved energy efficiency, creating an attractive museum and heritage park with commercial operations, engaging residents, creating opportunities for young people, and improving collections preservation on-site.

The timescale for this option will be long to fundraise for each step. It is the option with the greatest cost but the greatest potential for income generation. The site can open incrementally and make a feature of its ongoing redevelopment as part of the attraction. However, a note of caution on this long timeframe from a fundraising perspective, is that it could undermine the attractiveness of the project to funders because it implies a lack of momentum and confidence. Other risks include potential unforeseen circumstances, lack of continuity and rising costs.

Three of the four options are considered viable. This report is seeking to establish which option the local authority is supportive of exploring further, to prioritise the next steps of business planning, public engagement, and potentially early engagement with funders.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?	YES
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IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

Signed: **Ian Jones** Head of Leisure

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	2. Legal	3. Finance	4. ICT	5. Risk Management Issues	6. Staffing Implications	7. Physical Assets	8. Bio-diversity & Climate Change
YES	YES	YES	NONE	NONE	YES	YES	YES

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

While closed, the museum has been a target for vandalism and antisocial behaviour. All revenue costs are currently going towards mitigating and reacting to this risk. Engagement with neighbourhood policing teams and Designing Out Crime Officer has informed this options appraisal. Options 2, 3 and 4 require improvements to security that will help deter occurrences.

2. Legal

Option 1, to dispose of the property, will require legal advice over the due diligence process associated with ambiguous ownership of buildings and museum collections. Leasing a replacement collection store will also require legal advice.

Options 2, 3 and 4 will require some support regarding ownership of museum collections on site.

Option 4, in setting up a charity, will require legal advice to the local authority.

3.Finance

All options are summarised here with estimated liability costs. The Options Appraisal Study recommends option four because it presents a compelling vision and the most likely route to attract external funding, though all options feature liability costs. However, without sufficient support, a major project could impact the Council's operational museums by displacing staff, increasing revenue pressures, and competing for funding. And while every effort to diversify income would form the basis of any reopening plan, the Kidwelly site's size, layout, liabilities, and constraints are unlikely to support full self-financing operations.

Option 1 – Disposal of the site and assets

- Minimal essential property repairs are assumed for disposal.
- Capital maintenance costs are estimated at £395k-£495k, with some exclusions.
- Additional revenue estimate over 2 years is £260k, to manage the disposal of property and relocation of artefacts.
- Estimated total cost: £655k-£755k.
- Disposal options are limited and unlikely to yield a return.

Option 2 – Mothballing the museum

- Capital works will stabilise the property condition to prevent deterioration and increase security through fencing and installation of intruder and fire detection systems.
- These works enable safe access and management of the property and its contents as a short-term step within a longer-term plan.
- Capital cost estimates: £815k-£915k.
- Additional revenue estimate over 2 years is £281k, to manage mothballing project and partial disposal of artefacts to minimise liabilities.
- Project-based revenue grants may be available to improve collections preservation.
- Estimated total cost: £1.1m-£1.2m.

Option 3 - Reopening the museum in its existing format with existing content

- Includes mothballing costs and a flood consequences assessment for long-term adaptation plans.
- Capital cost estimates: £891k-£991k.
- Estimated one-off revenue cost over 2 years for reopening preparation is £412k.
- Estimated total cost: £1.3m-£1.4m.
- Likely to struggle to attract funding and does not improve options for income generation.
- Operating revenue budget to be developed within a Business Plan.

Option 4 – Reopening the museum as a reimagined version, offering a 21st century vision that enhances and utilises all that the site offers.

- This includes the capital costs identified in options 2 and 3, with the addition of flood protection, ecology surveys, design fees, visitor facilities, and car park improvements.
- Costs to reopen, including essential property repairs and basic building adaptations, could increase by 10% p.a. inflation during a long development phase, with current cost estimates at £2.5m in 2022 rising to £2.9m by 2029.
- Capital exhibition costs for the whole site are estimated to be around £1.3m.
- Revenue and project costs during the redevelopment are anticipated to be in the region of £250k p.a.
- Estimated initial capital costs for reopening: £4.2m, within a long-term plan for successive future improvements.
- Operating revenue budget to be developed within a Business Plan.

Funding

- Option 4 clearly supports several elements of the National Lottery's investment principles of •Saving heritage •Protecting the environment •Inclusion, access and participation, and •Organisational sustainability.
- Funders, donors and grant givers with specific remits of education, skills, conservation, or the environment are likely to find this option most appealing.
- Confidence, ambition and credibility are critical elements in attracting funding and other features that could make this option appealing include:
 - Ambition and vision - it sets out to protect the site in the short-term and maximise the full site's potential, and to provide an impactful solution over the long-term.
 - It seeks to fundamentally change the previous approach, increasing confidence and credibility in a longer-term vision.
 - It affords the opportunity for a 21st century re-interpretation of the site, and to develop a 21st century experience.
 - By opening the wider site, it seeks to place the tin plate works and its history in the widest possible context.
 - It helps deliver on several local, regional and Welsh National strategic objectives.

A Business Feasibility Study of the preferred option is recommended as the next step. This will provide a cost-benefit analysis as a precursor to a formal Business Plan, determining the preferred option's viability, recognising pressures on local authority finances. If feasible, a full Business Plan will be developed. Once detailed costs are identified, dialogues with funders can commence. If a funding EOI is approved, further development work of 12-18 months is anticipated to prepare a full grant application.

The cost of both the Business Feasibility Study and the full Business Plan is estimated to be in the region of £45k for options 2, 3, and 4 and is included in the estimates.

6. Staffing Implications

All options have staffing implications because each represents a significant project of one type or another. The museum structure can support this up to a point during the early development, noting there are two further museum improvement schemes in the pipeline. All options require additional capacity during delivery phase.

7. Physical Assets

Failure to maintain the authority's Listed Buildings and Structures will result in high capital costs and possible prosecution for neglect. Under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, there is a legal obligation to prevent deterioration of the listed buildings, with imprisonment as the ultimate sanction for wilful neglect. Kidwelly Industrial Museum has grade 2 and grade 2* listed buildings, and monuments that are protected as Scheduled Monuments. De-listing a building due to neglect is rarely an option. The 2022 property condition survey identified 8 grade D1 faults (unsafe or at risk of immediate failure) and 88 grade C1 faults (requiring major repair). A priority score of 1 indicates an immediate high risk to the health and safety of occupants and or remedy a serious breach of legislation that should be addressed within a year. These recommendations have not been actioned. The condition survey schedule provides a basis for preparing a schedule of works for procuring property repairs.

Leasing an equivalent museum collection store, if the site is disposed of, would cost around £34,262 annually in rent and rates, creating a revenue pressure on the service. Availability is a risk as appropriate Council-owned premises are occupied by long-standing businesses. Previous projects to find a museum collection store have failed due to high costs and lack of external funding

8. Biodiversity & Climate Change

This Options Appraisal Study is based on a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Any option involving development will necessitate a detailed ecological evaluation.

In option 2, existing land management practices on 50% of the site could be modified to enhance biodiversity. This option also includes a flood consequences assessment to evaluate long-term risks.

Option 3 proposes the restoration of previous operational activities, leaving 50% of the site unused. This area is noted for the presence of invasive plant species. A flood consequences assessment and mitigation strategies are included in this option as well. Utility updates might be needed to conform to relevant legislation, with all power sourced from the grid.

Option 4 highlights the area's rich biodiversity as a key asset to be preserved and used for public engagement and education. This option encompasses a flood consequences assessment to prepare for climate change adaptations and plans for repurposing historic buildings for sustainable, long-term use through improved insulation, on-site power generation, rainwater harvesting, and promoting active travel.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below:

Signed: Ian Jones

Head of Leisure

1. Scrutiny Committee request for pre-determination	NO
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2. Local Member(s)

Cllrs. Crish Davies and Lewis Davies have been kept updated on matters pertaining to the site and the progress of this report.

3. Community / Town Council

Kidwelly Town Council kept updated via local members.

4. Relevant Partners

Carmarthenshire's CofGar Museum service maintains contact with Welsh Government, Trustees, CADW and agencies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund to explore all options for the future of the site.

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

No staff are employed at the site.

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S) AWARE/CONSULTED	YES Cllr Hazel Evans is being kept informed of developments
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**Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:
THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW.**

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Kidwelly Industrial Museum Condition Survey Report, issued 08/12/2022		
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal: Kidwelly Industrial Museum, issued 29/09/2022		
Collections Audit Review: Kidwelly Industrial Museum, issued September 2022		
Kidwelly Industrial Museum Options Appraisal, issued April 2024		
Kidwelly Industrial Museum Options Appraisal Summary		