

Love Your Castle 2017

Earlier this year we launched a public engagement campaign called *Love your Castle*. We invited Islanders to reconnect with this amazing site at the heart of our Island story. And people responded in their thousands. The launch attracted 4,000 Islanders to an open day in April. Corporates have responded through new events like Hawksford Castle Chase. Ogier have supported a new educational programme – Castle School. Staff from Ogier, Nat West and others have got stuck into some practical conservation work at the Castle.

Castle Stories

The castle deserves this support – its buildings hold some of the Islands most important stories. St Helier himself lived and was martyred here in the sixth century - only the hermitage oratory remains of the 12th century Abbey created in his memory. The Governor's House perhaps first occupied by Sir Walter Raleigh, also sheltered Charles II during the Civil War, when lands in America forming New Jersey were given. It was here that Captain Mulcaster refused to surrender the castle to the French before the Battle of Jersey. Here where the Organisation Todt operated a camp during the German Occupation. And here where millions of tourists have enjoyed the castle as a visitor attraction showcasing our much loved living history programme.

Elizabeth Castle Today

Today Elizabeth Castle is the most visited Jersey Heritage site. It will receive well over 50,000 visitors this year, nearly half a million pounds in admissions. The Castle is absolutely core, not only to the Jersey Heritage business, but to the visitor experience of heritage in Jersey. The castle is the strongest defining image of St Helier and our waterfront, an image of great value in promoting the Island and as just one recent illustration of that featured strongly in the recent coverage of the triathlon superleague.

The size of the challenge

There are challenges in managing the future of the Castle, not least its sheer scale. The construction of the castle enclosed a number of small islets. With more than thirty

individual buildings 'the Castle' is best thought of as a small village enclosed by more than a kilometre of sea-wall. Consequently basic maintenance, let alone development, is a major undertaking.

The condition of the castle

There is a great deal of ongoing building conservation work taking place. We never stop repairing the seawalls, maintaining roofs, stabilising the ancient masonry. But many of the buildings at the castle remain closed to the public. The site was badly damaged during the Occupation. While buildings have been kept wind and watertight many were never fully restored and are currently unsafe to visit. I'll come to the financials later, but, in simplest terms, while castle income is sufficient to stand still with conservation work and maintain the operation of the castle, it is not enough to make a dent in this substantial conservation backlog. As was the case with Gorey Castle in 1999, significant investment, beyond the means of Jersey Heritage alone, is necessary if that is to be achieved and if these buildings are to be brought into productive use.

Development solutions

So we have developed proposals to make the most of the fabric, the stories and the experiences available at the castle, giving all these buildings the care they deserve. The proposals cover all the buildings wholly or partially inaccessible or requiring restoration. Taken as a whole, that would be a huge task. There is 13 to 15 million pounds of conservation, restoration and development here. There is extensive documentation of those proposals, which have been submitted to EDTSC and Treasury. Recognising the limits of what may be realistically possible, we have prioritised. We have looked at the individual developments likely to add most value to the castle as a visitor attraction, in the short term.

The Hospital Block a priority

And in our view, the priority is the Hospital Block, the most significant area of currently unused heritage interest. We are working with archaeologists from York University Department of Archaeology to understand the building and how best to restore it. It dates from the early nineteenth century. The current form of the building was complete around 1880, following as many as seven different phases of construction at a time the Castle must

have been a hive of construction activity. The arrangements included married quarters, kitchens, wards for infectious diseases, a mortuary, stables, engineers' stores and a coal yard – it's a substantial collection of buildings, all currently inaccessible to the public.

The Hospital Block Proposal

The presentation shows pictures of the interior of the hospital wards. In this part of the building our proposal combines historic presentation, with opportunities for venue hire and 'out of hours' activity. Following careful restoration of the buildings to their Victorian interiors, we hope to bring the hospital alive using video techniques incorporating elements of living history. This is such an approach used at Kew Palace, for example. It limits impact on the buildings and interiors, so when the interpretation is turned off the rooms can be used for a variety of events. Much like the restored Merchant's House at No9 Pier Road is used for corporate and cultural events, weddings and dinners, for example. Or rather like the National Trusts New Street building.

The Coal Yard Proposal

The proposal for these stores, stables and coal yard is to create new facilities to support events at the castle. This includes a multi-use flexible space, which would work rather like the Oules room at Jersey Museum. And WCs to provide for events, both in that building and events on the Castle Green.

The Green Proposal

The Green is currently the site used for larger, marquee events. The blue line marks the outline of a huge barrack building that once occupied this space. Marquees are not ideal structures in an historic site. They are disruptive to put up and down or if left over a longer period have a negative visual impact. So we looked at the possibility of building a semi-permanent, seasonal pavilion structure. We have come up with a modular structure that could enable a range of events, in different configurations for daytime and out of hours events. Here are some examples of how that might work. The core idea of the development is to provide facilities for a greater range of events and activities at the castle.

The Officers' Quarters

Although the Hospital Block is our priority, the development of self-catering accommodation in the Officer's Block is another early opportunity. The very first Jersey Heritage Let was developed at Elizabeth Castle in the 1980s, a precursor to the incredibly successful scheme with coastal forts and towers.

The Officers' Quarters, currently used for exhibition, if properly restored to period, would be ideal for group accommodation. A valuable addition to the Heritage Lets scheme this could handle large, school-class size groups.

The strategic context

And so that is what we are currently seeking funding for. We strongly believe the project contributes to key States strategic aims for education, tourism and the regeneration of St Helier. We believe that is consistent with the long term States vision Future Jersey being developed by the Policy Unit. A lot can be said about the value of heritage in a community like ours. At its simplest I come back to the response to our campaign; thousands and thousands of Islanders, visiting, volunteering, learning, sharing, delivering across many sections of the vision, Learning, Cultural Vibrancy, Inclusivity, Health and Wellbeing as well as the more obvious heritage drivers in Historic Environment . The Jersey Opinion and Lifestyle Survey last year showed that (and this is quite unlike in the UK) heritage engagement in Jersey is equally inclusive across all communities of origin. In other words wherever Islanders come from, 'heritage' is one of the spaces in Jersey that brings people together.

Tourism context

Looked at from a tourism perspective, I am grateful to Visit Jersey for this slide from a study for Visit Britain on cultural tourism. It is a reminder that the heritage visitor product is a combination of stories, of lived experiences as well as the historic fabric itself. So we have tried to cover all those bases in our scheme in a holistic appeal to people who enjoy heritage in many different ways.

Business Case

And at a more tactical level, investment will bring redundant buildings into productive use and prevent escalation of longer term maintenance costs. But it will cost money. The Hospital Block restoration is around 2.8M – the Officers' Quarters just under 2M. Additional income assumptions are relatively modest, as they were with the conservation of Gorey Castle. By comparison we spent c.£4.5M at Gorey castle - including a 3M States vote in 1999. There has been no comparable investment in Elizabeth Castle in recent history. In part, of course, longer term income levels depend on the success of growth in tourism - in which we hope upgraded heritage attractions will play a part.

Access

Finally, it is often said that access is a constraint on the development of the castle. But it is a fact that more people visit Elizabeth Castle than all our other sites, including Gorey Castle where there is no such apparent access barrier. We were asked to look at a bridge as part of this study. A bridge is obviously possible - but on this windward side of the Island would have to be very substantial, presenting planning, navigation and costs issues unlikely to be overcome in the short term. One issue we can address is night time access. The ferries can't run at night but with a relatively low cost pontoon at the breakwater we could land people via boat from the harbour enabling some development of the evening economy of the castle as part of this package.

So a bridge may become a long term option but at this stage the ferries continue to provide best value for access to Elizabeth Castle. These have of course attracted a great deal of discussion in the past. But to repeat what I said earlier, Elizabeth Castle is the most visited Jersey Heritage site and something like 80% of the 50+k visitors it attracts travel on the ferries which we anticipate being operable for another 8-10 years. And for many of our visitors, especially some of our youngest visitors, they are an essential part of the experience and an attraction in their own right.

Summary

So in summary, we will continue with the *Love Your Castle* campaign, continue to raise interest in the site, to involve Islanders and businesses, continue to develop the tourism

attraction of the site. We will continue to spend the half-million-pounds-a-year we take at the castle on its care. But to make a real difference, to finish the job started by the States after the Occupation, to realise the potential of the castle, to bring more of the castle into public use, we will need help. And with that help the castle will continue to play its part at the heart of the Island's special culture and heritage.

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