

Save The Commodore

An opportunity to enable Pembroke Dock to gain from a greater appreciation of its roots

The Commodore is a derelict building in Pembroke Dockyard at (SM959035). It was originally, in the warship building days of The Royal Dockyard Pembroke, known officially as the Captain Superintendent's Residence and was the focal point of the spectacular terrace that runs along the southern boundary of "The Yard".

Proposal

Aim: By means of an Historic Buildings Trust (HBT), acquire and renovate the former Captain Superintendent's Residence at Pembroke Dockyard, along with its former garden, transforming this currently derelict Grade II* listed building and its setting into a self-supporting community asset.

There now follows brief outlines of possible ways in which the building and its site might be utilised, both in the renovation phase of the project and the post-renovation phase.

These notes are prepared with the vision that this building should always be the focus of a community led project that will provide leisure, employment and educational opportunities for the residents of Pembroke Dock and its hinterland.

Renovation phase.

Whilst undergoing renovations, the building could be used as a "live" practical study example of the methods and skills used in the restoration and investigation of a real example of built heritage. There would be, of course, considerable health and safety challenges that would need to be met.

Seek partnerships with the organisations in the non-exhaustive list below:

Pembrokeshire College (Pembs Coll.)	Explore the possibilities of using the site as a training resource for students who are studying within the heritage, building renovation, leisure, media, computing/virtual reality and/or renewable energy sectors.
Construction Industry Training Board	Training grants and advice. Tap into any plans that MHPA might have or the CITB for their new centre in Swansea Bay.
Milford Haven Port Authority(MHPA)	Guidance and advice. Allowing acquisition of the portion of the garden of the former Captain Superintendent's Residence that is now their property.
Ysgol Henry Tudor(YHT)	An educational resource for exploring the heritage of Pembroke Dock.
Dyfed Archaeological Trust(DAT)	Archaeological excavation training dig of garden area and analysis and recording of the standing remains of The Commodore and other buildings within The Yard. The latter would be in negotiation with other agencies operating in the dockyard. Community archaeological projects can attract HLF grants.

	The archaeology of the site is potentially very interesting as the garden was formed over the upper limit of a tidal inlet that formally served the house of Paterchurch and was likely to have been one of the factors for the selection of this site for the building of the medieval house.
West Wales Maritime Heritage Trust(WWMHT)	Mutual support in furthering the study of the maritime history of this piece of coast line.
Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC)	Guidance and advice.
Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)	SPAB runs working weekends where volunteers learn new built heritage renovation skills. They also fund “fellowships” where young practitioners of the skills associated with the renovation of old buildings are able to further enhance their skills. One such fellow has recently been helping with the restoration of a 17 th century cottage near Castlemartin.
CADW	Guidance and advice, with possible grant support for the renovation of this Grade II* listed building.
Pembroke Dock Town Council(PDTC)	Promoting the heritage of Pembroke Dock.
Owner of Paterchurch Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre WWMHT	Working to establish these sites as complementary heritage attractions in Pembroke Dock.

Post-Renovation Phase.

These notes are prepared with the vision that this building should always be the focus of a community led project that will provide leisure, employment and educational opportunities to the residents of Pembroke Dock and its hinterland.

Any use of the renovated building would need to be considered carefully, but imagination and vision should be the order of the day. It should be possible to work in close consort with the Heritage Centre , West Wales Maritime Heritage Trust and other heritage focused businesses and property owners to put together an “offer” that would enable Pembroke Dock to be a cohesive heritage/arts tourist destination. The Captain Superintendent’s Residence provides, along with the Heritage Centre and other significant nearby buildings, an opportunity to tap into potential of the ever increasing holiday traffic (and occupants) that literally passes the front door of these premises.

Hotel, restaurant and wedding venue. Partnership with Pembrokeshire College and Ysgol Henry Tudor.	This use of the building is an obvious one, but to be successful it would have to find a niche in the market that focused on the undoubtedly positive heritage attributes of the site. In this guise it could provide a practical arena for the training of young people in Hospitality and Catering. The buildings provide much scope for this type of business, with a rejuvenated garden providing potential for seasonal marquee based events.
Recording Studio/Music Practice Rooms/Dance Studios	This would provide a resource that does not seem to exist locally. Whether the building could be successfully adapted to such uses without compromising its historical value, would need to be carefully examined. Dependent upon the damage to the interior of the building, it may be appropriate to drop a steel framework “box” into parts of the shell to provide modern facilities. This has been successfully achieved at the Chatham Historic Dockyard, where art/museum galleries have been installed within the shell of an old smithery(?).
Art Gallery/Presentation gallery/pop-up cinema.	<p>Some parts of the rear ranges of the building could be adapted internally for such uses. The cinema would be small scale and show films, say once a month initially. Again, links with Pembrokeshire College would be useful.</p> <p>Any galleries could also be used to showcase the renewable energy initiatives promised for the Haven and Pembroke Dock.</p>

Finally

It is my firm belief that Pembroke Dock has a great deal to offer and has been sorely served by those authorities that have professed to know what is best for the town.

However, there is a distinct impression that the will of the local residents to improve the lot of their town is on the rise. This is borne out by the number of younger people becoming involved in local politics and the general pride in, and appreciation of, the place that residents express on social media. There are also those visitors from “away” that choose to stop, enjoy and sometimes remain in the town and invest in its future. They all see an un-tapped potential for success.

Undeniably, Pembroke Dock has problems, but there are residents, far and near, who are deciding, in increasing numbers, to challenge the unsatisfactory status quo that has reigned for too long.

The burned-out shell of The Commodore (or Captain Superintendent’s Residence) is a symbol of the lack of care and inclusion that over recent decades has pervaded officialdom’s dealings with Pembroke Dock. The residents have felt that they are not listened to and have become dis-heartened, and in some cases apathetic and seemingly uncared for. This project, with appropriate support, is a chance to get people involved and to give them a stake once more in their community.

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For

“Save the Commodore”