

MORRISTON TABERNACLE OPTIONS STUDY

INTRODUCTION & CURRENT USE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Morriston Tabernacle is a building of great significance within Swansea, which with the right investment has the potential to provide a landmark for the community. The current use of the building is largely for the purpose of worship. There are a number of occasional events that take place throughout the calendar, however these do not generate a significant income. On this basis, the future purpose and use of the building has been questioned; with the emphasis of this report being to look at the potential.

The Grade I listed chapel offers considerable potential for redevelopment that will contribute to the Morriston district and provide a sustainable future for this significant building. In order that an informed decision can be made with regard to the future use of the building, it is necessary to assess the heritage significance of the building with regard to its conservation and heritage issues to review the current market requirements, and to understand the constraints of the building.

This options appraisal has been commissioned by The City & County of Swansea (CCS), Cadw and the Morriston Chapel Congregational trust (MCCT) to identify a preferred option for its reuse to provide a sustainable future for the Chapel and how its implementation may be funded. The study has been funded by the Welsh Government, through Cadw.

The following have contributed to the completion of this study:

Stephen Smith, Client contact (CCS)
Judith Alfrey, Client contact (Cadw)
Huw Williams, Client contact (MCCT)
Amanda Needham, Conservation Architect at Purcell (author of this report)
Jordan Green, Architectural Assistant at Purcell
Aimee Henderson, Heritage Consultant at Purcell
Neil Richardson, Consultation & Business Planner
Steve McLelland, Quantity Surveyor
Claire Turnbull, Graphics

This report covers the following:

- An appraisal of the building and site constraints
- A consultation plan
- A benchmarking study
- A use options appraisal taking into consideration the constraints imposed by the building, providing a summary of the pros and cons for each of the options.
- A preliminary cost plan for the access implementations.
- A programme setting out the next steps and deliverables.
- A job description for the candidate to develop the project further.

A conservation statement has been completed to accompany this report, which has been developed in a format that will support a HLF Round 1 funding application.

This report was commissioned in February 2016 and its completion will be an important step in the process of further engagement with the community and wider stakeholder group.

1.2 PURPOSE

The Client team (CCS, Cadw and the MTCT) appointed Purcell and their professional team in February 2016 to undertake a study that would explore the options for sustainable use and the management and administration of the Grade I listed Morriston Tabernacle in Swansea. The Client team decided to embark upon this commission due to the need to determine the buildings future.

At the commencement of this commission, it was highlighted that the building was in moderate use and in good condition. An identified programme of conservation repair works undertaken, at a cost of £385k which was informed by the 2009 and 2014 quinquennial inspections. It was also confirmed that the chapel membership stood at 108, with a regular congregation of 40. The design of the Chapel and its seating capacity was to accommodate 1450 people, the current low number of congregation was/is a growing concern for the future of the Chapel.

The process of the study was to begin with a period of community and stakeholder consultation to understand the community demand for potential income generating uses for the Tabernacle, whilst at the same time developing the assessment of significance of all of the internal spaces. Both the consultation and the assessment of significance would influence the potential options within the option study. In addition, a benchmarking study would be initiated to develop an understanding of potential case studies that would help inform the proposals for change and re-use.

It was explained within the client tender brief that S.P.Horowskyj had undertaken a quinquennial inspection in September 2013, which set out the current conditions of the building. It was therefore not required to undertake a condition survey of the building. The quinquennial report was made available to the team.

Following the development of potential change and the proposed options, the proposals would support the development of a 'next steps' programme which will outline a two year action plan and delivery schedule that will focus on what the building needs are to develop income streams.

1.3 CURRENT USE, ADMINISTRATION & FACILITIES

As noted earlier a conservation statement has been prepared as a stand-alone document and provides a detailed narrative and historic timeline of the development of the Morriston Tabernacle. It is not the intention of this report to repeat the conservation statement, however necessary sections within the conservation statement have been extracted to inform this study.

1.3.1 Current Use & Administration

The Chapel is currently under-used and only has a regular attending congregation of 40 people. It could be described that the building has three key spaces that offer availability of use; these spaces are the Main Chapel Auditorium that accommodates the ground and first floor spaces, the Main Vestry, and Small Vestry on the lower ground floor. These spaces are currently used on an annual basis as follows:

Main Chapel Auditorium – 8 concerts, 2 organ recitals and 46 weekly services annually;

Large Vestry – 3 choir rehearsals per week, meetings for local cultural societies, fundraising coffee mornings and local charities, occasional events, blood transfusion services – equating to 175 events annually.

Small Vestry – occasional services, discussions, post-concert receptions – 20 events annually.

The typical running costs of the Tabernacle (based on routine maintenance not major repair work) are approximately £25k per year. Due to the reducing congregation and age of the trustees, the costs of running of the building are becoming unsustainable. Furthermore, there is likely to be insufficient funding to meet the requirements of the upcoming 2019 quinquennial inspection. Therefore, the trustees of the building and elders of the congregation which worshipped in it have sought legal advice and restructured the constitutional arrangements to better reflect the legal reality and have established two clearly separate bodies:

- The congregation (CIO), and
- The unincorporated Tabernacle Trust

The congregation (CIO) will temporarily act as Custodian Trustee of the Tabernacle Trust, so long as its limited funds allow responsible trusteeship without compromise to the CIO's principal aim, which is to advance the Christian mission in the independent tradition. This is an interim measure and given the national significance of the Tabernacle, it is considered that this options appraisal is needed to ensure the continued sustainable use of the building and to develop an understanding of who will take ownership of the building in the future.

As trustee of the Tabernacle Building Trust, the congregation CIO has taken responsibility of undertaking quinquennial inspections, with the next survey due in 2019. The congregation CIO have voluntarily took on the quinquennial inspection regime, and since 1993 their fund-raising efforts have been focused on restoration of the building.

