

Re: Harlech Castle Visitor Centre

DCfW Response to revised submission

3rd August 2012

Thankyou for the invitation to comment on the most recent proposals for the above scheme. With reference to our Design Review report of 14th March 2012, we would make the following points in clarification:

1. Although we did raise the possibility of demolition and a new building as an avenue to explore, we did not in the end dispute the retention of the hotel, and in fact welcomed Cadw's prompt action to secure the hotel and car park.
2. We pointed out the difficulties inherent in re-using an existing building, such as the ground floor circulation.
3. Of much greater concern to us was the car park's location in the most prominent part of the site and we thought that the space between castle and hotel was cluttered and confused.
4. We were concerned that the entrance to the visitor centre was not obvious and potentially confusing for approaching visitors. Although we stated a preference for the location of a front entrance, that would very much depend on how the visitor centre and apartments are planned.
5. It is not correct to say that our concerns re access, parking, entrance location, circulation and the integration of the bridge, assumed 'the option of a new building with its own entrance and lobby', although we did think that was an option which should have been explored.
6. Our suggestion for a new visitor centre building was not intended to be at the expense of the hotel being retained.
7. The recent reinstatement of the playground is no good reason to dismiss the reuse of the playground for a new visitor centre.

We would have expected Cadw in their response to us, to explore further options for the building's siting, the circulation routes and access including the bridge, parking, and the use and management of the hotel.

We welcome the improvement in legibility for the proposed entrance and the omission of ramp and steps. However, only slight changes to the overall scheme are proposed in this revised document.

Problems seem to have arisen concerning gas storage and electricity load, and the BREEAM Excellent rating appears to be compromised as a result. We do not understand the objection to internal insulation (dry lining), especially as heat loss will be a problem with a solid stone envelope. However, we welcome Cadw's commitment to achieving the maximum number of BREEAM credits.

We commend the work which has gone into this response document, and we think that the issues raised could best be discussed and possibly resolved, in the course of discussion at a further Design Review.

END