

Design Review Report

Lifeboat Station, Burry Port

DCFW Ref: N121

Meeting of 18th August 2016



Declarations of Interest

Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare *in advance* any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

Review Status

PUBLIC

Meeting date	18 th August 2016
Issue date	31 st August 2016
Scheme location	Burry Port, Carmarthenshire
Scheme description	Lifeboat station
Scheme reference number	121
Planning status	Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

This is the first time that DCFW has reviewed proposals for this scheme.

The Proposals

The proposed lifeboat station and works to existing slipway will replace two existing facilities at Burry Port. The station will accommodate two lifeboats and respective launch vehicles as well as ancillary accommodation including crew change, mechanics workshop, public engagement area, souvenir sales, station office and a combined crew training/community use room.

Main Points

The client presented a clear brief for the building that responds to the aims of the organisation. It is proposed that the building will not only provide the essential life-saving facilities for the RNLI lifeboat and crew but also space for the public to see and better understand the workings of the station, and provide space for the 'Educate' and 'Influence' elements of the RISE concept.

Although it presents some constraints, this appears to be a suitable location for the lifeboat station. It works functionally in relation to the location of the slipways and has been considered in relation to the proposed redevelopment of the area. In relation to the latter it should be ensured that the spaces around the building and at the interface with the residential area do not become left over spaces that later present a maintenance burden and do not contribute positively to the area. In particular further

thought should be given to the 'wedge' of land to the east of the proposed building which doesn't have any apparent use at this stage.

This is a prominent corner site and a significant opportunity for a new building of significance to lead the way in the regeneration of the harbour side. The building is exposed to public view on all sides and does not have a 'back'. Therefore all sides should make a positive contribution to the public realm.

The interior layout has been determined by the client, based on the fundamental functional requirements of the building. The Commission was keen to understand whether consideration had been given to the inclusion of a cafe element given the passing footfall and attractive waterside location. The addition of this use would provide a further incentive for people to come into the building, learn about the RNLi and perhaps contribute to income generation. It may also have been better located on the southern side of the building overlooking the water. However, the Commission was informed that at a strategic level a cafe was not part of the business plan and was therefore not included. The need for the south elevation of the building to be robust given its exposure to water and debris at high tide was also explained, however it seems to be a missed opportunity to have a public function that overlooks the water.

Whilst the concept of the building is clear from the client side, the architectural expression lacks clarity and coherence. The building would benefit significantly from simplification. The range of materials, number of window types and the form of the proposed building is visually very busy and would have significant implications for the initial and ongoing costs of the building. Maintenance requirements will be significant due to the number of materials proposed and the number of junctions between different elements of the building. This site is exposed to the weather and sea spray and, therefore, must be robust. Fewer, higher quality and more robust materials in a more simple form would reduce costs and be easier to maintain.

The design approach could make a much stronger response to the context of the site and the function of the building. Attempting to break down the scale of the building is not necessarily required in this location as it would be appropriate and interesting to encounter a building of a larger scale in this location. Exploring the cultural history of the area and considering precedent buildings of a more industrial nature could help in the development of an appropriate design language for the building. This could also help the building to be distinct against the future backdrop of future residential development.

There are opportunities to express the function of the building more overtly in the design. The outlook windows and large doors, for example, could be more prominent as distinctive features of a building of this use. Currently the building appears somewhat domestic in nature when it could be more of a celebration of such an important function in a waterside setting.

The landscape around the building should be considered in relation to its use and functionality but also the coastal setting and the scale of the environment. Integrating the parking, access routes and entrances will be important and consideration should be given to how the building meets the landscape. The need for a temporary road to access the car park should be integrated into a phased programme of external works.

It is understood that the existing 19th century RNLI building will be retained and repurposed as the harbour master's office once the RNLI has vacated it. DCFW welcomes the retention and reuse of this building.

The Commission suggests that some significant change and rethinking of the design is required to achieve the quality of the building that is desired by the client and expected by the local authority. Time should be allowed for design at this stage before the planning application is submitted. The programme outlined at the review would not allow for a second review by DCFW but if there is scope to amend the programme we would welcome the opportunity to see it again and a slot should be reserved for this as soon as possible.

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A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.

Attendees

Architect:	Philip Lewis
Client:	Roger Bowen, Lifeboat Operations Manager, Burry Port Lloyd Evans, Estates Principal Engineer, RNLI
Engineer:	Dylan Gravell, Structural Engineer
Local Authority:	Rob Davies, Development Management Officer Steffan Jenkins, Regeneration Programme Manager
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW
Lead panellist	Kedrick Davies
Panel	Jonathan Hines

Observers:

Steve Smith
Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW
Samia Amina
Wendy Maden