

Ruthin Town Clock Restoration Project

Progress Report for Ruthin Town Council

Introduction

At the start of 2021, the town clock restoration committee was formed as a constituted community group with its own bank account and elected officers with the primary objective of commissioning plans to restore the Town Clock on St Peters Square (otherwise known as the Peers Memorial). The committee has 2 representatives from the Town Council, namely Councillors Anne Roberts and Jim Bryan along with local historians, archaeologists and surveyors. The committee then undertook research which confirmed that Denbighshire County Council own the clock and insure it as part of their property portfolio and this has been acknowledged in writing by DCC officers. The clock is Grade 2 listed by Cadw. From the outset we had identified the condition of areas of the clock's masonry as concerning with some green growth on the structure and areas of damage. Only minimal maintenance work has been undertaken in many decades to the clock structure (see attached condition report). It was agreed it was better work was undertaken now before it deteriorates further. The work will conserve the clock and not change it and the work will be of the highest quality possible. The committee recognized from the outset the clock's prominent location at the heart of the town on the square, and is treasured by locals and visitors alike. The project was split into 2 phases:

Phase 1 - Appointing a specialist conservation consultant to draft plans and drawings of the structure, create a schedule of works for improvements and costings for them, securing the necessary permissions from DCC as the owner (including listed building consent if needed) and RTC (as responsible for the maintenance of the clock mechanism) as well as a full community consultation about the plans (once they were made) to get the views of local residents and the general public at large (consultation event at The Old Courthouse and Town Library).

Phase 2 - The actual restoration works on the structure which in the most part would be stonework restoration, with some minor electrical work.

The committee secured funding from Denbighshire County Council, Clocaenog Windfarm Fund and Ruthin Town Council for phase 1, and in May 2021 the committee appointed Elinor Gray Williams as Conservation Architect through a competitive process where tenders were invited in response to a detailed written brief (4 tenders in all were received).

The plans and costs

Elinor has put the attached plans and schedule of works together as a basis of going out to tender for suitable contractors. Harvey Bloor (the Quantity Surveyor) who was part of Elinor's team has costed the proposed plans (please see the attached costs). Drone footage is available of the clock carried out by Elinor and this footage was used to produce photographs to draw up the restoration plans. Decisions were taken on the water supply of the clock and the lighting of the structure by the committee with guidance from officers at DCC. Chris Evans, the DCC Conservation Officer who has responsibility for the conservation of the county's listed buildings,

has judged the attached plans do not require listed building consent since they are only restoring the structure like for like, rather than making major alterations. Funding has been secured through the Town Council from the Denbighshire Event Infrastructure Fund available from DCC towards the costs of upgrading the dated electrical system in the clock tower to make it more suitable for events held on the square.

Community Consultation

The committee held an exhibition of the plans and history of the clock (including about Joseph Peers and John Douglas (the original architect)) in the Old Courthouse from the 4th until 19th of September 2021, and then in the foyer of the town library on Record Street from the 20th of September until the 2nd of October. The purpose of the exhibition was to raise awareness locally and further afield of the clock's current condition including areas of concern, as well as its history. The exhibition was widely promoted through posters, press articles, letters to local business and residents, social media, emails circulations, adverts etc. The clock committee are immensely grateful to all the volunteers who staffed the exhibition during its time at the Old Courthouse (the town Library display was not staffed, only by library staff). The feedback through the written questionnaire and verbally was overwhelmingly positive with every respondent to the questionnaire supporting the plans to restore the clock. Local primary schoolchildren were engaged in the project by being asked to draw a picture of the clock for a competition which the Mayor (Councillor Heather Williams) then judged. Numerous historical links and facts were found or brought in by members of the public during this time including the clock's old manually wound mechanism found in the Town Hall through the help of Brian Williams, Jeff Brimble and Emrys Wynne (the clock was electrified in c2012) as well as more information about Joseph Peers with special thanks to Mrs Moira Roberts.

Next steps

- We have secured the support of the owner of the town clock (Denbighshire County Council) for the work by officers from their Property and Assets Department.
- The plans and costs have been included in the Ruthin Town bid for the Levelling Up Fund to secure the capital funds necessary to do the actual work to the clock (90 percent), with the remaining funds coming from Denbighshire County Council (in principle)
- The work would take six to eight weeks with DCC (the owner) as the client, responsible for procurement and contracts, with the clock committee in an advisory capacity overseeing the work. The site would be fully enclosed with the clock fully scaffolded and scheduled in appropriately with the proposed works to the square
- Revenue funding would be applied for to the Clocaenog Windfarm Fund for a community heritage project alongside the capital works e.g. art and craft projects, events, history lectures, projects with local schools etc
- It is planned for the electrical improvements to the clock tower to be completed w/c 23/01/2022 including a new distribution board, a number of 13 amp sockets and 1 x 32 amp socket, with funding from Denbighshire County Council's Event Infrastructure Fund