

Dear Members of the Petitions Committee,

4th May 2020

RE: Petition P-05-949. Save Cowbridge Old Girls' School from Demolition

Further to my previous letter dated 22nd March, 2020 I enclose further correspondence that our group has had from the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism. Following submission of the group letter (Encl. 6 in my previous correspondence), the Minister responded on 29th April, 2020 to inform us that he had requested an independent assessment of the listing decision and this was undertaken by Richard Hayman, an independent heritage consultant. I enclose the response from the Minister (Enc. A) alongside further reports from Ms Alfrey on behalf of Cadw (Enc B, dated 26th March, 2020) and the report compiled by Richard Hayman (Enc. C, dated 7th April, 2020).

In my previous letter I laid out the reasons for our request of an independent peer review and feel that the response from the Minister does not satisfy this and indeed raises many concerns about their selection criteria for independent assessments. As previously discussed, there are clearly laid out procedures in place for an independent peer review of listing decisions through Historic England or Historic Scotland. It is unclear why this course of action has not been undertaken in this case and how and why the Minister has instead selected his own assessor in the absence of any transparent selection criteria.

I also enclose a rebuttal prepared by Dr Tudur Davies and Robert Scourfield to the latest reports from the Minister, which was submitted today (Enc D 4th May 2020). As outlined in their email response (Enc E), there are serious questions regarding the selection criteria of Richard Hayman as an independent consultant in this case in addition to concerns over the subjective and bias nature of his report. I would particularly like to draw to your attention to the fact that Richard Hayman is currently contracted by Cadw as a self-employed consultant to assist in clearing the backlog of spot-listing requests. In addition, a member of his immediate family is currently working in partnership with Hafod Housing Association, who are the developers seeking demolition of the school. **These are two very clear conflicts of interest which have not been disclosed.**

The lack of transparency in due process and procedure, lack of consistency in decision making, failure to address concerns repeatedly raised, failure to acknowledge the viewpoint of leading specialists as outlined in the group letter and failure to demonstrate an ability to select an independent reviewer raises serious questions over the handling of the listing decision. An independent peer review by Historic England or Historic Scotland is urgently required to ensure that no biases or conflict of interests can be inferred.

We therefore ask you to ensure that the correct due processes are put in place, and adhered to, to ensure that an important part of our history is not lost. The evidential historical, aesthetical and communal values of the former Cowbridge Intermediate School for Girls have been clearly demonstrated and a group of the county's leading specialists in this area are all in agreement that this is an historically important building and should be protected for generations to come.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Pedersen". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light pink rectangular background.

Sara Pedersen
SAVE Cowbridge Girls' School Campaign Group