

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai, Adfywio a Threftadaeth
Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-381
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/05461/12

William Powell AM
committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

10 April 2012

Dear William

Thank you for your letter of 26 March about the petition by Paul Sharrock, on behalf of the Restoration for North Wales Hospital Group, asking the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to assess the architectural heritage of the former North Wales Hospital and to ensure that the bat roosts at the site are protected.

Responsibility for the condition and restoration of the former hospital is a matter for the owner. Denbighshire County Council has lead responsibility for listed building matters in its area rather than the Welsh Government and may intervene with statutory notices if it has concerns about a building's condition.

The former hospital was assessed – and listed - by my officials in Cadw in 1981 as an exceptionally fine, and pioneering example of, Victorian asylum architecture. In 2000, further buildings at the site were listed on account of their architectural importance at the national level.

Since its closure as a mental hospital in 1995, the Council has been actively seeking a new and appropriate use. In 2006, the Council approved outline planning permission for the restoration and development of the site for residential, commercial and parkland use. In 2008, the Council approved an application for listed building consent to demolish a number of the lesser important listed structures so that the development could proceed and the more significant historic buildings could be retained. My officials in Cadw were notified of that application to consider if it should be called-in for determination by the Welsh Ministers but concluded that such intervention was unnecessary. The work commenced but soon stopped as the development was said, by the private owner based in the Virgin Islands, to be no longer viable due to the economic climate at that time.

The former hospital is currently derelict and in a fragile and dangerous condition. The Council is currently taking action under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation

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Areas) Act 1990, carrying out urgent preservation works in the region of some £850K and attempting to recover the cost of the initial works from the owner's agent. The Council is also considering the feasibility of legally transferring ownership of the buildings so that they may be saved and any such transfer could potentially involve an enforced sale or Compulsory Purchase Order by the Council. My officials are kept fully informed of the position but as the owner has appealed to the Welsh Ministers, in practice the Welsh Government's Planning Division, against the recovery of costs by the Council, it is inappropriate for me, or my officials, to comment.

The condition of the former hospital is such that I understand that it has been necessary to carefully demolish unstable elements of the buildings although the material has been stored for reconstruction at a later date. I understand from previous correspondence with the Restoration for the North Wales Hospital Group that it has reservations about the need to remove so much original fabric and my officials have clarified the position. I also understand that the Council's project team includes the full range of specialists that one would expect to be working on such a project and the Health and Safety Executive, and the Prince's Regeneration Trust, are fully involved.

The Council has explained to my officials that it continues to have proper regard to the protected species, including bats, but this is outside my ministerial portfolio and you may wish to take it up with the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development.

Finally, the issues raised by the petitioner are matters for the local authority to consider and I understand that the Council's Conservation Architect, Phil Ebbrell, would be pleased to explain the Council's approach to the preservation of this important listed building. Mr Ebbrell may be contacted by email phil.ebbrell@denbighshire.gov.uk or telephone 01824 406937. If the petitioner remains dissatisfied, he may take the matter up with the Council's Monitoring Officer who is also the Council's Head of Legal and Democratic Services Department and can be contacted by telephone 01824 712562 or dcc_admin@denbighshire.gov.uk



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