

PORTHCAWL GRAND PAVILION
HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT
ISSUE 04
AUGUST 2023



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Bridgend County Borough Council*

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September 2022
*Awen Cultural Trust,
Bridgend County Borough Council*

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August 2023
*Awen Cultural Trust,
Bridgend County Borough Council*

Issue 04

August 2023
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PORTHCAWL GRAND PAVILION: HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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SECTION 1.0

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared by Purcell on behalf of the Awen Cultural Trust and Bridgend County Borough Council as part of their extensive project to refurbish and revitalise the Grand Pavilion. The building is of special architectural and historic interest, becoming Grade II Listed in 1998. The listing report is reproduced in Appendix A. The purpose of this report is to provide a Heritage Impact Assessment for the proposed scheme to refurbish the Grand Pavilion. It has been written to accompany the application for Listed Building Consent.

1.2 AUTHORSHIP AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has been prepared by Purcell, a firm of conservation architects and heritage consultants. The report has been prepared by Will Holborow, Associate and by Emma Bryant, Senior Heritage and Townscape Consultant at Purcell. Photographs in the report were taken on 25th April and 8th May 2022. Historic buildings plans were kindly located by volunteers at Porthcawl Museum.

SECTION 2.0

UNDERSTANDING THE BUILDING

2.1 LOCATION AND SETTING

The Grand Pavilion is located in Porthcawl, a coastal town and community in the county borough of Bridgend, South Wales. Situated prominently at the centre of Porthcawl's sea-front Esplanade, the Grand Pavilion is orientated on a roughly north-south axis, with its southern principal elevation facing south and capturing striking views across the Bristol Channel. In front of the Pavilion is a broad pavement and on the opposite side of the Esplanade is a broad sea-front promenade.

On the west side of the site is Esplanade Avenue, a traditional residential street of gabled Victorian houses. Behind the Pavilion and at a lower level are two areas of hard surfacing, either side of the pavilion and its fly tower. The car park is approached from Esplanade Avenue via a ramp on the site's west side. The boundary wall is built in mortared rubble stone with a random rubble topping course. This wall pre-dates the construction of the Pavilion and is clearly visible in the photograph of construction in progress.

The east side of the site is bordered by Mary Street, with a modern development of shops and apartments on the opposite corner which replaced the former Esplanade Hotel. The boundary wall along the site's east side is built in mortared rubble stone with a random rubble topping course. The rear of the site is immediately adjacent to a four-storey block of flats.



© GoogleEarth 2022



Postcard from Y Llynfi collection

UNDERSTANDING THE BUILDING

2.2 DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

Porthcawl Grand Pavilion is a Grade II Listed Building. Cadw's listing report notes that it is designated 'as an important seafront building retaining much of its original character and reflecting Porthcawl's development as a major South Wales sea-side resort after the closure of the docks in 1906; also for its importance in its use of ferrous concrete.'⁰¹

There are no other designated heritage assets in the immediate vicinity of the Grand Pavilion however there are several listed buildings in the wider surrounding area. To the north-east of the Grand Pavilion, on John Street, are the Grade II listed Public Conveniences (1924) and The Old Police Station (late 19th century), also Grade II. There also are several listed buildings on the Harbour, to the south-east of the Grand Pavilion.

The table below sets out the distribution of listed buildings in the vicinity of the site.

NAME	AGE	GRADE	LINK TO CADW REPORT
Public Conveniences	1924	II	https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=en&id=11355
The Old Police Station	1877 or 1881	II	https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=en&id=11354
Walls of the Outer Basin and West Pier/Quay	Early to Mid 19th Century	II	https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=en&id=19363
Jennings Warehouse	1832	II	https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=en&id=11369
The Look-out Tower	Mid 19th Century	II	http://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=en&id=19359
The Old Customs House	Between 1867 and 1876.	II	https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=en&id=19358
The Breakwater	Mid 19th Century	II	https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=en&id=19362
Lighthouse on Breakwater Porthcawl Harbour	1866	II	https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=en&id=11370

⁰¹ Cadw, *Grand Pavilion*, Full Report for Listed Buildings, <http://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?lang=en&id=19364>

UNDERSTANDING THE BUILDING

2.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING

The central section of the façade facing the esplanade has a bowed entrance bay with channelled rustication in the bays either side and a balustraded parapet above. Each bay is flanked by paired Tuscan columns. On either side of the entrance block were arched entrances leading to broad flights of steps down to the lower garden level behind the building. Flanking these steps on either side were open-fronted shelters with five pairs of Tuscan columns at the front and seating at the rear. To either side of the shelters were further arched entrances leading to steps leading down, each flanked by two pairs of columns. The entire façade to the esplanade was formed in a gentle curve.

The original design for the dome was to be considerably higher, as shown on the watercolour image below, with higher clerestory windows below. As built, as shown in the photographs over leaf, the dome is shallower and lower in profile. It has four circular lunette windows, one in each direction. The watercolour shows flag poles at four corners of the octagonal dome, a weathervane and lightning conductor at its apex. The design also shows projecting ribs to each segment of the domed roof, which was covered in asphalt. A late alteration to the design was the flat-roofed rectangular addition at the rear, housing the stage and fly tower. The roofs around the dome and over the flanking wings are flat.

On the south side of the dome, above the entrance, is the clock tower – more Art Deco in character – with the clock face mounted on a triangular concrete structure. This sits on a square base which carries the words 'GRAND PAVILION' on its front face and the date 1932 on the side faces.

The design drawings note 'public gardens' either side of the building and at the rear, however no trace of these remain with these spaces now used as hard-surfaced car parking.

The original walls are built of an early example of reinforced concrete, now painted with a pale creamy-yellow colour and the columns painted in a contrasting white colour. Due to insufficient concrete cover of the reinforcement, there are many signs of spalling concrete across the Grand Pavilion's elevations.

Internally, the original building was formed of an octagonal dance hall entered from the esplanade via a pair of revolving doors at the centre of the façade and an entrance hall. To either side of the entrance were ladies' and mens' cloakrooms and WCs. Below the dome was a Palm Court with a sprung dance floor and balconies. The lower level below the Palm Court was for general storage and cloakrooms.

Some of the original joinery remains, including the balustrades to the balconies and the clerestory windows to the main auditorium containing highly-decorative stained-glass.

In the 1990s, the Grand Pavilion was altered to accommodate the needs of its evolving communities and programme, whereby its eastern and western open loggias were infilled to provide staff offices and a public cafe. Furthermore, the eastern and western gallery walkways which wrap the main auditorium leading to the lower ground floor were covered with an aluminium-framed glazing system, becoming sheltered internal features, with the ferro-concrete balustrades becoming concealed.

In the 2000s a small extension was added to the western car park, providing a new lower ground-floor entrance which introduced a passenger lift to auditorium level, addressing to some extent the Grand Pavilion's longstanding issues of universal accessibility.



Watercolour image of the proposed design by the Architect, E.J Moore, 1931

UNDERSTANDING THE BUILDING



Frontage to esplanade



West end of front façade



Former shelter



Detail of front façade



Detail of front façade



Steps to original main entrance



Steps to former shelter

UNDERSTANDING THE BUILDING



Clerestory windows



Clock Tower



Side elevation



Side elevation



Side elevation facing west



Side elevation facing west

UNDERSTANDING THE BUILDING



Side facing east



Side from east end



Interior of hall



Interior of hall



Interior of hall