

The Pales - future options.

The Pales Quaker Meeting House: Introduction

The Pales Quaker Meeting House occupies a spectacular hillside site in Radnorshire, Powys, approached along a one mile lane to the north of the village of Llandegley on the A44. It is six miles from the nearest town, Llandrindod Wells. The Meeting House stands next to a burial ground established in 1673, evidence of the early establishment of Quakers in Wales, following visits from George Fox. The two-roomed thatched Meeting House was probably built in the early 18th century, and despite the decline of local Quakers, has remained in continuous use. In the 19th century a school was briefly established at the Pales by Quakers from Leominster, and a brick cottage adjoining the Meeting house was built in 1867 as accommodation for a schoolmaster and visiting ministers. The cottage was later used as warden's accommodation. A water supply was installed in the 1990s and a separate shower and toilet block was added to the south of the burial ground. The Meeting House is in good order, but the cottage (damp and uninsulated) needs major work. Since 2015 it has been occupied by a Resident Friend on the understanding that this is a temporary arrangement.

To the south and west of the toilet block are grounds of around one acre, including an area reserved as an extension for the burial ground, vegetable and fruit gardens, mixed woodland planted c 2007, and a small camping area. The site is surrounded by grazing land. Car parking is available on the nearby quarry site (an SSSI).

The Meeting House and the attached cottage are listed Grade II*; the site is singled out as of special historic interest in many guide books, and is on local walking routes. There are visitors throughout the year. At present there is c £30,000 in the Pales Funds, some of it restricted to special purposes, including upkeep of the burial ground and repair of the thatch. Area Meeting has contributed £4000 p.a. to assist with the annual running cost of c £6000; the difference has been met by the Pales Funds, and fundraising activities, including the Friends of the Pales scheme.

The Pales Management Group was established in 2016 with the remit of investigating a satisfactory future.

The efforts of the PMG since its creation have largely been divided between maintaining the buildings and support of the Friend in residence, organising and hosting fundraising events, and drawing up plans for a sustainable future which included the essential renovation of the Warden's Cottage and the Meeting House and the provision of additional on-site accommodation. To that end plans were drawn up with guidance from architects well-versed in the update of similar buildings to carbon-neutral status; following a continuous dialogue with local Planners and Heritage officers a set of plans have been agreed and are currently with the Planning Authorities awaiting an outcome.

Now that we have most of and will shortly receive the remaining planning permissions based on those plans it is appropriate to detail the options we believe are available to the Area Meeting for them to discern the way forward. Below are the possible actions and below that is a detailed explanation of each option.

A Threshing Meeting will be held on Zoom on at 10.00 am on 27th March 2021, clerked by Deborah Rowlands, to help us to discern which of the various options is most appropriate. The details on how to comment and how to obtain the Zoom link are on the website.

Action	Function	Capital implications	Revenue implications	Issues
1. Do nothing	Minimal usage by Friends Caretaker's expenses paid	Nil	Cost to the AM of approx £4,000 per annum - assuming £5,000 pa. raised by Events and Friends of the Pales.	Continued burden on the Area Meeting finances
2. Sell all	Nil -	£350k income	Burial ground expenses covered by restricted funds.	Loss of heritage to all
3a. Sell cottage but keep some land etc Use some capital from sale of the cottage for development of glamping facilities	Possible use as more limited residential centre Some commercial lettings/ glamping	£180k (+?) income from sale of cottage of which a significant amount to be spent on developments	Investment in glamping facilities could generate an income.	Capital raised enables it to be more than just a MH. No warden to handle bookings, maintenance etc Usage and income not guaranteed.
3b. Sell all but MH	Occasional use by Friends	£280k income	Potential for £280,000 for AM building fund. Maintenance of Meeting House could be covered by the Restricted Funds held by the AM and income from Friends of the Pales.	Meeting House remains available for AM activities but no on-site warden.
3c. Sell all but MH - discuss transfer of ownership of the Meeting House to a charitable body such as Addoldai Cymru	Occasional use by Friends possible.	£280k income	Burial ground expenses covered by restricted funds.	Heritage value to public maintained, but £70,000 less for AM funds.
4. Execute plans as drawn up	Vibrant residential centre for MfFiW. Warden in residence Some commercial lettings/ glamping. Enhanced disabled access to the Cottage and School Room.	Upwards of £650,000 to be raised by fundraising	Income potential of upwards of £5,000 if commercial possibilities exploited	Large fundraising effort required, crowdfunding a possibility. Subsequent usage and income not guaranteed
5a Upgrade cottage for commercial rent; no other development	Occasional use by Friends	At least £100,000 to find for cottage renovation	£7,000 rent per annum Upkeep costs now minimal	£100,000 Capital for renovations to find, then recouped slowly through leasing the cottage. This retains option for resident warden and future developments, if they become viable.
5b Upgrade cottage for commercial rent and limited other development of site	Use as more limited residential centre for AM, MfFiW and other groups. Some commercial lettings/ glamping	£150,000 to be raised for renovation and some site improvements.	£7,000 rent per annum plus potential for camping/ glamping also gearing an income Upkeep costs now minimal	£150,000 Capital for renovations to find, then recouped slowly through leasing and camping/ glamping No warden to handle bookings, maintenance. Usage and income not guaranteed
6. An advertisement is circulated to Friends throughout BYM which invites expressions of interest in taking on the Pales.	Could remove financial responsibility from the AM but retain the Quaker nature of the site.	Negotiable	Negotiable	Finding the right people and covenanting the land correctly. Renting the property would leave the Area Meeting with financial responsibilities.

1. **Do Nothing.** This is not a reasonable possibility. When we started this process we were on the point of refurbishing the Cottage without planning permission etc for a cost of about £60k because the Cottage was considered to be 'uninhabitable'. Carole, our Friend in Residence, has lived in it in its current state as did the Williams family before her. However, anyone seeing it as it is would agree that if it is to be a habitation then it must be improved so 'no action' is not a real option and would imply capital expenditure.
2. **Sell all.** Peter Hussey has received a report from Adam Dean, of James Dean Estate Agents in Llandrindod Wells, which gives an assessment of the values of various parts of the The Pales. Selling the property as a whole, whilst retaining the burial ground, has a potential value of £350,000. A new entrance to the burial ground would need to be constructed.
3. **a. Sell the cottage in its current condition and a small area of land to form a garden.** This could produce a capital sum of £180,000 which could be used to make improvements to the Meeting House and School room, disabled access to the School Room and glamping facilities. This would require a supervisory team to manage the letting and cleaning/maintenance of the huts. It might be possible to engage at a cost a managing agent who would oversee the letting, booking and cleaning of the huts but this would significantly reduce any income. Right of Access to the Toilet Block would need to be established. The Area Meeting would still be responsible for maintenance of the Meeting House and School Room and the grounds.
b. Sell all but the Meeting House and Burial Ground. If the land were divided and a fence placed between the School Room and the Warden's Cottage the Area Meeting could then retain the Meeting House, School room and Burial Ground for Quaker purposes. The Area Meeting would still be responsible for their upkeep but the various restricted funds that are in hand would cover these costs. Continued access to the toilet block for users of the Meeting House would need to be negotiated.
c. Sell all but the Meeting House and Burial Ground and gift the Meeting House to a suitable charity. Addoldai Cymru, a charitable foundation that takes on responsibility for Ancient Place of Worship in Wales, has expressed an interest in visiting the Pales and might be in a position to take on the care and responsibility for the building, though they would hope for some endowment funding. This would release Area Meeting of the financial liability and would place the building in the public domain.
4. **Execute all the plans as drawn up.** In 2019 our Architects gave us an estimate of the costs of the plans as drawn assuming they were accepted by the Planning Authority. Changes have been made since then so these estimates do not include the cost of creating the parking spaces at the top of the site and the cost of providing a passing bay on the west approach road. We currently estimate the total costs to be in the region of £600,000 to £700,00. This money would need to be raised from donations and grants. These figures were estimates, to achieve accurate figures would cost £2,200 to cover additional specifications and cost planning management.
5. **a. Upgrade cottage for commercial rent; no other development.** This would require the cottage to be renovated to provide suitable accommodation for a family and would be rented out, preferably on a short term lease. Adam Dean estimated that a suitably renovated cottage would bring in an annual income of £7,000. The Area Meeting would remain responsible to maintenance of the cottage, the Meeting House and School Room and the grounds. The premises, other than the Warden's cottage would still be available for Quaker uses and could be used to generate funds in the way that the PMG have over the past years - £1368 was raised through events in 2018.
b. Upgrade cottage for commercial rent, complete the planned work for the Toilet Block, install the shepherd's huts as planned. This would generate income from the cottage and income from letting the huts. This would require a supervisory team to manage the letting of the cottage and the letting and cleaning/maintenance of the huts. It might be possible to engage at a cost a managing agent who would oversee the letting, booking and cleaning of the huts but this would significantly reduce any income.
6. **An advertisement is circulated to Friends throughout BYM which invites expressions of interest in taking on the Pales. This might be**
 - as Resident Friends with a vision for the whole site
 - Friends who would like to rent the Cottage as it is and manage its refurbishment and have oversight of the Meeting House, Burial Ground and Garden
 - Friends who would like to purchase the Cottage (and some land) with appropriate covenants concerning the care of the Meeting House and Burial Ground and first refusal on any future sale.

This would enable the 'historic Meeting House' to be retained and because the cottage is the major expenditure this would reduce the running costs significantly.