

A FUTURE FOR THE TAVISTOCK ABBEY REMAINS

In 2019 the Devon Historic Buildings Trust (DHBT) began working on investigating a future for the remains of the Abbey in Tavistock such that they would be safeguarded for the future as well as more readily understood and appreciated by the public. What research and information there is about the abbey and its community, is fragmented and not easily located. Discussions were held with the officers of Tavistock Town Council, one of the major stakeholders, and with Historic England to look at the feasibility of what could be done and to find a way forward.

In 2021, following the easing of access from the pandemic, the DHBT held discussions with the Tavistock Heritage Trust (THT) to see whether it would be more practical to work with them regarding the future abbey remains and the interpretation. The DHBT remains an interested party and is fully supportive of the proposed way forward.

In 2023 meetings have been held with the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) and with Historic England. In both instances we were encouraged to move forward with Historic England offering administrative support and the NHFL advising that our initial objectives should be with Betsy Grimbal's tower and the archaeological investigations, as set out below.

Our main objectives:

The objectives are wide and diverse to ensure the continuous conservation and care of the abbey remains, which are Listed and a Schedule Ancient Monument. They will ensure long term interest both from the local community and visitors, and provide knowledge of the abbey, which until now has been rather piecemeal, and create an educational resource for schools and research.

The intention is to:

- ❖ Prevent further unnecessary deterioration of the abbey remains.
- ❖ Determine approved methods of repairs and restoration of the abbey remains to ensure good conservation long term, and to relieve the burden on the owners by the determination and agreement of the appropriate levels and methods of conservation.
- ❖ Repair and restoration of Betsy Grimbal's Tower and the Still House such that they are open at all levels to the public.
- ❖ Provide visual and digital interpretation of the abbey for visitors, and for educational purposes.
- ❖ Carry out a full geophysical survey of the churchyard, Plymouth Road, the Square and the area on which the abbey stood from which a 3D interpretation would be made.
- ❖ Carry out the restoration of, and long-term housing of the abbey remains currently kept in, Betsy Grimbal's Tower.
- ❖ Investigate the relationship between the abbey and St Eustachius via archaeological means.
- ❖ Carry out archaeological investigation of the floor of the gateway of Betsy Grimbal's tower to locate the original ground level – to be carried out by local people/schools under the direction of an archaeologist.
- ❖ Set up a community project to find other unknown remains of the abbey.
- ❖ Produce a short book about the abbey.

Project Governance

The Group consists of knowledgeable volunteers with a background in buildings, conservation and archaeology which is overseen by the THT. Others with additional required skills will be invited to participate as the project progresses.

Group members (names available on request):

- ...retired consulting engineer; former DHBT trustee.
- ...retired conservation architect; former Chair and Trustee of DHBT.
- ...retired archaeologist – Museum of London.
- ...director le Page Architects; Tavistock Heritage Trust Trustee.
- ...Tavistock Heritage Trust Trustee.

Stakeholder and Community Engagement

The Group wishes to gain agreement to the project with Tavistock Town Council and St Eustachius as the two stakeholders with long term responsibility for the ruins. Once the stakeholders' support has been obtained, we will invite the public to come on board as a community project.

Funding

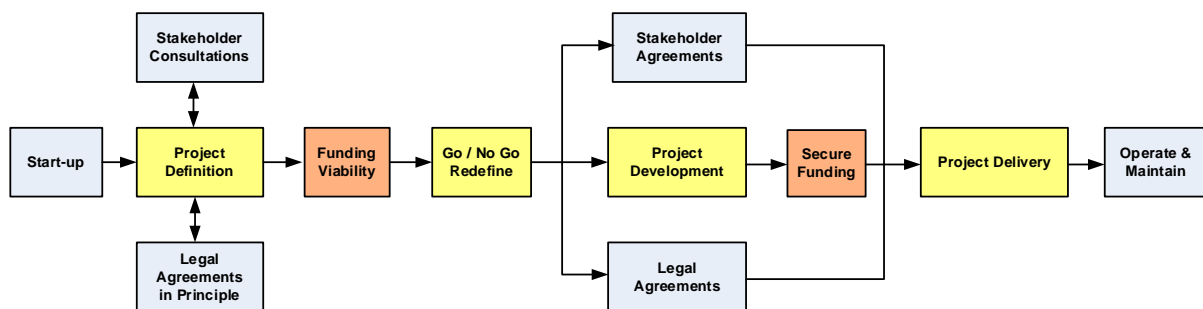
The idea as presented to the NHLF and Historic England is that monies to fulfil the Objectives would be obtained via grants and other fund-raising means as far as possible.

Timescale

Currently we are working with Historic England to determine the extent of the work required for the various elements in order to arrive at a budget figure prior to further discussions with the NHLF and other funding sources.

The stages and timing of project definition, development, funding, and delivery outlined below will always be under review due to possible slippages as has already occurred due to matters outside of our control.

Tavistock Abbey Revelation: Overview



Indicative timeframe

Q3 2021	Q1 2023	Q2 2023	Q3 & Q4 2023	Q4 2024	2024	from 2025
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