



From left: Dr Rhodri Llwyd Morgan-Director of Welsh Language and External Engagement & Chair Old College Project Board; Gwenda Sippings-Old Students' Association President; Nate Pidcock-Student Union President; Professor Elizabeth Treasure-Vice-Chancellor; Moc Lewis-Welsh Culture Officer & UMCA President; Jim O'Rourke-Old College Project Manager; Louise Jagger-Director Development & Alumni Relations

Old College Project Update

I am delighted to welcome you to this first biannual update on the Old College project for Vice-Chancellor's Giving Circle members. We are deeply grateful for your early support of the Fundraising Appeal and hope that you enjoy reading about key developments and learning about the difference that your gift is making.

As you will see from the above photograph, our plans now feature on hoardings outside Old College and there is much excitement from our students, staff, local community and beyond. We could not have come this far without your support and solidarity, and that of alumni and friends around the world. In recognition of your support and ongoing interest in the project, we will be inviting you to regular Giving Circle video presentations and Q&As, with the first taking place in July.

As you will be aware, our plans to transform Old College by the University's 150th anniversary in 2022/23 are amongst the most ambitious the University has ever undertaken. I am pleased to confirm that the overall project remains on track despite the challenges of the pandemic and we are even more excited by what we have planned now across the breadth of the Old College, Georgian townhouses and the new atrium extension. Thanks to our talented and creative designers, architects and engineers we are now fine-tuning interior designs and furniture schedules and are almost at the final stage of our design plans. This is quite a feat considering the scale of the project with 143 rooms across 7 floors in a grade 1 listed building with such eclectic architecture.

You can find photos of our plans here:

[Old College Overview](#)

This photograph of the Quad is one of a series especially commissioned to document the building as it is now. I thought you would welcome a sneak preview at one space that I know holds many memories for our alumni and will remain the heart of the building when it throws open its doors in 2023 with seating to enjoy exhibitions, activities and meetings in the adjoining rooms.



Our Fundraising Appeal continues at a pace and we have now reached £26m towards the total £27m capital project costs thanks to your generosity and funding partners. Further fundraising remains crucial in our last two years of the project so we very much hope that you will consider continuing to support the Appeal.

A video this summer is just one of many initiatives to help us attract new donors around the world. The Appeal will be at the heart of our 150th anniversary goals, and promoted at a number of high profile activities and events. Reunion groups and clubs and societies are also now becoming involved and raising funds for our major new spaces such as the Science Centre, the Centre for Dialogue and the University Museum. Other areas will be promoted in the autumn so watch this space!

It was important to the University from the outset that all Old College donors were recognised in the building. I am pleased to report that our donor recognition opportunities are proving popular and are now online. [Donor Recognition](#)

I do hope that this special update is helpful and of interest. If you would like a personal update on the Appeal, or if you would like discuss any aspect of the project, a donation or our donor recognition opportunities, please do contact Manon.



Meanwhile my deep and grateful thanks for your support.

Best wishes

Louise Jagger
Director - Development & Alumni Relations





Old College Progress Report

Design Team and Area Cost Plans

The design team and engineers are making good progress and we are now back on track and have completed the RIBA 4 designs. All Old College design work is also now complete with the final areas, the two Georgian townhouses and new atrium completed in March, with the final pre-tender cost assessments by our QS company (RPA) at the end of April.

A decision on contingency and inflation reductions as costs are refined will be made when RPA have completed all areas but we are aware of some possible increases and some possible reductions in the costs identified at the RIBA 3 stage in August last year and hope to be in the same ball park of about £26m for construction costs.

Main contractor

Having completed a PQQ process to advertise for interested construction companies in January, we have now drawn up a shortlist and invited three suitable contractors to take part in the full tender process based on a detailed schedule of works, that allowed 8 weeks for the pricing/tender submission by early June, to start on site in early August and complete in March 2023.

Asbestos and clearing the building

We achieved significant cost savings against our budget for asbestos removal but will retain a contingency of about £50k to cover unknown finds or complications. Clearing industrial/scientific waste from the attics has been completed and the estates staff have cleared the basements. Music has completed its move to the Bwthyn and Brynamlwg and Archives were packed and moved to Gogerddan in March. The Welsh Department has also now removed the final library books to store. We have completed the final clearing and storing of some furniture to be reused, and disposal of the rest of the furniture is planned with a public sale in July. Asbestos removal commenced mid-February beginning in the Georgian townhouses and will complete by the end of July.

Listed Building Consent, Building Regulation Approval, Drainage Approval, Highways Approval

These are all in preparation and will be subject to detailed discussions with CADW and Ceredigion. There will be some overlap with main contractor tendering, final cost plan confirmation and the car park planning application, but we plan to have confirmed all aspects to start on site in August.

Car Park

Having agreed the approach with Ceredigion we presented a number of options to St Michaels Church. The University car park area and options for the church to improve their car park areas, and lighting etc. have now been agreed. We can now proceed to draft the legal agreements and apply for planning permission and permission from Faculty (the Church in Wales body) who manage the church's property estate. Overall costs have been significantly reduced following agreement with Ceredigion on drainage issues and an understanding that no works should involve digging down more than 300mm to avoid complications with the previous graveyard which underlies the car park areas.

Mather & Co, Exhibitions and Collections

Cara Cullen, our Collections Research Coordinator, is making excellent progress in confirming the Department collections and their locations, and engaging with Departments, School of Art and Archives. Mather & Co are working on designs and planning for the exhibitions in collaboration with the research by Cara and in conjunction with possible additional exhibitions which include Prof. Richard Lucas, Ser Cymru Chair and the Living Wales exhibition. Plans also include the Law Department, Madrigal Singers Interpretation and other displays which are becoming possible through additional funding opportunities. We will need to ensure close collaboration with the interior designers at ASL and Lawray and our discussions to agree on branding and brand development will begin shortly, following the recent appointment of Efen, our brand development consultants.

Conclusion

So, we have embarked on a key year to begin construction within a few months. This requires decisions and outcomes on the elements noted, and a final decision by the University Council in July, but there is confidence too that we are on track. We may even gain from the delays in 2020, as we enter the construction tender phase with fewer uncertainties with regard to possible Covid and Brexit impacts but plenty to keep us busy!



Jim O'Rourke
Project Manager



View from stairs towards Seddon Room



Window detail in Library



The Tower - examples of areas in Old College that require extensive work



Collections Research Report

Since starting my role in October, I have been researching University collections and history across every department. I have been struck by the wealth of exceptional people I have encountered. Many of our collections come to life because of the stories of people connected to them and the pioneering work they achieved.

Some gems have been unearthed in the process of emptying Old College recently. In the attic there were a series of glass-plates with some of the first images ever captured of a new particle; the meson. These are remnants of the research of E. J. Williams from the Physics Department before the Second World War. In the basement there were boxes full of archaeology from an iron-age hill fort including a quern stone for grinding grain, pottery sherds and fragments from the wall of a round-house.

Our collections contain everything from Rossetti paintings to a pangolin skeleton. IBERS houses a globally significant collection of 35,000 seeds with ledgers dating to 1919. Some of these were gathered from environments and habitats that no longer exist. Our collections have been shaped by rare and extraordinary bequests and it was Aberystwyth's collections which helped to found the early National Library and National Museum of Wales. Alumnus Dr. Iorwerth Peate was the founding curator of St. Fagans National Museum and instrumental to preserving the material and intangible culture of Wales.

Many of the most important figures to secure official recognition for the Welsh language were connected to Aberystwyth and this may have contributed to the legacy of research on bilingualism which puts the University firmly on the map.



Prof. Tedi Millward and John Davies lead the protest calling for official status of the Welsh Language

The research for Old College extends beyond things. We are collecting the oral history of the university and I am working on a project with the Geography Department to map the memories of alumni and the Old Students Association. There are not many current students who know that Aberystwyth had the first departments of Interpol or Geography and Anthropology in the world. They also don't know that in the 1960s, Aberystwyth students made the national press by successfully hiding a fake portrait on the walls of the National Gallery in London for several days to raise money for Rag Week.



Givetto Aberragi, on display for 10 days in the National Gallery

I am currently working closely with the exhibition design company Mather & Co to work out some of the themes and connections across the collections. Old College will include a permanent gallery on the history of the University. Another gallery displaying its research and innovation are galleries that can be used for special, temporary exhibitions using University collections. This will create exciting opportunities to involve students in researching and displaying objects in the future.

Another important aspect of Old College will be to show student life over 150 years and we are hoping to gather objects and recollections from former students about their time here. A big part of our plans are to record oral history and to map the memories of Old College itself.



Look out for Old College news via email and our social media pages if you would like to get involved!

@OldCollegeAber, @AberUniArchives

Cara Cullen
Collections Research Coordinator

Historical graffiti in the Tower



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