

PORTELET TOWER & L'ILE AU GUERDAIN Conservation Statement 2020



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INTRODUCTION

The subject of the Conservation Statement is Portelet Tower & L'île au Guerdain in Portelet Bay, St Brelade, Jersey. The primary purpose of the statement is to draw together existing information, to set down a brief history for the site, a description of the principal elements, an assessment of significance, the identification of major conservation issues and a series of policies. The Conservation Statement is intended to inform and advise the management of the site and future decisions concerning its alteration and use.

1 UNDERSTANDING THE SITE

This part of the Conservation Statement briefly reviews the history and development of the site, provides an overview of the key surviving elements of its existing fabric, and an assessment of its significance.

1.1 TOPOGRAPHY

Portelet Tower is located on an islet in Portelet Bay, St Brelade in the south west of Jersey; approximately 200 metres offshore within the small sandy bay. The rocky islet is of coarse-grained granite of Corbiere type with Dolerite intrusions.

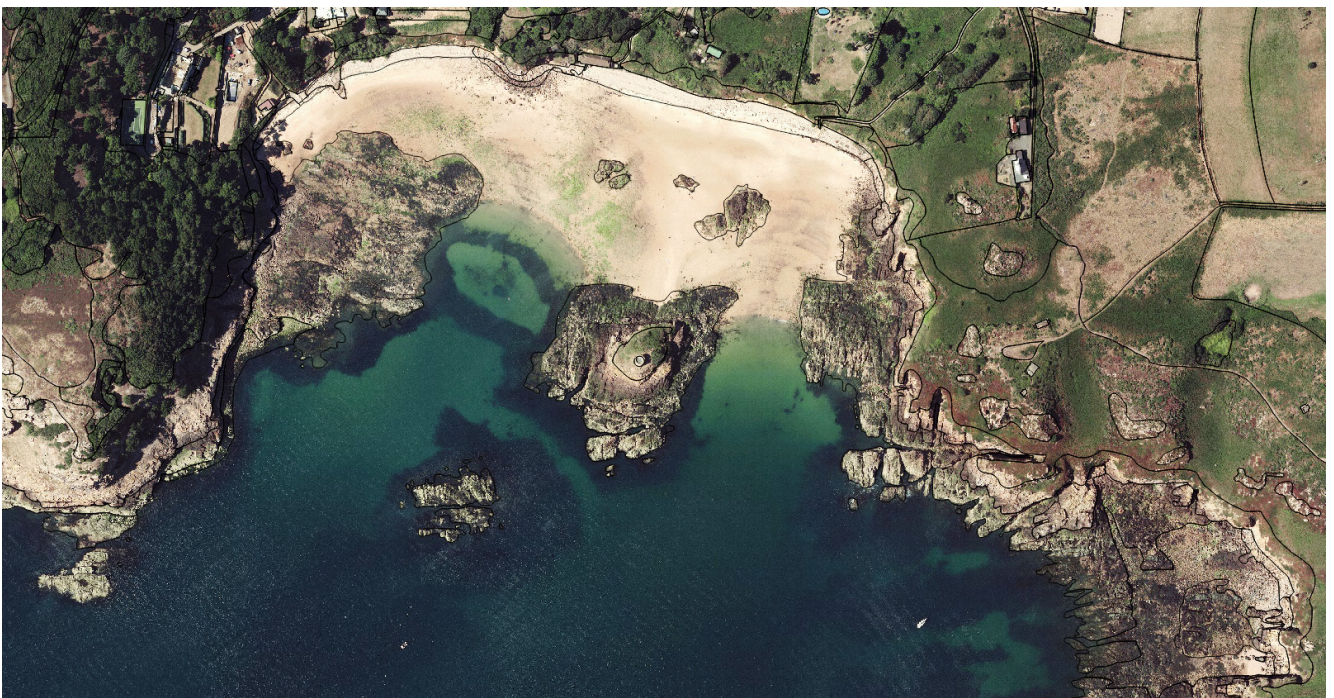


Figure 1: Aerial view of Portelet Tower and surrounding bay (Government of Jersey)



Figure 2: Portelet Bay, with Portelet Tower

1.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

EARLY HISTORY OF THE ISLET

Jersey Place Names (1986) state that the name 'Portelet' means a small harbour. The tower and islet are locally known as 'Janvrin's Tomb'. It is so named after Philippe Janvrin, captain of the 'Esther', who on returning from Nantes in 1721 was forced to quarantine the ship and crew in Belcroute Bay, as plague had reached epidemic in France. Janvrin died onboard ship but his body could not be brought ashore because of the plague, and the court ordered that he should be buried on the islet of L'Île au Guerdain in Portelet Bay. It is believed that the body was later re-interred at St Brelade's churchyard, although there is little evidence for this or any tombstone.

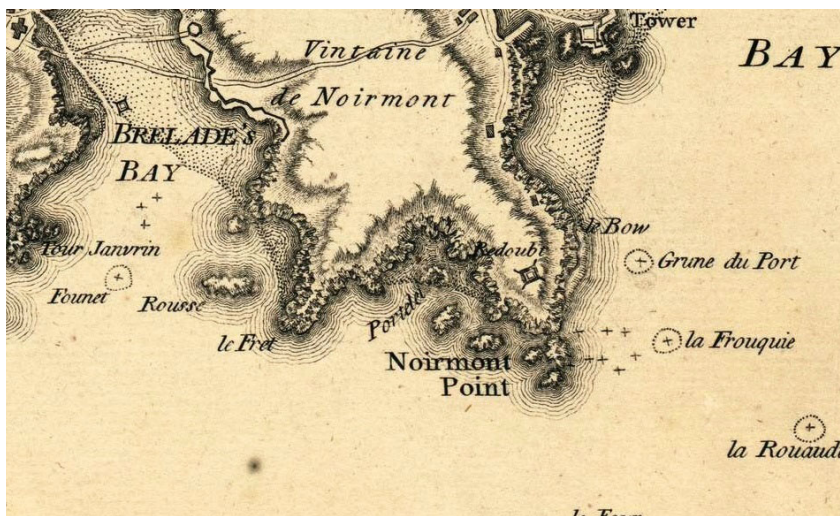


Figure 3: 1783 Faden map of Jersey showing defences

Portelet Bay did not feature in the construction programme for defensive towers undertaken by the Governor Sir Henry Seymour Conway from 1778 onwards, which focused on vulnerable coastal locations where a risk of enemy landing was present. The Richmond Map of 1795 shows the vacant islet, called Ile Janvrin. The 1783 William Faden Map, recording island defences, shows a Redoubt on the high ground of Noirmont headland above Portelet Bay.

THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY 'MARTELLO' TOWER

The outbreak of war against revolutionary France in 1793 was the start of a long struggle, ending at Waterloo in 1815. Jersey was heavily defended throughout this period, and correspondence from the then Governor, General Don, on 22nd May 1806 demonstrates his concern that French incursions were imminent. In a letter to Earl Spencer he beseeched, "My Lord, I beg leave to submit to Your Lordship's consideration the enclosed report on the Island of Jersey, by the perusal of which I presume it will appear evident; that the island of Jersey is likely to be attacked the ensuing Autumn or Winter...that the Island is so situated as to be liable to surprise... that the best mode of defending the large bays is by combined operation of Field Artillery, Cavalry &

Infantry, supported by a line of round armed Towers on the beach (such as those lately built on the coast of Sussex & Kent)" (Jersey Archive ref: L/F/95/A/2). This was followed by a letter of 29th June 1806 from Don to his Officers, "With regard to the defence of the large Bays the following additional round Towers (such as those lately built on the coast of Sussex & Kent) I am of opinion should be built without delay... In my report I have mentioned that this Island is liable to surprise, and the fatal example of the landing of Roulcour (sic) shews the necessity of every point being watched and guarded. The present position on

the coast I deem inadequate for this purpose & consider additional posts indispensable" including amongst others, "At Portelette." (Jersey Archive ref: L/F/95/A/4/1)

British military engineers had been impressed by a French fort on the southern tip of Corsica at a place called Mortella, which had inflicted a severe defeat on two British warships which attacked it in 1794. It was squatter than the traditional Jersey towers with much thicker walls, particularly on the seaward side, and designed solely for the mounting of ordnance without the loopholes or machicolations of 'Conway' towers. Martello Towers, as they became known, were constructed in their dozens along the south



Figure 5: Painting of Portelet Tower, by Philip John Oules, undated (JH ref: SJA/0000/01317)

under certain circumstances as affording cover for riflemen or as guard houses for infantry but they are ill adapted as Watch Houses from their low level positions.” (Jersey Archive ref: A/D2/1)

By the end of the 19th century, the War Office was looking to dispose of these buildings. A letter from the War Office to the General Officer Commanding in Jersey, dated 30th April 1896, states, “I am to ask that you will consider and give an opinion as to whether it might not be convenient and of advantage to offer to hand over to the States the whole of the detached properties such as old detached Martello Towers and other antiquated works of Defence, which are in no sense at present, and so far as can be foreseen will never be required by the War Department for military purposes”. Enclosed with the letter was a list of properties ‘probably available for disposal’ including ‘Isle of Janvrin, Portelet Bay’ (Jersey Archive ref: D/AP/AD/7/68).

Unlike many pre-existing fortifications there is no evidence that Portelet Tower was utilised during the German Occupation, perhaps as it was located below the extensive Batterie Lothringen on Noirmont headland.

The tower was leased from the States of Jersey to the Jersey Boy Scouts Association from 1964 to 1974. A letter from by A Hart, dated 13th June 1966, states that the lease was 2/6d per annum, and describes that the tower, “consists of one large circular room enclosed by a granite wall five feet thick and a very old wooden roof. A doorway, window and fireplace are

set into the wall, and access to the roof is through a skylight.” It sets out that the tower was made weatherproof by covering the roof with Ruberoid and installing a new door in 1954, but that urgent work was needed to protect the tower from further damage by hooligans and the weather, including a replacement door, the renewal of certain roof beams and the restoration to the ‘original level’. A visit by the Scouts in 1974 included ‘fixing the fireplace’, the water tank and roof hatch. (Jersey Archive ref: L/D/36/J1/18)

Portelet Tower is currently owned by the States of Jersey but is managed and operated by Jersey Heritage. The site is formally protected as a Grade 1 Listed Building for its historical, architectural and archaeological significance (Listed Building ref: BR0105).

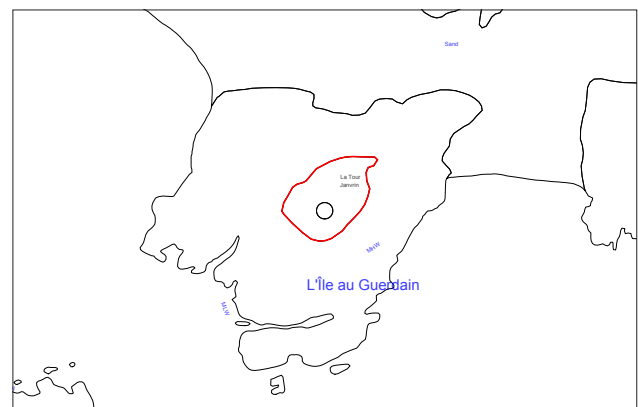


Figure 6: The boundary of the Listed Building, shown in red (Government of Jersey)

1.3 DESCRIPTION

The ‘Martello’ Towers in Jersey vary greatly in size and complexity - the most sophisticated being Kempt Tower, completed in 1834, and the simplest being Portelet Tower. In common with the other Martello-type towers, Portelet was designed primarily for mounting artillery on the roof platform and has the characteristic squat and robust Martello profile.

The tower is circular in plan, measuring around 8.2m in diameter and 5.2m in height. It has battered, thick outer walls - approximately 1.5m deep - of squared rubble granite, which diminishes in scale towards the parapet. There are no loopholes and very few other openings, the thick walls providing the main

1.3 DESCRIPTION

defence. Facing inland, away from the direction of attack, are a single window (raised at around 2.15m) and an entrance door at ground level. The rectangular window opening has a roughly dressed lintel and sill with jamb stones. The doorway lintel is formed by a large slab, around 1m deep, with holes for iron bars on the underside, which is supported off a pair of elongated jamb stones. The stonework to the courses below appears to have been disturbed, with the outer face of the opening widened, cement rendered and with brickwork patches.

The other Martello-type towers in Jersey all have an entrance raised at first floor level with a specially profiled threshold to enable the entrance ladder to be withdrawn from above. The doorway at Portelet is naturally elevated on a rocky outcrop and this suggests that the steep-sided rocky islet itself was considered an essential part of the defence. There are also the remains of a curved rubble granite-walled structure to the south of the doorway which may have related to its defence. Portelet Tower was certainly mounted with a 1 x 24pdr gun and therefore intended to be more than a guardhouse - despite its small scale.

The roof deck, with a broad encircling parapet wall and firing step, was originally designed to mount a single traversing gun. It is currently covered with a modern timber 'roof'.

Internally, the tower is a single circular room enclosed by a whitewashed granite wall. On the north side is a low, stone fireplace set into the wall, with the associated chimney emerging through the parapet above. At the level of the former gun deck are beam holes infilled with brick, and what appear to be springer stones but no original woodwork survives. The fixing holes for a vertical access ladder to the roof deck are evident. Beside the base of the ladder is a modern concrete block, which may cover a hatch into sealed magazine and storerooms below. It is difficult to understand how the gun tower could have functioned without a separate magazine store on the islet. The cement floor appears to have a roughly circular hole at its centre - possibly indicating the position of a central pillar to support the gun above, but this is not clear. Beside the doorway is a raised semi-circular platform with cement finish, which sits under a vertical pipe running up to the roof.



Figure 7: The tower showing the quarried platform and islet

Figure 8: The tower showing the entrance, viewed from the northwest

Figure 9: The tower showing the additional granite-walled structure to the exterior, viewed from the southwest



Figure 10: The tower showing the single window, viewed from the northeast
Figure 11: Detail of door lintel
Figure 12: The entrance doorway from the interior

Figure 13: The fireplace
Figure 14: The window from the interior
Figure 15: The fixing holes for the ladder to the roof deck, with firing step above

1.4 ECOLOGY

Portelet Bay is significant for its marine biodiversity. Marine biological fieldwork carried out by the University of Portsmouth in the 1980s identified 422 species in the bay, with a shallow of sub-littoral *Zostera* beds of great conservation importance.

1.5 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This Conservation Statement has established that Portelet Tower is of significance to Jersey and internationally as part of group of defensive structures.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL VALUE

Portelet Tower is part of a collection of military sites in Jersey that illustrate its strategic military history, and the development of defensive theory and design in the context of a changing military environment, including the perceived threat and opposing technology.

ARCHITECTURAL VALUE

The tower substantially retains its completeness and architectural integrity as an early 19th century Martello-type tower with the structure close to its original form and physical context. It is strategically sited and can still be read in terms of its strategic defence value as originally conceived.

SETTING AND SEASCAPE VALUE

The tower is a prominent feature of Portelet Bay and the seascape of the south coast of Jersey, and is evocative of Jersey's military history.

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH VALUES

Portelet Tower is a valuable educational resource to inform people of the Island's history and defensive architecture.

SOCIAL VALUE

Portelet Tower is a resource for informal recreation, for education on Jersey's military history and architecture, and as a resource for inspiration - particularly painting, drawing and photography.

Portelet Tower is designated by the States of Jersey as a Grade 1 Listed Building.

ECONOMIC VALUE

The economic value of the site lies primarily in its indirect role in contributing to Jersey's tourism offer - the tower, set within the sweep of Portelet Bay, being one of the area's characteristic images.

2 CONSERVATION POLICIES

This part of the Conservation Statement indicates how the various individual values placed on the property are vulnerable to damage, and then proposes a series of Conservation Statement Policies, which should ensure that the significance and values of the property are protected and, wherever possible, enhanced for public enjoyment and benefit.

The framework of policies seeks to:

- Preserve and enhance the significance of the historical building and its setting for future generations, and ensure that all conservation work is undertaken in strict accordance with international best practice;
- Guide management proposals for the preservation and future development of the property as a heritage and educational asset;
- Ensure that the property can be maintained as a sustainable heritage asset for the foreseeable future.

The conservation policies that are set out are intended to ensure an adequate balance between all the values placed on the property during its ongoing management and in any future proposals to develop it; conserving Portelet Tower as a heritage asset to the highest possible standards, whilst securing maximum benefit to the community. For the purposes of the Statement, the term development includes repair, restoration, interpretation, and the provision of facilities to encourage and improve public enjoyment and sustainability.

2.1 VULNERABILITY

Portelet Tower is in an exposed offshore location and if ill-maintained, the structures will be subject to water ingress and salt laden deposits leading to damp conditions and damage from insect and fungal infestations as well as intrusive plant growth.

The fabric of the tower is in fair condition but has a temporary roof covering, and without proper

maintenance and repair, there will be physical damage to the historic fabric.

2.2 CONSERVATION PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES

The policies set out in this Conservation Statement seek to ensure compliance with international and Government of Jersey laws, planning policies, principles, guidelines, and best practice concerning the conservation and development of historic properties. In particular the policies pertaining to Listed Buildings and Places in the Island Plan (2011) and Planning Advice Note 6: Managing Change in Historic Buildings (2008).

There are also a range of policies, principles, and guidelines for the care of heritage sites and these are set out in a range of international documents. Clear policies for repair and restoration are set out in the international Venice Charter (1964) and the ICOMOS specialist charters, in particular the Australian ICOMOS Burra Charter (1979 – revised in 1981 and 1988), whilst the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada 1988) and the European Convention on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (Valetta 1992), both signed by the States of Jersey, are more concerned with sustainable access and interpretation. The British Standard Guide to the principles of the conservation of historic buildings (BS 7913:1998) is a valuable standard in that it sets out general conservation principles relating to historic buildings as well as providing definitions of terminology. English Heritage’s advisory publication *Informed Conservation* (Clark, 2001) makes a series of valuable suggestions.

The Conservation of Wildlife (Jersey) Law 2000 affords protection to the ecology of the Island and has been supplemented by a Biodiversity Strategy; Policies NE1 & NE2 in the Island Plan (Revised 2011); and by Supplementary Planning Guidance on the Natural Environment.

2.3 CONSERVATION STATEMENT POLICIES

CULTURAL POLICIES (CONSERVATION)

Policy CP1: Seek to preserve the setting of Portelet Tower and the contribution that it makes to the seascape.

Reason: The setting of Portelet Tower makes a major contribution to the character of the surrounding area. Inappropriate and encroaching development could have a detrimental effect on the heritage value of the property and its contribution to the seascape.

Implementation:

CP1.1 Ensure that any proposals for alterations to Portelet Tower and the approaches to it are not visually intrusive to the site and the locality.

CP1.2 Make representations on proposals for new development, redevelopment, or alterations to existing buildings in the vicinity of Portelet Tower, which would have a harmful effect on the setting of the site.

Policy CP2: Meet legal and statutory requirements having regard to Jersey Heritage's obligations to the States of Jersey to comply with the Island's laws; with policies contained in the Island Plan; and with supplementary planning guidance.

Reason: Jersey Heritage is legally obliged to satisfy these requirements in respect to the transfer to it of responsibility for the management of the site. The buildings on the site are Grade 1 Listed and it is important that the highest possible standards are applied.

Implementation:

CP2.1 Satisfy local planning requirements, and particularly policies relating to Listed historic buildings.

CP2.2 Comply with local building byelaws as far as they are relevant.

CP2.3 Comply with Health and Safety at Work (Jersey) Law (1989).

CP2.4 Comply with provisions of environmental health legislation.

Policy CP3: Conserve, repair and maintain the structures at Portelet Tower in accordance with the conservation philosophy stated in this document and conservation good practice, as outlined in national guidelines and international conventions.

Reason: The buildings and remains on the site are of international significance and it is important that the highest possible standards are applied to their restoration and maintenance.

Implementation:

CP3.1 Ensure that staff of Jersey Heritage, its advisors and contractors are familiar with the relevant international practice and guidelines pertaining to the historic property, and seek to apply them in all works that are proposed and undertaken, whenever it is appropriate to do so.

CP3.2 Employ suitably qualified professionals to prepare specifications and to supervise all works.

CP3.3 Employ appropriately skilled and qualified contractors and craftspeople with experience of similar conservation work for all repairs.

CP3.4 Ensure access arrangements for conservation and maintenance works are carefully planned so as to cause the least damage to the historic fabric, while ensuring all visitor management and health and safety provisions are adequately met.

Policy CP4: Make decisions concerning repair and restoration based on the best available information about the original fabric and form of the structure.

Reason: The historical integrity of the structures at Portelet Tower could be adversely affected by the use of inappropriate materials or the inaccurate representation of lost features.

Implementation:

CP4.1 Undertake appropriate levels of research prior to the commencement of repairs or restoration works. This might range from archaeological recording and archival research to the specialist study of materials.

CP4.2 If any new works are proposed which might adversely affect historic fabric, seek to mitigate those affects either by a change of design or, as a last resort, by recording historic fabric before it is removed.

Policy CP5: Employ the most appropriate materials and methods of construction in all repairs and works of restoration.

Reason: The use of inappropriate materials and methods will adversely affect the historical integrity of the site and be damaging to its role as a heritage asset.

Implementation:

CP5.1 Ensure techniques employed for conservation works are those methods recommended by reputable conservation bodies and institutions.

CP5.2 Whenever possible, use traditional, like-for-like, materials and methods for all repairs and restoration works. It may be necessary to employ the use of specialist materials and conservation repairs techniques that may not be available in Jersey. For these reasons it may sometimes be necessary to source materials and craftsmen with appropriate skills outside Jersey.

CP5.3 The use of modern materials as an expedient during repair is not considered good practice. However, if no alternative course of action is available then they should be capable of being removed without damage to the historic fabric.

CP5.4 Where modern materials have been used previously and are seen to be harming the fabric or integrity of the historic building, and where removal will not cause further damage, then these should where possible be removed and new repairs using traditional materials and techniques implemented.

Policy CP6: Ensure that the historic property and its integrity, including any below ground material of archaeological value, are not adversely affected by alterations, new development or the provision of services.

Reason: The historical integrity of the site could be harmed by the construction of new structures and the provision of services could damage standing fabric or buried remains.

Implementation:

CP6.1 Any investigation or excavation must be based on a thorough understanding of the site and commenced only after sufficient desk-based assessment has been carried out.

CP6.2 Maintain and implement a strategy whereby services are installed with a minimal loss of historic fabric and in routes where they are accessible for future work.

CP6.3 Means of maintaining necessary environmental and security conditions to be designed and executed in a way so as not to harmfully impact on the historic fabric.

CP6.4 Wherever possible, ensure that functions and services that may adversely affect the historic significance and integrity of the property are placed elsewhere and/or in newer parts of the site.

Policy CP7: Mitigate risks and vulnerabilities affecting the cultural significance of the property by taking appropriate and timely actions.

Reason: Unless the buildings are adequately maintained they will deteriorate, causing loss of historic fabric and integrity.

Implementation:

CP7.1 Prepare an on-going maintenance plan, with annual programmes of repair and a phased maintenance schedule.

CP7.2 Prepare a detailed risk assessment to identify areas at risk from fire, extreme weather, high winds, heavy rainfall and flooding, and include preventative measures in the property maintenance plan.

CP7.3 Undertake regular condition audits of the buildings, preferably on a five-year cycle.

CP7.4 Identify the carrying capacity for the various rooms and spaces at Icho Tower to determine limitations on visitor numbers at events.

Policy CP8: Maintain consistent records of research and work undertaken at the property.

Reason: To ensure an accurate record of works and the long-term sustainability of the fabric.

2.3 CONSERVATION STATEMENT POLICIES

Implementation:

CP8.1 Ensure that a record is made of all alterations to the fabric, including ongoing maintenance, repair and servicing works, and that this is deposited in an appropriate off-site archive.

CP8.2 Ensure these records are regularly updated.

Policy CP9: Protect the architectural and archaeological fabric of Portelet Tower as a resource for research, and promote interest in its study.

Reason: The standing fabric of the buildings, and the below ground archaeological remains are important sources of information pertaining to the past uses of the site and the sequence of construction on it.

Implementation:

CP9.1 Encourage scholarly interest in the study of Portelet Tower.

CP9.2 Small scale archaeological excavations should be avoided wherever possible, unless they are evaluations undertaken as a precursor to development or the provision of underground services.

CP9.3 Allow for an archaeological watching brief during significant repairs or ground disturbance, in accordance with the standards set out by the Institute of Field Archaeologists and the Jersey Heritage archaeological protocol.

CP9.4 Ensure that a record is made of all alterations to the fabric and that this is deposited in an appropriate archive.

Policy CP10: Encourage the dissemination of information on the archaeology, history and architecture of Portelet Tower.

Reason: Information relating to the site, which has been derived from archival and on-site research, is only of value to the community if it is made available in a readily-accessible form.

Implementation:

CP10.1 Support the publication of material relating to the history, architecture, and archaeology of the site.

CP10.2 Ensure that original archival material and copies of relevant studies and investigations are deposited in an accessible location, such as the Jersey Archive.

NATURAL POLICIES

Policy NP1: Protect and enhance the value of Portelet Tower as a wildlife habitat.

Reason: The site sits within Portelet Bay, which is significant for its marine biodiversity.

Implementation:

NP1.1 Undertake additional wildlife surveys in order to establish the extent and range of habitats that exist on the site.

NP1.2 Monitor and protect existing habitats from unnecessary damage during normal visitor activities; routine maintenance of the fabric and vegetation; and during any proposed repairs or new development.

NP1.3 Enhance existing habitats, for example by encouraging vegetation growth in areas where it will not be damaging to the fabric of the historic buildings are their setting.

Policy NP2: Encourage interest in the natural values of Portelet Tower.

Reason: To achieve greater educational and public engagement with the site's wildlife interests.

Implementation:

NP2.1 Draw greater attention, by means of interpretation, to the wildlife interest of the site.

NP2.2 Encourage the use of the site by individuals or specialist interest groups.

SOCIAL POLICIES

Policy SP1: Convey the significance and values of Portelet Tower in various forms of interpretation and activities at the site.

Reason: To ensure that the visitors' experience is enjoyable; that a genuine understanding of the site is possible; and that repeat visits are encouraged.

Implementation:

SP1.3 Provide a good range of interpretation that will enhance the visitor experience, whilst maintaining the integrity of the historic property.

SP1.3 When major conservation works are being undertaken, the works and their purpose should be conveyed to visitors, including provision of indirect or managed direct access.

Policy SP2: Maintain a good provision of physical, social and intellectual access to the property that will promote its significance and values to a wide audience.

Reason: Access to the site is desirable for people of all ages and abilities.

Implementation:

SP2.1 Produce interpretive material that is easily available and accessible to a range of audiences, and considers those with physical and non-physical disabilities.

SP2.2: Designs and strategies to ensure the safety of all users of the site should be in keeping with the property and its setting, as defined in this Conservation Statement.

SP2.3: In undertaking access improvements, the presumption should be in favour of the preservation of the historic fabric, unless a convincing case can be made for alteration. Reasonable alternatives should be considered before alterations are permitted to the historic fabric.

ECONOMIC POLICIES

Policy EP1: Manage and develop Portelet Tower as a sustainable heritage asset to the benefit of the local community and visitors to the Island.

Reason: to ensure that Portelet Tower can continue as a heritage asset for the foreseeable future and

contribute to the local economy. Unless sufficient income can be derived, it will prove difficult to manage and maintain the property in an appropriate manner.

Implementation:

EP1.1 Manage the property in a way that maximises income from all existing sources, without damaging its authenticity and integrity.

EP1.2 Undertake necessary and urgent repairs based on available funding.

EP1.3 provide adequate facilities for the comfort of visitors.

EP1.4 Seek to identify and secure additional sources of revenue income.

IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

Jersey Heritage will implement the Conservation Statement Policies during its management of Portelet Tower and comply with them during any future proposals to conserve and develop the site. The Conservation Statement will be reviewed at appropriate times in order to ensure compliance with changing circumstances, changing approaches to conservation, and changing visitor patterns.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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