

Plans lodged for ambitious Bishop's Palace scheme

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A PROJECT to revitalise the Bishop's Palace in Abergwili, Carmarthen has taken a step forward with a planning application lodged for the ambitious scheme.

The Tywi Gateway Trust — which earlier this summer established itself as an independent charity — wants to see the venue thrive again. If all goes to plan the revitalised Carmarthenshire County Museum would be at the heart of the site, surrounded by spruced-up pleasure grounds, a walled garden, pond and meadow.

A visitor centre and cafe will also be included, together with car park improvements and a path around the Bishop's meadow.

The project was set up by the Carmarthenshire branch of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust in response to Carmarthenshire Council's proposal of "a park and museum for all".

The Tywi Gateway project aims to deliver this integrated approach. The total cost of the project is estimated at £2.1 million, with Carmarthenshire Council pledging £250,000.

The trust was awarded £136,000 by the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2014 to progress the project, and a further lottery bid for £1.1 million is due to be made.

The gardens' trust and its partners have several pieces of work in mind as part of the project. Now plans for the scheme have been received by Carmarthenshire Council planning department.

Within the planning application, it states: "The



Carmarthen Museum entrance.

Picture: Mike Walters

buildings comprising the Tywi Gateway have been underused for many years and are now partly dilapidated.

"Unless a new sustainable use can be found for them, precedent shows that their condition will continue to deteriorate." Subject to substantial levels of grant aid the business plan for the project shows that the project can be sustainable.

"Up to four staff will be employed full time, most of who could be employed locally." The Tywi Gateway will provide

light refreshment throughout peak periods and will provide meeting rooms for hire, an activity room and learning facilities. The centre is designed to supplement and support the work carried out by the county museum."

Speaking in May, Michael Norman, volunteer project manager on Tywi Gateway, said: "This is another gem we want to bring back to life. Bishop's Park contains nationally important cultural, historical and ecological features."

