

# St Catherine's Island project has proved too risky for its backers

A TOP tourist attraction in Pembrokeshire is to close at the end of the month because it faces "an uncertain future".

St Catherine's Island, off Tenby's Castle Beach, has been visited by thousands of people since it was re-opened to the public by the Tenby Island Project.

But last Thursday, a Facebook post by the project team revealed that the dream of expanding the facilities of the landmark island has come to an end. It is understood that more than £1m of private investment has been made into the scheme.

The seven people in the team are now turning their attention to another tourist scheme which will be located in Pembroke, the Western Telegraph can exclusively reveal.

Tenby Island Project director Peter Prosser said on Monday: "We're moving to a new project in Pembroke, and are in the final stages of tying that up. We're expecting to be able to make an announcement by the end of the week."

Mr Prosser would not

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give the precise location of the new venue, but added: "It will be a very people-based programme, very similar to the island project in that we are bringing people to a place. And there will be no planning permission needed, that is the beauty of it. We are very excited at the thought."

St Catherine's Island has been open to the public since November 2013, with Mr Prosser's vision to develop it into a family tourist attraction by expanding its facilities being the subject of controversial planning applications.

The first application was turned down by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority planners, and a subsequent appeal by Mr Prosser was dismissed by a planning inspector after a three-day hearing.

A new application was submitted and subsequently granted, but Mr Prosser then lodged an appeal over the condi-

tions of the planning permission.

Although this was allowed by the Planning Inspectorate last May, several new conditions were laid down, including a three-month condition for the submission of lighting and drainage schemes.

This has now lapsed, invalidating the existing permission.

"However, it isn't just planning restrictions which we are up against,"

said Mr Prosser.

"The overarching risks of the project have become too great, and all of these added together make for a very unsatisfactory way of doing any kind of business.

"A lot of people love the project, but a lot of the powers that be do not."

The island and its 16th Century fort were recently used as the location for filming for the hit BBC drama Sherlock, and can be seen in the trailer for its fourth series.

The final day of opening to the public will be Saturday August 27, with opening times continuing to be published on the island's Facebook page, Tenby Island - St Catherine's.



St Catherine's Island, Tenby, is to close to the public at the end of the month. PICTURE: Gareth Davies Photography.