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The former market hall on Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo.
Picture: Google Maps

Market hall revamp could start next year

A MULTI-MILLION pound revamp of Llandeilo's former market hall could start early next year.

The £3.9 million project is expected to provide space for 17 businesses and help create 45 jobs.

Carmarthenshire Council's executive board approved funding at a meeting on November 18, saying it fitted in with the authority's focus on boosting the rural economy.

The council-owned market hall has been vacant for many years, despite efforts to breathe new life into it.

Cllr David Jenkins, executive board member for resources, said: "There have been a few failed attempts by private partners, which didn't materialise."

The executive board set aside £562,000 last November towards the project, and more recently received written confirmation from the Welsh Government for a £1.4 million grant.

The council had planned to apply to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the remaining £2 million, but the heritage fund was said not to be willing to consider an application due to "incompatible time-

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lines." As a result the council will stump up the £2 million, mainly through the use of reserves and unspent capital budgets.

The report before the executive board said the grade two-listed building needed repairs which would cost £700,000, so a comprehensive redevelopment made more sense.

The authority is currently assessing its own planning application to restore the building, on the corner of Carmarthen Street and New Road. Some extra land will also be acquired to create additional parking spaces.

Council leader Emlyn Dole said he wholeheartedly backed the redevelopment project.

"It's timely as well as completely necessary for our rural economy," he said.

Llandeilo is one of 10 rural towns that the council has pledged to strengthen as part of a rural affairs strategy.

Last weekend the town hosted the annual Festival of the Senses, which was attended by Cllr Cefin Campbell among others. Cllr Campbell, executive

board member for communities and rural affairs, said a revamped market hall could be used for such festivals.

"It is important that we give that money (for the project) in order to get this over the line," he said. "We are so close."

The council said work could start early next year and finish in spring 2021, subject to planning consent and final technical designs.

Llandeilo councillor Edward Thomas welcomed the council's commitment.

"To have 45 jobs coming is a bonus for the area," he said.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund said the council approached it with an initial expression of interest for funding in February this year, saying construction needed to start in January 2020.

The heritage fund said this didn't leave enough time to complete both stages of a formal application for support.

The fund's director for Wales, Richard Bellamy, said: "Therefore both the council and the fund concluded that, sadly, it was not feasible to apply for a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund on this occasion."