

Restaurant to dish up new lease of life for town's Guildhall



A restaurant and cafe bar is coming to The Guildhall in Carmarthen.

A DEAL has been put in place for Carmarthen's most iconic building to open as a restaurant and cafe bar as part of a £1 million project.

It is understood Carmarthenshire Council has been in discussions with a number of interested parties about leasing part of the Guildhall - a building that has been empty since it closed as a courthouse in 2015 - and that it is now close to agreeing "exciting proposals" that it hopes will help secure the building's future.

No detail has yet been released as to which company is behind the plans, but we can reveal there are hopes the historic building will open next year as a restaurant and cafe bar.

Due to the Guildhall's listed status, the discussions have centered around the idea of retaining the historic courtroom within and sensitively developing the surrounding areas.

The proposal will be formally discussed by Carmarthenshire Council's executive board next month, and if the plans are rubber-stamped the project will see the creation of 25 new jobs in

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Carmarthen town centre.

The council remains tight-lipped on the identity of the private company which, they say, have "vibrant and exciting plans for the Guildhall"; plans which include a "sympathetic re-use of the building".

The Guildhall, which dominates Carmarthen's main square, has been the subject of much discussion since it was purchased by the county council last year for £225,000.

Despite the purchase seemingly safeguarding the future of the 18th century building, concerns have been expressed by councillors about the authority's ability to maintain it due to its running costs.

This has prompted the council to seek a partnership with an external party, one who would ensure that the ground floor of the Guildhall is occupied and open to the public while offering a timely revenue boost to the authority which would go some way to offsetting the concerns that exist

about the building's future.

Commenting on the exciting development, councillor Peter Hughes Griffiths, executive board member for culture, sport and tourism, said: "We have been approached by a private company with vibrant and exciting plans for the Guildhall.

"Their proposals would be an excellent and sympathetic re-use of this historic building. The restaurant and cafe bar would create an anchor in the centre of Carmarthen, connecting the old and new areas of the town and generating increased footfall that will benefit independent traders in the old part of town.

"The proposal would see a quality and sympathetic development that respects the rich history of the Guildhall and would keep the famous courtroom for people to visit and use, whilst giving it a new and sustainable lease of life. We hope it would add to the redevelopment of this part of the town centre and create a new momentum for further investment."

The proposal will be discussed by executive board on December 18.