

# Trouble at the Mill for Bluestone

By Ruth Davies

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IT could be back to the drawing board for the major £2.5m project to restore Pembrokeshire's historic Blackpool Mill to its Victorian heyday.

The scheme - being put forward by the nearby Bluestone National Park Resort - wants to transform the Grade II Listed building near Canaston Bridge into a "heritage tourist facility" which could inject £30million into the local economy over 10 years.

However, National Park planners are recommending refusal of the development, which they say is "insensitively and unsympathetically sited within the landscape."

They have also spoken out against the proposed narrow gauge railway, considering it as "little more than the creation of a theme park attraction without any real connection to the history of the locality."

Two planning applications are due to be considered by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority's development management committee on Wednesday, May 10.

One includes conversion and restoration of the mill and ancillary buildings; construction of the narrow-gauge steam railway, all-weather events barn and car parking, and the other is for a land train route connecting Blue-

stone with the mill site.

The officer's report to the meeting stated: "Whilst it is acknowledged that the development will result in an economic benefit to the area and will restore a Grade II Listed building, the harmful impacts on the special qualities of the National Park and the setting of the listed buildings are not outweighed by the economic factors."

The report continued: "The proposed development will result in a significant loss to the sense of remoteness and tranquillity of the area and will be insensitively and unsympathetically sited within the landscape."

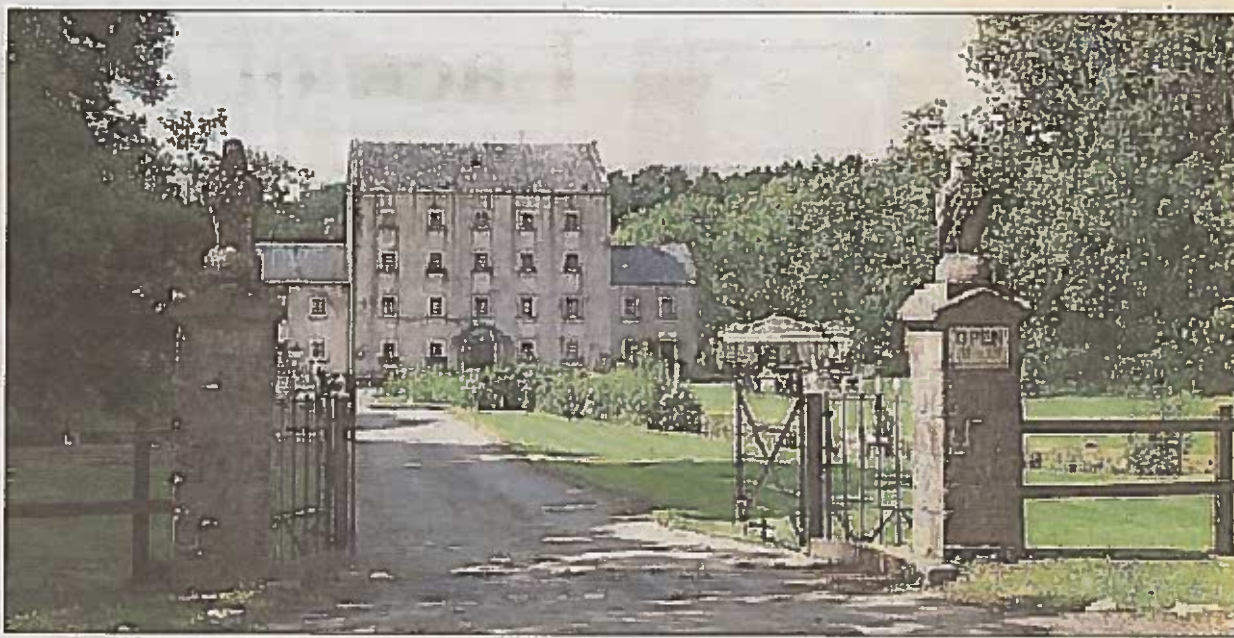
The principle of the land train - proposed to be a Land Rover towing carriages, as operates at the Bluestone resort - was considered to be "broadly acceptable".

But because the level of detail provided to date was "insufficient" a recommendation has been also made for refusal.

The Pembrokeshire branch for the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales is supporting the recommendations for refusal.

Said branch chairman Mary Sinclair: "Canaston Woods is an accessible and special place, where residents and visitors enjoy safe and quiet walks in woodland with estuary views, even though it is close to the A40."

As the *Western Telegraph* reported last week, an online petition objecting to the plans has been set up on Change.org by the Friends of Minwear and Canas-



Plans have been drawn up for the restoration of Blackpool Mill by the owners of the Bluestone resort.

ton Woods, and has now attracted over 800 supporters.

A forum of more than 20 Pembrokeshire community groups has been established by Bluestone to help shape the proposed restoration of Blackpool Mill.

Said Bluestone's head of projects, Liz Weedon: "We are proud to be showcasing our plans to breathe new life into this very special, but currently unloved building, giving it a long-term purpose and preserving it for future generations."

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