Almost a year on from court fight smallholder can stay

A LONG-RUNNING saga, which has cost Powys County Council more than £60,000, has been brought to and with a smallholder given permission to live on his land.

Eddie McIntosh has been told that his application to convert and change the use of a welfare cabin into a rural enterprise dwelling at Mellowcroft, near Llandegley, has been approved.

The council has confirmed the decision which comes less than a year after the authority won a court case against him for breaking planning laws, including by living, at the site.

An emotional Mr McIntosh told the Local Democracy Reporting Service said: "Planning has been approved and I feel numb.

"A friend told me that the status of the application had been updated to approve on their website.

"I feel vindicated but upset at what the ordeal has done to me and and my family.

"It should never have come to this."

Mr McIntosh bought Mellowcroft in 2006 and this followed on from a documentary programme that he had been part of which restored derelict properties.

Mr McIntosh added: "This was a derelict former smallholding and I was going to do it up and restore it. This was to show that restoring these old abandoned buildings is viable in the 21st century.

"To make it viable you need to look at alternatives to farm such as Shitake mushroooms and collecting Silver Birch sap.

"If the farmer had known this could be done in the 1930s it would not have been abandoned.

"I'm really grateful for the support of my community – this is a win for the underdog in what has been a battle between David and Goliath."

A council spokesman said: "I can confirm thet planning application was granted conditional consent on Monday, January 20.

"This application is subject to the use of a new vehicular access and a condition ensuring the closing up of the existing vehicle access which was one of the previous reasons for enforcement action."

At a planning committee meeting in July 2019, Mr McIntosh received retrospective planning permission for five structures for agricultural purposes including the welfare cabin.

In February 2019, at Merthyr Tydfil Crown Court, Eddie McIntosh, was found guilty of 18 charges of breaking planning laws by failing to comply with planning enforcement notices served on him by the county council which brought the prosecution.

He was fined £750 to be paid within 12 months or face 28 days in prison.

He was also given a 12-month conditional discharge on three of the charges, relating to a motor home, a shed and the tree house which had been moved or mostly demolished, but hadn't at the end of an enforcement period in October 2016.

The buildings were supposed to be knocked down.

It has cost the council more than £60,000 taking legal and enforcement action against Mr McIntosh.

NEWS in brief

Dog reunited with owner

A LOST dog which was found by police officers near Brecon has been reunited with its owner.

The small pooch was found in a remote area of the Brecon Beacons on Friday afternoon, January 24 by officers who launched a social media campaign on Facebook and Twitter to help find its owners.

The black and tan terrier was found on the A4215 at Forest Lodge and Heol Senni junction, which is between Libanus and Defynnog.

A Dyfed-Powys Police spokeswoman confirmed that the dog was reunited with its owner on Saturday, January 25.

Couple lost in mountains

MOUNTAIN rescue teams were called after a couple became lost in the Brecon Beacons.

Brecon Beacons Mountain Rescue Team was called to the couple on Friday, January 24 after they became disorientated in the Cwm Llwch area – near Pen y Fan.

A mountain rescue team spokesman said: "They became stuck on difficult ground in the Cwm Llwch area.

"The couple were located and assisted from the hill by team members and then returned to their vehicle."

Stolen quad bike appeal

POLICE in a Powys town are appealing for information about a stolen quad bike.

The white and black quad bike was taken by thieves in Ystradgynlais at the start of January.

Dyfed-Powys Police are appealing for information about the quad which was taken from Brecon Road.

Anyone with any information should reported it to Dyfed-Powys Police by calling 101.

Bus to Brecon broke down

BUS passengers going to Brecon struggled on Monday when the T14 bus broke down.

The bus could not leave the Merthyr Tydfil bus depot at 7.44am. It resumed nearly two hours later at 9.27am in Brecon meaning commuters in Merthyr had to find alternative routes.

Stagecoach Wales, who operate the TrawsCymru service, has apologised.

Slave captain's plaque will stay but wording to be reviewed

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WORDING on a slate plaque that commemorates a slave ship captain will be reviewed after councillors rejected the idea of removing it.

The plaque (pictured right) was commissioned by Brecon Town Council in 2009 but makes no direct reference to slavery and was erected in October 2010. The date caused further offence as October is celebrated as Black History Month in Wales and across the UK.

It was placed on the wall of the former St David's School, with a restored bench, and marked that 17th Century slaver Captain Thomas Phillips had lived at Havard House, in Glamorgan Street, and given his name to the Captains Walk path.

During the debate at the council meeting on Monday, January 27 Councillor Tom Davies noted councillors had observed a minute's silence when they met at the Guildhall.

He said: "It is Holocaust Remembrance Day today and this would be like having a plaque at Auschwitz saying Rudolf Hoss worked here."

Hoss was the longest serving commandant of the Nazi death camp.

The St Mary ward councillor proposed that instead of reviewing the plaque the council should agree to remove it.

Cllr Martin Weale asked the council to review the plaque due to Phillips' role in the slave trade. He had documented his journey carrying stolen Africans to plantations in the Caribbean on his ship, the Hannibal, in which he owned a 10% share, in his journal which is considered a detailed account of the grim trade.

Cllr Weale said hadn't suggested what the council should do about the plaque as he wanted an open debate and didn't wish to influence the outcome.

He said: "He was a slaver and there was some conversation about that (in 2009) but the decision, after some public debate, was Captains Walk was named after this man and that is historic fact.

"I have recently been approached by local residents concerned this council has endorsed slavery. I'm sure it wasn't the intention of the council to do that, and I'm sure it still isn't, but in as much as this plaque construed in that way we should remove it, amend it or leave it as it is."

Cllr Manny Trailor, who in 2018 became the first black person to be mayor of Brecon, said he didn't think leaving the plaque as it is would be welcomed by anyone.

He said: "The Hannibal was a slave ship, he was a slaver it has to be remembered and noted in some way if we are to keep the plaque.

"I wouldn't want Brecon to be remembered as a place that didn't denounce slavery, I know that's not what was intended, but it's very unhelpful to have that plaque up."

The council were also reminded of the "horrific" conditions men, women and children were transported in and that 328 of the 700 captives, who had been branded with the ship's name, had died during the voyage.

Cllr Davies said: "He (Phillips) even makes the point, in his journal, when they tried to escape they were eaten by sharks."

He also addressed the point made when it was agreed to erect the plaque that Phillips had written he didn't believe that white people were better than black people. A comment historians say was misunderstood by the town council in 2009.

"I don't think it's appropriate to have a plaque as some sort of memorial to someone who in later life expressed regret. He still took a 10% stake. I think it was a mistake erecting it."

But Cllr Marie Matthews said Phillips was still an important figure in the town's history.

"Removing the plaque would be taking out the history of Brecon. Gwenllian Morgan (the first female mayor in Wales) traces her history back to him and he is an ancestor of the kings of Wales.

"Maybe review the wording but his journal is a fascinating read and the fact he survived is a testament to him."

Cllr Gren Ham said the journal has been included on school curriculums and he had read it.

"We need to put our past actions in a proper context and I don't think this sign does that."

Cllr Mark Perry said the sign should be removed: "If it is reviewed what would it say? He killed 300 people?"

Cllr David Meredith, who chaired the committee which approved the plaque, said it was intended to mark that the historical figure had lived in the house and the path is named after him. He questioned if the name Captains Walk should also be reviewed

"Anybody who researches what is on that plaque would find out what he did and the terrible person he was, but we can't take that away as he was a part of Brecon."

Cllr Weale said he thought the plaque should be amended: "We have to remember the past and we can be as brutal as we like and say Captain's Walk is named after a man who killed 300 people. But I'm concerned removing it could clean our conscience but remove any reference to him."

Councillors agreed to review the plaque, with 10 voting in favour of doing so, while four voted for it to be removed altogether.

Theatr Brycheiniog's director David Wilson pictured outside the theatre

Theatre director is 'delighted' with revamped backstage area

A DIRECTOR of a Brecon theatre has said he is "delighted" with updates which have been made to its backstage area.

Theatr Brycheiniog has been refurbishing the backstage area including its dressing rooms, which now have a new layout, as well as other fixtures and fittings which have been updated.

The features were updated from Brecon Beacons National Park's Sustainable Development Fund.

Ceri Bevan and Helen Roderick from the national park authority visited the building to view the changes on Monday, January 24.

Theatre director David Wilson said: "We are delighted that the Sustainable Development Fund was able to support us in the refurbishment of our dressing rooms areas; increasing our ability to host professional touring companies, community cast members and new programmes of meetings and events in these spaces.

"As an example of this the theatre has recently welcomed Welsh classes and is facilitating a range of external activities."

To hire any of the facilities at Theatr Brycheiniog, including meetings rooms, contact the theatre on 01874 622838 or email the theatr email address at hires@brycheiniog.co.uk.

Inspectors set to return soon

ESTYN inspectors will return to Powys in a year to 18 months time to see if improvements to education have happened.

Councillors were told at last week's full council meeting the education inspectorate had been satisfied with Powys County Council's Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP).

Interim chief education officer, Lynette Lovell, said: "What Estyn wanted to be assured about is that we had coherent plans to address the issue and sufficient resources to implement the action plan.

"Following the conference our officers worked on the PIAP and put some more details into plans.

"We are already moving at pace; we didn't wait for it to be approved before starting our work, that started immediately after the inspection."

Ms Lovell went on to say that there had been "intense engagement" with governors, teachers and headteachers and had hoped to do more but purdah rules due to the December general election had stopped that.

Ms Lovell added: "You will be aware cabinet approved (on January 21) further engagement which will be done in February."

This will be for the Strategic School Review, this and the response to Estyn are intertwined.

Cllr Pete Roberts, chair of the learning and care committee added: "Officers spent 15 hours with scrutiny in five separate meetings looking at each of the streams (recommendations). They gave us significant confidence in their desire to move forward and turn this around.

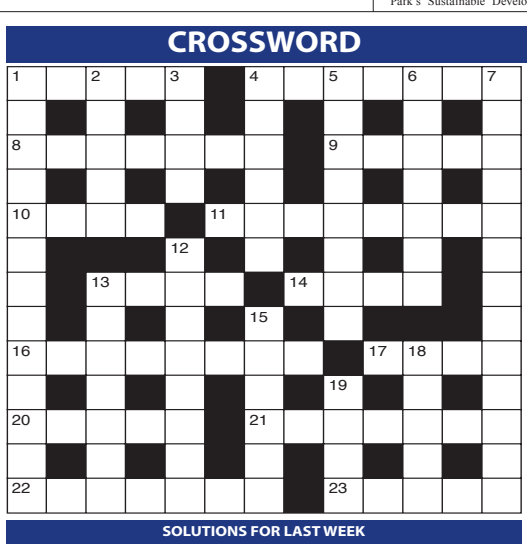
In September 2019 Estyn published a damning report saying many areas of the authority's work were of "significant concern."

Education – like Children's and Adult Social Services has also been added to the remit of the Improvement and Assurance Board.

Estyn assistant director, Clive Phillips wrote: "The conference enabled participants to explore areas of the improvement plan which would benefit from being strengthened. We will formally review the authority's progress in around 12 to 18 months time. This will be in the form of a progress conference."

Inspectors can then judge if enough improvements have been made to be remov the council from follow up work, or will need more visits.

CROSSWORD



CRYPTIC CLUES

Across

1. Animal arrived with learner on back (5)
4. Did seem to be a bad thing to do (7)
8. Left charge for allotment (7)
9. Signifies agency (5)
10. Using them properly is child's play, of course (4)
11. Arm cab in Welsh riot (8)
13. Luggage container one foot long? (4)
14. I had the French doing nothing (4)
16. Strenuous, having formerly been on stage (8)
17. Finished in a higher position, perhaps (4)
20. Terrier isn't one to give up easily without hesitation (5)
21. Establish post office in curiously inapt surroundings (7)
22. Rue gory villainy (7)
23. Put one's foot down in it most readily (5)

Down

1. Landlord from London, for example - the first in London (7,6)
2. The girl is about right to take to the altar (5)
3. Put down 50 to get help (4)
4. When the dynamo broke down? (6)
5. Thus I object to corpse of person of importance (8)
6. Being shifty, I have to save up beforehand (7)
7. Agents I'd tried went to pieces (13)
12. Situation vacant - no stamp required (4,4)
13. Fortifying by putting in twos? (7)
15. Dishonour results if many go out (6)
18. There's nothing in wrong-doing to give utterance to (5)
19. Catch sight of rising summits (4)

QUICK CLUES

Across

1. Perfect (5)
4. Quiver (7)
8. Sceptic (7)
9. Buoyant (5)
10. Escape (4)
11. Dislike (8)
13. Creek (4)
14. Gala (4)
16. Produce (8)
17. Loyal (4)
20. Suborn (5)
21. Outstanding (7)
22. Fascinate (7)
23. Lock of hair (5)

Down

1. Untiring (13)
2. Evade (5)
3. Tardy (4)
4. Flourish (6)
5. Expanded (8)
6. Delude (7)
7. Breadth (13)
12. Domineer (8)
13. Lag (7)
15. Saunter (6)
18. Crest (5)
19. Girdle (4)

SOLUTIONS FOR LAST WEEK

CRYPTIC SOLUTIONS

Across: 3 Statutory; 8 Nave; 9 Star pupil; 10 Herons; 11 Using; 14 Slump; 15 Tide; 16 Sousa; 18 Dyes; 20 Cheap; 21 Steep; 24 Mother; 25 Reservoir; 26 Unit; 27 Newsprint.
Down: 1 On the side; 2 Overtures; 4 Tots; 5 Turns; 6 Truant; 7 Rain; 9 Snaps; 11 Usurp; 12 Give a hand; 13 Temperate; 17 Actor; 19 Stress; 22 Elver; 23 Here; 24 Mien.

QUICK SOLUTIONS

Across: 3 Obsession; 8 Type; 9 Fictional; 10 Turret; 11 Rapid; 14 Motto; 15 Dive; 16 Novel; 18 Noon; 20 Infer; 21 Nerve; 24 Sandal; 25 Nostalgic; 26 Onus; 27 Objection.
Down: 1 Statement; 2 Operation; 4 Bait; 5 Extra; 6 Stolid; 7 Oral; 9 Felon; 11 Revue; 12 Diffident; 13 Heartless; 17 Lilac; 19 Nettle; 22 Valet; 23 Tomb; 24 Silo.