

Iron Ring petition

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 19 Medi 2017
Petitions Committee | 19 September 2017

Research Briefing:

Petition title: No to the proposed Iron Ring at Flint Castle

Text of petition:

“We the undersigned oppose the building of the Iron Ring outside of Flint Castle as we are well aware of the historical significance of Edward I and his so called Iron Ring as a use to subjugate and oppress our people.

We find this extremely disrespectful to the people of Wales and our ancestors who have battled oppression, subjugation and injustice for hundreds of years.

We ask that you please rethink the decision to build this monument and use the money elsewhere.”

Background

On 21 July the Welsh Government [announced](#) its plans for a £630,000 project at Flint Castle and foreshore, including the installation of a sculpture named the Iron Ring. This design was selected by a panel from the Welsh Government and the Arts Council for Wales, following a competition to obtain proposals for an artwork concept celebrating the Welsh Government’s Year of Legends.

The £395,000 Iron Ring would be up to 7 metres high and 30 metres wide. The Welsh Government stated that it would be engraved with “carefully chosen associated words and sayings to be developed with the local community”. Visitors would be able to walk along the sculpture and enjoy elevated views across the estuary and of the castle.

George King Architects, who designed the Iron Ring, [stated](#):

The sculpture symbolises a giant rusted crown representing the intimate relationship between the medieval monarchies of Europe and the castles that they built. The sculpture’s precarious balanced form, half buried beneath the ground, half projecting into the air, demonstrates the unstable nature of the crown. Its location at Flint Castle marks the spot where the crown was famously transferred from one medieval dynasty to another, as described in Shakespeare’s Richard II. Flint Castle was the

setting as Richard II surrendered the crown to Henry IV, a momentous event that shaped the history of Britain and Europe.

They elaborated [further](#):

Iron Ring has been carefully designed to work at many scales. From afar its striking, iconic form resembles a giant ancient artefact, washed up on the shore of the Dee Estuary. Its scale and dynamic form, complemented by LED lighting, means that it will become an instantly recognisable landmark for the area. However as you approach the sculpture it becomes obvious that piece is more than a sculpture. A passageway is carved out of the giant ring, allowing visitors to travel over its circumference. The gently sloping path elevates you above the ground, providing views of the estuary and of Flint Castle. Closer inspection reveals the sides of the walkway are intricately engraved. On one side of the path the full length contains an iconic quote taken from Shakespeare's Richard II as the King is considering surrendering his throne.

On the other side the path turns the ring into a giant compass, providing the name and direction of the other castles that make up the Iron Ring, providing details of their own stories and legends and creating a link between them and Flint that encourages visitors to visit the other castles in the ring.

Response

The Welsh Government's announcement received a substantial amount of criticism (for example, this [article](#) on the Nation.Cymru website, and the accompanying petition). These criticisms centred on the perception that the planned Iron Ring was celebrating the "Iron Ring" of castles that Edward I built as part of his military campaign in Wales. On 26 July, Ken Skates AM, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure said:

We have listened and recognise the strength of feeling around the proposed art installation at Flint Castle and feel it is only right that we now take a pause and review the plans for the sculpture. Working closely with local partners we will continue to work on proposals for developments at Flint, including reviewing new visitor facilities.

On 7 September, the Welsh Government [announced](#) that it would not be proceeding with the Iron Ring sculpture. Ken Skates AM said:

We acknowledge that the proposal for the Iron Ring sculpture has been divisive and, following extremely constructive and productive meetings with local stakeholders, have taken the decision not to proceed with the proposed design. Instead, we will use the investment allocated for the artwork to help deliver the wider masterplan for the foreshore, taking in the views of local people. This will include developing a range of capital investments for the area and holding a number of events and activities to increase the understanding of the history of the Castle and the significance of the foreshore. Alongside Flintshire County Council and Flint Town Council, we see development of the masterplan as a high priority.

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