



Restoring Bexhill's Seafront Bandstand



Popular and proud – the 1895 bandstand, a focal point of Bexhill's eastern promenade

Blot on the landscape – unloved and underused shelter 2020



Contents

Page

Our mission	3
Proposed outcomes	3
Impact on the community	3
Origins	4
Bexhill Heritage's proposals	5
Concept diagrams	5
Roof including estimate of tiles required	6
Structure	6
Load-bearing columns	6
Framework	7
Base panels	7
Window frames and glazing bars	8
Ventilation panels and cusps	9
Verticality	10
Openings	11
Ceiling	12
Further details	12
Landscaping	13
Photographs	14
Estimated volunteer hours	17

The Mission

To restore the town's bandstand original function as a focus for community activity and engagement while, at the same time, creating a heritage landmark of which the town can be proud.

Proposed outcomes

Following consultation with stakeholders including: De La Warr Pavilion; Bexhill Gets Creative; Bexhill Writers and the leaseholders of the Old Bathing Station we suggest that, with appropriate management, the bandstand could fulfil all the following functions:

1. A congenial and comfortable shelter for people using the promenade.
2. A refreshment venue for picnics and for the consumption of food and drink purchased from nearby outlets.
3. A place to meet, chat, play board games, read and dream.
4. A start and finish point for walking and cycling routes and events
5. A pop-up Tourist Information Point
6. A 'Heritage Hub'
7. A bookable facility (on limited dates and times) for:
 - drama, poetry and prose reading, comedy, magic, puppetry and mime
 - demonstrating hobbies and crafts
 - recruiting to local non-political clubs, organisations and groups
 - charity fundraising and awareness raising
 - displays
 - use by educational groups conducting fieldwork.

Impact on the community

We suggest that this new facility would be popular with local residents across the age range. It would attract more people to the promenade. It would entertain, educate and inform as well as facilitating conversation and debate. Through its activities, it would broaden horizons, enable people to make new friends and engender greater pride in our community.

We are confident it would help to attract more visitors to Bexhill and encourage them to return.

Management

Bexhill Heritage is willing and able to lease the restored bandstand and run it on a 'not for profit' basis. We would work with the local authority and local stakeholders to establish protocols and regulations for its use.

We intend set up a management committee and appoint an experienced volunteer manager to promote the facility and organise bookings. Revenue from bookings would be used for repair, maintenance and cleaning.

Our strategy for managing the facility will be informed and guided by examples taken from other similar ventures in the UK such as the 'Performance Platform' at Wareham in Dorset.

Origins and development

The bandstand was built by Earl De La Warr in 1895 to provide classical music to people using the promenade. It was the first structure to be built on East Parade and was enclosed by a fence. Seating was provided to the east of the bandstand within the enclosed area (photos 1, 2 and 3). The enclosed area was significantly below the level of the bandstand making it possible for the public to see the conductor and orchestra above (photo 2). Lights on posts were placed at approximately 3 metre intervals around the enclosure (photo 1)

The fence and lighting were removed when the bandstand was converted into a shelter in around 1906 (photos 4 and 5). The 'sunken' enclosure was raised to the level of the Kursaal Parade and one of the south-facing panels was removed to provide an entrance from the Parade (photo 4).

The former bandstand is a Grade 2 Listed Building and is owned by Rother District Council. It was last restored in 2011 at a cost of £10,000. That restoration has proved unsuccessful due to the use of inappropriate materials and construction methods. The building is currently in a state of considerable disrepair. In June 2018, the Council commissioned a feasibility study and obtained costings for a major restoration and conversion of the building to a Heritage Hub. At

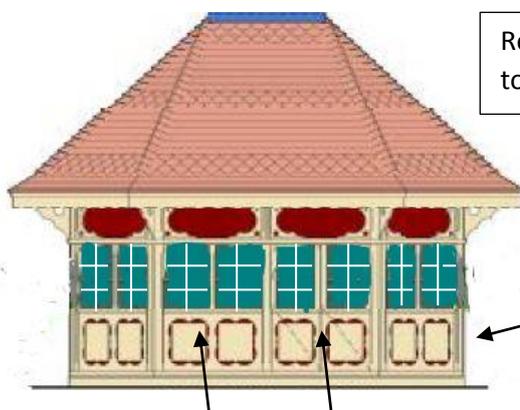
Bexhill Heritage's proposals and recommendations

We suggest that the shelter be restored to its former use as a place for relaxation, recreation, education and entertainment using the original 1895 design and colour scheme (photo 1 on page ...) as a guide to our work.

We are proud to work in partnership with Rother District Council to achieve an asset of considerable community value for Bexhill.

The following pages outline our proposals for each aspect of the restoration. The concept diagrams below, adapted from the Council's 2018 feasibility study, offer an overview of the proposed restoration.

Renovated bandstand – south elevation (north elevation similar but without doors)



Replacement clay tiles including three rows of scallop tiles to match the 1895 bandstand

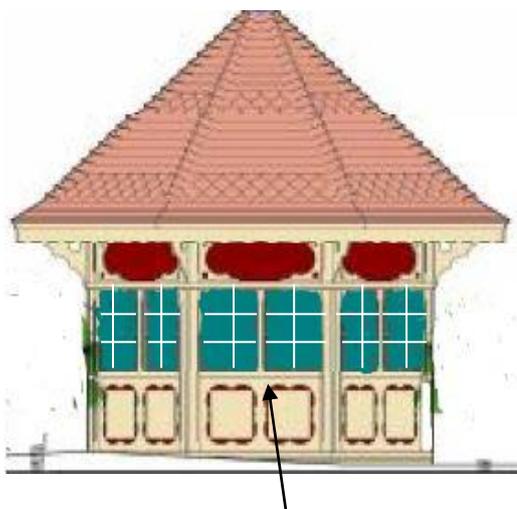
Colour scheme to match the 1895 bandstand

Lower panels to reference the design of the 1995 bandstand

Two lockable bi-fold doors to open up the south elevation to the promenade

Ground level slightly raised to enable access for all

Renovated bandstand – east elevation (West elevation similar but without doors)



One lockable bi-fold door to open up the east elevation to the promenade (to be opened for performances)

Roof

The original roof was built of clay tiles incorporating three bands of scallop tiles spaced as shown on page 5. Each of these bands were four tiles wide. 'Bonnet' roof tiles were used to cover the six external hips. On top of the roof was an ornamental iron ridge crest mounted on a lead hip capping. (photos 1-5). The ridge crest is similar to that extant on Shelter 2.

The roof no longer has its ridge crest and concrete tiles have been used as a cheap but heavier, replacement for the clay originals. The roof is felted. The felt appears to be in good condition. There are no distinctive bands of scallop tiles. Concrete pointing on the lower sections of the external hips is in poor condition. As a result, there is water ingress to the lower part of the roof. Several concrete tiles are cracked or loose.

The original scalloped fascia board remains but is now red rather than cream (photo 1). It is in poor condition and requires part replacement and part renovation where the latter is possible.

We propose that:

- *The roof be replaced with handmade plain and scalloped clay tiles with bonnet tiles on the hips.*

We estimate that the following will be required but the manufacturer should be asked to complete a pre-order check:

- ***Ordinary 2500***
- ***Scallop 850***
- ***Hip 250***
- ***Ridge 6***
- *The felt lining be repaired or replaced as necessary.*
- *A lead capping should be placed on the ridge, as on the original, incorporating fittings for an iron ridge crest*
- *A replica iron ridge crest be commissioned and installed in 2022*
- *The scalloped fascia boards be replaced or repaired and painted in Leyland Swan White oil-based gloss paint to match the original.*
- *Cusps be restored or replaced depending on their condition and painted in Swan White.*

Structure

The bandstand was supported originally by eight vertical wooden columns and a substantial top beam of 100mm thickness. This structure now supports a roof that is substantially heavier than the original and that it was not designed for. (We are concerned about this potential threat to the structural integrity of the building.)

Load-bearing columns

At least four of the eight columns are in poor condition and must be replaced, at least in part. We are of the opinion that the wooden columns penetrate well below ground level (by as much as 2 meters). It is likely that, below ground level, the columns are in poor condition and that this may be seriously compromising the structural integrity of the building.

We very strongly recommend that a professional assessment of the columns is undertaken to assess their condition below ground level. Columns should then be replaced or repaired according to the professional recommendations received.

Framework

A simple wooden framework was fitted between the columns using two horizontal cills and a base plate to accommodate a ventilation panel, a window panel and a base panel.

- Top – wooden ventilation panels and cills. Approx. 540mm high.
- Middle – window panels and cills (removable to the east and north-east sides). Approx. 1500mm high
- Base panel and base plate incorporating wooden panelling decorated with coats of arms. Approx. 700mm high.

By altering the position of the two horizontal cills, it is possible to alter the height of the ventilation panels, window panel or base panel. (Any or all of these panels can be removed for repair or renovation without affecting the integrity of the structure as they were at the time of the building's most recent renovation by Rother District Council in 2011.)

Base panels

The bandstand's decorative base panels were a particularly distinctive feature of its original design. Photographic evidence shows a single piece of wood in Swan White framed by a decorative border also in Swan White with green highlighting to give a distinctive third dimension to the panels. A delicate rectangular board in Swan White was inserted within the frame. These rectangles each carried a painted coat of arms. These are indistinct on the photos 1 and 2, but we suspect that they were added to the bandstand in preparation for Queen Victoria's jubilee and then removed (photo 3).

In 1906 the panels were removed and replaced with horizontal planking (photo 4) By 1910, window cills had been raised to reduce the height of the windows and allow for a higher base panelling (photo 5).

The original base panels are likely to have been constructed in a similar fashion to the ventilation panels using substantial tongue and grooved planking on a morticed or pegged frame. Photographic evidence suggests that the panels were faced with solid wood externally. It's likely that the panels were also faced with solid wood on the inside and that decorative wooden mouldings were added. Photographic evidence also shows that the external faces were overlaid with decorative wooden frames painted in Signal Red. The frame was shaped to match the cusps attached the top and base of the ventilation panel cills and to the tops of the window panels. These were painted in Swan White. A circular wooden plaque was attached centrally to the external face of each wooden panel. The 1895 photo shows that crests appropriate to Queen Victoria's jubilee had been fixed to these circular plaques.

The base panels were replaced in 2011 following serious vandalism of the building. They have been poorly constructed from unsuitable materials. The lower part of the current 30mm softwood framework shows serious signs of wet rot. The framework has been butt-jointed rather than morticed or pegged. This has resulted in movement and exacerbated water ingress. The inner part of the panels is constructed from interior-grade 12mm plywood. Delamination and wet rot are prevalent. The outer face of the panels is constructed from vertically-aligned tongue and grooved softwood planking. It is likely that these were not caulked on installation. As a result of heat expansion / contraction the boards have divided and twisted. They no longer form a weather-resistant 'skin' to the base of the building.

Existing base panels



30mm softwood frame. Butt jointed. No damp proof membrane. Wet rot present.

12mm interior plywood internal face. Poor quality. Delaminating and degrading.

Warped tongue and groove planking exterior face. Wet rot present. Gapping between boards.

We propose that Bexhill Heritage make replacement base panels to match the originals. These would be constructed on a morticed wooden frame built from 30mm timber and protected by a damp proof membrane. The external face would be formed from 18mm marine ply with a decorative 9mm marine ply overlay. The internal face would be 12mm marine ply with the addition of a rectangular decorative moulding to match the existing (Richard Burbidge decorative moulding 44x20mm). The marine ply would be sealed with a two-part epoxy resin primer followed by an undercoat and two coats of 'Toplac' gloss in line with International Paint guide AW044.*

On two panels, either side of the southern entrance, we propose fixing rectangles of 3mm Dibond coated with an anti-graffiti coating to display the logos / arms of Rother District Council and Bexhill Heritage.

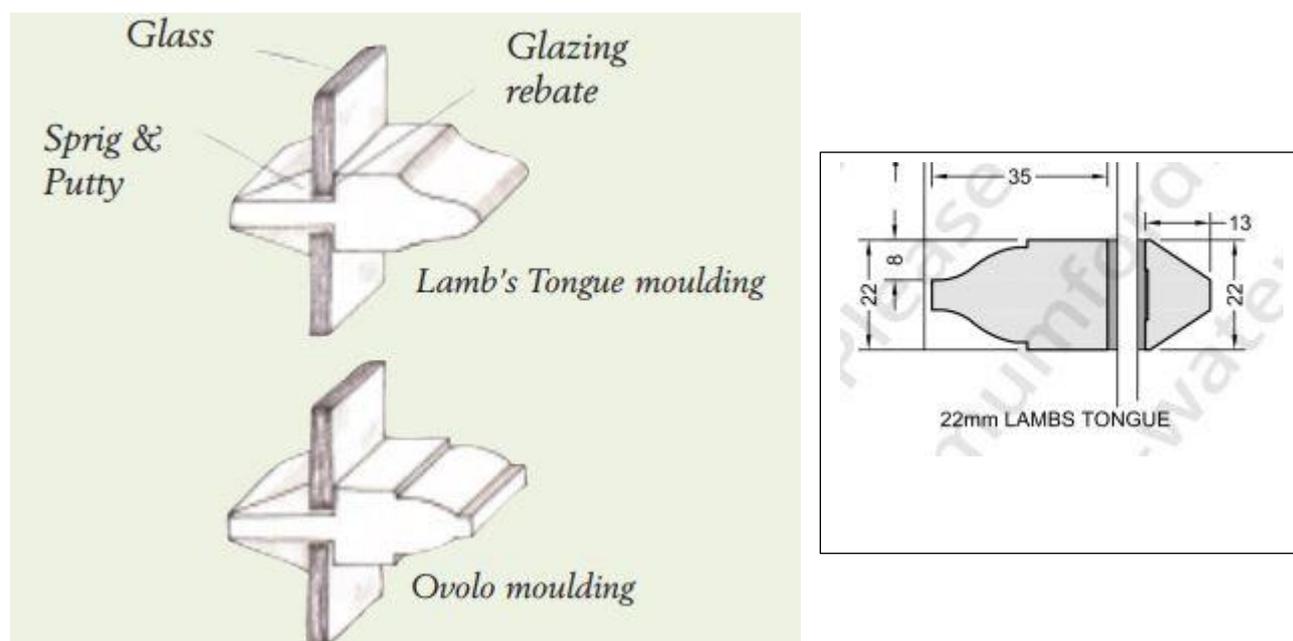
*Marine Ply is a type of hardwood plywood. It's made with thin layers of 100 percent hardwood, which is stronger and harder and has a finer grain than softwood. It is recommended for external works where high humidity or damp maybe a concern, these properties mean that it can be exposed to high moisture for a long period of time. Bexhill Heritage would use fully structural ply with no surface defects manufactured to BS1088.

Window frames

Window frames are in poor condition. The acrylic glazing has deteriorated through exposure to UV light. It has also been 'etched' by vandals.

Window glazing bars have been replaced as part of the 2011 restoration. The existing softwood bars are simple and square-edged. They lack the durability required in this location. Square-edged styles

were familiar to the Victorians and were widely used in sash windows for terraced housing. They are insufficiently interesting and decorative for the Victorians to have used them in any prestigious seafront building. Two main decorative styles were used for Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian glazing – Ovolo and Lambs Tongue. Photographic evidence does not show which of these was used in Bexhill’s bandstand. Lambs Tongue incorporates more rounded edges than the other two styles and so paint would more easily adhere to the wooden surfaces. Ovolo matches the bars used in Shelter 3. In order to optimise durability without compromising aesthetics, we would recommend a Lambs Tongue bar 22mm wide and 54mm deep.



We propose that local joinery companies be asked to quote for frames, using 22mm Lambs Tongue glazing bars, to incorporate window panels and cills but not base panels. The latter would be constructed by Bexhill Heritage and fitted to the frames. We propose that a more durable alternative glazing be explored.

Ventilation panels and cusps

Ten wooden ventilation panels were provided above each of the window panels. These remain in place and are of identical size and design to those featured in photographic evidence from the time (photo 5). They are likely to be original. Eight appear to be in good condition and the other two can be renovated. The panels are made of vertical tongue and groove planks painted in Swan White. They have lasted well in this less exposed and less vulnerable position. The thickness of the planks and their well-constructed frames have meant that the planks remain solid. There is minimal warping. The outer edge of each panel rests against a substantial decorative wooden frame painted in Signal Red. The frame has been shaped to match the cusps under the fascia boards and at the top of the window panels. Originally the wooden frames and panels were painted in Swan White. Four small holes in the shape of a cloverleaf have been cut into each panel to provide some degree of ventilation when the panels were in their closed position.

Examination of the building’s interior shows hinges at the base of each panel indicating that the panels were top-opening. Simple restrictor stays at either side were designed to limit the extent to

which each panel could open. Careful examination of the current shelter shows the location of these stays.

Photographic evidence (photo 2) shows that vertical exterior blinds were fixed to the top plate above the ventilation panels. We do not propose to reinstate these blinds.

We propose that the ventilation panels are removed as soon as possible and taken to the Bexhill Heritage workshop where they can be restored and painted in Leyland Swan White and Signal Red oil-based gloss paint prior to refitting with stainless steel hinges, and brass restrictor stays and butterfly catches. Cusps should be restored and repainted by Bexhill Heritage.

Verticality

The original bandstand was well proportioned in a ratio of 5:14:9 (photo 1).

Ventilation panels = 540mm high

Windows = 1350mm

Base panels = 900mm

(The above measurements are approximate based on photographic evidence)

Conversion to a shelter around 1906 very significantly reduced the height of the base panels (from 900mm to 300mm) but left the height of the ventilation panels and windows unaltered (photo 4). Although there is some limited written evidence that Earl De La Warr had the shelter 'cut down', photographic evidence shows that raising the level of the surrounding land may have had a more significant part to play in altering the shelter's vertical proportions to a ratio of (5:14:3) (photos 4 and 5)

We are unsure when these proportions were further adjusted but assume that this will have taken place by 1910. A photograph from that time (photo 5) shows that the window cills will have been raised to reduce the height of the windows to 1170mm and to recreate a more recognisable base panel with a height of approximately 1000mm. The ventilation panel height was not changed. Arguably this restored some sense of verticality to the shelter by achieving a ratio of 5:12:10.

Unfortunately, though, the ventilation panels, windows and base panels in combination fail to provide a pleasing sense of verticality. A restoration in 2011 missed the opportunity to rectify the problem.

We propose that:

- *The Bandstand be brought closer to its original proportions as far as possible by lowering the window cill. This will increase window height to 1265mm (including the cill) and reduce base panel height to 715mm. We recommend that the height of the original ventilation panels should be unchanged.*
- *Window design be amended to refer to the original but not replicate it, and further restore verticality. (See below.) As an alternative it would be possible to revert to the original window design, but this would compromise the aim of restoring overall verticality.*
- *Window frames be painted in Leyland Swan White oil-based gloss paint with Signal Red 'coach lines' to match the original.*

- *The existing southern entrance be fitted with twin bi-fold doors. This could replicate the designs of window and base panels throughout the building.*
- *Door furniture.*
Doors: Fittings should be stainless steel throughout except for the exterior handles. Hinges should be parliament hinges to allow clear opening. Heavy duty Espagnolette stainless steel bolts should be fitted to each of the folds together with a draw-bolt locking mechanism at the point where the south-facing door abuts the central pillar. Oval handles on both sides. The exterior handles should be brass.

Ceiling

Internal inspection shows that the ceiling is likely to be original.

We propose that we retain the ceiling and install an ‘invisible’ lockable hatch on the north side to allow access to the roof space. We would use original tonge and groove boards where possible. The ceiling would be stripped to bare wood and repainted in Swan White oil-based gloss. Existing lighting would be replaced with two lights similar to those used in Shelter 3.

Further details

External

For 2021

- Disabled access to southern entrance while maintaining a level floor inside the building.
- AI – size information board at a location to be agreed.
- Under-eave lighting to match Shelter 3 – controlled on timer for daylight hours.
- Installation of 6 classic heritage cycle hoops to the north of the building to avoid bikes being propped up against the paintwork.

For 2022

- Planters to the western side of the building for salt and wind-tolerant plants as provided on West Parade.
- Flagpole to the east of the building to replicate the original (photo 2) with circular bench surrounding and planters for hardy spring bulbs and summer bedding.

Internal

For 2021

- 25 amp power supply in security box with two ‘mains’ sockets and timer control for lighting.
- Four adjustable LED spotlights in ceiling – wall mounted light switches with override switch in security box
- Two central ‘warm’ lights in ceiling to match external lighting – wall mounted light switches with override switches in security box
- Two discreet speakers in roof space – as in Shelter 3.
- Two wall-mounted touch-free switches to activate sound system in roof space.

Landscaping

We propose that a landscaping scheme be designed to place the bandstand in an appropriate setting and include references to its enclosure, the adjacent flagpole and the nearby cycle shelter. (For budget and installation in 2022.)

Photographs

1. Bandstand in 1897. A celebration of Queen Victoria's Jubilee



2. Bandstand from the north in 1895. Note removable window panels, flagpole and the audience position well below the level of the road and bandstand.



3. Bandstand from the East 1896. Notice the sunken enclosure for an audience, the removable window panels. Base panel plaques have been removed.



4. Bandstand following its conversion to a shelter. Note that window height is unchanged but base panel height is significantly reduced. The enclosure has been filled in.



5. Shelter in 1910. Note reduced window height has been reduced and the base panel height has been increased. Notice ventilation panel detail.



Estimated volunteer hours (excluding contingency)

Task	Estimated hours	Notes
Remove, renovate and fit ventilation panels	140	Includes, where applicable, stripping to a bare surface, priming, filling and fairing, and applying 2 coats of undercoat and two coats of gloss.
Remove existing base panels. Construct and fit replacements	160	
Paint internal and external walls	600	
Paint main ceiling	100	
Paint external ceilings	340	
Paint fascias and cusps	110	
Fit additional wiring, new lighting and switches	30	
Make and fit loft hatch	15	
Periodic cleaning, and transporting materials and equipment	20	
Training and supervision	40	
Liaison with contractors and RDC	20	
TOTAL	1575	