

# Newport City

## Removal of the Chartist mural – why we had to do it

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### **The removal of the mural would have cost in excess of £625,000**

- Removing 50 – 70 tonnes of a mosaic and brick structure without damaging it is a significant engineering challenge – one that could have ended up costing nearly £1 million as a complete project
- Groups interested in saving the mural agreed to provide a separate costed plan for its replacement – they did not provide one

### **The mural was an integral part of the car park structure**

- As the consultant (Mann Williams) report shows, the car park wall and mural are separate. However, they were both attached to the same concrete framework, therefore integrally linked to the structure.
- Its complex construction, analysed by specialist consultants recommended by Cadw, informs that its integration included two half-brick skins to the car park structure, collar jointed with galvanised ladder reinforcement
- These are the primary, and unavoidable, contributing factors to the unaffordable cost of £625,000 for its removal

### **There were no guarantees that the mural would survive a move**

- Even a small test area of the mosaic showed significant deterioration during investigations
- The council is facing budget cuts of £34 million in the coming years – it does not have £625,000 to spend or risk on such a project

## **The mural did not meet Cadw's criteria for listing**

- Cadw, the official guardian of the built heritage in Wales, decided the mural was not of nationally significant architectural or historic interest to meet their listing criteria

## **The mural could not remain in its current location as the Capitol car park is deteriorating and has to be demolished**

- Closed to the public for many years due to its deterioration, the Capitol car park is at the end of its life – it has to be demolished on the grounds of public safety, regardless of any other interest in the structure or adjoining buildings

## **We are not forgetting or ignoring Newport's proud Chartist history – that's why we are consulting on a new artwork**

- We want the people of Newport to inform the choice of a new piece of artwork to commemorate the Chartist History.
- The consultation is open until 31st October and welcome suggestions.

The council has been clear for many years that in order for Newport to prosper and meet the needs of its residents, the redevelopment of the city centre is vital, including the creation of the Friars Walk shopping centre.

To make this happen the council has taken a carefully planned series of actions over many years including the compulsory purchase of businesses and buildings, obtaining the necessary planning permissions and preparing to clear the footprint of the new site as soon as possible in order to begin the development of the new scheme.

## **Permission to remove the mural was granted in March 2012**

In March 2012, Newport City Council agreed the planning application for Friars Walk. This application included information on all elements of the city centre to be purchased, removed or cleared, and is detailed in a [publicly available document](#) (pdf) on the council's website.

Also in March 2012, the cabinet member for leisure and culture considered a [report](#) (pdf), again publicly available, that stated:

“As part of the new Friars Walk retail development proposals, this

area (John Frost Square) is due to be completely redeveloped. It is impossible to preserve the original mural so an alternative needs to be sought.”

### **We have always recognised our Chartist history**

Four alternatives were identified and a [public consultation](#) approved.

Following the consultation and discussions with Oliver Budd, the son of the original mural artist Kenneth Budd, it was further resolved in March 2012 to replicate the mural on ceramic tiles and install it within the stairwell of the Central Library. Again the [report and decision schedule](#) (pdf) and [press release](#) are publicly available.

The proper democratic decision making process was followed at all times.

While the decision to take down the mural was made in March 2012 it was not necessary at that time to implement the decision as the development activity was still at an early stage.

In the intervening period representations have been made regarding whether it would be possible to save the mural even though the decision had been taken to proceed with demolition.

### **We worked with Cadw on options for saving the mural**

Cadw, the official guardian of the built heritage in Wales, received a request to list the Chartist mural and Newport City Council worked with them to look at a number of options for preserving it.

Cadw concluded that the mural was not of nationally significant architectural or historic interest and did not meet their criteria for listing.

### **The council could not afford £625,000 to remove the mural**

The council sought independent advice on the technical feasibility and potential cost of removing the mural. The [report](#)\*(pdf) found that it would cost at least £625,000 to try this option.

A ceramic specialist was also consulted to establish the state of the materials and what repair and restoration would be needed if indeed it could be moved. The results and further costs can be viewed in their [report](#)\*(pdf). Both reports are being published with

the consent of the consultants.

### **Even if budgets were available, the mural may not have survived a move**

Advice was given by the expert consultants that there could be no guarantees that the mural would survive an attempt to move it and this was made clear in the [Cadw letter\\*](#) (pdf) which is also being made available.

### **All the documents which are now being made available cannot be taken in isolation. Together they give the full background and reasons for the removal of the mural.**

The council has to make savings of £34 million in the next four years. Without the backing of Cadw, a cost of at least £625,000 without guaranteed success could not be justified in the current severe economic climate.

### **The Capitol car park has to be demolished for structural reasons**

This summer, Newport City Council secured a grant of £1.5 million to kick start the Friars Walk development with the demolition of the former Capitol car park and adjoining retail units.

This car park has been structurally deteriorating from some years which is why it has been closed to the public since 2010. A recent assessment by structural engineers had also indicated real dangers to public safety as the structural integrity of the Capitol car park was significantly compromised. As a result, the adjacent public thoroughfare which contained the mural was closed for safety reasons in July this year, including access to the bus station from John Frost Square.

The concern for public safety continued to mount and the council wanted to ensure that the full scale car park demolition project could begin as quickly as possible. Removing the Chartist mural prior to the commencement of the full works was necessary.

The mural was directly attached to the Capitol car park structure. It was therefore necessary to remove the mural prior to 28 October to ensure no delays took place with the main demolition.

Concerns were growing about the safety of the structure and that any large scale presence in John Frost square could present a real danger to the public.

## **With the mural confirmed as not listed by Cadw, removing the mural was the next step in preparing for the demolition of the Capitol car park**

The removal of the Chartist mural was carried out on Thursday 3 October in accordance with the proper decision making processes of the council. The decision was not prompted by any planned demonstration, notification of which was in the public domain but of which the council was not formally notified. The state of the car park structure, as detailed above, was causing real concerns over public safety with internal masonry falling away.

Contrary to comments made in relation to photos of the mural removal, the mural structure was integrally linked to the car park structure. Its complex construction included two half-brick skins to the car park structure, collar jointed with galvanised ladder reinforcement – contributing factors to the unaffordable cost of £625,000 for its removal.

The materials removed are in a safe and secure location while decisions are made as to what to do with it.

## **Remembering our Chartist history**

Documentation and recording of the mural has been undertaken and is available to view at the museum as well as the full Chartist collection housed there.

The focus should now be on the future and Newport City Council has already announced that it will be looking to commission a new way of commemorating the city's Chartist past, and wants the residents and members of the public to inform this choice.

Newport residents are being asked to have their say on the options available in an [online survey](#)