



Ymddiriedolaeth Addoldai Cymru
Welsh Religious Buildings Trust

Bethania, Maesteg CONSERVATION STATEMENT



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Welsh Religious Buildings Trust

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1 Introduction

Bethania is a Welsh Baptist chapel in Maesteg, the principal town of the Llynfi Valley north of Bridgend. It was acquired by the Welsh Religious Buildings Trust in 2004 as a very important example of the Welsh Nonconformist heritage, to be conserved and repaired as necessary, opened to the public and in particular returned to use by the local community.

This Conservation Statement has been prepared by officers and trustees of the Welsh Religious Buildings Trust to support an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Heritage Grant to partially fund a major conservation project at Bethania.

The scope of this document includes statements of

- the current understanding of the heritage and its significance
- how it is currently managed
- what the project will do
- the current and long-term risks to the heritage
- the conservation and management aims
- how we plan to manage and maintain the heritage after the project is completed

2 Understanding the heritage

2.1 Setting

Bethania is a Welsh Baptist chapel located on the west side of Bethania Street some 300 metres to the south of Maesteg town centre. Maesteg itself is the principal town of the Llynfi Valley and, after the town of Bridgend, the second largest town in Bridgend County Borough in south Wales. Maesteg is 9 miles north of Bridgend which is located on the main London-Swansea railway and the M4.

The town of Maesteg has been described as “remarkable” with an “air of civic pride”, whilst its principal thoroughfare “Commercial Street and its continuation, Bethania Street, form an unusually long and wide shopping street, graced with several impressive chapels.” (Newman 1995). Maesteg town centre has benefitted from the HLF’s Townscape Heritage Initiative grant scheme, although Bethania lies outside the scheme area.

2.2 Historical Overview

Bethania’s cause dates from 1828. Its first chapel was built in 1832, enlarged in 1841 and 1848, rebuilt in 1859 and further enlarged in 1878. Its history reflects the fortunes of Maesteg and the community of the Llynfi valley. The first chapel gave its name to the main road to Bridgend at its front. Its successive rebuildings and enlargements, culminating in the current 1908 building was a response not only to religious fervour but to the rapid population expansion arising from the growth of the iron-making and coal-mining industries of the valley. The architectural opulence of the current chapel building reflects the comparative wealth of that turn-of-the century industrial society.

Bethania is a prime example of the renewed enthusiasm for chapel building during the early 20th century, following the religious reawakening brought about by Evan Roberts’ famous religious revival of 1904-05.

2.3 Architectural Overview

Bethania’s architect was Sir William Beddoe Rees, a man born in Maesteg who became one of the most prolific Welsh chapel architects of the period, practising from Cardiff. He was the author of an influential guide to chapel design *Chapel Building: Hints and Suggestions* (1903). The contractor was the notable E. Turner & Sons of Cardiff, who had just completed work on Cardiff City Hall in Cardiff Civic Centre.

The chapel was listed at grade II* in 1997. The reason stated for its listing is: “as one of the best surviving architectural achievements by a major chapel architect in his powerful Beaux Arts style”. Bethania is representative of the final flowering of Welsh chapel architecture which occurred during this period and has been described as Beddoe Rees’s “most ambitious Classical essay.”

The 1908 chapel was itself a substantial enlargement of the 1859/78 chapel building and it therefore incorporates earlier fabric. Interpretation of contemporary documents and initial archaeological investigations have broadly identified the broad layout and fabric of the 1859/78 chapel but further work will be needed to identify remaining fabric of the 1832 and 1841/48 buildings.

2.4 Description of the different types of heritage

2.4.1 Bethania- the building, its setting and its artefacts

Although there is evidence of small numbers of Baptists in the Llynfi valley as early as the mid 17th century, Bethania's cause dates from 1828. The congregation initially met in the long room of the nearby Coetrehen Arms, but completed its first chapel building in 1832.

This was the mother chapel of the Baptist cause in the Llynfi Valley, giving birth to both Welsh and English language chapels. Its daughter chapels comprised Salem (which had 4 branch chapels), Tabernacle, Calfaria, and Aion, and the English language Bethel (which had 2 branch chapels) i.e. 11 in all. (Richards, 2008)

The principal elevation of the building, including short returns, is largely constructed of narrow Pennant sandstone with lavish limestone trimmings in the form of banded piers, stylised pilasters, Ionic columns, rectangular, circular and semi-circular window surrounds and angular roof embellishments. Its minister at the time, Rev. Edward Jones, insisted that the term *Bedyddwyr Neillduol* (Strict or Particular Baptist) should be inscribed on the front of the building to affirm the congregation's commitment to *cymun caeth*, the strict requirement that participation in communion is only allowed to those who have been baptized by immersion. The generous windows on the main front are divided into small panes to provide a strongly gridded effect. The overall result is a bold, eye-catching building at the side of the main approach road to the town centre.

The interior is spacious and handsome, with raking galleries and elaborate cast-iron balcony fronts on three sides. The pulpit projects from a raised gallery on the fourth side with, behind it, a recessed arch filled with organ pipes. The organ was built by J.J. Binns & Co. The galleries and ceiling are supported by storeys of slender cast-iron columns linked by round-headed arches. The curved ceiling is divided by deeply moulded ribs. A large immersion font is located below the floor of the *sêf fawr* and is accessed from the organ bellows room below the pulpit gallery.

The two storey range to the rear of the chapel contains a series of rooms (minister's room, deacons' room, ladies room, library and classrooms). Several contain fireplaces and the library has a room-width glazed bookcase.

The large vestry to the north incorporates fabric from an earlier schoolroom but was extended by means of three arches on iron columns in the 1908 construction to provide a greater area for Sunday School and other activities, and included timber partitions to subdivide the area. Later additions include a stage with a proscenium arch, and more recently, a flat roofed kitchen/toilet range.

A monument to members who fell in the Great War is located in the chapel vestibule. White marble wall monuments commemorate two former ministers: Rev. Edward Jones (Iorwerth Ddu) (1852-1931), minister for over 30 years from 1924 and president of the Welsh Baptist Union in 1925, and Rev. Richard Hughes (1820-85), poet and author.

The detached burial ground is on rising ground to the rear. It is separated from the main chapel by a public footpath, is entirely enclosed by a Pennant sandstone retaining walls and is approached by wrought iron double gates, which lead to a gravel pathway along its length. There are approximately 100 gravestones dating from the mid 19th to mid 20th century. The majority display simple records of members' deaths, although some record poignant deaths of children. Several monuments have become displaced and are a potential health hazard. The graveyard is largely covered in a mixed grass sward and does not have significant ecological value. At the time of Bethania's acquisition by the Trust it was heavily infested with Japanese knotweed, but herbicide treatment over successive years has largely eradicated it.

The chapel building is set back from Bethania Street, the intervening space comprising two broadly symmetrical lawned areas separated by a central paved pathway leading to a full width paved area in front of the chapel which is approached up steps. The whole is surrounded by a low Pennant sandstone wall upon which are art nouveau wrought iron railings together with central double gates and a single side gate, all designed by Beddoe Rees. Low wrought iron railings and a mature privet hedge also enclose the lawns internally.

The departing congregation provided the Trust with a large collection of documents originating in the construction of the 1908 chapel. These include original drawings by Beddoe Rees, bills of quantities, correspondence with client and contractor etc. Additionally, there are chapel minute books, registers and other items of correspondence from the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century. This collection has been catalogued by students of Archive Administration at Aberystwyth University and has been deposited at the Glamorgan Record Office. It is a rich resource which will be made available for interpretation.

There is a wealth of other material which illuminates the life of the chapel. The library incorporates a room-width glass fronted bookcase which contains an extensive collection of theological and more general books. They represent a valuable insight into the intellectual interests of the leading members of the chapel. Regrettably many of these suffered damage when vandals stripped lead sheeting from an adjacent flat roof resulting in water ingress. The books need to be catalogued and professionally conserved. Stored in the chapel are several framed paintings and framed photographs dating from the mid 19th century to mid 20th century. Some are annotated, whilst others remain to be identified. The chapel safe contained several silver/pewter communion cups and a glass jug. A glass cupboard in the kitchen contains a large collection of china crockery, embossed Capel Bethania. It is presumed to date from the 1908 rebuilding.

Beddoe Rees' chapel remains essentially unchanged, with the exception of the permanent removal during the late 20th century of several pews to the right of the pulpit. In 2006, the WRBT authorised the temporary removal of some pews in the gallery to facilitate damp and rot surveys. These will be reinstated.

The most significant changes have occurred in the large vestry. Sections of the original partitions serving the Sunday School have successively been removed. The stage was added at some point in the mid 20th century. In 1976, a kitchen and toilets were added. At some point in the 20th century, the original kitchen was converted into a boiler house.

2.4.2 Nonconformity

Bethania is a Nonconformist chapel. Welsh Nonconformity's origins lie in 16th century Puritanism, whose emphasis was on the Word of God and the overwhelming importance of preaching. The centrality of preaching became a source of aggravation between those who became known as Dissenters (and later as Nonconformists) and the established Anglican Church. Congregations or communities of believers were drawn together in 'gathered churches' or a 'cause'.

The Nonconformists share a fundamental common belief that the congregation has come together for essentially one purpose, to worship by hearing *Y Gair*, the Word of God, addressed to them from the pulpit.....The single thread that runs through the history of Dissent is its followers' belief about the importance of preaching, and that belief was to result in the basic plan of the chapels that were to house them. (Jones 1994)

Despite persecution, the earlier main denominations of Dissent, the Independents and Baptists grew during the 18th century, and the Welsh Methodist revival within the Anglican Church in the mid part of the century ultimately evolved into the Calvinistic Methodist denomination.

During this century, the majority of Welsh people began the process whereby they were transformed from being 'church people' to becoming largely 'chapel people', and Dissent moved from a despised minority position to a central role in the life of Wales.

The 1851 census showed that by then Wales was a predominantly Nonconformist nation but E. T. Davies notes that this had "probably been the state of affairs for at least a generation before 1851... This change was not only one of religious allegiance, but it had a profound effect on the cultural, social and political history of Wales throughout the century." (Davies, 1981)

The reasons for this transformation are various. Dr. Thomas Rees, quoted in E. T. Davies, wrote in 1866 "Among the means which have proved so successful in the evangelization of the masses in Wales, *effective preaching* claims the first place. No nation in Christendom has, within the last two centuries, been blessed with a succession of abler and more efficient preachers than the Welsh."

Davies goes on to cite, firstly, the Sunday Schools: "Their educative value in preserving the Welsh language was very great in days when the language was not taught in most primary schools, and, unlike the Church's Sunday schools, they consisted of a large number of adults as well as children". Secondly, there was the multitude of religious revivals which were endemic in the 19th century.

Thirdly, he cites the prominent place given to the laity in chapel affairs: "Nonconformist chapels and Sunday schools were thoroughly democratic institutions, free of the inhibiting influence of landlord or parson. For the better part of the century they were ecclesiastical republics in charge of their own affairs." (Davies, 1981)

Despite doctrinal differences, by mid-century Nonconformity in Wales presented a united front as far as social issues were concerned. The 1847 Education Report was an important catalyst. Gwyn A. Williams notes:

...accurate enough in its exposure of the pitiful inadequacy of school provision, (it) moved on to a partisan, often vicious and often lying attack on Welsh Nonconformity and on the Welsh language itself as a vehicle of immorality, backwardness and obscurantism.... In Wales at the time there was a massive explosion of anger and resentment.... A form of Welsh nationalism, peculiarly Dissenter and Welsh speaking, was stung into life."
(Williams, 1985)

The impact was the opposite of the report's intention. "From the middle of the century onwards, most Welsh people lived their lives within the orbit of, or in reaction, to the chapels. Their literacy, their world outlook, increasingly their politics, were deeply affected by the morality of the chapel." The Liberal MP Henry Richard stated "The Nonconformists of Wales are the people of Wales" and Gladstone agreed. (Williams, 1985) "Above all, the chapels gave back to the Welsh, whatever their denomination, a sense of pride and enthusiasm." (Morris, 1984)

2.4.3 The Welsh language in the development of Nonconformity and the story of Bethania

The predominance of Nonconformity in Wales is closely linked to the Welsh language. In the 16th century the language of the vast majority of Welsh people was Welsh, and so it remained until the early 20th century. Yet the Laws in Wales Acts 1535–1542 had made English the only language of the law courts and other aspects of public administration in Wales, and the language of the Anglican Church was predominantly English. Consequently the vast majority of Welsh people could not fully participate in worship.

In the words of John Penry, in *A Plea to Parliament* (1580):

....Thousands of our people know Christ as neither God nor man, as priest and prophet, have never hear of Him! O, forlorn and desperate state. Preaching is in many parts unknown. Shall we be in ignorance until we have all learned English... can we not have preaching in our own tongue? (quoted in Jones, 1996)

The translation of the Bible into Welsh in 1588 was to make this ambition achievable and access to preaching in the Welsh language at chapel drove the rise in Nonconformity up to the late 19th century.

Dissenter worship and chapel life were essentially conducted in the Welsh language. The Sunday School was an important vehicle for sustaining the written and oral literacy in Welsh of both children and adults. Indeed the strength of Nonconformity was a major factor in the survival of the Welsh language during the 19th century even in industrial areas such as the South Wales valleys which saw substantial immigration. However, the anglicising influence of the British state which began with the impact of compulsory English education under the 1870 Education Act together with ubiquitous English language media resulted in a steady decline in the use of the Welsh language during the 20th century.

Maesteg was typical. Brinley Richards observes that "Throughout the last (19th) century the great majority of the Llynfi Valley spoke Welsh as their first language. When the district was entirely agricultural all the farms bore Welsh names as they do today. The growth of Welsh Nonconformity contributed materially to the general use of the language." Despite substantial immigration of workers and their families from England and Ireland to serve the Llynfi valley's ironworks and collieries, "by 1864 Llynfi Valley children were almost all monoglot Welsh". The Llynfi Valley was still a largely Welsh-speaking community at the time of the 1908 chapel building's construction. (Richards 1982)

However, the 20th century saw within the Llynfi valley a steady decline in the use of Welsh as a first language and an increasing percentage of monoglot English speakers. Many monoglot Welsh chapels became bilingual. Alongside the collapse of the economic base of the Llynfi valley during the 20th century, the decline in the observance of formal religion and in the use of the Welsh language have contributed to a loss of pride and confidence of the community.

By the 1940s, concern at the decline of the Welsh language impelled its then minister Rev Geraint Owen to establish a Welsh nursery school. Following parental demand a Welsh medium school for 4 to 11 year olds was opened in Bethania's vestry, only the third to be established anywhere in Wales. This was eventually taken over by the local authority but Bethania's nursery continued to thrive and provide intake for the primary school. Thereafter publicly funded Welsh medium schools were established throughout Wales, including in largely English monoglot areas.

In the last 50 years, successive Welsh Language Acts, the creation of the Welsh language television channel S4C, the establishment of the Welsh Language Board and the Education Reform Act 1988 which gave Welsh the status of a core subject of the National Curriculum in Wales have all greatly strengthened the position of the Welsh language in the life of Wales.

Alongside there has been a growth in cultural activities through the medium of Welsh. For example, Theatr Na n'Óg has been active in South Wales for 25 years, providing Welsh medium community theatre. The company has been providing the Trust with guidance and support.

The number of Welsh speakers in Bridgend County Borough has grown over the last 20 years, and this is reflected in the growing number of children being taught through the medium of Welsh.

Bethania's pioneering school is an important legacy since Bridgend County Borough now has four Welsh medium primary schools with two more being required due to the demand. The Llynfi valley is home to the County Borough's only Welsh medium secondary school, Ysgol Gyfun Llangynwyd, and its staff wish to be a partner in this project. Bethania's minister truly was "the pioneer of education through the medium of Welsh in the Maesteg Valley". (Richards 1982)

A Menter Iaith is a community-based organisation which works to raise the profile of the Welsh language in specific areas. Each local Menter Iaith receives a basic grant from the Welsh Government, as well as financial support from a number of other sources, to work with individuals, organisations, and local business to promote the use of the Welsh language in its area. Menter Bro Ogwr is the Menter Iaith for Bridgend County Borough and is based in Maesteg. Together with other organisations it is meeting an increasing demand in the area for Welsh language activities and learning. It is a member of the Trust's reference group and will be a key delivery partner in this project.

2.5 Overview of Social and Community value

Bethania was the mother church of the Welsh Baptist community in the Llynfi Valley which was, when the chapel was built, still a largely Welsh-speaking community. As a Welsh language chapel, Bethania played a key role in Welsh cultural activities in Maesteg: eisteddfodau, choral and dramatic performances, lectures and magic lantern shows as well as preaching festivals became established features of the chapel calendar. E. T. Davies states: "The influence of Welsh nonconformity went deeper than politics. It can be said that from 1850 to 1920 it supplied Wales with much of its popular culture. This culture was produced in, and emanated from, hundreds of chapel vestries throughout the principality, for it should not be forgotten that the vestry was as important as the chapel itself in the life of nonconformity, and whereas the latter was used on Sundays only, the former was used on at least four evenings a week for religious and cultural purposes." Chapel members "looked to the vestry for cultural nourishment. In many places, the chapel vestry was the only place where people could meet. (Davies 1981)

Bethania was a dynamic source of popular culture until well into the second half of the 20th century. With the departure of the congregation, these activities have ceased, but the building and the potential of its performance spaces remain as does the need for such facilities.

2.6 How the Heritage is managed today

As with many other chapels a dwindling and mostly elderly congregation struggled to maintain Bethania. In 2004 its trustees passed its future care to the Welsh Religious Buildings Trust and the congregation now worship with the nearby Carmel Independent chapel.

The Welsh Religious Buildings Trust was brought into being in 1999 by Cadw and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action to take into care important examples of Wales' non-Anglican religious built heritage which have become redundant: in practice this means the rich heritage of Wales' Nonconformist chapels, what have been described as the "national architecture of Wales". The Trust is staffed by a full-time Trust manager and part-time Development Officer and managed by a board of trustees.

In 2004 and 2006 the WRBT commissioned a condition survey and dry rot survey. These informed limited emergency repairs undertaken in 2007, which focussed on dealing with water ingress and repairs to the main elevation and roof. Since then, due to unsuccessful funding bids and the Trust's very limited financial resources, the building has essentially been mothballed, although funds have needed to be found in order to repair damage arising from vandalism: due to its prominent location and apparent vulnerability, Bethania has regrettably been subject to several attacks of vandalism during the last few years.

3 Statement of significance

3.1 Historic Significance

The various expansions of the chapel building on the same site are not only indicative of the expanding population of the Llynfi Valley and of Bethania's pre-eminent role in the Baptist community, but are a response to the various Revivals which swept Wales during this period. The 1908 construction was certainly triggered by the 1904-05 Evan Roberts revival, but the national Revivals may well have also prompted the 1841 enlargement and 1858 rebuild. The changing fabric of Bethania provides evidence of these social changes.

3.2 Architectural significance

3.2.1 John Newman in *The Buildings of Wales: Glamorgan* (1995) states that Beddoe Rees' three Glamorgan chapels of the late 1900s "reinterpret traditional ideas in an Edwardian Beaux-Arts idiom... Their interiors, with segmental ceilings carried on upper arches and columns which spring from the pieced metal gallery fronts, and their co-ordinated furnishings, are rare ensembles of real architectural quality." Of Bethania itself he states "This is his most ambitious classical essay, in a Beaux-Arts style."

3.2.2 Simon Jenkins chose Bethania as one of the dozen Nonconformist chapels he discusses in detail in *Wales: Churches, Houses, Castles* (2008). In the Glamorgan chapter, of Tabernacl Morryston and Bethania he states:

From the earliest barn conversions... to the neo-baroque splendour of the valley preaching houses, chapels dominate the Glamorgan townscape. Though few are accessible, fine examples stand proud at Morryston and Maesteg. The preservation of these buildings is the more urgent given their declining congregations and the loss of the industrial monuments that gave them birth.

Of Bethania he states that it "represents the climax of the great era of Welsh chapel building.." and "demonstrates the baroque revival confidence of the later chapel architects."

3.2.3 In *Wales's Best One Hundred Churches* (2006), T.J. Hughes (who regrettably does not include Bethania amongst his 15 selected Nonconformist chapels) notes that "the 1904 revival was also to produce the last wave of major new religious buildings (in Wales), almost all of them chapels, the work of W. Beddoe Rees at Maesteg, Resolven and Llandudno being perhaps the most notable." Since the Calvinistic Methodist chapel in Resolven has been demolished and Tabor Maesteg and Ebeneser Llandudno have been drastically altered, Bethania probably survives as Beddoe Rees' sole unaltered masterwork.

3.2.4 Bethania is selected as one of 105 Welsh language chapels described in detail by D. Huw Owen in *Capeli Cymru* (Y Lolfa 2005).

3.2.5 The RCAHMW's compendium of Wales' heritage *Hidden Histories: Discovering the Heritage of Wales* (2008) states in its Introduction that Bethania is "one of the triumphs of the Beaux Arts style, designed by Beddoe Rees in every detail from façade to door handles..." and illustrates Bethania's main elevation and a detail of the elegant art nouveau door handles found in the vestibule screen.

3.2.6. Principal elevation

The principal elevation is an architectural tour-de-force which dominates Bethania Street. As with the vast majority of Victorian and Edwardian chapels the architectural interest is focussed on this elevation, the remainder being comparatively plain. Architectural descriptions are found in the listing description (Appendix A) and the Trust's leaflet (Appendix B).

Significant elements for Newman are:

This is his most ambitious classical essay, in a Beaux-Arts style. Shallow coursed Pennant sandstone, with lavish dressings of Portland stone. Channelled quoins overlaid with pilaster strips define the pedimented, three bay centre and the gallery-stair bays to left and right. Central Ionic columns and a Diocletian window in the pediment impose quite a grand scale on the whole façade.

Significant elements for Jenkins are:

The façade is a five bay classical composition. The centre is composed of screen of attached columns, with rounded windows below and a semi-circular window above, all held together by a bold pediment with urns and four graceful pilasters. The whole is in two tones of stone.

3.2.7 Chapel interior

The concept of the main chapel interior has been described as being reminiscent of St James, Piccadilly, but Beddoe Rees was responsible for the special detailing of its components: the slender cast iron columns made by W.A. Baker & Co. of Newport supporting the vaulted ceiling; the decorative iron grilles to the gallery and *sêt fawr*; the curved oak pews, each numbered; the elaborately carved pulpit; the art nouveau stained glass vestibule screen; the art nouveau brass door furniture. Architectural descriptions are found in the listing description (Appendix A) and the Trust's leaflet (Appendix B).

Significant elements for Newman are:

The galleried interior, to seat a thousand, is equally splendid. The interior is reminiscent of Wren's St James Piccadilly, for the galleries round three sides are not only carried on slender iron shafts but in turn carry upper shafts and semi-circular arches. Segmental plaster vault. Shaft caps moulded below, with swirling foliage above. Foliage corbels carry transverse arches across the vault. Exceptionally elaborate, gilt iron gallery fronts, incorporating a lyre pattern. On the fourth side the gallery continues, to support large organ set an Ionic arched recess. Timber pulpit below, carved with Art Nouveau details. Oak pews set on a segmental curve.

Significant elements for Jenkins are:

The interior is in the form familiar to late Victorian chapels, vaguely related to Wren's St James, Piccadilly. It contains a panelled gallery supported on columns of cast iron. Further ironwork, some of it in the form of pierced panels, fronts the seats of the elders and the centrally placed pulpit. Above this rises the great organ, its pipes curving upwards in response to the downward curve of the arch behind. The composition appears hierarchical for a Dissenting chapel. The windows contain Art Nouveau glass.

3.3 Significance of Nonconformity

The core belief of Nonconformists, that preaching was of overwhelming importance, is reflected in their buildings. A chapel was not seen as a building, but a congregation, "a community of believers": "it is a house that had a pulpit from which to hear preaching." (Jones, 1996) Nonconformist buildings evolved from simple barn-like meeting houses to the architectural eclecticism of the mid 19th century onwards, all the while retaining the pulpit as focal point. As Nonconformity pervaded 19th century Welsh society, its chapels became ubiquitous in the Welsh urban and rural landscape, to the extent that they have been described as the "national architecture of Wales". The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales' (RCAHMW) Chapels Recording Project has logged over 6000 chapels built in Wales, almost certainly an over-provision, which reflected the pervasiveness of Nonconformity and the diversity of, and rivalry between, denominations.

3.4 Significance of the Welsh language

Welsh was the language of the people of these Isles over 2000 years ago and it has survived the linguistic pressures of a succession of encroaching cultures. It was the principal language of a form of Christianity which grew to dominate Welsh society for over 400 years. Today it is a key ingredient in Wales' identity and an equal component of what is an increasingly bilingual nation.

Maesteg has the highest percentage of Welsh speakers across the County Borough and the Welsh language is seen as important to the community again. There is a renewed interest in Welsh culture and in the historic past of the local area. Bethania not only embodies the confidence and spirit of a past age but can also with others become a catalyst for the development of a revived Maesteg community. A bilingual cultural centre at Bethania will not only benefit the local community but will attract visitors from elsewhere in Wales and beyond.

3.5 Social and community significance

Brinley Richards notes that "during the second half of the last (19th) century and the first quarter of this (20th) century, the Llynfi valley was famous for its singers and choirs, mainly nurtured in the local Chapels". As the largest chapel in the valley, Bethania played a full role in the social, cultural and educational, as well as religious, life of the local community. Bethania, for example, had a prize winning choir under the 50 year long directorship of Samuel Davies. Richards adds that in this period:

Welsh Nonconformist Churches were brimming with activities like lectures, penny readings, eisteddfodau, concerts, young people's societies and drama companies...It is doubtful whether any other Welsh valley of comparable size could boast of greater cultural and social activity...In 1943 the valley could boast of two Welsh, and eight, English drama companies, two opera companies and seventeen youth clubs.

Key people have influenced the history of Bethania from its beginnings in 1828 until its closure. Bethania had a large impact on the religious, social, industrial and cultural development of Maesteg from its roots as a small rural community to becoming the main industrial town within the Llynfi Valley. Bethania's location on Bethania Street gives a simple indication of the influence it had on the growth of the town of Maesteg. It also had a Wales-wide role: Baptists from all over Wales attended the Baptist Union meetings at Bethania

Bethania in its architecture and grandeur reflects the vibrant, confident community that Maesteg was at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. These were years of great economic growth and community confidence. Formal religious life was at its height and the Nonconformist chapels were the powerhouses of the social and cultural life of the community. The economic decline of the later 20th century and the resultant loss of confidence in the local community, coupled with a significant fall in chapel attendance, have been reflected in Bethania's physical decline.

Nonconformity in its various denominations is still evolving to this day, but the number of worshippers has reduced substantially, resulting in a radically reduced need for chapel buildings across Wales. However, even amongst non-practising communities, the chapel holds a special place in the psyche of people to this day.

3.6 History and learning

Bethania belongs to the strong tradition of Sunday Schools in Wales. Classes were held on a Sunday as it was the day most people were available, and were open to adults and children alike. Early Sunday Schools involved basic tuition in reading and writing that was based on the scriptures. As state education was established their role developed into Bible study and more general theological and other related educational subjects, attended by all ages. As in most chapels, classes were held in purpose-built buildings, as well as in the main chapel itself.

Chapels also provided other learning opportunities, such as literary societies, held on weekdays, and had a strong general belief in the importance of education. Many chapels including Bethania, had their own general libraries, holding a wide range of publications.

The significance of the establishment at Bethania of only the third Welsh medium infant/primary school anywhere in Wales has already been noted. Bridgend County Borough Council's recently opened Welsh medium secondary school, Ysgol Gyfun Llangynwyd, is located nearby and continues that tradition of Welsh medium education in the Llynfi valley.

Bethania the building and its artefacts provide tangible evidence of Welsh Nonconformist society in its 19th/ early 20th century heyday. Properly interpreted, they can provide abundant opportunities for learning about the history of Welsh Nonconformity from the 16th century, the development of chapel building, the varying fortunes of the Welsh language, and the dynamic industrial society of South Wales during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

3.7 Previous Significance

Clearly the building and all that this entailed - its religious, social, educational value- was hugely significant to the congregations that used it and its earlier forms for over 170 years. Although Nonconformist congregations typically tend not to place a high value upon the chapel building itself, (partly as point of principle i.e. the Word, not the building) Bethania's final congregation took particular care to transfer into the care of the Welsh Religious Buildings Trust as the best option to secure its future.

3.8 Technical significance

Technical components of the building are not unusual for a building of this type. However, as the complete and virtually unaltered work of a major chapel architect, Bethania provides a rare accessible example of the final flowering of Welsh Nonconformist chapel architecture. It is therefore of high significance.

3.9 Statutory status

Bethania was listed grade II* by Cadw in 1997 "as one of the best surviving architectural achievements by a major chapel architect in his powerful Beaux Arts style". The Trust understands that fifteen years on, Bethania survives as Beddoe Rees' only surviving unaltered major work- his major chapels in Llandudno and Resolven, as well as his two other chapels in Maesteg, have been either demolished or drastically altered.

3.10 Overall Significance – summary

Bethania is one of a relatively small number of grade I and II* listed Nonconformist chapels which represent the cream of the more than 6000 that have been erected in Wales.

The decline in religious adherence during the 20th century coupled with the over-provision of chapels arising from denominational rivalries has meant that many of these buildings are becoming redundant and subject to demolition or radical alteration for new uses such as residential accommodation, office and community use. In these cases the external fabric and the building's place in the landscape tend to be preserved but the scale of alterations to the interiors tend to result in a considerable, and often total, loss of architectural integrity and character. Additionally there is a negative impact on the chapel's ability to function as a performance space since they were designed with performance and participation in mind. Such adaptations undermine the acoustic quality and the value of the chapel's sense of place.

Bethania is in the care of a charitable trust dedicated to preserving it 'as found' for the benefit of posterity and to finding an appropriate new use which, with sensitive adaptation, will bring it new life and give opportunities for people to learn about its heritage and that of Welsh Nonconformity.

4 Condition and Capacity for Change

4.1 Condition of the Building

The building is generally in poor condition, following a long period of neglect prior to being acquired by the Trust in 2006. The external rainwater goods were in poor condition allowing water penetration into the fabric of the building. The building has suffered historically from damage as a result of water penetration, with new solid floors installed in several places in the 1970s and with repairs to decayed joinery e.g. support of gallery. In recent years, water ingress from roof defects and also following theft of lead has exacerbated the situation.

In general, the condition of the building is steadily deteriorating- virtually every storm is followed by emergency repairs to roofs. The building is fragile and is vulnerable to vandalism. It is obvious that the deterioration has become more advanced and the condition of the building has worsened in recent years.

A condition survey was commissioned by the Trust in 2004, and a Diagnostic Non-destructive Environmental Survey was commissioned in 2006. Some short to medium term repairs were carried out in 2007, primarily to coping stones on East/Front Elevation and to various rainwater goods, leadwork and roofs. The issues itemised below are identified in the above mentioned reports, or have become apparent since they were conducted. The building requires a detailed up to date survey of its condition, accessing all areas not yet inspected and providing solutions to problems identified.

Roofs

Main chapel roof

- The main chapel slate pitch roof is in fair to poor condition, with some slippage and damage, requiring regular repair. Loss of loose slates in strong wind.
- The main roof vent has been sealed & leaded over.
- Chapel roof abutment with facade: Lead flashings and soakers renewed 2007.

Two storey meeting rooms lean-to hipped roof

- Some slippage and damage, as main chapel roof.

Boiler house lean-to roof

- Interlocking concrete tile roof at low pitch, subject of constant vandalism, which shows signs of sagging due probably to the weight of the roof.
- Rainwater goods are a mixture of cast iron and UPVc., and are in a poor condition, being the main cause of water ingress in many areas. Recent partial repairs.
- Chimney in brickwork in poor condition.

Large Vestry main roof

- This is older than the main chapel roof. Considerable slippage of slates, requiring regular repairs, needs re-slating. Ridge tiles blown off (replaced).
- Large chimney in brickwork in poor condition.
- Considerable damp penetration around chimney, with local sagging of the vestry roof around the large vestry chimney. Flashings and soakers, lead tray renewed 2007. Subsequently replaced with non-lead alternatives after theft of lead.

Large Vestry extension roof

- More recent than main vestry roof. Condition as main chapel, with recent fall of slates.
- Chimney in brickwork in poor condition.

Elevations

- Water penetration from damaged drain pipes and loose guttering in numerous areas, causing local damage and cracking to the adjacent render.

East (Front) Elevation

- The pointing to the coping stones was missing or in poor condition and allowing water penetration into the masonry.
- Water penetration through the main copings and cornice areas was evident along the full width of the façade, partially resolved by copings on front elevation being removed and re-bedded on lead and the parapets repointed in 2007.
- Decorative ornamentation to the front façade appears to be generally stable. However there have been falls of masonry – one complete piece fell and replaced in 2008, and during last 12 months small parts decorative stonework on the façade are now breaking away – around the lettering mainly

South Elevation

- The render on the south elevation cracking in areas allowing water penetration.
- Although regularly repaired and patched up the guttering at eaves level is defective, allowing water to run down the walls of the building particularly at the west end of the elevation.
- Due to vandalism, cast iron ventilation grilles have been replaced with brick vents of reduced area, effectively reducing airflow and not providing adequate cross ventilation.

West (Rear) Elevation (Two storey meeting rooms and chapel west elevation)

- Rendered gable above lean-to roof on the west elevation cracking in areas allowing water penetration
- Local sandstone showing signs of weathering, with frost and water action resulting in widespread de-lamination.
- Walls generally require repointing.
- Undersized and defective guttering allowing water to run down the walls of the building particularly at the junction between the chapel and the Vestry.

North Elevation

- The render on the north elevation cracking in areas allowing water penetration.
- The guttering at eaves level defective allowing water to run down the walls of the building particularly at the west end of the elevation to the east of the entrance porch.

Large Vestry Exterior

- Local sandstone showing signs of weathering, with frost and water action resulting in widespread de-lamination.
- A small buttress on the east facing wall has been partially demolished.
- Rear walls in rubble stone masonry pointing loose and friable.

Windows & Doors

- Windows on all elevations, including the main roadside elevation, have been subjected to vandalism. Windows the west side have been blocked up or grilled over and will all have to be renewed as part of any reuse or refurbishment.
- Temporary Perspex protection provided to front elevation windows in 2007.
- The chapel windows are all in timber painted. All windows lack basic maintenance and decoration. At least 2 lower windows show signs of sill rot.
- There are 3 points of entry into the building. The original front gable entrance and side porch entrance door are in fair condition. The boiler room door leading to the 'small vestry' is the only access to the rear yard and has been severely vandalised on several occasions. It is currently barred from the inside.

Roof Voids

Main chapel roof void

- The main chapel roof timbers are generally in good condition
- The south and north bearing ends of the first truss from the east are decayed on their built in ends in the walls.
- Repairs have been carried out to the rafters and rafter plate at the east end of the south wall. There is continued water penetration in this area and an area of plasterboard ceiling has recently collapsed.
- The purlins bearing in the east wall are in varying states of decay due to wet rot. Water penetration through the roof along the east elevation probably associated with poor flashings and pointing to the masonry.

Large vestry roof void

- Evidence of water penetration and wet rot in the end of a king-post truss and associated timber elements adjacent to the Large Vestry chimney, significant local sagging of the roof also noted. This area is now supported by Acrow props as a precaution.

Interior of chapel – general

- Most panels of lath and plaster ceilings cracked. Several areas of staining due probably to historical roof leakage. Notable damp ingress at the façade abutment
- Against damp external walls it is likely that all timber and panelling is affected by wet or dry rot.
- Sporadic evidence of furniture beetle in pews and staircase, particularly in North lobby.
- Water staining and penetrating damp is evident in numerous areas, which coincided with the damaged drain pipes, gutters and flashing

Main chapel - ground floor

East Vestibule and Porch

- There is dry rot mycelium on the wall in the northwest corner below the stairs.
- There is a risk of decay to the panelling in the southwest corner below the stairs as there is dry rot in the adjacent area to the west.

Main Chapel- South Side

- The south wall is damp particularly at the west and east ends.
- The west window lintel is structurally decayed by wet rot and dry rot.
- The east window lintel and second window lintel from the east are modern softwood replacements probably replacing dry rot decayed lintels in the past.
- The west and east windows are decayed by a combination of dry and wet rots.
- There is dry rot mycelium on the masonry below the west and east windows.
- There is dry rot mycelium on the east wall in the southeast corner.
- The truss bearing in the southeast corner is structurally decayed at its upper end in the south wall. The second truss from the east wall is structurally decayed on its bearing end in the south wall.

Main Chapel - North Side

- The west window lintel is at risk of decay due to its close proximity to the dry rot outbreak above.
- The north wall in the northeast corner of the room has dry rot mycelium on the wall below the east window and to the east return wall.
- The truss bearing in the northeast corner has been repaired by splicing in new timber.
- Active wood worm infestation in numerous pews throughout the chapel

Void under Organ

- Poor ventilation into the floor voids in the main chapel, resulting in recurring condensation on oak timber panelling

Main chapel - First Floor

North East Landing

- The lintel over the east window has been renewed, replacing the original decayed lintel.
- The floor joists supporting the half landing are modern replacements suggesting past problems with decay in this area.

South East Landing

- The lintels over the east window & south window structurally decayed by dry rot.
- The east and south walls damp, associated with water penetration through the masonry walls and roof.

Gallery - East

- The lintels over the east windows are damp although free of structural decay.
- Localised woodworm to the sapwood but this is not structurally significant.
- The east wall is damp, particularly at high level, associated with defects to the pointing on the exteriors and flashings at roof level.
- The lath and plaster ceiling against the east wall is in poor condition due to the water penetration.

Gallery - South

- The west window lintel is structurally decayed by wet rot and dry rot.
- The east window lintel is structurally decayed by dry rot and the second window lintel from the east is probably infected with dry rot although not structurally damaged.
- The east, second window from the east and the west windows are decayed by a combination of dry and wet rots.
- The south wall is damp particularly at the west and east ends.
- There is dry rot mycelium on the masonry below the west and east windows.
- The timber studs at the top of the west wall in the southwest corner are decayed by wet rot.
- The floor joists/trimmer against the south walls below the east and west windows is in contact with dry rot infected masonry and although appearing free of structural decay is likely to be decayed or at high risk of decay due to the continued dampness in the wall.

Gallery - North

- The west window lintel is structurally decayed by dry rot.
- The west window frame and sill is decayed by dry rot.
- The north wall is damp particularly at the west end.
- There is dry rot mycelium on the wall below the west window and on the west return wall.
- The floor joists/trimmer against the north wall below the west window are in contact with dry rot infected masonry and although appearing free of structural decay are likely to be decayed or at high risk of decay due to the continued dampness in the wall.

South Stair Well (Vestibule)

- The lintels over the south window are structurally decayed by dry rot.
- The south window frame and sill are decayed by dry rot.
- The south wall is saturated due to continued problems with defective downpipe/guttering on the exteriors.

North Stair Well (Vestibule)

- The lintel over the (north) window is structurally decayed by dry rot, and is now supported by Acrow props.
- The north window frame and sill are decayed by dry rot.
- The north wall is saturated due to a defective downpipe/guttering on the exteriors.

Meeting rooms - Ground floor

Minister's Room (South Meeting Room)

- The lintel over the west window is decayed by wet rot
- The south and west walls were damp due to defects to the guttering on the exteriors.

Small Vestry Meeting Room

- Small vestry lined out in hardboard suggesting excessive damp penetration.
- The lintel over the west windows not accessible, and is likely to be decayed or at high risk of decay.
- The skirting board along the south wall is decayed by wet rot.
- Dry rot evident above door to boiler house.

Deacons' Room

- The lintel over the west window was decayed by wet rot and dry rot, and has been replaced with temporary lintel.
- The west and north walls damp – due to defects to the guttering on the exteriors and to repeated theft of lead above.
- Timber suspended floor has been removed due to decay by dry rot.

Central Corridor

- Floor of timber suspended construction and decayed by a combination of wet rot, wood boring weevil and woodworm there may also have been some dry rot along the south side of the corridor. Currently unsafe.
- Signs of rising and penetrating damp in numerous areas along the ground floor.
- Significant amount of dry rot spores evident in area of small vestry, deacons' room corridor and vestibule stairwell.

Boiler House (small lean-to)

- Lintels over the windows decayed.
- Asbestos based insulation present.

Meeting rooms First floor

South Toilet Room

- The lintel over the south window structurally decayed by dry rot.
- The south window frame and sill decayed by dry rot.
- The south wall saturated due to a defective downpipe/guttering on the exteriors.
- The floor joists along the south side of the floor bearing in the east wall are decayed by dry rot.

North Toilet Room

- Rafter ends and wall plate along the north side of the ceiling decayed by dry rot.
- The timber studs of the west wall structurally decayed by dry rot.

South Meeting Room

- The bonding timbers below the west window decayed by wet rot.
- The west wall damp due to defects to the guttering on the exteriors.
- The skirting board along the south wall decayed by wet rot.
- The floor joists bearing in the west wall in the southwest corner of the room below the fireplace decayed by wet rot to the 4th joist from the south wall.

South Central Meeting Room

- Rafter plate along the west wall visible and decayed by dry rot.
- The lintel over the west window structurally decayed by dry rot.
- The west wall damp due to defects to the guttering on the exteriors.
- The floor joists bearing in the west wall are at high risk of decay.

North Central Meeting Room

- The lintel over the west window saturated and at risk of decay.
- The west wall damp due to defects to the guttering on the exteriors.
- The floor joists bearing in the west wall are at high risk of decay.

North Meeting Room

- The lintel over the west window structurally decayed by dry rot.
- The west window decayed by dry rot.
- The west wall damp due to defects to the guttering on the exteriors.
- The floor joists bearing in the west wall are at high risk of decay.
- Room affected by substantial water penetration due to repeated theft of lead above.

Large Vestry

- Evidence of water penetration through the roof particularly along the south side of the roof at the junction with the chapel. Several damp patches noted in ceilings
- The south wall saturated centrally from floor to ceiling level associated with the defect at roof level at the junction between the chapel and the vestry and associated with valley abutment to chapel and chimney. Affected by repeated lead theft above.
- Water penetration is affecting foot of one king post truss, which is being supported.
- Penetrating damp in exposed external walls.
- The skirting board along the west wall decayed by wet rot in the area of the solid floor.

Services

- Generally wiring is old with non-PVC insulation. Faulty circuits disconnected. Temporary lighting & power circuits installed.
- Heating system redundant and decommissioned.
- No fire fighting equipment or alarm system.
- Foul drainage sufficient for current use.

External areas

- Front Yard access steps and front yard stone wall and wrought iron railings require substantial refurbishment.
- Surface water drainage system requires investigation and repair.
- Burial ground is still under threat of re-invasion by Japanese Knotweed.
- Several gravestones are leaning and dangerous.
- Burial ground is surrounded by a Boundary Walls made of rubble stone wall, part retaining on to public footpath which is bulging in one area.

4.2 Capacity for Change

The chart below details the various areas of Bethania and their significance and capacity for change. See also Beddoe Rees' plans at Appendix B.

Area	Significance	Capacity for change
Exteriors		
Path to front entrance and garden	6	3
Front (East) elevation	8	8
Path alley & side entrance porch	3	3
North elevation	4	6
South elevation	4	6
West Elevation – Two storey meeting rooms	5	5
Boiler House	2	2
Large vestry West elevation (gable)	3	3
Large vestry West elevation (1908)	5	5
Large vestry North elevation	5	5
Large vestry South elevation	5	5
Remains of outhouses/coalhouse	2	1
Garden to rear (West)	2	1
Chapel boundary walls – transecting footpath	3	4
Boundary walls & fences to chapel and large vestry (exc. transecting footpath)	1	1
Burial Ground	4	6
Burial Ground boundary	4	5
Interiors		
Main Entrance Area/Foyer	8	7
North & south stairwell (front)	8	7
Main Chapel interior (all)	8	8
North & south stairwell (rear)	7	7
Organ blower chamber	5	7

Rear corridor (ground)	3	3
Minister's room	3	3
Small Vestry	4	3
Deacons' Room	4	3
Boiler Room	2	1
Rear corridor (first floor)	3	3
Meeting room 1 (first floor)	3	3
Meeting room 2 (first floor)	3	3
Meeting room 3 (first floor)	3	3
Library (first floor)	4	3
Side Entrance Vestibule	3	2
Kitchen (1970s)	1	1
Ladies & Gents toilet & back entrance corridor	1	1
Large Vestry – south, pre 1908	4	3
Large Vestry – north, post 1908	6	6
Key		
Significance		
7,8	Exceptional	National or international significance
5,6	Considerable	Regional significance
3,4	Some	Local significance
1,2	Negative or Negligible	Negative or limited heritage value
Capacity for change		
7,8	Very low capacity for change	Highly fragile and very vulnerable to change and neglect. Only capable of accepting minimal interventions carried out with great care if these avoid compromising significance. A conservation approach is needed.
5,6	Low capacity for change	Vulnerable to change and neglect. Capable of accepting some changes if these avoid compromising significance. A conservation approach needed.
3,4	Moderate capacity for change	Capable of accepting a number of changes without compromising significance. Significance must inform proposals.
1,2	High capacity for change	Very major or major interventions possible without compromise to significance.

4.3 Conservation Issues

The Trust was established by Cadw and the WCVA to take into care examples of redundant Nonconformist buildings which are of exceptional architectural and/or historical significance. It is therefore incumbent upon the Trust to afford the greatest respect to the integrity of the building fabric, and its fixtures and fittings. There shall always be a presumption in favour of retaining the building “as found” and of resisting proposals for alterations, especially removal of original fabric, fixtures and fittings. There will also be a presumption in favour of retaining more recent changes to a building which illustrate its altered use, rather than endeavouring to “restoring” a building to an earlier presumed condition.

Nonetheless, the Trust is realistic in recognising that some managed change to a building may be necessary in order to realise its potential after-use and to assure its future. The Trust will therefore carefully consider changes to building elements which are deemed to be of minor significance, and whose sympathetic alteration would not adversely affect the building's overall significance.

The Trust endorses the principles and guidance contained in Cadw's *Conservation Principles* (Cadw 2011), and will seek to closely follow its format in the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan.

Bethania comprises several discrete areas, in adjoining and linked buildings, and not all areas are of equal conservation value/ architectural significance. The over-riding consideration is the conservation of the historic 1908 main chapel interior and its related spaces, and the main chapel elevations, in particular the main façade. Other parts of the buildings have either been altered, have lesser conservation value or none at all. A limited amount of restoration could be possible, for example, reinstating moveable partitions in the large vestry, reinstatement of rear windows, and reinstatement of roof ventilator.

Options will need to be considered carefully in order to maximise the extent of conservation of the historic fabric and 'feel' atmosphere of the building alongside ensuring that the building complex can be used by the local community for the maximum amount of time and range of activities.

The Trust has undertaken some preliminary work on the architectural history and archaeology of Bethania, and the various areas of the building complex and their relative degree of historic significance and integrity, some historic fabric having already been lost e.g. outhouses, part of large vestry. This work, expanded and extended in the course of the full Conservation Management Plan along with the assessment of significance detailed earlier in this Statement, will inform any proposed changes at Bethania.

4.4. Conservation and Management Aims

Whilst planning and undertaking any scheme/proposals/project at Bethania the Trust will consider the following:

4.4.1 Conservation

The Trust will endeavour to pursue good conservation practice, ensuring that only people with appropriate skills will work on the historic building and artefacts. The Trust will retain the maximum original historic fabric, fixtures and fittings, and reinstate original details and finishes to reinforce the unity of the original architectural design. Traditional materials and craft techniques will be employed, utilising locally sourced materials wherever possible. External specialists and advisors will be consulted when necessary and guidance will be sought from Cadw and the local authority.

4.4.2 New Work

New work will be designed to complement the historic fabric sensitively and sympathetically. Its design will be environmentally sustainable. New services in the historic fabric will be incorporated discreetly.

4.4.3 Access

Building improvements will reflect the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act whilst being sensitive to the significance of historic fabric.

4.4.4 Effects on the Environment

In relation to sustainable development, developing Bethania will contribute to enhancing community identity, and the conservation, interpretation and presentation can be a source of pride and well-being. The on-going use and raised profile of Bethania will contribute to community cohesion and social capital, through bringing people together for a shared purpose.

There are environmental gains to be achieved through the maintenance and conservation of heritage building stock. These buildings represent a major investment in natural and human resources. Maintenance and conservation of the built heritage drastically reduces or eliminates demolition and new construction waste, and conserves the embodied energy in the existing buildings. Currently the building has no energy saving mechanisms, energy efficiency or environmentally sustainable energy generation. Any project will be designed to have a minimal impact on the environment and aims to follow these principles:

Energy

Bethania in its present state is an energy hungry building with no thermal insulation and an inadequate and expensive heating system. The project will aim to rectify these deficiencies.

The project will include the design and construction of a new building (café & bookshop extension) which, wherever possible, has passive environmental controls, has little or no need of a heating system and which uses natural ventilation as much as possible. Energy efficiency will be achieved to at least that required by the Building Regulations and will use natural insulation materials.

The project will incorporate appropriate renewable energy technologies, heat recovery from waste water systems, rain water collection and appropriate electrical circuits to enable the use of photovoltaic technology (if used, PV panels to be on new build only). Energy efficient equipment and fittings will be installed.

Water

Aerated taps and other water-saving fittings, grey water systems and flow-reducing valves on pipework will be installed where appropriate.

Building materials / construction waste

Traditional products and building materials and those with a low embodied energy will be used and sourced locally wherever possible. Paints, varnishes and other finishes which are natural oil or water-based and not petro-chemical or solvent based will be used. Material from the existing building will be re-used where possible. 10% of the materials' value will come from recycled content. The building contractor and sub-contractors will be required to adopt an environmentally responsible site waste management plan.

Soil, timber and biodiversity

No peat to be used. All timber to come from proven legal and sustainable resources. Ecological appraisal to be carried out at design stage to assess impact on biodiversity.

Visitor transport

Use of public transport to be actively encouraged. Visitors' use of public transport to attend main events to be monitored. Bethania is on the main Bridgend-Maesteg bus route, with bus stops within 1 minute walk. Ewenny Road railway station, on the Bridgend-Maesteg line, is 5 minutes' walk away.

5 Outline proposals

5.1 Project development

The congregation of Bethania ceased using the chapel building in 2004 due to a reduction in the numbers of the congregation and on-going costs of maintenance becoming a burden to them; they were however anxious to ensure a secure future for the building for future generations to enjoy. WRBT trustees gave careful consideration to the building and its significance and decided that its exceptional quality fell within the Trust's criteria for acquisition and that it had enormous potential as a community resource. They accordingly accepted ownership of the building to the Trust in 2006. The congregation now worship with another congregation in Maesteg but they continue to engage with and support the Trust in the development of this project.

The Trust has endeavoured to maintain the building within a limited budget but this is increasingly difficult with costs rising and a gradual deterioration of the building fabric. This is compounded by vandalism, specifically theft of lead flashing and sheeting. The Trust is currently negotiating with the local boxing club to license them to use the vestry temporarily, which will provide a presence at the building and thereby improve its security as well as providing a much needed small income.

Bethania is the largest building within the Trust's portfolio. It poses the biggest risk and conversely the biggest opportunity. Due to limited staff capacity, the Trust has struggled to make progress with the project but recognised the need for in-depth development to advance this project; it accordingly in 2010 employed a Development Officer with project management and community development skills to aid to focus open Bethania. The Development Officer has been working with stakeholders including individuals, voluntary groups, and the local authority to identify a new community use, identify what is needed in Maesteg, in the wider County Borough of Bridgend and in south Wales in order to establish a sustainable vision for Bethania.

An Open Day was organised to invite key people to join a Reference Group to support the consultation and engagement to-date. The Reference Group is made up of local councillors (County Borough and Town), representatives for the local MP and AM, the Women's Institute, Llynfi Valley Historical Society and Menter Bro Ogwr. They have met quarterly. Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO) has sent out 90 consultation letters to all their member organisations across the county borough and featured the project in their newsletter.

The Trustees have formed a working group to take forward the development of this project. Through this group the Trustees have conducted options assessment based on current engagement levels and information and will be looking to undertake further consultation and engagement within the development of an audience development plan as part of the development stage.

The main chapel at Bethania has been identified as the 'key' selling point of the whole building with excellent potential to return to what it was built for, performance. It has excellent acoustics and can seat a range of small to large audiences around a "theatre-in-the round" temporary stage. This would provide a facility and an audience experience quite different from but complementary to that available at Maesteg Town Hall, and would be attractive for small-scale drama, music, dance and the oral arts. Additionally, the wide range of ancillary spaces available at Bethania offer potential flexibility and variety of use for rehearsals, set preparation, small scale performance etc.

The staff of Menter Bro Ogwr, a stakeholder member of the Reference Group; provide Welsh language activity across the county borough and have expressed an interest in delivering a wider range of activities at Bethania.

They run a Welsh language book shop and craft shop in Bridgend town centre. They have identified the need for a similar facility in Maesteg which has the highest concentration of Welsh speakers in the county borough.

Maesteg is the location of Ysgol Gyfun Llangynwyd, the county borough's Welsh medium secondary school and a key stakeholder in this project. Consultation with staff has identified a need for a suitable venue to run the school's yearly eisteddfod, and a need for volunteer and work placement opportunities, as well as social activities through the medium of Welsh. Local theatre companies have also identified a need for this type of facility, with limited multi-functional performance space available in the area.

It is the Trust's view that a Bilingual Cultural and Heritage Centre including a café/bar and bilingual bookshop would powerfully occupy a niche that would complement the activities of the Town Hall. This option would potentially increase the variety of offer at Bethania, appealing to a wide range of people that may not ordinarily come to a religious heritage site. This would enhance the potential footfall of the building, generate much needed income and help to secure a long term future for the building.

5.2 Brief project description

Bethania is the Trust's flagship project. It has been developed with the local community as an exemplar project to create a bilingual cultural centre which will breathe life into an important redundant Nonconformist chapel designed by a major chapel architect.

The project will include the conservation and repair of the original fabric, fixtures and fittings of the chapel auditorium to the highest standards and to the original 1908 condition. To meet the needs of new users, it will also be sensitively adapted through minimal interventions, including the sensitive incorporation of a removable stage to enable a wide range of performance possibilities.

The attached schoolrooms and ancillary rooms are less architecturally significant and, along with a new extension on land to the rear, these will be converted into office space, meeting rooms, dressing rooms, rehearsal rooms, local history society archive, café/bar, bookshop, kitchen, and toilets.

The substantial collection of documents and artefacts dating from 1908 together with knowledge and memories gleaned from surviving members of the congregation will be used to interpret the story of Bethania and Nonconformity, the role of the Welsh language, and their place in the cultural, educational and social life of the local area and Wales.

5.3 Opportunities for improving the significance of the heritage

Any capital works will include repairs to the historic fabric and restorations as appropriate, and conservation of historic artefacts.

In addition to the capital works, the project will include activities to encourage public participation, learning and understanding about the heritage of Nonconformity in Wales, chapel building and the role of the Welsh language. The Trust will prepare an Activities Plan setting out these proposals.

The project will give the Trust the opportunity to explain the architectural heritage of the building in the context of the social and economic history of Maesteg and Wales. As part of the project the Trust will produce an exhibition of the building, its historical development, the architectural design of Beddoe Rees, the chapel in its heyday, and recent conservation work. The Trust will also produce a publication illustrating these themes using archival photographs, Beddoe Rees' drawings and photographs of recent conservation work.

5.4 Management of the Heritage

Broad aims and objectives for conserving and managing the site include gaining a better understanding of the heritage through rigorous research and public involvement, conserving and representing the heritage artefacts of the chapel and providing interpretation for the public through audio-visual installations and trained volunteers.

In the long term the heritage will continue to be the practical responsibility of the WRBT. The heritage will continue to be protected through Cadw's listing and statutory processes.

Once the heritage project is completed, managing and maintaining the heritage will need the following:

- Continued good management of the building by the Trust and volunteers
- Continued interest and financial support/giving by visitors and users
- Continued statutory protection
- Training for staff and volunteers
- Future updating of any audio/visual interpretation

5.5 Risks to the building and the project

The most obvious risk to the building is its condition. However its poor condition will only be remedied if a use is found for the building, funding raised and the building repaired and conserved and put to its new use. There are various opportunities and options for this, as set out above, but there are also risks involved. This table tries to summarise the risks as perceived by the Trust.

Risk	How likely is the event?	How serious would the effect be?	Consequence	What action taken to help prevent risk?
Short term risks				
Vandalism/Theft.	High	Medium	Loss of artefacts, increased conservation work costs, further water ingress, fire risk	Ensure that the building remains secure & that the risk is managed
Accidental damage (e.g. impact or fire damage)	Low	High.	Fire damage could cause the catastrophic loss of building	Ensure building remains secure & that the risk is managed.
Failure to carry out extensive repairs to the historic fabric (exterior)	Low	High	The building would continue to deteriorate. The building would constitute a hazard to the public.	Early consultation with grant aiding bodies. Ensure that i. an emergency repairs strategy is agreed and implemented. ii. a long term repairs strategy is agreed and implemented, with the necessary funding.

Long term risks				
Failure to carry out extensive repairs to the historic fabric (interior)	Medium	High	The building would continue to deteriorate and could not be used, failing to attract community involvement	Ensure that a long term repairs strategy is agreed and implemented, with the necessary funding.
Condition of building is discovered to be worse than expected when repairs undertaken	Medium	Low	Unforeseen additional conservation work, using up funds - scope of project aiming to re-use building might have to be limited or contingency sums spent to keep within budget	Further detailed condition surveys to be carried out to assess existing condition prior to drawing up and implementing repair schemes for the buildings. Address the dry rot problem urgently to establish its cause/s and extent and eradicate.
Failure to secure a viable long term use for the building	Medium	High	The building could not be used to its full extent, failing to attract community involvement and failing to attract funding for its repair and continued upkeep.	Undertake local consultation and engagement work to understand local needs and requirements. Develop appropriate and sympathetic scheme for building. Funding strategy is agreed and implemented to access funding for development.
Failure to receive planning and LBC for scheme for viable long term use for the building	Low	High	Delays to project and possible and possibility that project could not continue in its current form	Early consultation with local authority to ensure proposals are in line with its policies. Ensure work is justified and enhances the character of the listed building.
Failure to raise sufficient funds by grants and fundraising	Low	High	Project would not continue	Early consultation with grant aiding bodies. Ensure fundraising strategy agreed and implemented. Regularly review figures and strategy to monitor progress.
Failure to secure sufficient community support and volunteer input	Low	High	Building will not be open and used 'living' building	Undertake local consultation and engagement work, seek and develop local partnerships to enable use of building.
Withdrawal of partners (e.g. Menter laith, LVHS) owing to lack of funding	Low	Medium	Loss of diversity of use. Loss of rental income	Design spaces so as to be suitable for flexible use / do not create dedicated spaces for partners' sole use.
Failure to maintain enthusiasm of adviser volunteers	Low	Low	Additional cost would be incurred to obtain expert advice to develop the project	Commitment of Trust staff and trustees.
Failure to achieve current Flagship Project	Low	High	Credibility of Trust put into question	Commitment of Trust staff and trustees.

6 Next Steps

1. Development of the project up to RIBA Stage D (including full condition survey)

Ensuring that the Trust's vision for this important building is feasible will require the following professional and volunteer services:

DESIGN TEAM AND ASSOCIATED SPECIALISTS

Lead Consultant, Conservation Architect
Quantity Surveyor
CDM Co-ordinator
Consulting Structural Engineer
Building Services Engineer

Adviser on Historic Interior and Exterior Decoration
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
Timber Decay Specialist
Fire Consultant
Party Wall Adviser
Asbestos Specialist
Acoustic Adviser
Community Theatre Adviser

Various Conservators/Specialist Advisers:

- Organ
- Commemorative plaques
- Library
- Photographs
- Graveyard

2. Preparation of a full Conservation Management Plan

This will be undertaken by WRBT in-house officers and trustees (volunteer services), in conjunction with Catherine Rees Archaeologist and Alwyn Jones Conservation Architect.

3. Preparation of an Activity Plan

WRBT in-house Project organiser to lead (staffing costs), with contributions from all Bethania Working Group members (with further input from Heritage Interpretation Advisor, Community Theatre Adviser and other consultants)

4. Preparation of a Training Plan

This will be undertaken by WRBT in-house Adviser (volunteer services)

5. Production of an Audience Development / Marketing Survey

This will be undertaken by Audience Wales or other specialist following competitive tender.

6. Preparation of a Financial Appraisal

This will be undertaken by specialist following competitive tender.

7. Preparation of a 10-year management and maintenance plan

WRBT's in-house Project Organiser to lead (staffing costs), with contributions from all Bethania Working Group members

8. Commencement of oral history project

Interviews with former congregation members will be undertaken by WRBT in-house officers and trustees (volunteer services).

9. Consult the community about the importance of the heritage

Regular meetings will continue to be held with the Reference Group. Additional members will be sought.

10. Submit funding applications

Submit funding applications to Cadw, Welsh Government, Big Lottery, Arts Council etc.

11. Undertake emergency repairs

Emergency repairs will be required to the building in the short term in order to prevent further deterioration and to deal with possible storm damage and/or vandalism.

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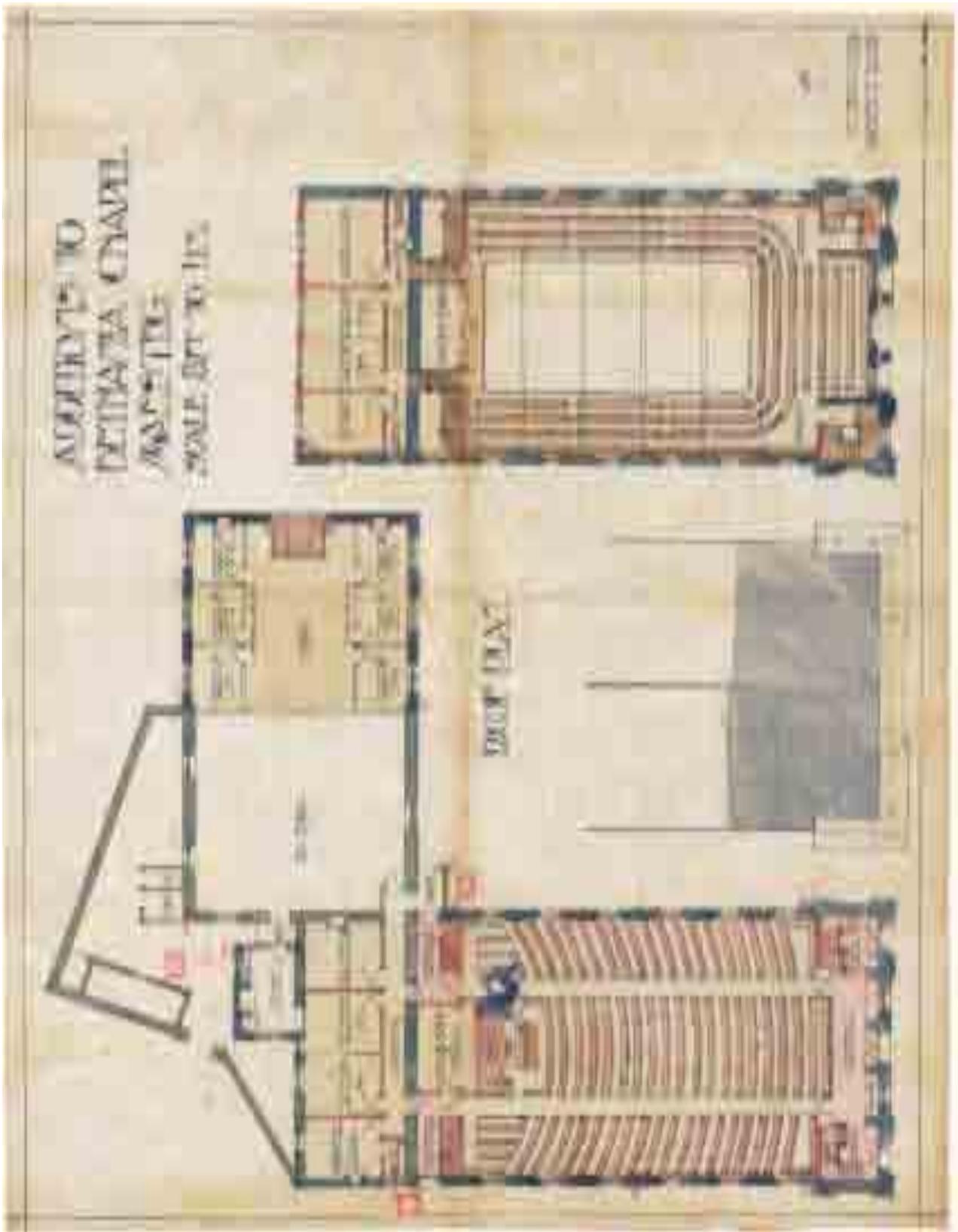
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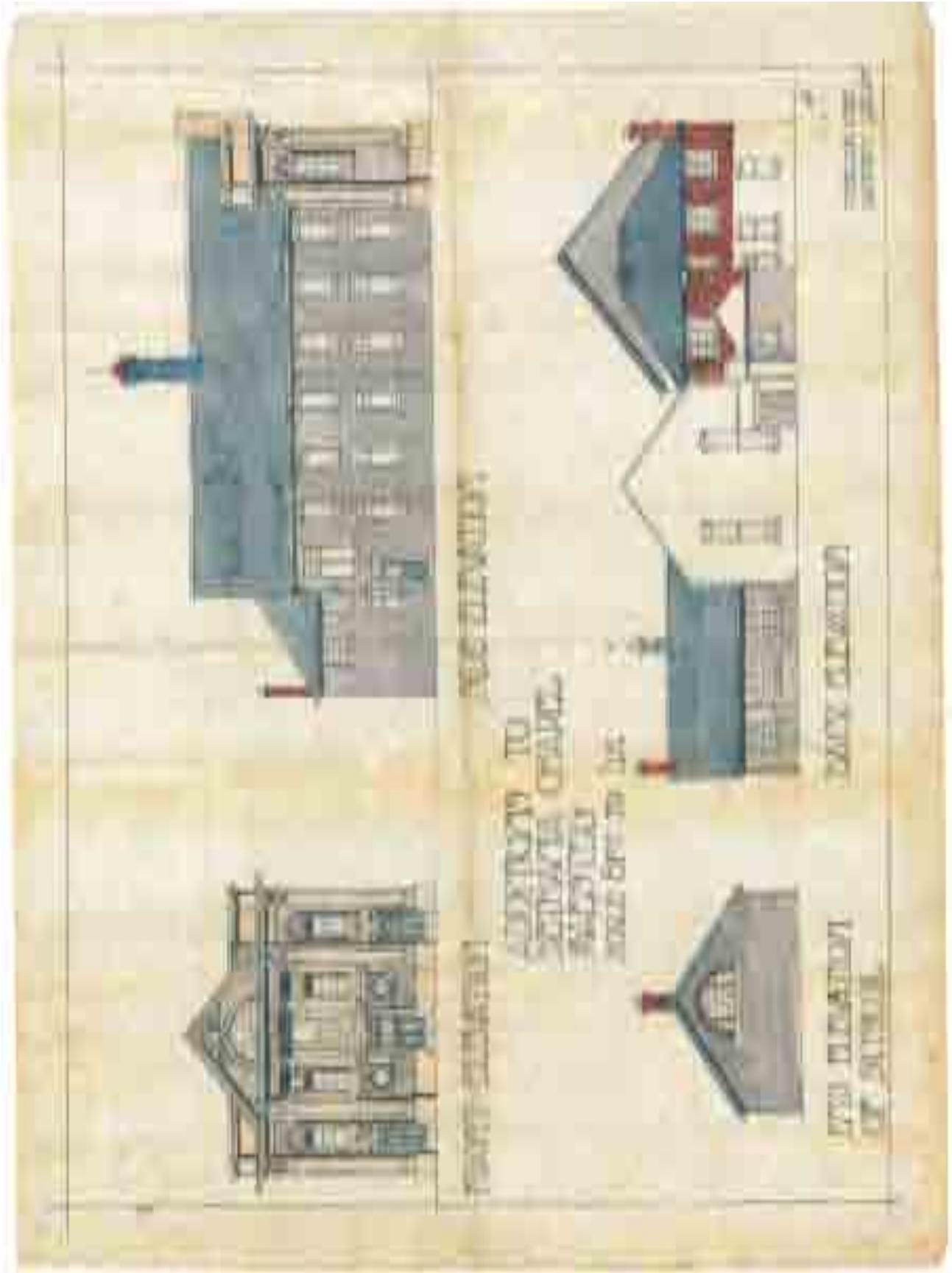
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Appendix B Beddoe Rees' Floor Plans & Elevations







Ymddiriedolaeth Addoldai Cymru Welsh Religious Buildings Trust

CAPEL BETHANIA, MAESTEG

Capel Bethania is an outstanding example of the last great flowering of chapel architecture in Wales. It was designed by W. Beddoe Rees and built in 1908. It is Listed as a Grade II* building. Because of the chapel's importance as part of our Nonconformist heritage, it was acquired on trust for the nation by the Welsh Religious Buildings Trust in 2005 when the chapel's congregation became too few to maintain it. It will be carefully conserved, and repaired where necessary, and eventually reopened for community and general use as a worthy example of Wales' built heritage.

Bethania was the mother church of the Welsh Baptist community in the Llynfi valley which was, when the chapel was built, still a largely Welsh-speaking community. It was the second chapel on the site, the first being built in 1832, four years after the Baptist community was established in the valley. The first Bethania was extended in 1841, in order to provide space for up to 700 persons (including standing room for 80 men). The chapel was largely rebuilt in 1905 to provide sitting space for a thousand people. Its architect, Sir William Beddoe Rees (1877-1931), was the son of a Maesteg businessman. Rees specialised in designing chapels for various denominations, mostly in the south, and also wrote a book - *Chapel Building*.

Hints and Suggestions - on the subject. Later, Rees gave up architecture for a business in coal mining and shipping and eventually became Liberal M.P. for Bristol South.

Although Bethania stands well back from the main road, its splendid front facade dominates the scene in this part of Maesteg. Externally, the front facade is by far the most important elevation, being largely built of costly Portland stone with tall panels of Perseus sandstone. The style is a mixture of French-Beau-Arts and Art Nouveau, both derived from Classical architecture. The front is divided into three sections by quoined plaster strips. The central bay, with its circular windows on either side of the entrance doors and Ionic columns and large multi-paned windows in the first floor level, is grand in scale. The narrower outer bays front staircase towers giving access to upper galleries. The apex of the roof pediment is surmounted by a shell-like ornament, or acroterion, while the side pinnacles carry ornamental urns.

A long vestibule, with stairs at either end, leads through a stained-glass screen into the chapel's spacious and imposing interior. A magnificent vaulted ceiling, divided by deeply moulded ribs, spans the central part of the chapel. It is carried on a series of arches which in turn are supported by surprisingly slender iron columns (made in Newport) rising through the side galleries. The galleries are continuous on three sides, and are inclosed with associated decorated iron grilles incorporating a tyre pattern which swoop down in front of the organ to form a complete circuit. Oak pews on the ground floor are set on slight curves to provide more comfortable views towards the carved timber pulpit. The set-back, which is enclosed by a timber rail on decorative staircases, covers the immersion font.

To the rear of the main chapel, behind the altar and organ, is a two-storey wing containing a series of small rooms (originally minister's room, deacon's room, ladies' room, library and classrooms). To the right of this wing is a large schoolroom divided into two parts by a three-arched partition. The older part appears to be the original Sunday School. The part beyond the arched partition incorporates a large and small classrooms and was added when the main chapel was rebuilt in 1905.

JBH 2008

Appendix D Photographs



Bethania exterior 2006 © Crown Copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales



Bethania new chapel exterior c. 1910



Bethania interior 2006 © Crown Copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales



Bethania Vestry 2005 showing 1908 extension through arches, later stage



Previous Bethania chapel building, photo c. 1904



Rev Edward Jones (Iorwerth Ddu) and deacons 1904, old chapel



Rev Edward Jones (Iorwerth Ddu) c. 1908



Memorial to Iorwerth Ddu



Proposed organ 1908 – JJ Binns & Co



Bethania new chapel interior c. 1910



Bethania exterior 2006 © Crown Copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales



Roof damage to Vestry 2011



Main chapel, south side – west window 2011



View of chapel and vestry buildings from the burial ground 2011



Burial ground 2011