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Design and Heritage Statement

**The Downs and Little Downs
Higher Trenoweth
St Mary's
Isles of Scilly
TR21 0NS**

30 AUGUST 2024 **REV A**

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DUCHY *of* CORNWALL

Introduction

The proposal is to replace the slate roof covering of the dwellings and install three number flush with slate finish Velux Heritage Conservation Roof lights into two of the rear facing roof slopes as part of the reroofing works.

The Downs is a 3 bedroom dwelling with self contained ground floor Annex used as holiday accommodation found in a cluster of dwellings and agricultural buildings at Higher Trenoweth. The property is constructed of coursed granite with a Cornish scantling wet bedded roof finish of slate with clay cockscomb ridge tiles, lead valleys and shaped in situ cement mortar as a caping to hips.



The Downs/Little Downs is not an imposing building as most will view it from the farm access track that runs past it to access the coastal path around the north of St Marys at Bar Point and Innisidgen.

The property is well screened from the coastal path by a shelter belt of trees and from the complex of farm buildings by the tree lined boundary hedge to the east side of the property.



The building is not listed but sits to the north edge of the settlement of Higher Trenoweth where Trenoweth Farmhouse and attached Cottage and garden wall are listed grade II and the adjoining barn to the north of the farmstead is also grade II listed.

The Trenoweth farmhouse listing states : *Farmhouse and cottage. C18 with late C19 extension. C18 fabric of painted and rendered granite rubble with gabled scantle slate roof; large granite stack finished in brick to north gable and brick rear lateral stack. Late C19 extension of coursed granite rubble with dressed quoins and lintels, gabled slate roof (scantle slate to C18 wing and dry slate to C19 wing) and brick end stacks. C18 range is linked to late C19 range by two-storey link of coursed granite with dressed quoins, slate roof hipped to right (east) and tarred boarding. Overall L-plan, with the lower C18 house of 2-room plan extended to front left (NW) in late C19. C18 house of 2 storeys, with west front of 3 windows across having late C19/C20 horned 2/2-pane sashes and off-centre mid C20 half-glazed door. Rear elevation has C19 6/6-pane sash under eaves and 6-pane narrow casement in deep recess to right; C20 lean-to service extensions. Late C19 range has symmetrical 3-window south front, with horned 2/2-pane sashes and panelled door with overlight.*

INTERIOR: C19 plank doors, exposed timber joists (roof not seen). Late C19 extension has panelled doors and shutters, moulded cornice to left-hand drawing room and fine spiral staircase to hall, with polished wood balustrade, stick balusters and moulded nosings to risers.

SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: low granite wall to west side of front garden, joining the outer angles of the L, with rounded coping and piers flanking C20 iron gates. The C18 cottage comprises one of the earliest inhabited structures to have survived on the islands and has survived in a relatively unaltered state of preservation.

The proposal is to remove the defective existing slate roof covering, carry out repairs as found necessary and provide a new natural slate roof covering using natural Trevilletts from the Tintagel quarry in either 400 x 250 with the addition of a continuous roofing membrane that is suited to the roosting of bats but will act as a secondary defence against water ingress. The opportunity is being taken as part of the roof recovering works to install three number Velux Heritage Conservation rooflights of size 550 x 978 mm.

The cockscomb ridge tiles will have been removed with care and will be rebedded on the new slate coverings. Valleys will be relined with lead and the mortar hip finishes will not be reinstated but the hips will be finished with a mop stick roll and lead capping.



The Existing Issues

The current roof finishes are allowing the fabric of the building to deteriorate. Whilst temporary repairs have been carried out, issues continue.

Like many solid stone built older properties, the domestically occupied property has suffered continual issues with dampness particularly through the roof coverings. This has been monitored over a number of years now and isolated reactive repairs have been carried out.

Parts of the roof have a modern nonbreathable membrane, whilst other parts use a traditional technique of lime torching and some include both. The present occupiers have made attempts to channel the water leaking through the roof coverings away from the internal areas by underlining rafters with sarking felt in attempt to channel the water to the eaves of the building. This in turn, and over time, will cause deterioration to the heads of the external walls.

Water is penetrating the slate roof covering, concentrating where it is unable to penetrate the non-breathable membrane but subsequently overwhelming the lime torching and entering the structure of the building.

The ecological surveys have found that bats are present so timing the works will be critical. Further emergence surveys have been commissioned and the results will be made available, together with a method of working and any compensatory measures required, following the start of the activity season.

Materials and techniques

It is proposed to replace the wet laid slate with a dry laid slate so that a protective membrane can be effectively introduced.

The sole reliance on the existing wet laid scantle slate roof covering as currently in place, although a noble conservation technique is not conducive to the harsh environment and humid conditions observed for the locality. The proposal is therefore to use somewhat larger slates laid to a 75mm gauge but with TLX Bat safe breather membrane. The TLX breather membrane has been recommended in the ecological study due to the presence of bats. It is thought the proposal would enhance the space for bats and would ensure the structure of the building, once repairs to the timbers have been carried out, would be better preserved.

Timber repairs will be inevitable.

Impact

There will be a subtle change to the external appearance of the roof however the building will be better protected from the elements.

By changing from the problematic wet lay scantle slate to a dry lay slate there will be a subtle change in the appearance as viewed from the outside with some of the lime torching visible sandwiched between the slates. The use of small 250 x 400 mm slates with a 75mm lap will achieve a similar gauge. The lime torching would have been introduced originally to prevent drafts and lifting of slates as well as a means of fixing the slates. This technique was before modern membranes existed. Buildings evolve with the technology available at the time. The latest attempt to replicate the traditional technique has not been good for the long-term preservation of the building. It is hoped by introducing modern roofing membranes and ventilation along with keeping small slates to a tight gauge the building will be preserved for decades to come sympathetic to the hamlet of buildings and the ecology of the area.