

'Iron Ring' sculpture unveiled as part of £630k project at Flint Castle

The winning design was selected by a panel from the Welsh Government and sponsored body, Arts Council for Wales, following a nation-wide competition to obtain proposals for an artwork concept celebrating Wales' Year of Legends.

Begun in 1277, Flint was one of the first castles to be built in Wales by Edward I. The King later moved on to construct the north Wales castles of Beaumaris, Conwy, Caernarfon and Harlech, which today form a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The £395k monumental Iron Ring sculpture, plans for which have been unveiled today by Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure, could potentially measure up to seven metres high and 30 metres wide, and symbolises a giant rusted crown representing the relationship between the medieval monarchies of Europe and the castles they built.

The installation will be engraved with carefully chosen associated words and sayings to be developed with the local community.

When opened in 2018, visitors will be able to walk along the sculpture and enjoy elevated views across the estuary and of the castle.

Its location at Flint marks the event where the crown was famously transferred from one medieval dynasty to another, as described in Shakespeare's Richard II. Flint Castle was the setting as Richard II surrendered the crown to Henry IV – a momentous event impacting the history of Britain and Europe.

"The sculpture will take a balanced form, some buried beneath the ground, the remainder projecting into the air, to demonstrate the unstable nature of the crown,"

said George King, from George King Architects Ltd – the architects behind the ambitious design.

"The sculpture has been carefully designed to work at many scales. From afar its striking, iconic form resembles a giant ancient artefact, washed up on the shore of the Dee Estuary.

"Its scale and dynamic appearance means that it will become an instantly recognisable landmark for the area.

"However, as you approach the sculpture it becomes obvious that the piece is more than just a sculpture."

The engravings will celebrate local landmarks, historic towns and their links with Flint Castle, as well as content about the flora and fauna of the Dee estuary.

The sculpture is part of planned wider developments outlined in a newly-commissioned regeneration strategy for Flint foreshore, aimed at greatly enhancing the visitor experience at Flint Castle, strengthening and building on community relations within the town and helping with the regeneration of this unique area.

Ken Skates said:

“It gives me great pleasure to announce plans to help improve the visitor experience at this fascinating site steeped in history during Wales’ Year of Legends.

“Throughout 2017 we are celebrating the incredible people from our past, captivating places and stories that have shaped Wales’ rich heritage and culture.

“In its prime, Flint Castle played a pivotal role in not only shaping the future of Wales but that of the UK and Europe. The Iron Ring sculpture is a perfect way of marking this significance while attracting more people to visit the site, bringing positive economic benefits to the area.”

Further improvements to the castle include the installation of a stainless-steel spiral staircase within the north-east tower and a masterplan to consider the wider regeneration of the Flint Foreshore.

The £217k staircase has been fitted in the same position as the original masonry staircase, allowing visitors access to the tower and an opportunity to enjoy magnificent views from a new platform installed at the top of the stairs.

The regeneration approach is in its early stages, but will look at options for the improvement to the current facilities along the shore. This will include working with Flint’s RNLi, rugby club and football club to improve current facilities, and working with partners such as the Local Authority to develop visitor services at Flint Castle.