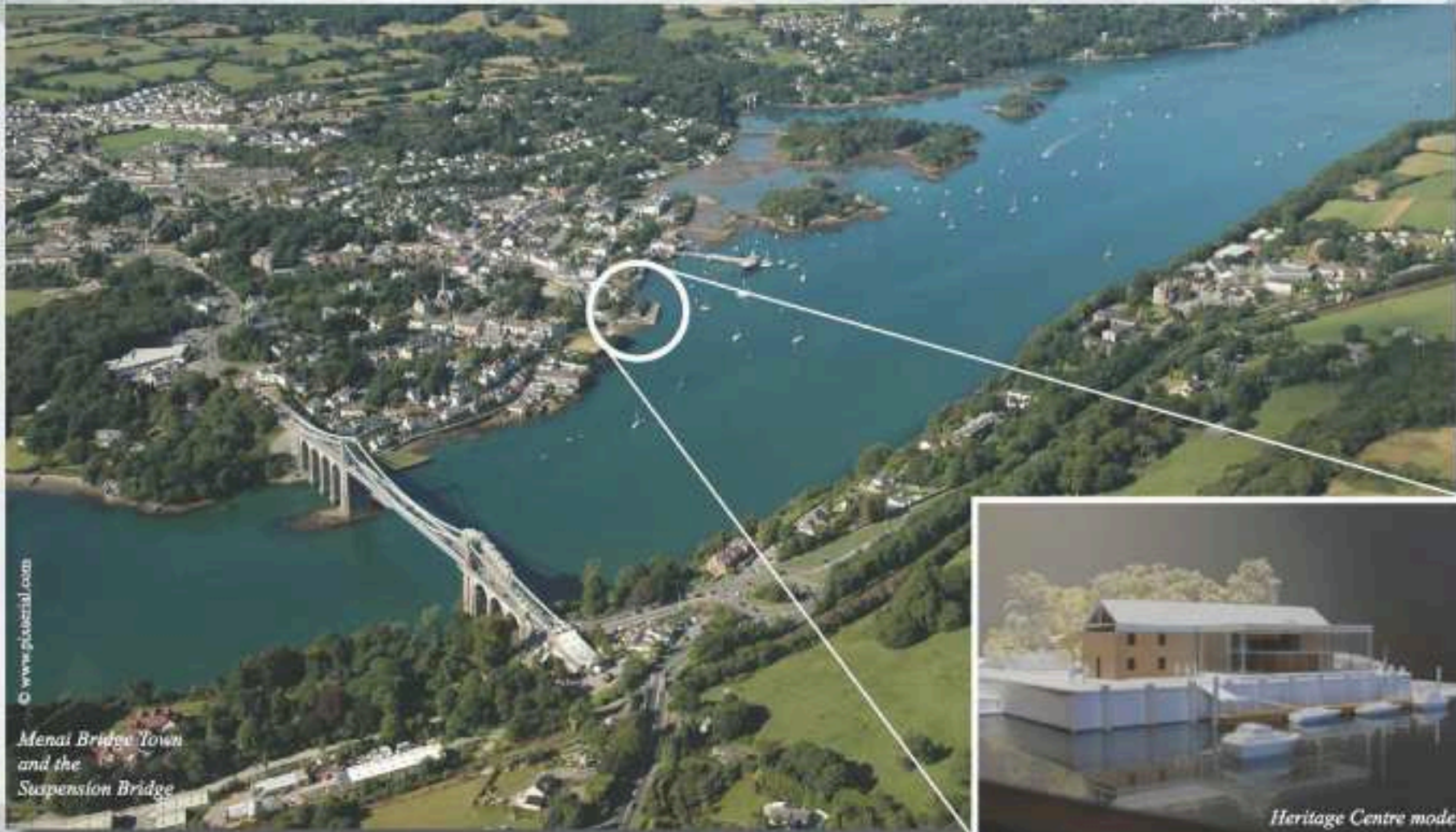


# Menai Heritage

A heritage centre for the Menai Straits



**Menai Bridge Community Heritage Trust and Menter Môn**



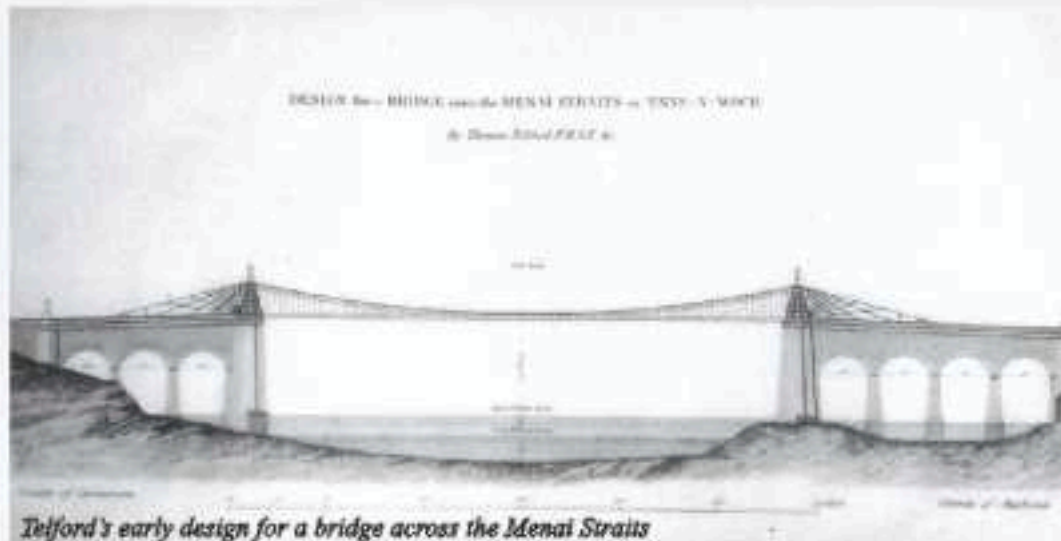
## Why have Menai Heritage and what facilities will it have?

Menai Heritage is an exciting new project to create a heritage centre on the shores of the Menai Straits. The centre will be housed in a new and spacious glass building constructed around the historic stone warehouse on the Prince's Pier quay near the centre of the town of Menai Bridge.

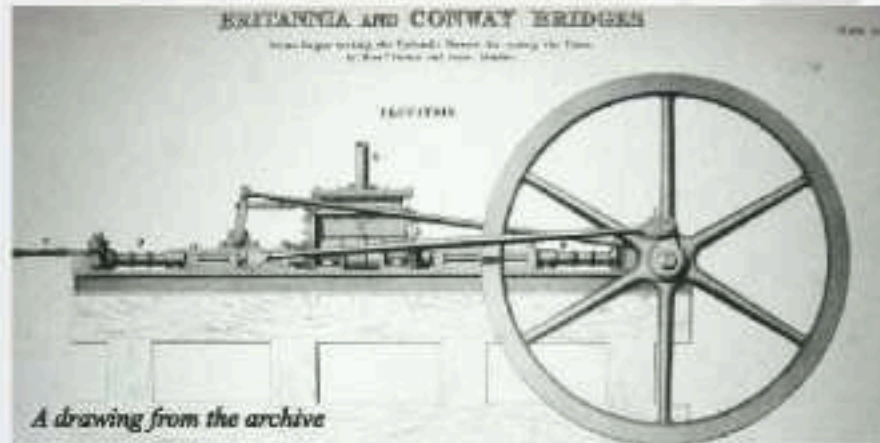
It will have two main themes:

- *The two world-renowned bridges across the Straits: Thomas Telford's Menai Suspension Bridge and Robert Stephenson's Britannia Railway Bridge.*
- *The unique environment of the Menai Straits: its marine flora and fauna, and geology.*

The Prince's Pier location is one of the best and most prominent on the Menai Straits, with fine views of the Suspension Bridge and a superb vista along the Straits towards Bangor Pier and Beaumaris. Menai Heritage will provide a wonderful facility for visitors to learn about the heritage and as a viewing point from which to enjoy the sights of this very special environment.



## Menai Heritage



- **The Exhibitions:** the presentation of the heritage will combine both permanent and rotating exhibitions. This will enable all of the extensive collection of artefacts to be shown and ensure that the exhibition is continually refreshed.
- **The Two Bridges:** Telford's and Stephenson's bridges were landmarks in the history of engineering. The exhibitions will tell their story through pictures, artefacts, models and interactive technology to enable visitors to explore them in their own way.
- **The Menai Straits:** the marine environment is unique and of international importance. Working closely with Bangor University's School of Ocean Sciences, Menai Heritage will explore novel methods for presenting and interpreting this fascinating marine biodiversity.
- **Guided Tours:** by boat or on foot, visitors will be taken on tours of the Straits to witness first hand what they have seen in the exhibitions.
- **Education:** special emphasis will be given to education, especially developing programmes for working with schools, colleges and universities. Special needs, and other interest groups, will be catered for.
- **Bilingualism:** the exhibition and all literature will be bilingual Welsh and English.



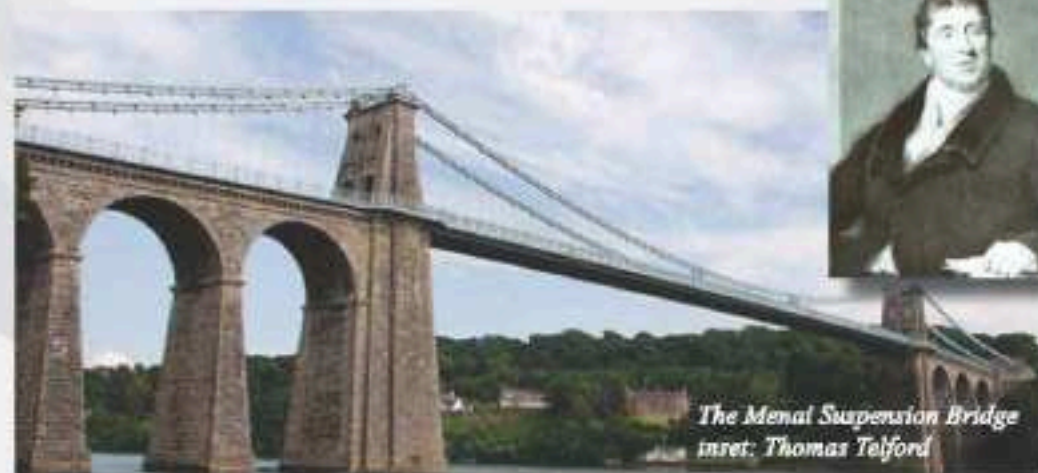
## Why is this heritage of unique importance and interest?

### The Two Bridges

#### *The Menai Suspension Bridge & Thomas Telford*

Following the union with Ireland in 1801, the need arose to improve communications with mainland Britain. Thomas Telford was commissioned to improve the road from London to Holyhead, the highlight of which would be a suspension bridge across the Menai Straits. Raised high over the Straits at its narrowest point—to allow the passage of sailing ships—the bridge employed groundbreaking engineering and construction principles. Completed in 1826, it was the longest suspension bridge in the world for many years. The iron chains and road deck were replaced in 1940 to accommodate increased traffic and bigger vehicles, and footways were added on both sides. Artefacts from the original bridge are displayed in the exhibition.

Telford was also responsible for other major civil engineering projects in the area, including the World Heritage Pontcysyllte and Chirk aqueducts, Conwy Suspension Bridge (still with its original chains), and the 1200 m long Stanley Embankment near Holyhead. These and other Telford works are also featured in the exhibition.

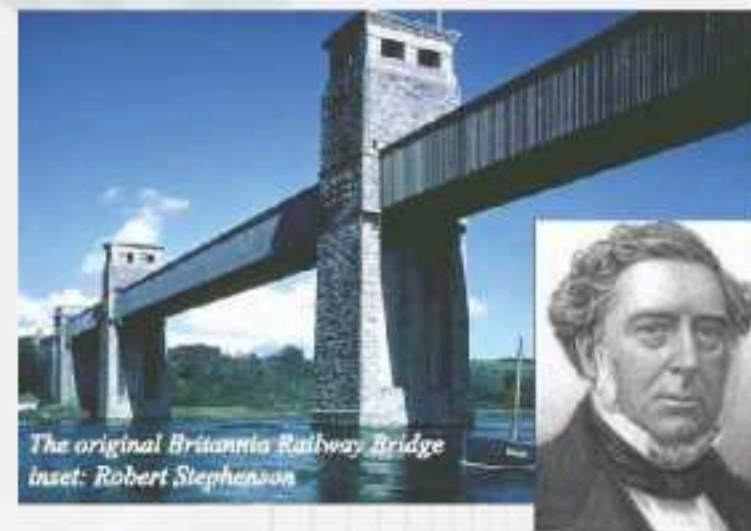


*The Menai Suspension Bridge  
inset: Thomas Telford*

#### *The Britannia Bridge & Robert Stephenson*

The coming of the railway soon created the need for a second bridge over the Menai Straits. The great railway engineer, Robert Stephenson—son of George Stephenson—was commissioned to construct the bridge, which was completed in 1850, just 16 years after Telford's death. While Britannia Bridge was more functional in appearance, its wrought-iron box-section tubes and the method of construction were perhaps even more innovative than Menai Bridge. Sadly, the bridge was irreparably damaged by fire in May 1970. Rail service was suspended until the new steel arch structure spanning between the existing stone pillars was completed. A road deck was then constructed above the railway and opened in 1980 (now the A55). Contemporary drawings, illustrations and descriptions of the original construction and 1970s reconstruction are displayed in the exhibition with other relevant artefacts.

Stephenson echoed Telford in building a similar, less spectacular, tubular bridge over the Conwy Estuary, which is still largely intact. This and other significant features of the Chester – Holyhead railway are also shown in the exhibition.



*The original Britannia Railway Bridge  
inset: Robert Stephenson*

## Natural Heritage

### *The Menai Straits Marine Environment*

The Menai Straits, with its complex tidal regimes and racing currents, is of great interest and importance for its marine biodiversity. The whole of the Straits (and including Conwy Bay) is designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the highest European designation for the natural environment. The tidal rapids and reefs within the Straits are especially noted for their diverse and unusual communities of marine flora and fauna.

The sheltered waters of the Straits are a haven for a great variety of seabirds. Grey seals are frequently seen in the Straits; dolphins are also seen occasionally passing through.

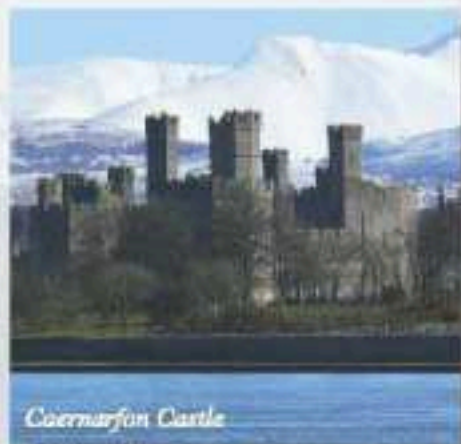
### *Landscape and geology*

The Menai Straits is a unique natural phenomenon of great beauty. Its whole length falls within the Anglesey Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The prominent position of Menai Heritage and the tours on foot and by boat will enable visitors to enjoy its sights to the full.

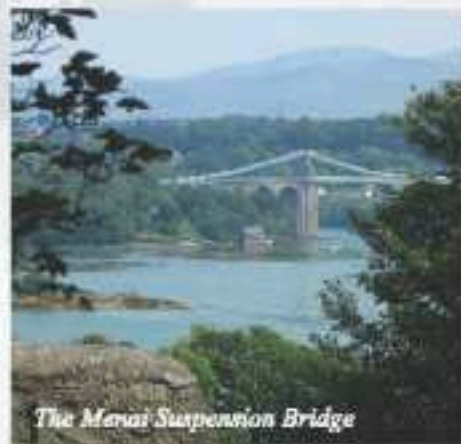
Anglesey is a designated European Geopark. The geology of the Straits will be interpreted with the aid of the Geopark Project ([www.geomon.org.uk](http://www.geomon.org.uk))

## Cultural Heritage

The castles of Beaumaris and Caernarfon, standing at the north and south entrances to the Menai Straits, are witness to its strategic importance. Historically, Anglesey, the 'breadbasket of Wales', has been of central importance to Wales, whilst its high density of ancient monuments testifies to the length of this history. The town's location (the town itself was not established until the 19th Century) has been the one of the focal points of entry to and exit from the island by ferry from well before the construction of the bridges, and so has been a focus for this activity over the centuries.



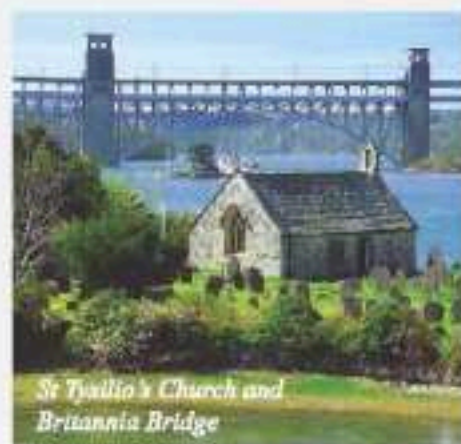
Caernarfon Castle



The Menai Suspension Bridge



Regatta day 1904 with La Marguerite at St George's Pier



St Tyllio's Church and Britannia Bridge

## Why is this an ideal locality for the heritage centre?

- Menai Bridge has excellent access by road and rail, lying just over a mile from the A55 trunk road and just over two miles from Bangor railway station. It is an hour and forty minutes drive from Liverpool and two hours from Manchester. The town is en route to Beaumaris, a popular tourist destination on the island.

- Distances by road:

*Chester ..... 64 miles*  
*Conwy ..... 18 miles*  
*Llandudno .... 23 miles*  
*Bangor ..... 1.5 miles*  
*Holyhead ..... 24 miles*



- Approximate rail times:

*Bangor - Manchester ..... 2 hrs 30 mins*  
*Bangor - Liverpool ..... 2 hrs 20 mins*  
*Bangor - Birmingham ..... 3 hrs 15 mins*  
*Bangor - London ..... 3 hrs 40 mins*



## Menai Bridge Town

Menai Bridge Town is a thriving town at the gateway to the island of Anglesey. Its facilities include: shops, pubs, restaurants, hotels, churches, visitor attractions and places of recreation. The town is a centre for education, with primary and secondary schools and the School of Ocean Sciences of the University of Bangor. The Menai Straits is itself a magnet for recreation: sailing and water sports, fishing, walking and the annual raft race that finishes at the town's waterfront.

The special quality of the town lies in its proximity to the two bridges, however, the town also has intrinsic merit architecturally and historically. Much of it is designated as a Conservation Area, being a good example of a Victorian town.

## Prince's Pier — the location for Menai Heritage

The Pier is located in the historical heart of the town. It is close to the high street (250m) and within sight of the Suspension Bridge (400m), and hence is ideally situated for the creation of Menai Heritage.

This area is popular with weekend and holidaying walkers seeking access to the waterside and to the path under an arch of the Suspension Bridge. This path leads to the waterside 'Belgian Promenade' and beyond to the historical Church Island and Coed Cynol, the town's woodland Local Nature Reserve.

Immediately adjacent to Prince's Pier is the recently restored and busy slipway, 'Porth y Wrach', one of the few public access points for pleasure boats on the Anglesey side of the Straits. There is good road and pedestrian access to the Pier and several car parks in the town within easy walking distance.



## How will Menai Heritage maintain itself and benefit the local community and tourism?

### *A Self-sustaining Heritage Centre*

Menai Heritage will operate as a self-sustaining community enterprise.

- The shop will sell items and souvenirs connected with the heritage themes. As a member of Anglesey Tourism Association, the Trust helps to promote tourism facilities across the Island, and has won awards.
- The café will be open during visiting hours to provide lunches and snacks, and in the evenings it will be transformed into a restaurant with a high quality menu based on local produce.
- The building will also provide space with separate access for 2/3 small business units, e.g. for crafts or IT businesses.
- Income from these commercial activities and the leasing of the units will be key to guaranteeing the sustainability of Menai Heritage.
- The Trust will further develop its programme of income-generating schools and other workshops.
- The Trust's volunteers will continue to work in the exhibition and the shop which reduces running costs.

### *Tourism*

Tourism is the mainstay of Anglesey's economy. Visitors look for variety and a balance between indoor and outdoor activities. The Menai Straits is a magnet for sailing and water sports enthusiasts, but underused as a resource for the average visitor. Menai Heritage will open up the Straits as a destination for families.

### *Employment*

Menai Heritage will employ permanent members of staff, with additional staff in the holiday season. Increased visitor numbers will give much needed trade to local businesses.



### **Menai Bridge Community Heritage Trust Ltd**

Menai Bridge Community Heritage Trust (MBCHT) was established in 1997. The Trust is committed to preserving and promoting the artefacts and historical detail of the two world-famous bridges over the Menai Straits. It also aims to raise awareness of the importance of the ecology of the Straits, to provide a centre of excellence for all ages, and to create a 'sense of place' and local pride in the area.

In 2007, the Trust opened the Thomas Telford Centre in the former National School, which now houses an exciting exhibition of artefacts, original drawings and pictures of both bridges, local history, shipping and ecology. See [www.menaibridges.co.uk](http://www.menaibridges.co.uk).

The Thomas Telford Centre has a comprehensive education programme for schools and colleges, with groups attending from as far away as the USA and France. Local groups include The University of the Third Age, drama groups, choirs, dance and multicultural groups.

Based on the success of the Thomas Telford Centre, it has been the Trust's cherished ambition to realise this new project, Menai Heritage.

### **Menter Môn Ltd**

Menter Môn is the development agency for Anglesey. It is an independent and non profit-making social enterprise located in Llangefni, the county town of Anglesey. Its principal activities are: providing business advice and training; developing new products; building capacity amongst the communities to organise themselves and to develop their own projects; promoting tourism and events; encouraging the Welsh language and culture; conserving the natural environment and heritage in partnership with local communities.

Amongst its current heritage projects on Anglesey are the Aberlleiniog Norman Castle and Community Nature Reserve ([www.castellaberlleiniog.com](http://www.castellaberlleiniog.com)) and the 13th Century Llys Rhosyr, a Royal Court of Llewelyn Fawr ([www.llysrhosyr.co.uk](http://www.llysrhosyr.co.uk)). Each year Menter Môn organises the Anglesey Walking Festival ([www.angleseywalkingfestival.com](http://www.angleseywalkingfestival.com)) and the Anglesey Marathon ([www.angleseymarathon.com](http://www.angleseymarathon.com)).

### **MBCHT and Menter Môn Partnership**

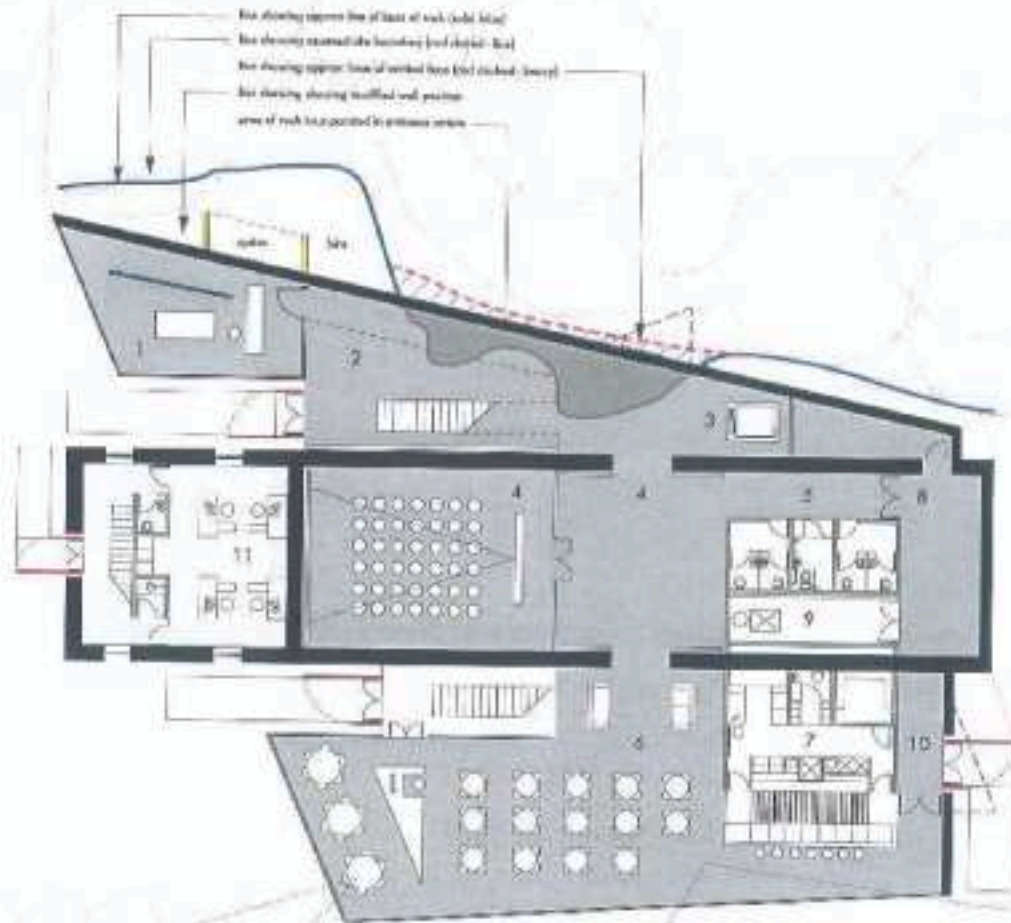
The two organisations have established a working partnership to realise this project. Menter Môn is the owner of the project site, Prince's Pier, but will be jointly responsible with MBCHT for the development and the running of Menai Heritage.

**The existing Prince's Pier warehouse and models of Menai Heritage.**




**Illustration of ground level plan of proposed Menai Heritage.**

shedkm



- 1 shop
- 2 atrium
- 3 lift
- 4 exhibition
- 5 toilets
- 6 restaurant
- 7 kitchen
- 8 store
- 9 playroom
- 10 store
- 11 office
- roads





The two partners, Menai Bridge Community Heritage Trust and Menter Môn, are seeking to raise £2.5m to fund the creation of the Menai Heritage centre, with a proposed 3 year programme commencing in 2011.

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Further details are available at our website:  
[www.menaibridges.co.uk](http://www.menaibridges.co.uk)