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Seafield House, Ayr, the former residence of renowned Scottish engineer Sir William Arrol, is put back on the market, potentially heralding a new chapter in the life of this important building. SAVE appeals to the local authority to ensure the right outcome for the house is reached.

SAVE and Friends of Seafield House welcome the new marketing campaign for Seafield House and call on all those involved to ensure an appropriate course of action to safeguard the future of the house and grounds. While SAVE accepts that some enabling development may be necessary, it is essential that over-development is avoided. A marketing day for the house will be held in Ayr on Monday (16th September).

Following initial local campaigning, SAVE and Friends of Seafield House have been campaigning to save this beautiful Italianate house, on the seafront just outside Ayr, for two years. Grade B listed, it was built for Sir William Arrol, the renowned Scottish engineer of the Forth Rail Bridge and London Tower Bridge, by architects Clarke & Bell. Seafield House is unusual in the Clarke & Bell repertoire, which is largely commercial. As Sir Robert Purvis noted in his 1913 biography of Sir William Arrol, "[in] its general features the new building was designed by Sir William himself". As Rob Close, the noted architectural historian and Chair of Friends of Seafield House has said, Seafield House is "one of the best houses of that style in Scotland and extremely well constructed".

A tooled tablet above the porch features Sir William's initials and the house's distinctive tower is a much-loved landmark. Seafield was Arrol's home from the late 1880s until his death in 1913. As in his own work, Arrol's home reflected his ingenuity, one example of which was the pumping of seawater to the master bathroom for saline baths.

The house was purchased by the Ayrshire Maternity and Child Welfare committee in 1920, and for the next 70 years it served as a hospital and as the NHS Trust HQ, closing in the 1990s. Since then Seafield has been without a use, and has suffered as a result. A fire in 2008 gutted much of the house and

destroyed its wonderful interiors. However, the external structure of the house remains in sound condition, and Seafield could therefore be restored and brought back to life.

Historic Scotland recently reconfirmed the Grade B listed status of Seafield House, once and for all banishing fears that it may be demolished.

On Monday 16th September, at a marketing day in Ayr held by Ryden, potential developers will be taken on site visits and listen to presentations from NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Historic Scotland and South Ayrshire Council's Planning department.

South Ayrshire Council has indicated that the house and site of 6.4 acres have the capacity for thirty residential dwellings – a mix of new builds within the grounds and dwellings created from conversion of Seafield House. SAVE is concerned that this is over-development and that buyers may be attracted who have less interest in the house than in the potential of the site for development. It is clear that for this to work, a balance has to be struck. The land around the house is wooded, which is an important part of its setting.
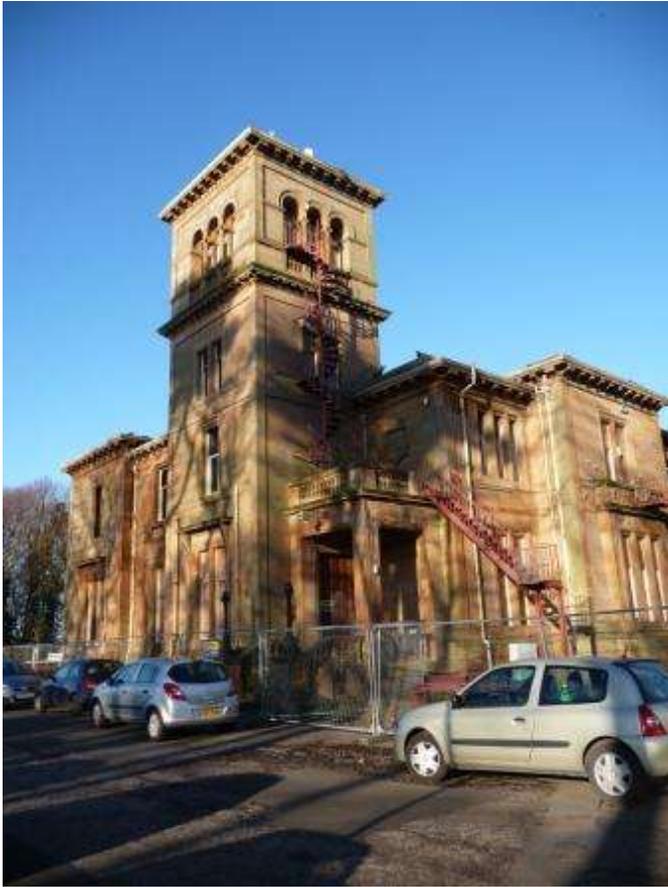
Friends of Seafield House count among their number leading conservation architects Andrew Arrol as Patron, Patrick Lorimer as architectural adviser, architectural historian Rob Close as Chair, and historian Brian Williamson as Committee Member who is an expert on the house. SAVE and Friends of Seafield House are concerned that insufficient notice and marketing has taken place in advance of the Open Day, but both will be present on Monday.

The particulars of the sale say that it is earmarked for residential use, but that South Ayrshire Council may consider other uses e.g. hotel.

Friends of Seafield House say: "Significant features remain and the structure is sound – thanks in large part to Sir William Arrol's construction innovation and expertise. There is an extensive photographic record and the in-depth knowledge and expertise of the Friends of Seafield House, which can be made available to assist in the sympathetic restoration of the house."

SAVE President Marcus Binney says: "we welcome the NHS trust's decision to put the house on the market with the focus on restoration by means of enabling development. It is vital that the price sought takes account of the work needed to repair the listed building. The NHS Trust that owns it does not insure it as it has a self-insuring policy. In this case no money at all has been spent on repairs. To achieve a good scheme with a sensitive and a not excessive amount of new build in the grounds, it is vital to acknowledge the need for a scheme which provides the necessary investment in the historic building. It is also vital that in any

planning permission the developer is obliged to repair the building at the same time that the first quarter of the development takes place. There should be no prospect of the land being sold off separately for development while the house is left derelict and unrepaired."

For more information and images, please contact the SAVE office on 0207 253 3500/office@savebritainsheritage.org, or Friends of Seafield House on info@friends-of-seafield-house.org.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS: SAVE Britain's Heritage has been campaigning for historic buildings since its formation in 1975 by a group of architects, journalists and planners. It is a strong, independent voice in conservation, free to respond rapidly to emergencies and to speak out loud for the historic built environment.

The Friends of Seafield House were established to support the campaign to save Seafield House in Ayr, securing a new use for the iconic building and developing proposals for its restoration. Its patrons are Andrew Arrol and Sir William McAlpine.