

Preservation society's bid to buy historic lighthouse

Clifftop cliffhanger

by SIMON BARRETT

A HISTORIC lighthouse sold off cheaply by a council could be bought by a preservation trust and opened to the public.

Belle Tout, near Beachy Head, was sold by Eastbourne Borough Council in 2001 for just £900 – a fraction of the £250,000 it was estimated to be worth.

The lighthouse, one of the most famous landmarks in Sussex, was put on the market earlier this year with an £850,000 price tag.

Now the Belle Tout Lighthouse Preservation Trust has been formed to raise enough cash to buy and maintain the 173-year-old property.

Rob Wassell, of the trust, said: "The lighthouse has a colourful and interesting history.

"It is part of our national heritage and we want to open it to the public and maintain it for future generations of visitors to enjoy.

"It is our aim to raise enough money to purchase the lighthouse and open it to the public.

"It will allow guests to visit the tower and enjoy the amazing views, enjoy



ON THE MARKET: Belle Tout lighthouse, on the clifftop near Eastbourne, is for sale at £850,000

refreshments and provide bed and breakfast accommodation in a building with a genuine difference.

"The guide price is £850,000, although there is also about £100,000 of additional work that needs to be done to get the building and its grounds ready for public access."

Its sale to the wife of then Eastbourne councillor Mark Roberts was criticised by

councillors, who said the decision was made behind closed doors.

The lighthouse is now being sold by Louise Roberts through estate agents Strutt and Parker.

Mr and Mrs Roberts raised £250,000 to have it moved 50ft back from the cliff edge and renovated, even appearing on the TV decorating show Changing Rooms with Carol Smillie.

They turned it into a bed and breakfast and lived there for several years with their two children.

The family moved out some time ago.

When it was first built in 1834, the lighthouse was 100ft from the cliff edge.

After a major rock fall in 1999 it ended up just 10ft from the edge before the 600-tonne building was lifted and moved back.

The Grade II listed lighthouse, which has since been converted into a six-bedroom home, was used as a location for the BBC's 1986 drama series *The Life And Loves Of A She Devil*.

For more information, to donate to the trust, or to become a volunteer at the lighthouse, visit www.belletout.org.uk.

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