# Tintern Abbey part 4: Preparing for the scaffolding

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| Tintern Abbey, Cadw’s most ambitious conservation project in decades. Preparing for the scaffolding. | Information cards |
| Will Davies Inspector of Ancient Monuments | Will stands within the abbey church facing camera |
| A combination of sort of freeze and thaw action. So again, the walls are getting wet; they're freezing, they’re expanding, they’re contracting. As they thaw out, that also aids that process of erosion. |  |
| Climate change may be an issue. We’re getting longer seasons of cold, wet and dry, they’re more unpredictable |  |
| And, in general, we've got an issue with masonry falling off from various heights. | Drone flight through the upper level of the abbey church showing the height of the walls |
| To make this work possible you can't do it from a cherry picker or a ladder. You need a scaffold, and the scaffold here will be how many lifts? 8 or 10 maybe? |  |
| But we've been told initially by the scaffold engineers it will have a loading weight of about eight tons on each of the major uprights. | Will stands within the abbey church facing camera. |
| So you can imagine focus on a point that big is is quite spectacular. |  |
| So we've currently got another very distinguished expert in medieval masonry - specializing in big churches, eroding mortar and stones; | Drone flight descending from the top of the church to the ground, showing the state of the exterior walls |
| for example in this case, we're actually looking at the conservation state of the building. |  |
| It's been surveyed very, very thoroughly by a stone masonry conservator to understand exactly where the problems are now. |  |
| So we'll have our historian understanding what we've done and when, what the implications that are for what we've recorded now: where are the problems? |  |
| To follow that up then, we have to start prepping scaffold. |  |
| And what will be happening will be a range of things. There will be bits of repointing. The wall heads will be made stable to stop the water ingressing in and pushing the faces the stones out |  |
| It's certainly quite low key stuff, nothing particularly earth shattering and innovative; just lots and lots of it. There is an enormous amount of masonry behind us to deal with. | Will stands within the abbey church facing camera |
| So we’ll be doing it in five phases, dealing with the east end of the church first. | Drone flies backwards through the east end of the church towards the east window |
| The archaeology is all being done by hand. They’ve stripped everything off onto the topmost archaeological layer, |  |
| and they're in the process of cleaning down the surface under the topsoil to effectively just map out the archaeology in 2D once we work to that level |  |
| Once that's happened, the surveyors will plot out to, you know, millimetre precision, the locations of the uprights for the scaffold. |  |
| We then bring out the engineers, the scaffold contractor, and we say, okay, where are the problems? |  |
| The scaffolders will see the site and we will adjust the scaffold design accordingly. There'll be more excavation in areas, possibly long strips along the principal lines - just to understand the implications. |  |
| The scaffold will be dug in: it will be on boards on the surface anyway, but that'll still have that crushing power potentially of anything below. | Will stands within the abbey church facing camera |
| So we need to understand anything that's likely to be impacted and, more at the point, if there is anything of archaeological significance, we will be investigating the bases of walls that we’re seeing. |  |