



Case Information

Reference/Case ID		300018833	
Scheduled Monument	Huntly Castle		
Index no	SM90165	Grid ref	NJ 53200 40700
Date application validated		12 December 2016	
Summary of proposed works		Consolidation of the carved stone inscription and surrounding architectural ornament and mouldings on the South Facade and also the corbelling of the Oriel window on the South Tower	

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that approval for the consolidation of the carved stone inscription and surrounding architectural ornament and mouldings on the South Façade and also the corbelling of the Oriel window on the South Tower be granted without conditions.

2. Background

The historic environment asset and its cultural significance

The monument comprises Huntly Castle and the tree-lined avenue that approaches it from the south. The castle is complex and multi-period, and is located at an important river junction between the River Deveron and River Bogie.

First built in the 12th century as a motte and bailey, it underwent several transformations. The Gordons probably acquired the lands of Strathbogie around 1376; the first towerhouse at Huntly is likely to date to around this time, its construction replacing the earlier outdated accommodation. The castle reached its height in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, with the 'palace' itself built in the mid-16th century by the 4th Earl of Huntly, and it was added to and remodelled by the 1st Marquis in the late 16th/early 17th century. Today, the site is dominated by the 'palace' with its magnificent south façade, capped by a red sandstone superstructure of two-storey (now reduced) oriel windows with a carved stone relief inscription running across the façade that was installed to proclaim the newly elevated status of the 6th Earl of Huntly to 1st Marquis in

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



1599. It is this south façade that is the focus of this application; specifically, it is the inscription and surrounding architectural ornament and mouldings on the South Façade and also the corbelling of the Oriel window on the South Tower.

The cultural significance of this part of the monument is vested in its survival as one of the finest examples of late medieval/early renaissance secular architecture in Scotland. The finely carved stonework shows great skill and clearly demonstrates the wealth and power of the Gordons, and was designed to be both impressive and to legitimise the 1st Marquis' place in society and amongst his peers. The south façade and its inscription is therefore significant not only for its rarity and architectural finesse but also for its contribution to the overall understanding of the castle and its development.

The applicant

The application is for the consolidation of the carved stone inscription and surrounding architectural ornament and mouldings on the South Façade and also the corbelling of the Oriel window on the South Tower, and it is designed to address stone conservation issues identified in a detailed survey in September 2015. The application has been submitted by HES Conservation Directorate, who manage Huntly Castle as a paid-for visitor attraction. The application is accompanied by the stone conservator's report of September 2015, and a detailed assessment of the cultural significance of the south façade and inscription.

Pre-application discussions

The applicant has discussed the scope of the proposed works with HES Heritage Directorate, and the current application accords with the outcome of these discussions.

Subsequent to the application being submitted, the applicant provided an updated document (dated 19 January 2017) confirming the scope of works and methodology (so as to clarify any variation from the scope and methodology set out in the stone conservators report of September 2015 that forms part of the supporting documentation for the application).

3. Proposals

- Consolidation of the carved stone inscription and surrounding architectural ornament and mouldings on the south façade, using the updated scope and methodology set out in the document of 19 January 2017. For clarity, this does not include any indents or replacement of damaged or missing letters.
- Consolidation of the corbelling of the Oriel window on the South Tower, using the updated scope and methodology set out in the document of 19 January 2017.

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



Consented works – the works comprise the consolidation of the carved stone inscription and surrounding architectural ornament and mouldings on the South Façade and also the corbelling of the Oriel window on the South Tower.

Aims – the purpose of the works is to address stone conservation issues identified in a detailed survey in September 2015 before ongoing degradation results in the further loss of culturally significant material.

Timetable – the applicant hopes to undertake the work within the next six months so as to minimise the impact of further degradation to the masonry, and so as to utilise scaffolding that is already in place for work being carried out under a separate SMC.

Personnel – the works will be undertaken by the in-house HES Stone Conservator with assistance from the HES Monument Conservation Unit, both of whom are suitably qualified and experienced in undertaking this type of work.

4. Representations received

No third party representations were received.

5. Report

a) Policy considerations

The application should be considered with the following legislative and policy considerations in mind:

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

Part 1 Section 2: Control on works affecting scheduled monuments.

Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement June 2016

3.14. A monument is included in the schedule to secure the long-term legal protection of the monument in the national interest, in situ and as far as possible in the state it has come down to us. Scheduled monuments have an intrinsic value as monuments, not related to any concept of active use. It is the value of the monument to the nation's heritage, in terms set out in the section on Scheduling in Chapter 2 of this policy statement that is the primary consideration in determining applications for scheduled monument consent.

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA

3.16. Works on scheduled monuments should therefore normally be the minimum level of intervention that is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in a monument.

3.17. As each monument will require treatment specific to its individual nature, characteristics, significance and needs, any proposed change to it must be fully and explicitly justified.

3.18. Scheduled monument consent applications must be considered in terms of the cultural significance of the monument and the impact that the proposals would have upon this cultural significance. The more important particular features of the monument are to its cultural significance, the greater will be the case against interventions which modify these features.

3.20. Where change is proposed, it should be carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed, properly planned and executed, and where appropriate in the context of an individual monument, reversible.

b) Assessment

The works involve the consolidation of the carved stone inscription and surrounding architectural ornament and mouldings on the South Façade and also the corbelling of the Oriel window on the South Tower, so as to address stone conservation issues identified in a detailed survey in September 2015 before ongoing degradation results in the further loss of culturally significant material.

The physical impact of these works on the monument and its cultural significance will likely be comparatively minor, but the benefits to the long term preservation of the monument will be significant. There have been various phases of conservation works to the carved stone inscription (and surrounding architectural ornament and mouldings) since 1921, and these interventions are set out in the detailed assessment of cultural significance attached to the application. Some stonework is untouched, but most has been subject to previous repair using acrylic resin mortar, and in some instances partially replaced with fibreglass or full stone indent. Previous interventions have all been driven by conservation best practice of the time, with the aim of conserving what is culturally significant about the monument. In this instance, it is important that the inscription remains readable and as intact as possible, given that it forms an integral part of the overall architectural scheme designed by the 1st Marquis. Undertaking these consolidation works, using sound stone conservation techniques that aim to retain historic fabric in situ, is therefore considered to benefit the long term preservation of a part of the monument that contributes to its cultural significance.

If the works as set out in the application are not undertaken with some urgency then there is a likelihood that the structural integrity and architectural coherence of the inscription and surrounding ornament, mouldings, and corbelling will continue to deteriorate, with the likely outcome that historic fabric and architectural detailing will be

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA

lost. A secondary driver for the works is the potential risk to public health and safety; whilst mitigated in the short term by fencing off the base of the south façade and the South Tower, this is not a long term solution. It is therefore to the benefit of the long term preservation of the monument that the works are undertaken now.

The updated scope and methodology (dated 19 January 2017) indicates that those undertaking the works will use a tried and tested approach to the stone conservation, although an irreversible consolidant will be used as part of the process for repointing cracks. This consolidant has the benefit of being breathable, which makes it more compatible with the stone; given the condition of the masonry, it is unlikely to withstand having the consolidation process reversed anyway, so it becomes irrespective that the consolidant used is irreversible rather than reversible.

c) Other material considerations, including impact of the works on Protected Species and Places

No impact on Protected Species and Places is considered likely.

d) Conclusion

The application should be viewed as works as set out in both Part 1 Section 2 of the AMAA Act 1979 and paragraph 3.4 of the policy statement.

The proposed works, comprising the consolidation of the carved stone inscription and surrounding architectural ornament and mouldings on the South Façade and also the corbelling of the Oriel window on the South Tower, are the minimum necessary to conserve what is culturally significant in this scheduled monument and so are compliant with paragraphs 3.16 and 3.18 of the policy statement.

The works have been proposed in order to ensure the long term preservation of the monument, by addressing stone conservation issues identified in a detailed survey in September 2015 before ongoing degradation results in the further loss of culturally significant material, and so are justified in accordance with paragraph 3.17 of the policy statement.

The application meets with paragraph 3.20 of the policy statement because it has demonstrated that the works have been carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed and properly planned. Consequently, no conditions are considered necessary.

6. Recommended decision

The works proposed are considered acceptable in meeting the terms of national policy for scheduled monuments, and also accounting for other material considerations.

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA

I recommend consent is **granted without conditions**.

7. Conditions

No conditions have been attached to this decision.

8. Approval

Case officer	Oliver Lewis	Date	02 February 2017
Approved by	Iona Murray	Date	02 February 2017

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Location plan – 429-165-317
- Stone conservators report - dated September 2015
- Detailed assessment of the cultural significance of the south façade and inscription – dated 23 November 2016
- Updated document scope of works and methodology – dated 19 January 2017