

Case information

Reference/Case ID	201506467		
Scheduled Monument	Bothwell Castle,Uddingston		
Index no	M90038	Grid Ref	NS688593 268800.0000 659300.0000
Date of Application	14 January 2016	Application Received	14 January 2016
Summary of proposed works	Install handrails to doorway steps of three cellars below the Great Hall		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends approval without conditions.

2. Background

The Great Hall at Bothwell is a first-floor hall aligned N-S over three vaulted cellars, each aligned E-W. Each of these cellars is accessed by individual doorways in the W wall, with each entrance served by three external steps and two internal ones. Each set of steps has different riser heights and tread depths, which suggests that they were formed at different periods. The low rate of erosion and the overall sharpness of the individual stones strongly points to the steps dating to the late 19th century, when the then-Earl of Douglas appears to have carried out substantial works at the castle. These steps do not represent medieval fabric.

Two of the cellars are used for education and display purposes, while the southernmost cellar is presently used for storage of temporary seating and signage. However, it is also proposed that this latter cellar be opened for public use in the near future, as it has a toilet and utility supplies that would be suited for a café and additional interpretative space.

Previous monument audits have seen the discussion of potential health and safety risks at these entrances, and a series of incidents affecting visitors to the site. The chief issue here has been the low doorway and the change of light levels at the threshold, allied with the lack of hand grips in the doorway itself. In addition, as no two steps are the same, there is a risk of disorientation and mis-stepping. The 2011-

2012 health and safety audit for the castle has identified that this presents a risk that requires mitigation. This audit slightly predates an accident resulting in serious injury that occurred in 2012. The north and mid cellars have had temporary plywood steps inserted over the interior steps to reduce the apparent risk, but the residual risk has been flagged up in the 2015-16 audit.

Subsequent to the application, the full text of the 2011-2012 and 2015-16 health and safety audits have been supplied upon request from Heritage Management. These identify the health and safety risk as being of a serious nature, and that the plywood steps only partly mitigate the risk. An Option Appraisal has been provided, which considers the various options against the heritage impacts. This concludes that the proposed works are the preferred option.

3. Proposals

Install Handrails to Doorway Steps of three Cellars below Great Hall.

4. Representations received

The owner's agents have indicated via email that they do not wish to make representations.

5. Report

a) Policy considerations

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

The Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP)

The assessment below relies on the following paragraphs of SHEP:

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.

3.20. 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

Each handrail would be supported on a single vertical upright placed in the outermost 19C step, and then run to the exterior of the door where it would be fitted onto a bracket, which would itself be supported by a steel stiffening plate welded onto the existing doorframe. On the interior side of the door, three brackets fitted into masonry joints of the 15C fabric would support the handrail. Therefore, there would

be impacts on historic and non-historic fabric. There would also be indirect impacts on the exterior of the great hall.

1. The impact on historic fabric

The vertical upright would support the outer part of the handrail at each cellar. A 30mm drill would be used to sink a single 125mm deep hole in the nineteenth-century step, to take the upright. The steel upright would support a handrail with a flat profile. The steel stiffening plate would be welded onto the 1920s steel doorframe, and the inner end of the handrail mounted onto that plate. Therefore, the outer element of the handrails would involve disturbance to 19C and 20C fabric. This fabric is an important part of the conservation history of the site.

The three brackets for each of the inner handrails would involve drilling of three 20mm by 5mm slots into the cement conservation mortar of masonry joints. The brackets would be retained by flattened steel holdfasts placed in these slots. The surrounding masonry is definitely 15C in date, although it is possible that earlier masonry remains were reused here. However, the conservation mortar is of 1930s-1960s date (our files are unclear on this point). While small amounts of this mortar would be destroyed, medieval mortar is not likely to be preserved at depths less than 20mm. The loss of conservation mortar is not a significant direct impact on the cultural significance of the monument. No impacts on surrounding masonry are predicted.

2. The indirect impact on the monument and its setting

Views towards and along the west elevation are an important element in understanding and appreciating how the hall range functioned. The arrangement of the cellar doors indicates that the cellars served as a butlery, pantry and larder for the hall above, and that access to these was deliberately separated from the hall above by locating them away from the main stairs up to the hall. This allowed lordly life to take place in the hall while minimising interaction with the supporting activities of servants. Views towards and along the elevation are also an important aesthetic element in appreciating the high quality of the masonry.

There is therefore potential for impact on appreciation and understanding of the castle remains, in terms of perceptions of both exterior and interior of the cellars. Views towards and along the west elevation of the hall could be affected by the presence of handrails. Moreover, the presence of handrails here could lead to a misunderstanding of their possibly historic nature.

In terms of the interior perception of the cellars, there are already a small number of non-historic items, including interpretation signage, electric lighting and dehumidification equipment, as well as the plywood steps. It is unlikely that any confusion about the historic nature of the handrails here would be of a significant nature.

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

None predicted. As the steps are in areas that are regularly traversed, no disturbance to EPS including bats would be likely, and HES' environmental advisor has confirmed this.

d) Conclusion

The impact on the historic fabric of the castle would be relatively minimal. The three handrails would be clearly visible in views towards and along the west elevation of the hall range, and have some potential to impact on perceptions of this element of the site. They would have an impact in that they would be prominent in views along the elevation. There would also be an impact on aesthetic appreciation of the hall block, but these would be relatively minor and is the least intrusive of the options considered.

Offsetting these impacts, the mitigation of an ongoing and partly-mitigated risk would have a benefit for access to and continued public access to this part of the Property in Care.

The proposed works are consistent with the principles set out in SHEP, and particularly section 3.16. They are also largely reversible, apart from the 30mm wide drill-hole into the outer step of each cellar, which could be filled upon removal.

On balance, the impacts would be relatively minor and also justifiable in terms of the public benefits provided.

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.

Granted without conditions.

7. Conditions

None.

8. Approval

Officer	John Malcolm	Date	05/02/2016
Approved by	John Raven	Date	18/02/2016

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Drawing: New Cellar Handrails 188-038-364 2.
- Drawing (A4) 1:2500 Location Plan dated 06/01/2016 3.
- Supporting Statement Annex A [Amended 17/02/2016]
- Options Appraisal Annex B [Amended 17/02/2016]