

Case information

Reference/Case ID	201507387		
Scheduled Monument	Elcho Castle		
Index no	M90140	Grid Ref	NO164210 316400.0000 721000.0000
Date of Application	23 February 2016	Application Received	23 February 2016
Summary of proposed works	Masonry and roof repairs to the N and NE elevation of Elcho Castle, including the replacement or consolidation of eroded crowsteps on the NE tower, descaling and repointing works, the replacement of chimney cappings, repairs to flashings and slates, and alterations to steel water spouts.		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that approval for masonry and roof repairs to the N and NE elevation of Elcho Castle, including the replacement or consolidation of eroded crowsteps on the NE tower, descaling and repointing works, the replacement of chimney cappings, repairs to flashings and slates, and alterations to steel water spouts be granted with conditions.

2. Background

The monument comprises an exceptionally well-preserved 16th century house with a rectangular core augmented by a large, square-plan tower to its SW corner and another three engaged towers. This complex disposition of towers is unique in surviving houses of a similar date. Probably built between 1558 and 1570, the castle sits on a slightly elevated rocky knoll to the S of the River Tay, and it fell out of use as a residence after 1756. The castle was re-roofed in 1830 (and a cottage was built in the fragments of a former courtyard range), and it was placed into State guardianship in 1930.

The monument is cared for by HES Conservation Directorate and is operated as a visitor attraction. High level surveys by MEWP and drone have identified a series of repairs required to the masonry and roof, principally on the N elevation but also on

the NE tower and the E elevation. The stability of crowsteps on the NE tower is of a concern, and as such the base of the tower is currently fenced off on H&S grounds.

HES Heritage Management Directorate has undertaken pre-application discussions with the applicant (HES Conservation Group) regarding the scope and timing of works, and this application accords with the outcome of those discussions.

3. Proposals

Consented works – Masonry and roof repairs to the N and NE elevation of Elcho Castle, including the replacement or consolidation of eroded crowsteps on the NE tower, descaling and repointing works, the replacement of chimney cappings, repairs to flashings and slates, and alterations to steel water spouts.

The proposals comprise:

- Erection of temporary scaffold with fixings to joints in stonework (no ground penetration).
- Replacement or consolidation of severely eroded and laminating crowsteps to NE Tower (subject to a detailed report and updated drawings once access has been gained from the scaffold).
- Descaling and repointing work to N and NE elevations using a suitable lime mortar.
- Replacement of modern friction fixed acrylic chimney cappings with safety glass and mechanical fixings (to current HES standards).
- Renewal of roof skew/verge/eaves fillets in lime mortar, minor slate repairs, replacement of felt flashing in code 6 lead (utilising existing raggie), and the replacement of damaged stone ridges.
- Replacement of 1 no. broken steel spout, installation of 1 no. new steel lining to stone spout, realignment of 1 no. steel spout, and the lengthening of 1 no. lead spout.
- Overhauling of window yetts (including repainting and tamping of lead wool to sockets to prevent further erosion from rust).
- Replacement of 1 no. rotten timber window half-sill and replacement of mastic to all windows in scaffold area.

4. Representations received

Representations were received from the landowner (HES has guardianship over Elcho Castle, not ownership) confirming that they were content with the proposed works.

5. Report

a) Policy considerations

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

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

Part 1 Section 2 - Control of works affecting an ancient monument.

Part 1 Section 2 (3) – authorises works where Scottish Ministers or Historic Environment Scotland Have granted consent (scheduled monument consent) for the execution of the works where the works are executed in accordance with the terms of the consent and of any conditions attached to the consent.

Part 1 Section 2 (4) – allows consent to be granted with conditions.

The Scottish Historic Environment Policy

3.14. Scottish Ministers include a monument 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 SHEP, that is the primary consideration in determining applications for scheduled monument consent.

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.

3.18. 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.

3.22. Where consent for the range of works set out in paragraph 3.4 is granted, conditions are normally applied to ensure the works are undertaken in an appropriate manner. Common requirements are:

- f. that an appropriate level of record is made before, during and after any work and deposited in local and national archives, and, where appropriate, published;

- h. that any archaeological excavation or other intrusive investigation should be based upon a detailed research strategy, with adequate resources, using appropriately skilled and experienced archaeologists with a satisfactory record of the completion and publication of projects (see Note 3.10); and,
- i. that the design, planning and execution of works on scheduled monuments are undertaken by people with appropriate professional and craft qualifications, skills and experience.

b) Assessment

The works involve masonry and roof repairs to the N and NE elevation of Elcho Castle, including the replacement or consolidation of eroded crowsteps on the NE tower, descaling and repointing works, the replacement of chimney cappings, repairs to flashings and slates, and alterations to steel water spouts.

The physical impact of these works on the monument and its cultural significance will be comparatively minor, but the benefits to the long term preservation of the monument will be significant. The work will build upon previous consolidation/conservation campaigns by undertaking remedial and conservation works to mitigate health and safety risks to the public and to maintain the water tightness of the castle's walls and roofs. These works are those that cannot be tackled during routine maintenance works or are in areas otherwise inaccessible unless by scaffold.

The proposed replacement or consolidation of the crowsteps on the NE tower is the element of work that has the most potential to impact on the greatest amount of historic fabric. Drone survey has identified severely eroded and delaminating stones, and pieces have recently fallen. The crowsteps have been maintained using best conservation practice over many years and have been brushed down to remove spalling material, but now little fabric remains above the roofline which makes maintaining a sufficient depth of upstand for a mortar fillet between the crowsteps and slates no longer possible. This has an impact on the weather tightness of the roof. Unaddressed, this could lead to water ingress and knock-on damage to other historic fabric. The proposal is to undertake a detailed report and produce updated drawings showing the remedial works required once access has been gained from the scaffold, and this prescribed methodology is considered a suitable way to address the issue.

The descaling and repointing works, as well as the replacement of chimney cappings, repairs to flashings and slates, and alterations to steel water spouts are all considered sound conservation work as they either aim to retain historic fabric in situ or they are repairs/alterations to more recent interventions to the castle.

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

No impact on Protected Species and Places considered likely – see PP&S assessment.

d) Conclusion

The proposed works will be of benefit to the long term preservation of the monument as they will continue best practice conservation work on a monument that has been in State care since 1930. With the exception of the work to the crowsteps, the works will either aim to retain historic fabric in situ or they are repairs/alterations to more recent interventions to the castle. In terms of the crowsteps, whilst retention of historic fabric in situ is usually preferable, where the quality of that historic fabric is such that it offers little contribution to the cultural significance of the monument and a knock-on impact could be caused to other parts of the monument in better condition if the issue isn't dealt with, then a case can be made for removal. The works can therefore be considered as the minimum level of intervention that is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in a monument, and thus compliant with SHEP 3.16.

The works are also being done to elements of the monument in such a way that their impact on the cultural significance of the monument is minor, and as such the application is compliant with SHEP 3.18.

The works build upon previous consolidation and conservation, and they are designed in such a way as to be reversible (where relevant), are well planned with identified funding, and as such the application is compliant with SHEP 3.20.

The exact scope of works to the crowsteps will require to be determined once access has been gained from the scaffold. This will involve the applicant producing a detailed report and updated drawings setting out desired remedial works, so the agreement of this will need to be conditioned. All works (reversible or otherwise) should be recorded photographically, so as to add to the public record of the monument, so this will need to be conditioned. This will enable the application to be compliant with SHEP 3.22.

Condition 1 is to ensure that any remedial work to the crowsteps is carefully considered, justified, and carried out without detriment to culturally significant historic fabric.

Condition 2 is to ensure that an adequate visual record of the works is added to the public record within a reasonable timescale.

6. Recommended decision

Subject to compliance with the schedule of conditions, the works proposed are considered acceptable in meeting the terms of national policy for scheduled monuments, and also accounting for other material considerations.

I recommend consent is **granted subject to the conditions detailed below.**

7. Conditions

1. No works (other than initial inspection) shall be undertaken on the crowsteps of the NE Tower until the applicant has submitted and had approved by Historic Environment Scotland a detailed report and updated drawings showing the desired remedial works.

Reason: to ensure that the work is carried out without detriment to culturally significant historic fabric.

2. A series of annotated photographic records taken before, during, and after the works to show the replacement or consolidation of eroded crowsteps on the NE tower, the replacement of chimney cappings, alterations to steel water spouts, and general views of the roof repairs should be submitted to Historic Environment Scotland within 4 weeks of completing the works on site.

Reason: to provide an accurate record of the site before, during, and after the various works have been completed.

8. Approval

Officer	Oliver Lewis	Date	16/03/2016
Approved by	George Findlater	Date	18/03/2016

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Site plan and photographs - 312/140/079
- Roof plan - 312/140/080
- Photo sheet - 312/140/081
- North elevation - 312/140/082
- East elevation - 312/140/083
- Description of proposed works
- Email from the landowner (HES has guardianship over Elcho Castle, not ownership) to the applicant dated 11 March 2016 confirming that they were content with the proposed works.