

Scheduled Monument Clearance: Report on Handling



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Case information

Reference/Case ID		201600915	
Scheduled Monument	Blairfindy Castle,20m N of Castleton		
Index no	M105	Grid Ref	NJ198286 319800.0000 828600.0000
Date of Application	19 May 2016	Application Received	19 May 2016
Summary of proposed works	Stabilisation and masonry consolidation of the monument		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that approval for masonry consolidation and repointing at Blairfindy Castle be granted with conditions.

2. Background

The monument comprises the remains of the 16th century tower house of Blairfindy Castle built by John Gordon. The castle is an L-plan tower house, with a bretèche over the entrance and a surviving bartizan in the form of a round corner tower. It is relatively well preserved, despite being abandoned in the 18th century and having quickly fallen into disrepair. The tower survives in most places complete to wallhead but it does have structural issues related to historic settling and the sustained erosion of its lime mortar.

The monument was subject to an extensive stabilisation programme in 2013 which resulted in the temporary measure of the tower being reinforced with steel ties; the works covered by this application will address the long term stability issues and consolidate the masonry allowing the removal of these temporary steel ties.

The project is part of a wider Landscape Partnership project for Tomintoul & Glenlivet, with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This work will benefit the longterm preservation of Blairfindy Castle in that it will continue to stabilise vulnerable elements of the monument using appropriate reversible techniques. Public access into the site and limited access to the castle are part of the long term goals of the project and will incorporate interpretation of the castle and the surrounding landscape. There was pre-application discussions with the applicant in October 2015. This application accords with those discussions.

3. Proposals

Consented works: Stabilisation and masonry consolidation of Blairfindy Castle.

The proposals comprise:

- **A detailed photographic survey of the monument.** This has been detailed in the Written Scheme of Investigation, supplied by FAS Heritage.
- **Extensive traditional masonry conservation works.** This includes the removal of cement mortar and failed mortar. Cracks will be raked free of debris and consolidated with small stones and pinnings. Larger structural issues will be dealt with by rebuilding the masonry in these areas. The whole structure will then be repointed with a lime mortar mix. All of the wallheads of the castle will be consolidated and where necessary rebuilt at a slope, so that they shed water. The works will deal with the extensive erosion of the masonry and localised instabilities. These works will be carried out by Addison Conservation and Design, who specialise in traditional conservation of historic properties.
- **The removal of the recent metal tying system-** this will occur after the consolidation works have been complete near the end of the project.

4. Representations received

No representations were received.

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.

Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement (June 2016)

3.4. Scheduled monument consent is required for any works that would demolish, destroy, damage, remove, repair, alter or add to the monument or to carry out any flooding or tipping on the monument. It is a criminal offence to carry out any of these works without consent.

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.

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.

b) Assessment

A detailed photographic survey of the monument.

A detailed photographic survey of the monument will be conducted prior to the works on site and the works will be monitored by an Archaeologist from FAS Heritage. This has been outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation supplied with the report. I consider that the WSI conforms to established industry standards.

Extensive traditional masonry conservation works.

The works involve masonry consolidation and repointing at Blairfindy Castle.

The physical impact of these works to the monument and its cultural significance will be comparatively minor, but the benefits to the long term preservation of the monument will be significant. Although the work will be kept to a minimum to achieve the long term objectives of the project, it will involve localised rebuilding of collapsed parts of masonry at high levels. The wall heads will be extensively consolidated but this is unlikely to have a significant impact on undisturbed historic fabric. Likewise, the

selective consolidation of loose stonework and wall core, and the selective removal of failed and OPC mortar and repointing in lime is sound conservation work and will support the long term preservation of the monument. After clarifying the lime mortar mix with the applicant's contractor I am content that the mix will be suitable for the conservation works. The repointing and pinning works are all considered sound conservation practice as they aim to retain historic fabric in situ using established conservation techniques, in such a way that should stabilise loose masonry. This work is reversible if required. The works will be undertaken by Addison Conservation and Design and their subcontractors and I am content from the details supplied in their report that the works will be undertaken to the best conservation practice and will conform to established industry standards.

The removal the recent metal tying system

The work will build upon previous consolidation/stabilisation works by consolidating the monument in a traditional manner and allowing the removal of the steel ties. The steel ties were intended to be a temporary measure and their removal after consolidation will have a positive impact on the monument.

Summary

If the works as set out in the application are not undertaken within the next few years then there is a real likelihood that the condition of the masonry will continue to deteriorate, with the likely outcome that the benefits and good work associated with the previous stabilisation scheme will be undone.

It is therefore to the benefit of the long term preservation of the monument that the consolidation is undertaken now, and I consider that the prescribed methodology will have a positive impact on the monument.

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

The protected species and places assessment has been carried out and indicates that there may be the potential for bats in this area. The applicant has commissioned a bat survey. Given that Blairfindy is a crown property, the applicant is responsible for ensuring that they adhered to EPA requirements.

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 will be of benefit to the long term preservation of the monument. They will stabilise vulnerable elements of the monument using appropriate techniques that build upon previous consolidation works. 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 3.16 of the policy statement.

The works detailed in the application are also being carried out in such a way that their impact on the cultural significance of the monument is minor, and as such the application is compliant with 3.18 of the policy statement.

The works detailed in the application build upon previous consolidation, 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 3.20 of the policy statement.

Given the nature of the works and the proposed removal of the steel ties it is necessary to condition a detailed timescale for the works, this is to enable a case officer to visit the monument at key points during the consolidation process.

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 with conditions**.

7. Conditions

1. Not less than 2 weeks before any of the works to which this clearance relates are begun on site, Historic Environment Scotland will be informed in writing of a detailed timetable/scheme of works for the proposed works.

Reason: to ensure that Historic Environment Scotland is aware of the timing of the works and to enable monitoring of the progress of the works if required.

8. Approval

Officer	James Bruhn	Date	11/07/2016
Approved by	George Findlater	Date	13/07/2016

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Blairfindy Castle, Glenlivet, *Report on condition of the ruin and proposed conservation works*, Addison Conservation and Design, April 2016.
- FAS Archaeology WSI (Appendix 4)