



## Case information

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<b>Reference/Case ID</b>	201602643		
<b>Scheduled Monument</b>	St Kilda village and related structures		
<b>Index no</b>	M2276	<b>Grid Ref</b>	NF010994 1000.0000 899400.0000
<b>Date of Application</b>	16 August 2016	<b>Application Received</b>	16 August 2016
<b>Summary of proposed works</b>	The repair of the collapsed south gable of Blackhouse H on Village Street, St Kilda.		

## 1. Summary recommendation

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This report recommends approval for the repair of the collapsed south gable of Blackhouse H on Village Street, St Kilda.

## 2. Background

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The monument comprises the abandoned remains of several millennia of farming, which came to an abrupt end in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the island was abandoned. The remains therefore represent a relict farming system and settlement pattern which has then been overrun by natural processes. Its abandoned and natural qualities are also key to the island's dual World Heritage Site (WHS) designation, for both natural and cultural purposes.

Blackhouses are a type of dwelling which are specific to the western coasts and islands of Scotland, although they form part of a wider building tradition. Blackhouse H forms one of many ruined and restored structures along Village Street and much is known about its construction and use. Although unroofed, Blackhouse H has been in relatively stable condition since 1995 and while its sudden collapse was unexpected, the collapse of such stone structures is not an uncommon event on St Kilda due to the adverse weather conditions - most recently, Blackhouse G in 2014 and Blackhouse B in 2011.

Following the collapse, the applicant contacted HES about the proposed repair as part of pre-application discussions, and the method statement has been previously used in relation to other collapsed structures.

### 3. Proposals

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The consented works comprise the repair to the collapsed south gable of Blackhouse H on Village Street. They comprise the following:

1. **Clearance of rubble.** Rubble to be sorted and laid out to allow for identification of stones to allow for stone-for stone repair.
2. **Stabilising of collapse.** Further removal of stones may be necessary to create a stable foundation for repair
3. **Rebuild of collapse to main body of blackhouse.** This will be undertaken using a stone-for-stone rebuilt where possible. Any additional material such as core material will be sourced locally and will be made visually unobtrusive.
4. **Assessment of stability of main structure.** Contractor will assess the structure to decide if it is structurally stable enough to take the weight of the gable. **If the structure is suitably stable then 5a, if not 5b.**
  - 5a. **Rebuild of gable.** Following stone-for-stone method where possible, any changes or addition of material needed will be completed using locally sourced materials and will be visually unobtrusive.
  - 5b. **Store stone for gable appropriately.** The gable stones will be stored nearby, lichen-face up, to preserve lichen patina and ensure stone is kept collated and can be easily identified at a later date. Suggestions for making the structure more stable will be discussed with partners to allow for full repair.

### 4. Representations received

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No representations were received.

### 5. Report

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#### a) Policy considerations

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

#### Ancient Monument and Archaeological Areas Act (1979)

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

## Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement (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 (see Note 3.2). A consent under section 42 of the 1979 Act is also required to use a metal detector within a scheduled monument (see Note 3.3). 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.

3.15 Monuments are subject to decay and the threat of destruction, from natural and human causes. Conservation work is normally needed to prolong the life of a monument, but there is a risk that this can be so invasive that it irreversibly modifies the monument's character and affects the special interest or features that made the monument important in the first place.

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. (Annex 1 sets out guidance as to how cultural significance and national importance should be determined.)

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.

3.19 Extensive intervention will only be allowed where it is clearly necessary to secure the longer-term preservation of the monument, or where it will clearly generate public benefits of national importance which outweigh the impact on the national cultural significance of the monument. Such public benefits could come from, for example, interventions which make public access to scheduled monuments easier, or assist public understanding, or will produce economic benefits once the works are completed.

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 monument is part of the St Kilda WHS, and the Management Plan for the WHS includes a commitment to the continued conservation and monitoring of the cultural heritage on the island. Blackhouse H is also part of the Zone of Intervention (ZOI) and the Management Agreement for the WHS includes regular maintenance and repair within this zone. Furthermore, good records of the monument exist, and therefore we can be confident that the proposed works will restore it to its previous condition. Therefore, the proposed works to the collapsed building are necessary to restore it to its original condition and will, when completed, provide a significant long-term benefit to the historic fabric and cultural significance of the monument.

In addition, the proposed repair works have been informed by the methodology used when repairing other similar structures – for instance, Blackhouse G, which collapsed in 2014. Therefore, the works have been carefully planned and considered.

Prior to the works being undertaken, a photographic record will be undertaken. Rubble will then be sorted to enable the dry stone dyker to identify the stones to allow for stone-for stone repair.

During the repair, some stones may need to be added. However, any additional stones will be sourced locally, thereby ensuring that the works will be sympathetic to the character of the monument. Should the structure need to be made more stable, the applicant will store the gable stones, and discuss any future full repair with Heritage Management.

Although any adverse impacts on the monument are unlikely, the NTS archaeologist will be on-site to monitor and record the works and will provide a report of this to Heritage Management.

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

None

**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 Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement.

Having assessed the potential impact on the fabric of the monument and its cultural significance, it is concluded that the proposed works would repair an important

structure in Village Street. Given this, the works accord with Section 3.14 of the Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement.

The proposed works would have minimal impact on the cultural significance of the monument, hence they are consistent with paragraphs 3.16 and 3.18 of the Policy Statement.

The proposed works also accord with Section 3.19 of the Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement because they would generate public benefits of national importance.

The application also meets paragraph 3.20 because it has been informed by conservation and archaeological reports. Thereby, 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

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

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

## 7. Conditions

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None

## 8. Approval

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<b>Officer</b>	<b>Nicola Hall</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>08/09/2016</b>
<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Iona Murray</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>08/09/2016</b>

### Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Method Statement