

Document 1

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 9, 2021 9:15:13 AM
To: Gilruth J (Jenny), MSP <Jenny.Gilruth.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Historic Environment Scotland

Dear Jenny,

I understand that with your enhanced ministerial role you now have oversight of Historic Environment Scotland. Along with other members of the organisation I received an email (copied below) about closing a large number of their properties for an indefinite period, many of which have only recently reopened. The email really is unsatisfactory. It begs the questions:

1. Why do so many properties require safety inspections all of a sudden? If so, why were these properties recently reopened and now closed again?
2. Does this suggest that Historic Scotland has failed in one of its core functions of properly checking and maintaining its properties on an ONGOING basis? (I don't think the pandemic is much of an excuse here.)

I look forward to your (or their) reply.

[redacted]

Begin forwarded message:

From: Historic Scotland <no-reply@hes.scot>
Date: 7 June 2021 at 19:01:53 BST
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@hotmail.com>
Subject: **Important Historic Scotland Site Updates**
Reply-To: no-reply@hes.scot



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IMPORTANT UPDATE
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SITE CLOSURE NOTICE

Hello [redacted]

Planned inspections recently carried out at some of our properties identified a potential safety risk to visitors and staff from unstable masonry at high level. We have therefore taken the decision to close or partially close some sites as a precautionary measure until inspections can take place.

Where we are able to safely maintain access to sites we will do so with reduced ticket prices to visitors while inspection work on site takes place. However, some areas of these sites will be closed to visitors. A full list of the sites currently affected is below.

- Jedburgh Abbey
- St Andrews Cathedral
- Arbroath Abbey and Abbots House
- Melrose Abbey
- Dryburgh Abbey
- Caerlaverock Castle
- Tantallon Castle
- Doune Castle
- Linlithgow Palace
- Craigmillar Castle
- Dirlerton Castle
- Dundonald Castle

Any visitors with pre-booked tickets to these sites will be contacted. We are also inspecting the following sites which are currently closed:

- Dunkeld Cathedral
- Crichton Castle
- Bothwell Castle
- MacLellan's Castle
- Rothesay Castle

We know how keen visitors and members are to access sites however the safety of our visitors and staff is our first concern and we are prioritising a programme of further inspection works at these sites.

We are also continuing to reopen a number of other sites to our members and visitors including most recently Edzell Castle and Dundrennan Abbey and will be announcing more sites over the upcoming weeks.

We are sorry for any inconvenience this may cause.

Kind regards,

The Membership Team

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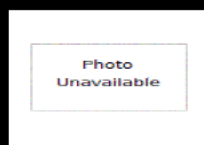
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Historic Environment Scotland
Longmore House
Salisbury Place
Edinburgh
EH9 1SH

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Document 2

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@gmail.com>

Sent: 19 November 2021 16:27

To: Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>

Subject: Fwd: Progression of complaint to stage 2

Dear Ms Gilruth,

I wish to bring to your department's attention some questions and concerns I have raised with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) regarding the closure of a swathe of properties in their care over the past few months. Given that your Culture and Heritage remit includes oversight of HES, I am kindly asking that some intervention or enquiry into the concerns I have raised be looked into.

You will see that I have forwarded the entire correspondence between HES and myself below. The questions I raised were dealt with, in the first instance, by the Membership Department of HES, of which I have been a member for over 15 years. I have subsequently asked that my concerns be accelerated further within their complaints procedures but have not yet had a response.

The questions I raised were specific and were left unanswered by the Membership Supervisor who dealt with my initial email. My questions related to the specific closure of properties, or parts thereof, to the public and these are: Dirleton Castle, Dryburgh Abbey, Dunfermline Palace, Jedburgh Abbey, Melrose Abbey and Tantallon Castle, sites which lie across the Lothians, Borders and Fife - where I believe you represent a constituency.

In my email to HES I asked for specific detail around what interventions had been made over the past 15 years of my membership to secure the upkeep of these properties for the future - the core remit of HES. I also asked what was being done at the closed properties to inform members, visitors and the local communities in which these historic sites sit, about the timeline needed and remedial activity required before these six properties can re-open. Neither of these specific questions were addressed directly in the initial response from HES.

In a bid to understand what HES has been doing to conserve these magnificent and historically significant sites of national importance, I consulted their 2019-2020 annual report which you will find [here](#)

Naturally, I was heartened to read that £8.3 million was spent on the upkeep of properties in care in 2019-20. However, as I began to interrogate the level of investment made in properties across Scotland I was struck by the statistics revealed on p16 of the report illustrated by a map (which unhelpfully did not name or list the properties, instead they were represented by coloured dots). I found that in the region of 20 properties across the Lothians, Borders and Fife had less than £10,000 invested in their upkeep over 2019-2020. It became apparent to me that several of these properties may include the ones which are now closed to members and to visitors.

It is my understanding that the decision to close these properties came after a substantial high level structural survey of Melrose Abbey. Naturally, I understand that HES took this decision to safeguard the health and safety of their staff and that of the public. However the correlation between investment, or lack of, versus structural decay seems highly problematic.

On page 11 of the report HES recognises that 'major physical interventions by our predecessors in the 1930s to PiCs (Properties in Care - my parentheses) are now deteriorating'. The 1930s is almost a century ago! My point about what has been done in the last 15 years remains highly pertinent.

It seems to me that there are two avenues to explore. The first is funding and by this I mean direct grants from the Scottish Government. It strikes me that if the properties I mention are to survive for future generations to see and enjoy, then some kind of emergency and ring fenced funding needs to be made available now and urgently, and I appeal to you to look into this. The second is governance and strategic decision making at HES. If this has been remiss, either with current or previous administrations, then I feel some questions should be asked. Is this agency able, whether by resource, capacity or management, to secure these sites of national importance and significance for future generations?

The report goes on to say (p11) that "this year we have focussed on the development of new policy and procedure for the delivery of high level inspections". This smacks of naval gazing at best and, at worst, complacency. What is required in my view is action and positive intervention.

I understand, Ms Gilruth, that you had a background in teaching before you entered government. I was also a teacher for 10 years and, though I don't wish to assume it, we probably both share a view that identity and civic pride comes strongly from the communities in which we live and work. These historic castles and abbeys also serve their communities and reflect traditions and identities that are wrapped up in place; whilst they remain closed, local economies suffer and education and access to history and heritage is lost. HES recognises this on p15 of the annual report "we understand the value of what we do to local economies" but action is needed now if these sites are going to continue standing in the decades ahead.

I have never been moved to write to a government minister before but as you may realise, history, heritage and the place of these fine buildings matters so much to me. I just hope they matter enough to today's Scottish Government so that our children and grandchildren will be able to marvel at these monuments which have stood to represent the history of our nation for so long.

I hope my query reaches your desk and I look forward to hearing from you, or from your office, in the coming weeks. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,
[redacted]

----- Forwarded message -----

From: [redacted] <[redacted] @gmail.com>

Date: Fri, Nov 19, 2021 at 1:05 PM

Subject: Fwd: Progression of complaint to stage 2
To: <complaints@hes.scot>

To whom it may concern.

Please see the email trail below between myself and [redacted].

According to the HES complaints procedure, I should have received an acknowledgement of my request to accelerate my complaint to stage 2 of your procedures within 3 days of receipt and a fuller response within 20 days. You will see the date of my request was 5th November, 2021. I understand that the nature of my questions may go beyond the remit of the Membership Department but I have not yet received a response from anyone.

In the interim, and in the spirit of absolute transparency, I have been in email discussion with the office of my constituency MSP, Ben Macpherson to ask how I may pursue a response to my specific concerns with Scottish Government. I will therefore be contacting the office of Jenny Gilruth MSP who has ministerial responsibility for culture and heritage which includes oversight of HES. It is my hope that the specific questions I raised about the management of the properties in care I listed in my correspondence with [redacted] will be investigated, if not resolved.

Yours faithfully,
[redacted]

----- Forwarded message -----
From: [redacted] <[redacted]@gmail.com>
Date: Fri, 5 Nov 2021, 13:56
Subject: Progression of complaint
To: Membership - members <members@hes.scot>

Dear [redacted]

Thanks for getting back to me and I appreciate your fulsome response.

At no point in my initial email did I ask for free, or extended free, membership. This wasn't the reason for my correspondence with HES although I do understand why you might want to assuage my disappointment with my current membership, with this offer.

You say in your reply that 'increasing amounts of conservation and maintenance work (that) has been more challenging to deliver over the past twenty years'.

Why is that? I asked about what had been done in the last fifteen years by the head of conservation and their team to secure these sites for future generations, which is

the core objective and remit of HES is it not? With respect this question wasn't answered.

Of course, I absolutely understand that HES would seek to put measures in place to safeguard visitors and staff by closing the sites.

I also asked why there wasn't information at the closed sites explaining the interventions required in order to progress to re-opening the sites and a timeline of activity by conservation teams. I illustrated my query with my recent visit to Tantallon Castle. Here the custodian/warden knew nothing about the above. Does that not seem entirely inappropriate for visitors, especially members, who are invested in the work you do? Again this was not addressed in your response.

Please do progress my complaint to the next level of your procedures on my behalf.

Thanks and sincere regards,
[redacted]

On Fri, 5 Nov 2021, 13:29 Membership - members, <members@hes.scot> wrote:
Hello [redacted],

Thank you for your email. I'm really sorry to hear that you are disappointed and I hope that I may be able to address your concerns.

To give you more background, the properties we care for are often ruinous and have been for some time. Age and accelerating decay have required increasing amounts of conservation and maintenance work that has been more challenging to deliver over the past twenty years.

More invasive procedures are now required to access the properties at high level in order to inspect them. Recent planned inspections carried out at some of our properties identified potential safety risks to visitors and staff from unstable masonry at a high level. On establishing there was an issue that could affect other sites, we acted quickly to close and partially close some sites as a precautionary measure to ensure staff and visitors are not placed at any risk. Unfortunately, this includes Dirleton Castle, Melrose Abbey, Dryburgh Abbey, Tantallon Castle, and Jedburgh Abbey.

We are currently assessing the information we have gathered from our recent inspections and considering what our next steps might be. I hope you can appreciate the scale of this task and the implications for our operations. Whilst we very much want to welcome visitors back as quickly as possible, safety must be our top priority. We will communicate to our members via updates in the members magazine, emails, and on our website as soon as we are in a position to do so and we hope that you can bear with us a little longer.

Although the monuments at Dirleton, Melrose, Dryburgh, Tantallon and Jedburgh are closed, the grounds are still open for visiting at these sites. At Dunfermline, the

Palace and Monastery remain closed but the Abbey Nave is open. We currently have over 28 staffed properties open to visit including Edinburgh, Stirling and Urquhart castles, a full list is available at www.historyawaits.scot. In addition, the reciprocal arrangement is still in place with English Heritage and Cadw: Heritage in Wales, offering free entry to members visiting sites in those areas. However, we do appreciate that it is disappointing to have so many of our sites closed.

I can see you have been a member with us for almost [redacted] years and we are really grateful for all of the support you have given us, especially during the past eighteen months which have been incredibly difficult for everyone. In the circumstances, I would like to offer to extend your membership by a further six months free of charge. This would make your membership valid up to the 30th of April 2023 and I hope may help to make up for the disappointment felt. We propose to continue collecting your monthly payments up to the 1st of July 2022, and after this no more payments would be collected. We would then contact you at your renewal date in April 2023 to see if you'd like to renew your membership then. We will arrange for a membership card with your new expiry date to be posted out to you, but please bear with us as it may take a 2-3 weeks for this to arrive. I can advise you that your complaint has been addressed at stage 1 of our complaint procedure, a copy of which can be found on our website (<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/complaints/>). If you are unhappy with this response you can request a further investigation of your complaint. If you wish to do so, please contact me.

Kind regards,
[redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted] | **Commercial and Tourism**

Historic Environment Scotland | Àrainneachd Eachrdaidheil Alba

Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh, EH9 1SH

T: 0131 668 8999

E: members@hes.scot

www.historicenvironment.scot

Heritage For All - read our Corporate Plan and help to share our vision

From: [redacted] <[redacted] @gmail.com>
Sent: 02 November 2021 18:42
To: Membership - members <members@HES.scot>
Subject: Re: Give the past as a present this Christmas!

Hello,

I've just received your email about buying a gift of membership for HES properties and monuments.

I've been a member of HES since 2006. In those 15 years there has never been such an unprecedented number of historic venues in your care closed to members. Therefore my question to you would be: what has been done by the head of conservation and their team to secure those properties, currently closed, in the last 15 years of my membership?

Living in Edinburgh I love to make day trips to your properties such as: Dirleton Castle, Melrose Abbey, Dunfermline Palace, Dryburgh Abbey, Tantallon Castle and Jedburgh Abbey; all remain closed as I write to you.

Tantallon Castle is one of my favourite monuments in your care and, ironically, this once great fortress is now encircled by barriers. I visited the grounds in September and there was no indication about when the Castle would reopen let alone any indication of what HES is doing to progress necessary works here.

I have never been moved to express my disappointment with my membership of HES before and I would be entirely happy for my question to reach the highest level in your organisation.


I look forward to your response.

Yours,

[redacted]

On Tue, 2 Nov 2021, 12:58 Historic Scotland, <no-reply@hes.scot> wrote:

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Longmore House
Salisbury Place
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EH9 1SH

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Document 3

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@gmail.com>

Sent: 16 January 2022 22:15

To: Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Subject:

Condition of our built heritage

Why are numerous monuments in the care of historic environment Scotland closed of to the public and shrouded in herres fencing.

It would be easy to blame covid and the current climate but in my opinion that is not the case.

Historic environment Scotland lost their way several years ago and forgot the core values of preserve and present our built heritage , Science and education are important but not to the detriment of the stones and mortar.

The skill base within HES is very high and varied, use the staff you have and employ more to get the job done and let's have our built heritage open for the public to enjoy.

I spent 35 very happy years with HE'S and it's predecessors.

Regards

[redacted]

Document 4

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@btinternet.com>
Sent: 02 April 2022 17:24
To: Gray N (Neil), MSP <Neil.Gray.MSP@Parliament.scot>
Subject: Kisimul Castle, Barra

Dear Mr Gray,

I understand you are having discussions with Historic Scotland about the continual delays to our castle. Have you any idea if these discussions could lead to building work within the castle. I know Alasdair Allan has written to you and he has been very helpful here. But, really, this castle has been left for two years. When will it re-open?
Yours, [redacted].

Document 5

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 14, 2022 2:29:34 PM
To: Robertson A (Angus), MSP <Angus.Robertson.MSP@Parliament.scot>
Subject: Continued closure of Maeshowe Chambered Cairn to visitors

Dear Mr Robertson ,

I am writing to you in your capacity as Cabinet Secretary for Culture.

My wife and I are making a (thrice postponed) visit to Orkney in May this year organised by Orkney Archaeology Tours. The company has told us that HES has not reopened Maeshowe to visitors because HES cannot operate the same shuttle bus system to take all visitors to the site that was in operation before the Covid closure.

I have complained to HES and received a prompt and detailed response from the Visitor Operation Manager to which I have replied asking for the complaint to be escalated to senior management at HES. The reasons given for continued closure are:

1. HES cannot run the shuttle-bus service because the contract with the bus company lapsed. A fresh tendering process has been started but could not begin until the confirmation of budgets at the beginning of the financial year.
2. HES cannot have an interim contract with a bus company because that would put HES at risk of prejudicing the fairness requirement of the tendering process.
3. HES cannot allow any private or tour company vehicles to take people to the site because that would not comply with the Traffic Management Plan agreed with Orkney Council and
4. such an arrangement would be unfair to visitors without access to their own or tour operators' transport.

The points of my complaint are that HES

- a) are treating a Traffic Management Plan as unalterable even on a short term temporary basis
- b) have provided no evidence that the fair tendering for bus contracts would be jeopardised by a temporary contract
- c) and that rather than work out a best solution for limited access to the site they have chosen to "treat everyone equally" and refuse access to a jewel of Orkadian prehistory to all .

The tour operators in Orkney have been arguing with HES about this since January and there has been no movement .

I hope that you agree with me that HES's stance is not logical and damaging to Orkney tourism and that you would be willing to raise the issue with the Board and the CEO of HES.

I have attached as a pdf copies of my brief exchange of emails with [redacted]. HES

yours sincerely

[redacted]

**Correspondence with [redacted]
HES Re continued closure of Maeshowe Chambered Cairn**

1

[redacted] <[redacted]@gmail.com>

12 Apr 2022, 12:13 (2 days ago)
to complaints, bcc: Orkney

Good morning

I am writing to complain about the continued closure of Maeshowe .

My wife and I are booked on a tour with Orkney Archaeology in the first week of May which has been thrice postponed because of Covid.

I understand from [redacted] of Orkney Archaeology that the reason given by HES in Orkney for the cairn's closure is that the tendering process for a new provider of the shuttle-bus service to the site won't be completed till June and no interim arrangement can be made. This is despite the fact that the buses providing the service before the Covid enforced closure are unused and available.

The failure by HES in Orkney to make any alternative arrangements for one the world's most important neolithic sites at the start of a new tourist season seems to indicate gross inefficiency and a lack of concern about the impact on an important part of the Orkney economy.

I am asking for this decision to be reviewed as a matter of urgency by Alex Patterson and Elly McCrone .

I am also sending a copy of this email to Liam McArthur MSP and the relevant Cabinet Secretary and Minister.

My wife and I would appreciate a quick response .

yours sincerely
[redacted]

2

[redacted] <[redacted]@hes.scot>

13 Apr 2022, 12:51 (1 day ago)
to me

Dear [redacted] and [redacted],

Thank you for your below email which I am responding to in my role as [redacted] for the Highlands and Islands based in Orkney.

I was sorry to read of your frustration that Maeshowe will not be open at the point of your visit in May and appreciate your disappointment about this. Please be assured that I work closely with all local tour operators, independent visitors, researchers and other specialists to support their access requests as best I can and within the context of ensuring that we treat all requests for access to sites (with constraints or restrictions) equally. I wanted to provide a background to some of the challenges at Maeshowe which we have worked to mitigate over the previous years.

Maeshowe is a site that is accessible only by shuttle bus from our base visitor centre in Stenness village. There have been historic challenges with using Tormiston Mill as a car park for vehicles other than the bus and it was concerns raised about this (including near misses and accidents) which necessitated an operational model being created which minimises vehicle movement into and out of the car park. Following our relocation to Stenness Visitor Centre a few years ago a Traffic Management Plan was created in liaison with Orkney Islands Council, and we require ongoing compliance with the outline of this plan to ensure effective and safe oversight of the car park for visitors, staff, and our neighbours. This plan restricts visitor vehicle movements in Tormiston Mill car park and ensures only official HES vehicles utilise this space.

The tender for the provision of the Maeshowe Shuttle Bus went live on Public Contracts Scotland on Monday 4th April with a deadline for applications of 5th May and an anticipated go live with an operator in early June. We are required to follow mandated timeframes for the tender process, including a minimum advertisement period, and standstill period of ten days on appointment of the contract. Our tender went live as soon as confirmation was made available on provision of budgets for this service.

Whilst several short term solutions have been considered locally to minimise the period during which Maeshowe remains closed, none were effective in managing the needs of the Management Plan or not causing significant access restrictions to wider visitor groups, such as those arriving independently rather than as part of a tour. All these potential routes to support short term access considered added significant challenges to the operation and ran the risk of reducing access to a very limited pool of visitors. This would be likely to increase frustration to those unable to access the tomb and would put significant pressure on our site-based staff to manage appropriately.

As a public body Historic Environment Scotland (HES) must demonstrate genuine and effective competition in its procurement of services, and Single

Source Justification (SSJ) can only be used in situations where there is no alternate supplier in the market, or where competition is not deemed appropriate. Whilst an interim supplier during the period before which the tender goes live has potential to support provision of an interim access arrangement it runs the risk of HES being seen to show preferential treatment to any future tender bids and consequently SSJ would not be progressed under these circumstances.

Our Orkney team continue to offer an outreach talk free of charge from the visitor centre during the period in which Maeshowe is closed. We have also encouraged visits to the less well-known chambered cairns in the vicinity of Maeshowe increasing public knowledge and understanding of these sites, many of which offer an equally fascinating experience.

Whilst I appreciate your disappointment on not being able to physically view the interior of Maeshowe at the time of your visit, I do hope your wider tour around Orkney is enjoyable and I can confirm the majority of sites have now fully re-opened following our COVID restrictions over the last two years. We continue to support sector growth following COVID lockdowns and more widely we have re-opened more sites to access in Orkney at the start of the season.

I can advise you that your complaint has been addressed at stage 1 of our complaint procedure, a copy of which can be found on our website (<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/complaints/>).

If you are unhappy with my feedback you can request a further response to your complaint. If you wish to do so please contact me at the below address.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted], **Highlands and Islands** [redacted] |
Historic Environment Scotland | Àrainneachd Eachdraidheil Alba
Skara Brae Visitor Centre, Sandwick, Orkney, KW16 3LR
T: [redacted]

3

[redacted] <[redacted]@gmail.com>

13 Apr 2022, 15:47 (21 hours ago)
to [redacted], me, bcc: Orkney

Dear [redacted] thank you for your prompt and detailed reply to our complaint .

I recognise that HES staff have found, like so many others, that operating during the pandemic has created many difficulties. I also recognise that you in your role may be constrained by policies and procedures set by HES in Edinburgh. It was for that reason that I asked that the complaint be referred to the two relevant members of the senior management team.

I therefore want the complaint escalated because the argument for the continued closure of Maeshowe chambered cairn is seriously flawed .

The argument in your email seems to me to be based on two premises and two judgements.

1. The first premise underlies your first paragraph: about treating all requests for access equally . The premise is : at a given time if everyone cannot get access to the site then no-one should . HES is certainly ensuring equality of outcome by closing the site to everyone but is not ensuring equality of opportunity.

2. The second premise is in the second paragraph : we require ongoing compliance with the outline of (the Traffic Management Plan). The premise here is the famous totalitarian premise : everything that is not compulsory is forbidden. I find it hard to believe that a Traffic Management Plan cannot allow for the temporary suspension of parts of its provisions and give controlled access of non-HES vehicles to the car park at Tormiston Mill .

3. The first judgement is in paras two and four : that HES does not have the staff/budget to manage, temporarily, an open access policy that doesn't involve the use of shuttle-buses. So this means close the site because premise 1 rules out limited access.

4 The second judgement is in the sixth paragraph and concerns a short term contract for shuttle-buses before the completion of the tendering process. I am astonished by the words used : an interim supplier runs the risk of HES being seen to show preferential treatment to any future tender bids and consequently Single Source Justification would not be progressed under these circumstances. The phrasing used in this sentence appears to be that of a lawyer providing a justification for not taking the straightforward solution which removes all the other difficulties.

I would like to know the evidence on which this judgement was made. Is the coach-hire sector on Orkney so ferociously competitive and so litigious that this is a serious risk ? And is this risk so great that **all interested visitors** to Orkney should be unable to visit one of the glories of Orcadian prehistory .

Please let me know if I need to take further action to escalate this complaint . And I thank you once again for your response.

yours sincerely

[redacted]

[redacted]

08:38 (4 hours ago)

to me

Dear [redacted],

To confirm receipt of your request for an escalation and that this has been passed on to relevant colleagues.

[redacted]

Document 6

From: [redacted] <[redacted] @gmail.com>

Sent: 21 May 2022 12:16

To: Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism & Enterprise <MinisterBTTE@gov.scot>

Cc: Finlay.Carson.msp@parliament.scot; Emma.Harper.msp@parliament.scot

Subject: Historic Environment Scotland

Dumfries and Galloway closed properties Dear MSPs Historic Scotland have closed so many sites in this area with no plans for repairs or opening just fencing off. This seriously impacts tourism in the area and the small businesses near the sites which depend on this passing trade. Fencing them off will cause further damage to local beauty spots. Historic Scotland's answer is they are in dangerous conditions, all 75 it seems, and there is no timescale for work to be carried out only this appalling idea of fencing things off. Can I ask you to have a dialogue with them on this matter? The local businesses and people are considering a petition but perhaps we don't need this if they can be persuaded of the urgency of this. I'm sure local press would be interested.

Thank you for considering this issue

[redacted]

Document 7

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@gmail.com>
Sent: 26 June 2022 15:21
To: Gray N (Neil), MSP <Neil.Gray.MSP@Parliament.scot>
Cc: McLennan P (Paul), MSP <Paul.McLennan.MSP@Parliament.scot>; Hoy C (Craig), MSP <Craig.Hoy.MSP@Parliament.scot>
Subject: Closed castles !!

Yesterday, we were in Dirleton and, not having been there for several years due to covid, we thought it would be a good opportunity to have a look round the castle. We were then VERY disappointed to learn that, not only was Dirleton castle closed, but so are a HUGE number of other Historic Scotland properties throughout Scotland. Why? There has been the long period of covid restrictions when obviously crowds of visitors could not be allowed to visit, but surely if there was any maintenance/safety work required, that was an ideal opportunity. This is yet another example of covid being used as an excuse for shutting down places of valuable historic interest and value. We are also feeling very cheated in that, having paid membership fees for all that time on the basis that money was still coming in to maintain the properties, it doesn't appear that money has been put to good use.

PLEASE try to get something done about this disappointing situation. We need to keep these properties and their valuable history for future generations. They are also desperately needed to bring back tourists with their much needed financial contribution to our finances.

We will hope to see some action before the end of the summer season.

[redacted] members of Historic Scotland for many years.

Document 8

From: [redacted] [redacted].co.uk>

Sent: 28 June 2022 18:47

To: Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism & Enterprise <MinisterBTTE@gov.scot>

Subject: HES in general and Glasgow Cathedral in particular.

Hello

Never have I known HES to have so many properties closed, some of which have been closed for many years. Now St.Andrew's Castle and Cathedral are both closed, for example.

I would especially like to draw your attention to the fact that HES are advising visitors to Glasgow Cathedral that the nearest toilets are at John Lewis, more than a mile away! It is pathetic that we are providing such a poor visitor experience. So much for Scottish hospitality!

Best regards

[redacted]

Document 9

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@btinternet.com>
Sent: 08 August 2022 12:41
To: Gray N (Neil), MSP <Neil.Gray.MSP@Parliament.scot>
Subject: Kisimul Castle, Barra

Dear Mr Gray,

Can you put any pressure on Historic Enterprise Scotland to hasten the renovation work on our castle in the bay? You may well be getting a number of emails about this, as I've just attended a well-stocked meeting in Barra about the deficiencies in the contract which HES have failed to address. All the best, [redacted].

Document 10

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@hotmail.co.uk>

Sent: 12 August 2022 10:28

To: Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>

Subject: Clan MacNeil Castle Barra

I am writing to you to say that I think it is very important to try & keep the above Kismul Castle opened as it is part of our Scottish Heritage . We need to do everything to try & keep our history alive. I would like to be kept updated with what's going on here & why they are not giving the money that's needed to preserve this beautiful castle. My parents are still native to Barra as were my grandparents & great grandparents & I have been going there for nearly 50 years & I think it is terrible they have stopped the tours to the castle & I would very much like them reinstated .

Regards

[redacted]

Document 11

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@gmail.com>
Date: Fri, Feb 3, 2023 at 2:10 PM
Subject: Arbroath Abbey
To: <david.mitchell@hes.scot>
Cc: mairi.mcallan.msp@parliament.scot
<mairi.mcallan.msp@parliament.scot>, DOOGAN, Dave
<dave.doogan.mp@parliament.uk>, Dey G (Graeme), MSP
<Graeme.Dey.msp@parliament.scot>

Dear Mr Grey

Please see attached letter to Dr Mitchell HES for your information and comments. Apologies, I sent it to Mairi McAllan initially - wrong minister, wrong portfolio.

[redacted]

Dear Dr Mitchell

I have attached a letter raising my concerns regarding the impact of the closure of Arbroath Abbey to visitors and the residents of the town.

I look forward to your comments in due course.

Similarly, I would appreciate input from my elected representative regarding this issue..

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

3rd February 2023

Dear Dr Mitchell

Visitor Access to Arbroath Abbey

As you are aware the restrictions for access to Arbroath Abbey have been in place for at least a year, if not longer. I am sure all the necessary risk assessment were completed before such restrictions were put in place.

My question is – Why is there a great profusion of barricades inside the Abbey and around the main gates but none on the pedestrian walkway (Abbey Path) and indeed the High Street which has both pedestrian and motor traffic? Are these areas deemed to be safe for pedestrians and motorists? I noted the other day that the residents of Abbey Lodge have

made their own provision by erecting a barrier of pallets around the part of the Abbey buildings adjacent to their property. Did you not offer them some of your barriers?

There is also the knock-on economic effect of the closure. As you know, Arbroath High Street is no different from any other in Scotland. Visitors coming into the town, used to stop and spend money which helped our local businesses. I question if they do so now. A quick stop at the harbour and they are on their way again.

Entrance fees and takings from the gift shop must also be adversely affected by the lack of access. Visitors want to capture the atmosphere of the place where such a historical event took place. They want to be able to wander round these impressive ruins and enjoy the history. It saddens me every time I walk past the Abbey with all these barriers.

Now, I know you are going to trot out all the old chestnuts of covid, Brexit, lack of materials, the weather etc, but we have been waiting a VERY long time for OUR Abbey to be opened to the public. I think the people of Arbroath deserve better don't you?

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]

cc. Mairi McAllan - Minister for the Environment and Land Reform
Dave Doogan MP
Graeme Dey MSP

Document 12

From: [redacted] <[redacted].co.uk>

Sent: 15 February 2023 16:14

To: Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>

Subject: Concerns about Scotland's built heritage

Dear Angus and Neil (although I appreciate given today's announcement by the FM, incumbents may change)

I write with reference to a number of concerns that I have about the state of Scotland's built heritage. My particular concerns relate to castles, although there are many other types of monument in similar situations.

First, it is clear that in the years leading up to the pandemic, buildings owned and/or managed by Historic Environment Scotland had been suffering from underinvestment in terms of assessment for safety, alongside repairs and maintenance. This had resulted in many monuments being closed to the public – either partly or fully. Due to the impact of the pandemic, it is clear that inspections were not done, leading to an increased workload and backlog of inspection – particularly at high levels. After being closed and having massive losses in revenue, it is to be expected that HES is struggling to bring the inspection programme up to speed, and a substantial proportion of properties remain wholly or partially closed to the public. This, combined with the systematic programme of de-staffing of many monuments has resulted in a huge reduction in the ability of the visiting public to enjoy Scotland's castles and other monuments.

HES, and Historic Scotland before it, has been operating on a commercial business model that is entirely inappropriate for a national heritage organisation. It has concentrated investment on "high value" sites in terms of footfall, and neglected those which have lower footfall. This applies not just to investment in visitor facilities, but also in maintenance and repair activity, and in marketing and promotion. When you take the 2018 figures (the last to be published that I could see online quickly), the footfall numbers are incredibly stark.

5,229,049 visitors paid to enter HES sites in 2019. Of those, 90% were concentrated in four sites – Edinburgh Castle, which accounted for over 40% of all paying HES visitors, Stirling Castle, Urquhart Castle and Glasgow Cathedral. The fifth most visited site, Doune Castle, had less than a third as many as Glasgow Cathedral. It is painfully obvious that a huge proportion of visitors to Scotland don't get out of the central belt, and the majority of those coming to the north (as you will both be aware given your personal backgrounds) do the "Highland run" of Loch Ness, Inverness and Culloden before heading back down the A9. However, there are a huge number of monuments north of the central belt – each of which requires investment. I am enough of a businessman to understand the most visited sites bankroll the rest of HES, but – as it is misleading to say that a national economy has to "balance the books" like a personal bank account, it is misleading to think that national heritage can be managed as a business on a profit/loss basis.

[redacted]. I have personally visited over 500 of them, and I can assure you that the vast majority are in a poor state of decay. There is nothing in place that obliges the owners of monuments to keep them in a good state of repair, and most are deteriorating rapidly. Inspections do not take place by and large, and local authorities are generally dismissive of unsolicited contact reporting this. HES themselves are generally unwilling to investigate as they are undermanned, and do “desk based assessments” that are not worth the cost of the electricity expended on the computer usage.

Those which are considered to be suitable for restoration or repurposing had the “ancient monument” tag removed and were left as listed buildings. And yet it is still the case that the default position of local planners seems to be to pay lip service to being supportive of projects to restore, whilst accepting the most petty objections as valid and delaying such projects, causing well-meaning individuals seeking to save a historic building substantial cost and stress. Over and above this, the policies in place regarding the sense of historic space of such buildings also seems to be ignored, with wholly inappropriate housing developments being permitted within what was the area of the policies of such buildings after estates were broken up. This entire system needs to be re-evaluated to ensure that (a) there is a presumption that historic buildings of this type are to be restored, (b) public access to the exterior is also to be presumed, not just for those receiving state support (and not just for one afternoon a year), and (c) people living near a building of this type are to expect them to be restored and increased public footfall. To be frank, the current planning system is not fit for purpose. Too much relies on individual interpretation, and that leads to inconsistency and bias.

Those which are not are in desperate need of state intervention. Failure to do so will result in hundreds being lost to posterity due to neglect. I believe a policy needs to be developed which obliges owners to maintain these buildings – with a moderate amount of state support if appropriate – and failure to do so will be on the presumption that the property will become state-owned, maintained, and with public access. It is utterly unacceptable for historic buildings to be maintained as a private “folly” within the grounds of a newer property, fenced off “for public safety” and that the owners will do nothing to maintain it. I am fully aware of the cost implications of this, but I believe it is essential to save Scotland’s heritage. This problem is particularly acute when dealing with overseas property owners and wealthy domestic property owners, who dismiss the right to roam, challenge aggressively through the legal system, and bully local authorities to do what they want.

A further concern is that of sites where buildings have been lost, whether this be medieval castle, civil war fort, abandoned medieval settlement, forts, duns, brochs or even Roman marching camps. So many of these sites have been lost to development, quarrying and so on. When you approach Daviot northbound on the A9, look up on the left. You’ll see the hillfort of Dun Davey – which the settlement is named after. Half of it has been quarried away. Clatchard Craig, the most impressive and extensive Pictish hillfort in Fife, and one of the most important in the whole of Scotland, was totally destroyed by quarrying. This cannot be allowed to continue, and yet sites like the Lochinver Quarry near Elgin (the site of some incredibly important Iron Age discoveries paid for by the quarry company) continue to operate.

Technology is advancing to the point where non-penetrative LIDAR, magnetometry and ground penetrating radar can all be run from a drone to identify lost features. Yet the Canmore database, the primary national resource, has hundreds of castle sites incorrectly categorised, and derives a considerable amount of information from the Ordnance Survey assessment of sites of nearly 200 years ago. The medieval motte adjacent to the 13th century Altyre Church south of Forres can only be labelled as an earthwork because nobody “in authority” has been to look at it. The motte at the top of the golf course by Muir of Ord is labelled as a henge, despite numerous notes from field visits beneath saying it clearly isn’t. And there is no linked-up thinking with the Historic Environment Records of the local authorities – some of which are online and some aren’t.

Scotland as a whole needs new thinking on its built heritage. HES and the National trust are focussed more on making money than saving and preserving built heritage. Both are rivals for the same visitor pounds, and squash out smaller local properties through aggressive marketing against which a single site business cannot compete. Both, as is the case with government, think in terms of the numbers and little else. Westminster is London-centric. The Senedd is Cardiff-centric. The Scottish Parliament is at best central-belt-centric. The Highland Council is Inverness-centric. Moray Council (despite its small size is also guilty) destroyed the Forres archive when it took over, being totally Elgin-centric. Getting rural services is of course problematic for these two. But councils generally are building walls as an act of protectionism. So much of Scotland is sparsely populated, clearly national policy has to reflect where the population is – but not at the cost of depriving rural areas. In terms of heritage the same logic must apply. Scotland’s built heritage is in all of Scotland, and yet money is not going to where it is needed.

Current policy is not working. It is leaving our national heritage to rot. Heritage is one of the more important industry drivers in the country. It is one of the main reasons people come to Scotland. Clearly there are many priorities for government at the moment. But heritage, the arts – these are things that cannot give a tangible return that can be accurately measured. These are things that take us beyond a balance-sheet existence into making life worth living. And I for one do not accept the commoditisation of life. We should be more than a set of input/output figures to be run through a chancellor’s calculator to make his small state ideology work.

Best regards

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]