

CHAPTER 17

Conservation Policy/Strategy

17.1 **On behalf of HS, Mr Wright stated** that he finds the order to close the property to the public, issued by HC, odd. The fabric of Tioram does not seem to be in any worse condition than many other ancient monuments which are accessible to the public. He agreed that Tioram is in a comparatively good state of preservation, but disagreed with the assertion that it is considered to be structurally poor.

17.2 Mr Wright disagreed with the applicant's reconstruction approach. In several projects on which he is working, the primary aim is to preserve the fabric of the SMC through consolidation in preference to reconstruction. These do not involve massive infrastructure works. The aspirations of those involved have been matched by the availability or the promise of availability, of significant public funding from several sources, recognising the importance of cultural heritage for tourism and related economic benefits.

17.3 It was stated that the applicant's claim that the proposal to re-roof the castle would assure its continuing life for a period of 100-150 years was contentious and at odds with the proposals to consolidate the curtain wall with methods which would not be dissimilar for a consolidation exercise appropriate to the ruin as a whole. The castle, in its reconstructed form, would prove difficult to maintain, given the rigours of the west coast climate, and considering the relative inaccessibility of many parts of the fabric due to the configuration of the site. Limewashing would need to be undertaken at regular intervals to preserve the integrity of the harled finish.

17.4 Claimed benefits relating to public access and benefits for the local community would be met far more effectively by consolidating the fabric, which would encourage public access at all times, without restrictions. A charitable trust could be set up involving the local community more securely in the management and maintenance of the site. Restrictions on access would seem to preclude the key months of the visitor season, from which the local community would be most likely to benefit.

17.5 Mr Wright considered that proposals to consolidate the ruin would be entirely in accordance with the conservation philosophy advocated by the principal funding agencies, and for which funding can be secured. It is quite possible to undertake repairs on a phased basis over a number of years to suit the funding package.

17.6 It was stated that examples of the reconstruction of tower houses have been less than successful over the last 25 years or so. In terms of the international conservation charters which have now been adopted universally, reconstruction can be deemed to be highly questionable. It can destroy site evidence and distort history. The preservation of ruins through consolidation allows others in the future to take decisions.

17.7 Mr Wright contended that the maxim that "the preferred use for a historic building is the purpose for which it was designed originally, and that where such a use is no longer possible, it is preferable to maintain the building in use provided that this is compatible with the retention of its significance" applies primarily to listed buildings, which are governed

by separate legislation. That certain buildings have been ruinous for a very substantial part of their existence can be of great significance in itself.

17.8 In relation to economic regeneration, it was stated that a carefully managed programme of repair as a consolidated ruin has the potential of offering each of the claimed benefits. There is a real risk that Castle Tioram would be regarded as an impregnable bastion compared with a site and monument to which unfettered access had been possible historically.

The Statement of Cultural Significance

17.9 Mr Wright stated that the true significance of Tioram does not appear to have been presented in a clear and logical manner. The essential components are to state clearly the cultural significance of the artefact or site, and from that level of understanding to proceed to set down conservation policies which lead, in turn, to the *Conservation Strategy*, and a management plan for the site. Although there is an attempt to set down issues which are deemed to be culturally significant, these do not reflect a whole range of issues which are touched upon in the supporting papers. For complex sites, which may involve several historical layers, these issues should be expressed in terms of national, regional or local significance and any matters deemed to be detrimental to that significance should also be stated. The witness cited James Semple Kerr's 'The Conservation Plan' as setting down good practice. The significance of Tioram has not been stated adequately. The conservation policies and strategy flowing from an inadequate understanding of the site are likely to be flawed.

17.10 Mr Wright considered that the significance of Tioram, in the context of other key fortifications of the region, appears to have been misunderstood, or played down deliberately. It is not enough to state that good examples of certain features of Tioram can be found elsewhere. It is the assembly of the whole and its state of preservation which is of particular significance. Phasing or development plans should have been presented as part of the understanding of the site in order to arrive at an understanding of the purposes of the original accommodation and how this may have changed through time.

The Structural Condition of the Built Fabric

17.11 The witness concurred generally with the applicant's analysis of the agents of decay which place a SAM, and Castle Tioram in particular, at risk. This analysis would, however, apply equally to any proposal to consolidate the fabric which may not call for the extremes of intervention proposed by the adaptation of the ruin as a private dwelling house. He had serious doubts that the problems of water penetration can be overcome. To prevent water penetration through the core of the wall would prove to be impossible without an unacceptable level of physical intervention greater than that proposed by the applicant. That would pose an unacceptable level of intervention to a SAM simply in order to render the property habitable.

17.12 It was stated that the arguments for reconstruction, as opposed to consolidation of the ruin, question the wisdom of a conservation approach which has been practised successfully in this country for the past century and more. That approach sets out to preserve the fabric of standing archaeology through consolidation, and to preserve the

essential features of the ruin so that it can continue to be interpreted accordingly. It would be absurd to suggest that the ruins of classical antiquity should be reconstructed. The authenticity of monuments is much more likely to be preserved by adopting the principle of minimal intervention.

The Technical Strategy

17.13 That the state of the wallheads has been capable of surviving 250 years without major change, based on Sandby's survey of 1748, was stated to be highly encouraging. This suggested that their survival can be secured best through consolidation. Elements of the fabric would require considerable amounts of rebuilding if the ruin were to be roofed and the structure adapted for habitation. The materials would require to match exactly those which are found on site. The application supplies no information on the sources of this material, nor of the blue/grey or green slates to match existing samples identified on site.

17.14 It was suggested that there are two further technical options (in addition to the four identified by the applicant) which have not been examined;

- consolidation as an un-roofed shell with localised and limited stabilisation; and
- consolidation as a partially roofed shell with additional stabilisation where required which may be inserted to coincide with the intermediate floor locations.

Neither of these options would require the ruin to be adapted for any new use and both would allow the archaeology of the ruin to be read while adopting the principles of minimal intervention and reversibility.

17.15 The applicant's structural engineer suggests that the walls appear to be in a reasonable condition, supporting their own weight and resisting wind forces. This suggests that the remaining fabric of Tioram is considerably better than many SAMs with which the witness had been involved through his own practice. The plan form of the castle, and of the individual cellular units, was stated to be inherently strong, unlike structures which have unrestrained long parallel walls penetrated by several window openings. The masonry of Castle Tioram is well suited to a consolidation exercise and compares favourably with the projects upon which the witness is presently working.

17.16 Referring to the borescope survey, Mr Wright agreed with the analysis, but not with the conclusions. It was his view that there may be many reasons for the localised collapse of masonry, but the loss of facework through freezing conditions is unlikely to be a major cause of collapse at Tioram due to the maritime location, where frost will occur much less frequently than on exposed upland sites, or those located on the eastern side of the Scottish mainland.

17.17 It was stated that the *Design Analysis and Technical Impact Assessment* throws up as many questions as it does solutions to those elements of the fabric which cannot be interpreted clearly from archaeological investigation and documentary evidence. This highlights the sort of problems encountered when reconstruction work is contemplated with a measure of conjecture. The key elements giving character to the design are shrouded in uncertainty. It seems highly unlikely that sash and case windows would be introduced to the fabric of a building of this age and in this location during the mid 17th century. There is no evidence put forward for the existence, or otherwise, of wallhead dormers which, rather

like bartizans can impart considerable aesthetic qualities to a building such as Tioram. No matter how erudite the research and conclusions as to the most likely manifestations of missing features, this can serve only to devalue the fabric which remains. The finished profiles of skewstones, corbiesteps and chimney copes would rise above the curtain wall and would be key elements in the recognition of the form of the castle, and also that it has been substantially rebuilt with pristine, sharp profiles associated with new work. This would appear incongruous.

17.18 Mr Wright considered that the problems of conjectural reconstruction extend to the treatment of the internal fabric. Normally fragments of historic plasterwork would be conserved as found, while here it is suggested that they should be removed and replaced with new matching lime plaster. The arguments appear to be confused. On the one hand certain design elements are considered to be inappropriate as they would be deemed to be conjectural (eg the timber screen to the hall) while on the other, the uses to which the individual rooms are being put can only be considered as adaptation. The decision to return the ruin to how it may have appeared at the height of the powers of Clan Ranald is arbitrary, leading to further problems of interpretation which cannot be reconciled easily with requirements for contemporary living. The choice of dateline ignores changes carried out to the fabric post-1715.

17.19 The proposal to reconstruct areas and reinstate profiles in new matching materials would change the character and appearance of the fabric irrevocably. New materials would appear different to historic fabric. They will not have weathered and will impose a different character. If there is insufficient material on site for the proposed works of reconstruction, then the problem of replicating materials will be exacerbated.

17.20 Mr Wright stated that he would consider the following elements of construction to be conjectural:

- external doors and frames
- chimneyhead profiles
- wallhead details, including dormers
- skewputts, skewstones, corbiesteps, finials etc
- conical roof
- authenticity of window profiles, window types and their precise locations within masonry apertures
- internal door details, frames and architraves
- the existence, or otherwise of shutters to windows
- profiles to fireplace surrounds, other than those known
- skirtings
- floor finishes
- ceilings and plastered cornices
- exposed joisted ceilings – painted panels or beams?
- armorial panels or other decorative features
- partition locations, construction and finishes

Mr Wright considered that the design proposals devalue the authenticity of the original in the form in which it appears to us today.

17.21 The proposals for the dwelling house were stated to beg the question as to how it would be serviced, both in terms of services infrastructure and the delivery of goods, given that the location of the castle is some distance from both the causeway and from the pier. Incoming underground services would require markers (for safety) and access points for valves. This could interfere with the appearance of the present site. The regular delivery of goods to a castle which is remote to the supply routes will undoubtedly be a challenge. It is assumed that victuals are loaded up from the pier and that they must be trolleyed to the entrance to the castle and any refuse generated must follow this route in reverse. Pathways to cope with this traffic would have to be of substantial construction. These may be paved or whin gravel. Paved pathways would be an unacceptable intrusion in a landscape such as this, both visually and to any existing archaeology. There is no allowance in the proposals for the storage of fuel, which would need to be considerable to serve the number of fireplaces, or for the disposal of refuse.

17.22 It was stated that the site is in an area of high rainfall and, the efforts to prevent water penetration at the wallwalks, through parapets, wallheads and chimneyheads are unlikely to be successful. Flues cannot, and should not be capped, particularly if they are to be used as part of the heating strategy for the building. They would be likely to conduct water in large quantities into the internal fabric. The walls, due to both thickness and exposure, are likely to remain saturated and dampness would be transmitted to internal surfaces, particularly at the interface with the bedrock which is exposed in certain of the ground floor rooms. The walls, due to their immense thickness, would dry out very slowly, even if water-tightness of the construction could be achieved. Any heating applied to the fabric would be unlikely to overcome this risk. Not only could the plaster be permanently damp in some locations, but there would be the risk of fungal attack to any embedded timbers, such as floor joists, and studwork to partitions.

17.23 The limitations of the conservation philosophy were stated to be demonstrated where the external harled finish, adopted for walling enclosing the proposed habitable spaces, stops abruptly against an external corner. It is not possible to reconcile this with the decision to preserve the curtain wall and associated structures "as found". This policy works against the principles put forward by the applicant in favour of harling the external walls for sound conservation reasons. There would be an unsatisfactory balance between harled surfaces and masonry to be repointed in its present state. On elevations DD and Q, the corner bartizans would be harled, but the adjacent wall surfaces would not, leading to a discordant visual effect when viewed from afar. It would appear that a string course has been introduced in line with the top moulding to the corbelling to each bartizan to ensure that the harling to the chimneyhead is stopped at a sensible level. This exposes a basic conflict arising from the conservation philosophy adopted.

17.24 Notwithstanding whether or not the windows should be sash and case, Mr Wright considered their proportions to be somewhat unsatisfactory in appearance. Windows of the era being recreated were normally multipaned with a tendency for the panes to be closer to square rather than elongated vertically. The astragals would need to be of a heavy pattern. The drawing suggests georgian windows, more appropriate to the 18th and early 19th centuries. As such their authenticity would be in question.

17.25 Mr Wright stated that at the ground floor, there would inevitably be disturbance of archaeological resources within the rooms affected, where sub-soil drains

have to connect to soil stacks, and within the courtyard. Some of the drain lines pass under external stone walls, or unacceptably close to foundations of both internal and external walls, with consequent risks of undermining. It is unclear as to how drain lines on the upper floors, serving wc's, showers and baths, thread their way through structural elements in order to reach the drain stacks. In certain areas there appear to be ceilings introduced to disguise surface runs, and in other areas there are not. The need for drain stacks to be vented was questioned and whether any pipework penetrates at roof level. It would be highly unsatisfactory for the principal hall in block 3 to require a ceiling disguising the exposed joists. It would seem unlikely that the drainage runs could be accommodated within the depth of the partitions on the floor above. At ground level there is no tolerance for managing the direction of sub-soil drains if archaeological resources are uncovered, or structural problems exposed at foundation or bedrock level.

17.26 Mr Wright expressed similar reservations about the distribution of remaining services, such as power, lighting, fire protection and security wiring and the effect this would have on the structure. In several of the rooms it would appear that the strategy is to accommodate services within areas framed out from one of the existing walls. Other than drainage pipework, there would need to be cables, conduits, terminals and light fittings in other parts of the same room. He was concerned as to the visual appearance of this in the context of historic fabric, and also extensive damage/unsightliness which may be caused to these elements by persistent damp conditions. Under extreme conditions copper wiring, even if sheathed, can be affected by verdigris and galvanised boxes for face terminals together with any associated screw fixings will rust, leading to staining of internal wall finishes. He doubted that the provision of electrical light fittings could be compatible with the stated aim to reconstruct the fabric of the building to coincide with a dateline set at c.1650.