

CHAPTER 4

Consultation and The Statement of Cultural Significance

Consultation

4.1 On behalf of the applicant, Mr Drummond stated that *The Analysis of Consultation* was circulated to a wide range of bodies, interested individuals, and archives and that all research reports were made available on the Tioram internet site which was regularly updated.

4.2 On 19th May 1998 a locally publicised public meeting, attended by about 120 people of whom a significant number were from outwith the local area, was held in Genuig to present the research work and seek comments. No specific conservation strategies or proposals were put to the meeting. Opinions were varied and the following general points emerged:

- The peace and tranquility of the castle, island and Loch Moidart should not be disturbed.
- Public access to the island and castle should remain.
- It was generally appreciated that in order to maintain the peace and tranquility some form of visitor management scheme would probably be required.
- Opinions were divided as to whether the castle should be re-roofed and brought back to life again, with those members of the local community who spoke generally more supportive.

The initial analysis of consultation concluded that:

- Public perception of the history and significance of the castle within a wider, pre-1715 context is limited. Many interpret the 1715 burning as the most important moment in the castle's history.
- Most parties wish to see continued access for the local community to Cùl Doirlinn and Eilean Tirim, and some form of public access to the castle should be maintained.
- The local community does not wish the peace, beauty, and tranquillity of the area disturbed and does not want an increase in tourist numbers.
- Based on current information, HS, the Clanranald Castle Tioram Trust, and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in Scotland (SPABiS) wish to see the castle conserved as a ruin.

The Statement of Cultural Significance

4.3 Mr Drummond stated that the *Statement of Cultural Significance* allowed the historical and cultural value of the site, both as a whole and in its individual elements, to be assessed and from this process the principles which were derived to guide an appropriate conservation strategy. *The Illustrated Burra Charter* warns against bias and subjectivity in understanding significance and deciding what to do. All aspects of cultural significance should be considered without unwarranted emphasis on any one aspect. *The Stirling Charter* recommends that conservation be based upon a full awareness of cultural significance and all phases of development.

Chapter 4: Consultation and The Statement of Cultural Significance (Anta)

4.4 In considering significance it was necessary to consider a range of issues, including the aesthetic, historic, scientific, and social values of the monument, building, or site. The criteria for use in consideration of cultural significance as suggested by *James Semple Kerr, The Conservation Plan*, were used as a starting point. The three primary criteria used were:

- physical evidence;
- the ability to demonstrate (i.e. does the subject demonstrate a philosophy, design, custom, process, use or function?); and,
- associated links (i.e. links which are not attested or exhibited by any surviving physical evidence).

In deciding whether an individual element or aspect was important, it was considered whether it was, for example, rare, unique, intact, seminal, early, or representative of that particular subject. Mr Drummond considered that the castle is a representative and early (but not unique or intact) example of a fortified site of the Kingdom/Lordship of the Isles and clearly demonstrates this through physical evidence.

4.5 Mr Drummond stated that historic value encompasses the history of aesthetics, science and society, and therefore to a large extent underlies most of the consideration of significance. Castle Tioram's dominant historical importance was as one of the principal strongholds of the Kingdom/Lordship of the Isles and the seat of Clanranald for over 500 years when it existed as a lordly dwelling and administrative centre, as well as a vital part of the Gaelic-Norse culture of the Gaidhealtachd. This ceased following its forfeiture, loss of military and commercial significance, and as a consequence, effective abandonment as a habitable dwelling in the late 17th/early 18th century. The abandonment of the castle by Clanranald and its garrisoning of the castle by government forces for 22 years during the period 1693-1715 demonstrates the overall political and military situation in the Highlands leading up to the 1715 uprising. The government's decision not to repair the castle in 1748, and the Clanranald's failure to return, confirms the loss of both strategic and social significance after this time – a period where Dunstaffnage, Mingarry, and Duart suffered similar fates. Considering the relative importance of the burning it was stated that there is insufficient evidence to accept Father Charles MacDonald's account. Whilst a firing almost certainly occurred, there is no evidence – physical or documentary - to support the romantic but essentially flawed notion of a grand conflagration. Whilst it might be argued that the resonance of the story is of importance, the linked issues of accuracy and authenticity cannot be set aside. It was concluded that the firing of the castle is of secondary significance as part of a series of minor pre-emptive military actions within the opening days of the 1715 uprising, and had to be viewed within the wider context of the castle's history. In answer to questions, Mr Drummond agreed that the historic period from the 6th century to the 12th century is not addressed in the *Statement of Cultural Significance*; that the treatment of the ruin by artists, which had been covered but not included, may be relevant to historic value; and that the statement contained no expression of the 'Scottesque' perception of history.

4.6 Mr Drummond stated that, linked to the historic and aesthetic significance of Tioram is its architectural value. It is one of an important and relatively small group of structures which might be broadly categorised as curtained walled castles of the north western seaboard, all of which were important mediaeval strongholds. The other members include Duart and Sween, Duart, Mingarry, Dunollie, Duntrune, and Dunvegan.

Chapter 4: Consultation and The Statement of Cultural Significance (Anta)

4.7 The surviving mid 13th century fabric – primarily the curtain wall – represents the earliest period of stone castle building in Scotland and in some areas is found to be relatively intact. The polygonal curtain wall following site topography is representative of this group of west-coast castles, whilst the form of the wallhead is similarly representative of castles of that period generally. It is not by any means unique - the curtain walls at Mingarry and Dunstaffnage are very similar, and more interesting in aesthetic and architectural terms. The wallhead shows a number of interesting, but again not unique, features. The box machicolation has parallels at Kisimul, Mingarry, and Breachacha, as does the heightening of the wallwalk and the re-organisation of the parapet for firearms defence. Block one, the 15th century tower house, is also of some interest. However tower houses were becoming common along the north-west seaboard in this period and were added to existing curtain wall castles at Duart (late 14th century), Tarbet (15th century), Sween (Macmillan's Tower, 15th century), and Skipness (early 16th century). Gatehouse structures resembling tower houses exist at Dunstaffnage and Rothesay.

4.8 As the castle developed, later fabric came to parallel the rest of Scotland more closely. The design of main 16th/17th century accommodation (Block 4) to the pattern of a castellated tower-house, complete with corbelled bartizans and parapet walkway, is essential as a display of military strength. In contrast, the north elevations of these buildings can only be seen from within the entrance pend and courtyard. Here, the designed effect is completely different, comprising a grand, protruding staircase block with large, even, indefensible window openings on each side. Any suggestion of defence has been lost in favour of a much more balanced, architectural effect alluding to the refined cultural values which might be expected of noble accommodation of the period. It is probable that this formed the lordly accommodation. This contrast is not uncommon in 16th century castles and other, better, examples can be seen for example at Crichton and the 1634 Renaissance wing at Caerlaverock. Tioram is stark in its simplicity and lack of ornate carved detail. Similarly, the general move away from defensive towards a more symbolic use of traditionally defensive elements is recorded at many buildings of the period.

4.9 Mr Drummond stated that it was concluded that, in architectural terms, the castle as a whole is a good representative - but by no means unique - example of an early castle of the west coast. It was continually modified throughout its life, the elements of which can largely be identified and interpreted today.

4.10 Mr Drummond stated that the wider aesthetic significance of Morar, Moidart, and Ardnamurchan – designated as a NSA - was identified by SNH as arising from the coastal fringe. Loch Moidart was included because it is a sheltered, introverted landscape of intimate seclusion and charm. The Ardnamurchan Tourist Association (ATA) made it clear that it was this very intimate, secluded landscape that was important to visitors. Many tourists visit Tioram as part of their trip to the area, not specifically to see the castle and understand its historical or architectural values but to enjoy the surrounding landscape. Discussions with members of the local community confirmed that they too enjoyed Dorlin, Tioram, and Loch Moidart for the beauty of the surrounding landscape, its peace and tranquility.

4.11 Addressing scientific and research value, Mr Drummond stated that 46 features had been identified throughout the island as being of possible archaeological significance. In addition to any remains within the castle itself, there are four main categories

Chapter 4: Consultation and The Statement of Cultural Significance (Anta)

of archaeological feature which are of particular interest - middens, building stances, cultivation remains, and the pier. In addition it was likely that, on a site with an extended period of historical use such as this, there may be buried or sealed remains. It was concluded that these remains have the potential to inform our understanding of such important historic sites, and have considerable research value.

4.12 Addressing social and cultural value, Mr Drummond stated that, from consultation with local bodies such as the community council and more informal discussion with the local community generally, it was apparent that for the local community and many members of the expatriate clan today, the castle is important as the most conspicuous focal point relating to the local area and its history. This was and continues to be confirmed by the considerable local interest in the future of Tioram. This part of Loch Moidart and Eilean Tirim in particular, despite being in private ownership, is viewed very much as a semi-public area.