

21 September 2006

Dear editor,

The owner's account (20<sup>th</sup> September) of Historic Scotland's stance on Castle Tioram is seriously misleading. Castle Tioram is a scheduled ancient monument, like Melrose Abbey and Skara Brae. It is not just another castle; the recent independent assessment shows in our view that it is of particular importance for understanding Scotland's history. Scheduled monuments are the most strictly protected category of building we have. The established policy for them is that they should be preserved, with the minimum interference unless there are exceptional circumstances.

When the castle was offered for sale Historic Scotland considered acquiring it in order to ensure its preservation. We withdrew our interest because there was interest from a trust committed to preservation. We took steps to ensure through the sale particulars that any new owner would be fully aware of the policy for scheduled monuments. Mr Brown nonetheless applied for consent to restore it for residential use. In line with the recommendation of the independent Reporter after an extensive inquiry, consent was refused.

Following representations from Mr Brown, we agreed to explore possible compromise options. The ideas suggested in discussion by his agents were essentially similar to the previous application. We have nevertheless carried out a full reassessment, considering the possible proposals against established policy and guidance. Our view is that restoration would have a significant impact, going well beyond the minimum interference which normal policy requires, and that there are no exceptional circumstances which justify this. Your readers can study all the relevant papers at [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/castletioram](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/castletioram). The castle needs conservation and repair, and we have offered financial assistance for this, but Mr Brown has declined to discuss it.

He accuses us of inconsistency. We consider each application on its merits. Fenton Tower, which he cites, is in our view a less important monument than Castle Tioram, there was better evidence to inform a restoration and less interference was involved than appears necessary to realise his ideas for his castle.

It is disappointing that Mr Brown is resorting to slurs on the Reporter and on our Chief Inspector. Our view is that with the completion of a programme of conservation and repair, with regular public access and good interpretation Castle Tioram would be a real asset to the local community. We look forward to the meeting which the local councillor is convening to discuss these possibilities.

John Graham  
Chief executive  
Historic Scotland  
Longmore House  
Salisbury Place  
Edinburgh