

Minister for Culture, Europe and International
Development and Minister with special
responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine
Ministear airson Cultar, na Roinn-Eòrpa is Leasachadh
Eadar-nàiseanta agus Ministear le dleastanas sònraichte
airson Fògarraich bhon Ucràin
Neil Gray BPA/MSP



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

T : 0300 244 4000
E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Martin Robertson
nationaloffice@ahss.org.uk

Our Reference: 202200284497
Your Reference: AHSS: Properties in Care / HES

17 March 2022

Dear Martin,

Thank you for your letter of 21st February 2022 regarding Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and its approach to conservation and protection of our properties in care.

First of all, thank you for the kind words about my recent appointment as Minister. I look forward to working with you and I am proud to count the members of the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland amongst the stakeholders united in our shared aim of protecting Scotland's Historic Environment.

Please be aware that although I am not responsible for the day to day operational activities of HES, and legislation prevents me from directing HES in relation to specific statutory functions, I remain ultimately accountable to the Scottish Parliament for the activities of HES and its use of resources. I am, therefore, grateful to you for raising your concerns about their conservation policies with me.

I can confirm that the Scottish Government has not given direction to HES to spend less on physical conservation of assets. I agree with you that it is vital that Scotland's historic properties in care are kept in a safe condition, both for the visiting public as well as members of HES staff. HES will continue to consider all options available to best protect the 336 nationally significant properties in care, and to allow the ongoing conservation of our historic environment, especially as we seek to build resilience into the sectors recovery from the pandemic. It is important however that whilst we recognise the pressures we face from the accelerating impact of climate change, and the associated increased rainfall and temperature variation which has been experienced across the range of our natural and built heritage

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sites, we seek sustainable solutions which value the integrity and unique nature of our historic environment.

Like you, I also greatly value the distinctive character of our historic places, and I appreciate the key role of the historic environment in our economy, our national identity and also in our wellbeing. Please be assured that I will be actively and regularly discussing the HES current and future management approaches and strategies with them.

With regard to the ongoing high level inspection programme specifically, the closures and access restrictions are regrettable, however they do remain necessary. I am sure you understand that health and safety must remain the top priority. By restricting access, HES is making sure that staff, contractors and visitors are protected from the identified risks. I am told by HES that some of these closures are likely to be in place for some time due to the scale and scope of remedial works needed. I will continue to discuss these closures and restrictions regularly with HES especially as we approach the peak season of 2022.

Yours sincerely



NEIL GRAY

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