



Speaking for Scotland's Buildings

October 6, 2023

Perth & Kinross Council
Pullar House
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Dear

PKC 23/01278/LBC | Removal of existing bridge and erection of a replacement footbridge | Pitlochry Railway Station

Having considered the application for replacement of the footbridge at Pitlochry Station carefully, the AHSS cases panel for Tayside & East Fife wish to strongly **object** to the proposal to remove the existing footbridge at Pitlochry Station. We have set out our reasons for our objection below.

Pitlochry Station, including the main building, the platform building, footbridge, signal box and fountain is a Category A listed building. As such, it is of special architectural or historic interest, *an outstanding example of a traditional railway station, demonstrating specific characteristics of the Highland Railway Company station building of the 19th century. The design is stylistically significant within the Highland Railway tradition.*¹

The proposal is for the removal of the cast iron footbridge and replacement with an accessible bridge, incorporating lifts, to provide travellers with step-free access to both platforms. The good intention of upgrading the station to complete barrier-free access requires no comment. However, the means chosen to achieve this goal are of considerable concern in view of the evident loss of heritage value.

The Design, Access & Heritage Statement explains that several options for 'accessibility solutions' were explored. None were considered practical, except for the replacement of the historic footbridge with a modern substitute. The new design includes two solid lift towers, stairs and a bridge that imitates the old one. The proposal fails to meet the requirements of the Local Development Plan, as *any proposed alterations or adaptations to help sustain or enhance a building's beneficial use should not adversely affect its special architectural or historic interest.*² However we would argue that the new design will have a detrimental impact on the historic station. The historic interest of the existing group will be much reduced with one element removed. Putting a different structure without any architectural quality in its place, aggravates the situation, leaving the listed building irrevocably damaged. In our view, the proposed change to Pitlochry Station fails to protect the historic environment as stipulated by the Historic

¹ HES, Listed Buildings, *Station Road, Pitlochry Station, including down platform building, footbridge, fountain and signal box*, LB39867 (1994)

² Perth And Kinross LDP2, Policy 27A: Listed Buildings (2019)



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Environment Policy for Scotland³. The Panel recommends that further consideration to alternative solutions that balance the protection of the historic building with the need for accessibility.

The applicant's appraisal looked at a range of options to meet access requirements. It does not fully consider the option to retain the existing footbridge, that allows passengers to reach the second platform, and to erect a separate, less conspicuous bridge – potentially served by lifts only – to the north-west of the existing bridge. If this new structure were to be fully transparent (glass and steel) and placed behind the existing bridge as viewed from the main building and platforms, this could result in less of an impact on the appearance of the station and the least detrimental impact on the historic building. This would allow for the retention of the existing footbridge which as set out by the Significance Statement by Turley Heritage (see 3.13 “when considered as a group the three buildings, the main station building, down platform building and footbridge, are of greater significance than any of the buildings would be on their own. The loss of any of the individual buildings or structures would impact upon the significance of the group”). We question the argument used regarding not to locate the new footbridge nearer to the Signal Box due to impact on its setting, as this building is of lower significance to the grouping (stated as low significance in the Heritage Statement- see above).

The issue of future electrification of the line is mentioned as an argument for the removal of the existing bridge due to the limited height of the structure. Perhaps the bridge could be raised as necessary (around 2 feet). This kind of intervention is not uncommon in the course of electrification and in this instance would only have a minor impact on the historic building. We strongly object to the removal of the footbridge based on something that might (or might not) happen in the future. We also query as to where the bridge would be relocated, particularly as there are several other stations where a similar argument is used (Kingussie and Nairn) and whilst this approach might have been used elsewhere (e.g., Strathbungo to Brechin Caledonian Railway) the options will be finite.

In summary, we believe that the proposed removal of the footbridge is avoidable and that a new accessible route can be formed by alternative means without jeopardising the significance of the listed building.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Kettles

Cases Panel Secretary -Dundee & Angus/Perth & Kinross

³ Historic Environment Policy for Scotland, Policies for managing the historic environment, policy 4 (2019)