Conservation policies and grant eligible work

Introduction and broad conservation policies

Stromness has attracted funding from both the Scottish Ministers' Historic Environment Regeneration Fund (HERF) Programme and the Heritage Lottery Fund to support property repairs under the Stromness Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI). It is a condition of this funding that these repairs, as well as other works within the conservation area, are carried out in a manner which maintains the character and appearance of the individual buildings and the wider Stromness conservation area.

This document summarises the Council's Conservation Policies and sets out the eligibility criteria for grant aid along with the principles that should be followed when undertaking repairs to traditional buildings.

For a more detailed understanding of the conservation area and the Council's policies please refer to Development Planning and Regeneration at Orkney Islands Council.

The main aim of the Stromness THI is to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. By investing money into the town, it helps preserve and enhance the area whilst assisting the town in remaining economically stable. It also contributes towards creating a sense of place about which the residents can be justifiably proud and which visitors can truly enjoy.

These aims will be achieved in three principal ways:

- through direct investment in the buildings of the town;
- through appropriate investment in the public realm; and
- through appropriate planning controls.

Conservation Area

All development must preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Stromness Conservation Area.

The area covered by the Stromness THI is aligned with the designated Conservation Area. Maps of this area can be found within the Orkney Islands Council website: [www.orkney.gov.uk](http://www.orkney.gov.uk) and search under Stromness THI

Conservation philosophy

The conservation-led approach being adopted by the THI acknowledges the inherent character and qualities of Stromness and seeks to retain and enhance these essential elements.

Whilst new work is also encouraged, it should be innovative and authentic, but must respect the scale and character of the surrounding built environment. It is important for the future well-being of any settlement that it is not solely preserved but that sensible and sensitive new development is encouraged. The conservation philosophy must therefore seek to achieve a positive and supportive attitude toward new development.
The Stromness THI’s conservation policies are founded on the following principles:

- Repair of historic features is preferable to replacement and buildings should therefore be regularly maintained.
- Repairs should be true to the building and must be based upon historical evidence respecting relevant historic fabric, forms, method and technology.
- All work should be authentic and complement the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and be truthful in its own right, being easily recognised as a later phase in the town’s ongoing evolution.

**Restrictions on development**

There are extra controls on development within the Stromness Conservation Area. These controls relate to the erection and demolition of buildings and boundary treatments, the protection of trees and restrict certain changes to properties such as re-roofing, painting, cleaning and alterations to fenestration, if the character and appearance of a building or the wider area is materially affected. For further information please refer to the Orkney Islands Council website or contact Jamie Macvie (planning officer) in Development Management on 01856 873535

**Listed Buildings**

Buildings that are “listed” as being of architectural or historic importance are subject to special controls on all works affecting their fabric, character or appearance which are not instances of maintenance and repair or like for like replacements. If you are uncertain, please check with Development Planning and Regeneration at Orkney Islands Council to find out whether or not your property is listed before you undertake any work. You can also refer to maps within the Orkney Islands Council website: [www.orkney.gov.uk](http://www.orkney.gov.uk) and search under Stromness THI.

**Design guidance and eligibility criteria**

A full list of works eligible for grant funding can be viewed on the Stromness THI web pages within the Orkney Islands Council website: [www.orkney.gov.uk](http://www.orkney.gov.uk) and search under Stromness THI.

**Outline specification and eligibility criteria for grant aided repairs**

This guidance covers the principal areas of work which are grant eligible. This is not intended to be a detailed specification but is meant to indicate the general standards and criteria which apply. It is neither exhaustive nor exclusive and proposals should be discussed with the Stromness THI project team before any application is lodged. Applicants for grant will need to seek professional advice and must submit full working specifications before consideration will be given to making an offer of grant assistance.

All work must be undertaken with respect for the character and integrity of the building or structure, and of the area within which it lies, in accordance with the relevant national and local conservation policies and following published guidance and advice issued or endorsed by Historic Scotland in accordance with the Advisory Standards of Repair which can be found at [http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk).

Applicants must also ensure that all necessary consents, such as Listed Building Consent, Planning Permission or Building Warrant have been obtained. Grants will not be awarded until all necessary consents have been formally granted and all planning conditions have been discharged to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority. A check list is available in the application form which can be found within the Orkney Islands Council website: [www.orkney.gov.uk](http://www.orkney.gov.uk) and search under Stromness THI.
Grant will not be paid for work that, in the reasonable opinion of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Orkney Islands Council or Historic Scotland (HS) does not meet generally accepted standards of quality in materials or workmanship appropriate to the circumstances, whether in conservation work or new construction.

Roofs
Slate remains the dominant roofing material throughout the conservation area. The island location of Stromness has resulted in Welsh, Scottish and Norwegian slates being widely used in addition to the use of local Orkney and Caithness stone “slates”. This historic pattern has led to great variation in the texture, thickness and colour of slates in a relatively confined geographic area. Furthermore, some roofs have a differentiation in slate size across the plane of the roof which should be retained.

Roofs should continue to be slated using natural materials and encouragement will be given to returning both asbestos cement and concrete covered roofs to slate.

Ridges, skews and chimney heads
Historic fireclay ridge tiles should be retained where possible or replaced on a like for like basis where the condition of a tile necessitates its removal. Skews are an important feature of Orkney buildings and, where skews have been removed and evidence can be found for the correct detailing, replacement stone skews will be eligible for grant.

Chimney heads and chimney cans are likewise an important feature of the Stromness roofscape. Missing chimney heads and cans should be replaced to match the local traditional style.

Dormers and rooflights
Large modern skylights and roof windows can be intrusive and may detract from the character of the conservation area. New dormers may be permitted where they are necessary to support the proper and viable future use of a building and where their design is based on good examples of traditional dormers appropriate to the age and style of the building on to which they are to be placed.

New dormers, skylights and rooflights are not normally grant eligible. However, the repair of any existing traditional dormers or rooflights, and the reconstruction of modern box dormers to a more appropriate traditional design, may qualify for grant.

Traditional iron rooflights should be retained where they presently exist. New rooflights will only be permitted where they are of an appropriate design based on traditional proportions and materials.

Rainwater goods
It is important that rain water from roofs and upper surfaces of buildings is effectively collected and disposed of in an appropriate manner. Rhones and fall pipes must be fully serviceable and free from leaks. Basic repairs, at the time roof works are undertaken, should include cleaning, painting and renewing jointing putty and gutter bolts.

Traditional rhones and down-pipes, often in cast iron, are important to the character of individual buildings. Many are plain½-round, though some buildings have decorative profiled rhones. Modern PVC replacement rainwater goods are inappropriate and detract from the character of the building.

Repairs or replacements should normally be undertaken using cast-iron rhones and fall pipes. Where valley or parapet gutters exist these should be appropriately repaired, usually with lead sheet using proprietary expansion joints. Ogee and other profiled rhones, decorative brackets and other details should be retained.

Repair and replacement of existing rhones and pipes are usually grant eligible providing the replacement profiles match the existing where original. Alternatively, the local context should be
used to determine the nature of what will be most appropriate. Cast iron and lead hoppers should be retained and plastic insertions will not be accepted. Cast and painted aluminium guttering is acceptable for grant funding but extruded aluminium guttering is unacceptable for grant aided repair work.

Service pipes (such as soil, waste and vents, extractors, utility cables etc) on the external walls of old buildings can be unsightly. Where possible these pipes should be re-routed internally or replaced with cast iron.

**Windows and doors**
The replacement of traditional or original windows and doors will not be supported where it is possible to repair what is presently in situ.

Traditional window patterns based upon local historic evidence are fundamental to the character and appearance of individual buildings and the wider conservation area. Where sash and case windows were not originally installed, the opening is unlikely to have been formed to accommodate the sash case and weights and care should be taken in choosing an appropriate replacement window. Many of the larger paneled windows in Stromness retain evidence of where astragals have been removed from sashes. Where such evidence exists, repairs and replacements may be acceptable.

The value of historic glass, which has a rippled appearance and a high sparkle, is occasionally overlooked during restoration works. This special reflective quality adds to the character of the streetscape. If a window, or individual sashes, must be replaced by virtue of their condition then any existing older glass should, wherever possible, be utilised in the replacement window.

Fitting double glazing in traditional sash and case windows often results in over-large astragals which are detrimental to the character and appearance of the window and only systems that use a fine integral astragal and wet putty fixing are acceptable for grant funding. The repair or replacement of internal timber shutters or secondary glazing will be encouraged where a greater degree of insulation is required and original windows and features are effectively retained.

Traditional doors, particularly on principal elevations, were often four or six-panelled though more elaborate examples do still exist. Traditional doors should always be retained or reinstated wherever possible. Doors, to pends and industrial buildings are likely to have been vertically boarded and this should be emulated. Replacement doors must have regard to the age and style of the host building. Modern “off-the-shelf” joinery is unlikely to effectively emulate the traditional style particular to Stromness and are therefore unacceptable for grant funding.

Before repair work commences a detailed inspection should be made of all windows and doors. This will serve to ensure that, where possible, historic joinery is retained in good working order and is not replaced.

All new joinery work should normally be agreed by drawn details, showing profiles and dimensions etc. Alternatively samples of astragals and other mouldings can be prepared and submitted for approval. Joinery must be painted, and not stained, in accordance with the Orkney Islands Council conservation colour palette.

Existing traditional ironmongery should be retained and reused. Where none exists, replacements should be chosen to match that which would originally have been used.

**Pointing**
The majority of early buildings in Stromness are built with clay mortars and are finished with a lime point or harl. The effect on the appearance and character of pointing on a building can be significant. Wholesale re-pointing should not be undertaken unless absolutely necessary, only
joints where older mortar has failed and can easily be raked out should be re-pointed. Details of proposed re-pointing and mortar mixes must be accurately specified and agreed before work commences.

At all times, the strength of the mortar should respect the strength of the stone or brickwork to avoid causing damage to the fabric of the building. Mortar used on historic structures is normally based on lime, sharp course sand, fine sand and beach shell. Aggregates used in re-pointing should match existing mortar aggregates for texture and colour where patch repairs are being undertaken.

Joints should be raked out as appropriate, by hand; tools such as pointing irons, quirks and plugging chisels must be carefully chosen to suit the work.

New pointing should be finished in the appropriate manner for the stone face being pointed, in most cases this will be flush, but may be polished or smeared over weathered areas of stone where lime rendering, harling or washing is appropriate.

Pinning stones are a major element in rubble walling; they not only reduce the amount of mortar showing, they are an integral part of the structure and must be reinserted in accordance with best practice for traditional masonry repairs. Special techniques are required for fine ashlar work and further advice can be offered for such specialist work.

Details of the existing joint treatment should be noted and recorded before work starts. Grants may be subject to conditions requiring the approval of a sample area of pointing before the main work commences.

**Harling or rendering**

In general, traditional stone walls should not be covered in hard, dense or waterproof coatings. These will trap water in the body of the wall causing damp penetration problems and the porous nature of much of the building stone in Stromness would suffer as a result of such a finish.

Harling or flat coatings should be based on a lime mix. Where inappropriate harls or renders exist, consideration should be given to the removal of the coating, particularly where a dense cement surface has been applied to a clay mortar and porous stone wall.

Harls or renders should only be applied where they exist, where there is evidence of original applications as a traditional finish or where it is demonstrated that it is required as a sacrificial layer for the preservation of the building.

Lime mortar mixes should always be specified and agreed before work starts. The use of traditional mortars using hydraulic limes or well cured lime putty will be encouraged where appropriate. Grants may be subject to conditions requiring the approval of a sample area of harling/rendering before the main work starts. Harl mixtures comprise a lime, sand and aggregate mix and should be lime washed as opposed to painted.

Some existing renders may comprise a sand and early cement mix, as is widely the case with shop fronts in Stromness and these were in many occasions painted. Lime wash was a more common finish before the turn of the 20th century, but requires regular maintenance and will fail if the surface upon which it is being applied is not sufficiently porous to accommodate it.

**Specialist stone repairs**

Many of Stromness’ buildings are of durable Orkney stone and little maintenance or repair work will normally be required to the stone itself, earlier buildings are of less dressed stone, and there is some evidence that these would have been either pointed for lime rendering and lime washing. Late Nineteenth century buildings may have more dressed and regular coursed stonework, with feature sandstone detailing on the most high status buildings. Eroded stonework can sometimes
be dressed back to sound material and left. But if the erosion is likely to affect structural stability, or weathering of surrounding stones, then proper repairs using matching stone, bedded correctly should be undertaken.

Cement patching and plastic repairs are not grant eligible, occasionally resin repairs and pinning pieces of stone together will be appropriate and will qualify as legitimate conservation work.

Cleaning of stone should be avoided and will not be eligible for grant funding.

**Shop fronts**

Shop fronts have an important impact on the appearance of buildings and streets and represent the face of Stromness. The town has many shop fronts with original or near original detail. Some shop fronts have been altered inappropriately and some have been replaced completely using modern materials. Grants are intended to assist with appropriate repairs or, where necessary, the replacement of the entire shop front and signage with a more suitable alternative to a traditional pattern.

Architectural joinery works relating to the repair of shop fronts may be grant eligible. At all times, as much of the original fabric as is possible should be retained.

**Advertisements**

The size of signage should respect the form, proportions and appearance of the building on to which they are being placed. Signs should be traditional in appearance or innovative using traditional materials.

Applied lettering or individual lettering fixed directly onto the building may be considered in appropriate situations where the materials are not intrusive and the appearance of the building is not compromised. Box signs and box fascias, particularly internally illuminated, will not be supported and projecting signs will be individual and responsive to the nature of the business and should generally be based on traditional hanging signs.

**Painting buildings**

Painting of unpainted stone buildings will not be grant eligible.

Colours for painting cement shop fronts should adhere to the Orkney Islands Council conservation colour palette.

**External features**

Features such as walls, gates, railings, flag stone paving, and garden areas are often important and can contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Repair works to external features are grant eligible.

**Restoration of external architectural details**

As with shop fronts, restoration should only be undertaken where there is firm evidence of the original detail to be restored. Speculative reconstruction should be avoided and work should be confined to traditional techniques using original matching materials. The restoration of architectural details could include replacing lost carved details, door cases/surrounds and transom lights, decorative woodwork and minor details and decoration such as finials.

**Other Eligible Costs**

**Ancillary Items**

Some ancillary items may be counted as grant eligible where they are necessary for the proper execution of the work. The costs incurred for scaffolding and preliminary work such as stripping
roofs etc. are normally eligible where they are necessary to carry out the grant eligible work. Where there are non-eligible works being undertaken as part of the project, for example the renewal of services which also require the use of common items such as scaffolding, then these ancillary costs must be apportioned in the ratio of grant eligible work to the whole project cost.

**Bringing disused historic floorspace back into use**
This includes vacant space within partly used historic buildings, such as unused upper floors above shops. Such proposals must respect the character of the building internally as well as externally.

Since the objective is to bring historic floorspace back into use, all aspects of the physical work of conversion will be grant eligible, including necessary alterations both internal and external. Internal work will normally involve decoration, but furnishings, and services beyond the basic provision of heat, light and power are not eligible. Grants to bring floorspace back into use will only be offered if the building is in sound repair, or will be made so through concurrent repair work.

Proposals to bring vacant historic floor space back into use will involve individual assessment by a qualified independent professional.

Where the value of the property on completion of the works is significantly higher than originally forecast at the time of application, the Stromness THI may seek to recover all or part of the grant.

**Professional fees**
Elements of expenditure on fees for qualified professional advisers is eligible for grant provided they belong to one of the recognised institutions with an appropriate level of specialist experience.

**Value Added Tax (VAT)**
VAT may be included in the grant calculation. It must be shown separately and applicants will be asked to sign a declaration indicating whether or not they are VAT registered or otherwise able to recover VAT or if the work will be zero rated.

VAT may be payable on eligible repair costs and fees and, where it cannot be recovered, it is eligible for grant. Guidance on VAT and listed buildings is contained in VAT Notice 708 Buildings and Construction (February 2008) available from HM Revenue and Customs (www.hmrc.gov.uk).

**Conclusion**

The main purpose of the Stromness THI is to enhance the appearance and character of Stromness, which should also bring about an improvement in economic prosperity. The proper repair or restoration of buildings in public view or the upgrading of floor space to generate viable activity are key to the scheme.

Though the THI focuses on repair and restoration, the importance of regular maintenance should not be overlooked. A simple effective programme of inspection and repair can repay itself many times over.

It is suggested that the following principles be borne in mind when planning to carry out restoration works to a traditional building:

- Repair is preferable to restoration and only essential works should be carried out;
- Show respect for the past, do not try to hide or remove the signs of ageing;
- Use traditional workmanship and materials which match that existing; and
- Do not undertake work which is not reversible.
Main policies
The Council, when considering applications for development proposals which have a direct visual impact of the Conservation Area, will have regard to the Policies and design guidance in the Orkney Local Plan, Stromness Conservation Area Management Plan and National Guidance. Relevant Policy Guidance and Plans include:-

- Historic Scotland Standards of Repair
- Managing Change in the Historic Environment, Historic Scotland 2010
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997;
- Scottish Planning Policy, 2010
- Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP). July 2009
- The Orkney Local Plan (2004);
- The Stromness Conservation Area Appraisal (November 2008);

Orkney Islands Council administers a series of Conservation Grants on an annual basis. Residents within the Stromness conservation area are able to apply for the Council-funded Maintenance Grants and should contact Development Planning and Regeneration for more information (873535 ext. 2816).

Information
This leaflet contains summarised details of grants available from the Stromness THI. For further information on THI grants and conditions please contact the THI project team at the address below. Further information can also be found within the Orkney Islands Council website: www.orkney.gov.uk and search under THI

How to apply
Contact the THI project team at the address below who will arrange to visit your property to discuss the proposed work. Application forms, full guidance notes including the criteria used to assess a property and grant work proposals can also be found within the Orkney Islands Council website: www.orkney.gov.uk and search under THI

Stromness THI is supported by Orkney Islands Council, Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Scotland.

Work proposed under this initiative will be judged on an individual basis in accordance with Conservation Policy and Repair Guidelines. Grants are discretionary and will be referred to the Stromness THI Partnership in the event of any disagreement.

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