



A5.1 The Charlestown Limekilns

Project Overview:

Charlestown's limekilns complex is a Scheduled Monument, and thus of national importance. The limeworks were developed in the 18th century by Charles, 5th Earl of Elgin. With its impressive bank of 14 kilns, the structure was the largest of its kind in Scotland, and played a key role in the industrialisation process by supplying quicklime for agriculture and construction to both domestic and overseas markets.

The kilns had been neglected for some time, were fenced off to the public, and were becoming increasingly ruinous. Conservation work was managed by Historic Environment Scotland and began with the clearance of encroaching vegetation. During the clearance phase, HES was assisted by IFLI's Landscape Management Trainees, who were responsible for removing an area of scrub and small trees that had grown on top of the kilns. This enhanced the practical experience offered to trainees, whose on-site experience would not normally have included working on a Scheduled Monument. It also allowed them to contribute in a meaningful way to the management of the site, in this case by electing to build dead hedges around a number of the kiln shafts, thus providing a natural safety barrier that doubles as a shelter for wildlife.

Following clearance works, extensive conservation masonry works took place across the front face of the kilns. Selected lintels were replaced and new ironwork was installed in the tunnel entrances to the kilns. A brick chimney was re-pointed and secured to adjacent masonry. Wildlife was further provided for during the conservation works: bats will have continued access to the structure via specially commissioned brickwork, and nest boxes have been provided for swifts. These self-contained swift boxes will not damage the integrity of the limekilns structure, and have safeguarded a known nesting site for this important protected species.

HES staff ran site tours during the conservation works programme that fed into parallel IFLI projects and have successfully engaged with the local community by providing Insight Tours during the 2018 gala celebrations. An interpretation panel was installed at the site through IFLI's Telling the Inner Forth Story project. Extensive landscaping and new paths between the kilns and the road now showcase the extent of the structure and provide a welcome to the visitor.

This project and that at Kennetpans (A5.3) is somewhat unique to HES as it provided an opportunity for staff to work off the HES Estate on privately owned properties with a national importance.

Project lead and other organisations:

Lead: Historic Environment Scotland

Landowner: Broomhall Estate

Project Location:

Charlestown, Fife. NT 06422 83561

Project dates

Years 1-4: September 2014 to March 2018.

Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
Significant south front of limekilns exposed and consolidated	1	1	

What difference has this project made to the built, cultural and natural heritage of the Inner Forth?

Charlestown's limekilns complex is a Scheduled Monument and thus of national importance. It was one of the eighteenth century's biggest industrial centres in Scotland, producing quicklime for agricultural and building purposes.

While the conservation of the full industrial complex is a long-term project, the consolidation work to the south front has secured those elements at most risk. It has also raised the profile of the monument and provided a firm base for any future works.

What difference has this project made to people?

As well as consolidating a monument of national significance, this project has improved the main aspect of the kilns for residents and visitors. It has also facilitated closer access to the kilns: whereas the former fence served to keep people several metres back from the stonework, the new metal screens allow people to get nearer to the structure to view the tunnels and drawholes of the kilns.

Through events such as Insight Tours offered by HES people have gained increased knowledge about the history of the kilns, the development of Charlestown, and the building conservation works undertaken to protect the structure.

The Landscape Management Trainees who assisted with vegetation clearance were afforded the opportunity to work on a Scheduled Monument site, thus enhancing their overall practical work experience.

Useful Links

Project Page on IFLI website: <http://www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk/projects/conserving-restoring/charlestown-limekilns>

Canmore: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/49497/charlestown-harbour-road-limekilns>

Future Plans

HES will liaise with the agents of the Broomhall Estate to ensure an effective handover, with guidance and advice on maintaining the monument in its repaired condition over staged timescales provided in a Maintenance Plan. Additional legacy funding has been identified that is hoped to fund additional metal screens. As a scheduled monument, the site will continue to be monitored, and HES will continue to offer

Inner Forth Landscape Initiative End of Project Report

advice to the owner and their agent. It is also hoped to continue to build on connections made with the local community, and to assist in future events where possible.

Lessons Learned

The project has provided a useful learning opportunity for conservation staff and apprentices, providing experience of types of repair works not normally found within projects at HES properties in care.

The project has also provided an opportunity for different departments within HES to work together, and to work with external stakeholders, which will be of long-term benefit.

Photographic Evidence

Limekilns complex before project began



After consolidation works, February 2018



Insight Tour, February 2018



Bat access and swift box



Landscaping and interpretation board seen by delegates of IFLI Visions to Actions project site tour, August 2018



Photos courtesy of IFLI team. Further images can be seen within this presentation from August 2018:
www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk/files/Resources/8_DavidBorthwick_HES_Conservation_and_Consolidation_of_Built_Heritage.pdf

Funding Partners

**Funding raised by
The National Lottery**
and awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund



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