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PERTSHIRE TOURISM PARTNERSHIP MEETING 12/08/20

Historic Environment Scotland Update

Reopening our properties

Since the closure of our Properties in Care (PiCs) on 18 March 2020, owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, Historic Environment Scotland (HES) have been constantly monitoring the situation in line with Scottish Government guidance. We have been working hard to map out how we can safely begin to reopen our PiCs in the most appropriate manner, as restrictions are eased.

Developing a plan for reopening has been a very complex exercise and we have had to consider so many factors that it has not been feasible to reopen all 336 PiCs simultaneously so we have adopted a phased approach to opening our PiCs in line with the Scottish Government's phased route map.

We look after over 300 Properties in Care across Scotland and, as you can imagine, developing plans for reopening has been complex. We have taken account of ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, our legal duties to ensure the health and safety of our staff, volunteers, visitors and everyone who accesses our Properties in Care. We have also considered the circumstances of each local community in which our Properties in Care sit. These considerations have helped us arrive at a phased approach to reopening.

We have carefully considered how and where sites can be efficiently and safely reopened to support local economic recovery, provide spaces for personal health and wellbeing and support local and regional recovery. To do this, we have prepared detailed Operational Policy and Minimum Operating Standards based on Scottish Government guidance. This guidance is the benchmark for safe delivery of property re-opening and operational activity.

As part of our reopening and wider recovery work we want to engage with our partners, stakeholders and wider communities, enabling conversation about the issues and practicalities we are all encountering we would like to provide transparent, up-to-date information and reassurance and will reach out to existing and new partners, stakeholders and neighbours. Together we can identify opportunities within the historic environment, and support partnerships and local recovery plans.

Edinburgh Castle, Stirling Castle and Urquhart Castle successfully [reopened on 1st August](#). These were the first of HES's ticketed sites to reopen - tickets for Edinburgh Castle and Stirling Castle sold out, and 97% of tickets available for Urquhart Castle were sold. Here's a link to video which HES Filming & Photography Team produced ahead of the reopening of Stirling, Edinburgh and Urquhart Castle: <https://vimeo.com/443123464/719125857b>

There are 12 sites included within the next stage of the roll-out of reopening sites taking place throughout the country: Blackness Castle is scheduled to reopening on Monday 17 August, followed by Inchcolm Abbey, Huntly Castle and Melrose Abbey on Wednesday 19 August, and

Elgin Cathedral and Caerlaverock Castle on Friday 21 August. Tickets for these sites are on sale as of today (Monday 10 August). Doune Castle, Dunstaffnage Castle and Linlithgow Palace will then reopen the following week on Wednesday 26 August, followed by Skara Brae, Tantallon Castle and Glasgow Cathedral on Friday 28 August.

We have elected to open on weekdays, as we would expect to receive less visitors then. This will enable our staff to review the measures that have been implemented to manage the risks associated with COVID-19 and implement any changes required as soon as possible (and before the weekend, when we usually receive more visitors are at our sites).

HES is on track to reopen a further 10 ticketed sites in September, and this will be assessed in line with Scottish Government guidance.

New safety measures have been put in place on site, with cash payments no longer being accepted for the foreseeable future, and visitors being asked to use contactless payment where possible. One-way systems will be in place in some locations, and some indoor areas may be closed, such as small enclosed spaces where physical distancing is not possible. Visitors can enjoy access to outdoor spaces including historic courtyards, as well as some indoor areas which will be capacity limited.

If you would like to find out more about the other sites across the country that we are reopening, click on this link to our new visitor facing webpage (which will be continually updated as we identify sites for opening and develop more resources): <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/reopening>

All visitors must book tickets online in advance. Visitors (including members and holders of ASVA passes, etc) should not travel to a site to gain entry without a booking already in place, as we can't currently accept walk up visitors. This is to manage visitor numbers and to spread visitor arrivals throughout the day. Where tickets for specific sites are not yet live, be assured that these will be added ahead of the opening date.

Visitors will be asked to wear face coverings when entering any retail shops, cafes and internal enclosed spaces at sites, in line with Scottish Government guidance.

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