

## REPORT TO MARR AREA COMMITTEE -TUESDAY 14 JUNE 2016

### TULLICH KIRK AND SYMBOL STONES

#### 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to comment on relocating the Tullich Symbol Stones to Ballater Royal Station and make recommendations to the Infrastructure Services Committee.**

#### 2 Background/Discussion

- 2.1 Tullich Kirk and symbol stones located there are of national importance as an early Christian ecclesiastical site. This is acknowledged by the site being a Scheduled Monument with **Appendix 1** reproducing the Scheduling Description. Historically the stones were located in a wire enclosure on the north elevation which was not particularly secure and exposed to the elements.
- 2.2 A project to restore Tullich Kirk and create a purpose built shelter for the Tullich Symbol Stones has been an ambition for the Council for several years. Planning permission was obtained in October 2012 from the Cairngorm National Park Authority for a shelter to be located in the new cemetery extension. A planning condition was that works were to commence within 3 years but due to delays in the purchasing of the land permission has now lapsed.
- 2.3 In anticipation of the cemetery extension being completed on time the symbol stones were removed from Tullich and sent for specialist stone conservation in Edinburgh. They are currently in secure store in Mintlaw but will require some cleaning before being displayed again as damp storage conditions has encouraged biological growth.
- 2.4 Based on this experience at Mintlaw, of damp encouraging biological growth, professional advice is that the open design of the shelter is considered not fit for purpose. This is compounded by the discovery of two additional stones as part of the cemetery extension ground works which were not accommodated into the design for the shelter.
- 2.5 Following surveys of the Kirk walls in 2013/14, under the Historic Assets Management Project, serious structural instability of the original mortar was revealed requiring emergency stabilisation of the north elevation of the Kirk. Significant bulges were found in this elevation along with the partial collapse of the voussoirs in the original arch.
- 2.6 This temporary bracing undertaken in 2014 required Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) which was given for five years. Works are ongoing to devise a permanent solution. Council officers are in frequent contact with HES over the temporary stabilisation works at Tullich and officers have applied for an additional SMC to dig test pits at around the foundations to see if engineers

can identify the cause of the bulges and thus devise a plan of action to secure the future of the kirk.

- 2.7 The rebuilding of the Royal Station in Ballater with a public exhibition space has presented the possibility of relocating the symbol stones from Tullich to Ballater. If moved to Ballater a location within the Royal Station would provide a dry and secure site which could be lit to show the stones to their best advantage. It is also thought that more people would see the stones. By locating the stones indoors the need for recurrent cleaning would be negated.
- 2.8 If a decision is made to move the stones to Ballater it would be on the basis that:
- 2.8.1 All stones move as their importance is as a collection.
  - 2.8.2 Access to the collection would be free.
- 2.9 Initial consultations in the community at events in October 2015 and April 2016 exploring the possibility of relocating the stones to the Royal Station received, on balance, a positive response. Any works to the stones will require Scheduled Monument Consent from Historic Environment Scotland (HES).

<b>Reasons for moving the stones to Ballater</b>	<b>Reasons for the stones staying at Tullich</b>
More people would see the stones	They “belong” to Tullich
Current climate and pollution causes more biological growth thus requiring more cleaning which is detrimental to the stones	They have been outdoors for over 1000 years- why move them indoors now?
They would be clean and well lit	
Deeside Way provides easy route between station and Tullich	Deeside Way provides easy route between station and Tullich
Possibility of making replica stones to have at Tullich or along the Deeside Way.	Could locate replica stones in the Royal Station
They would be more secure	

- 2.10 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this Report and their comments have been incorporated.

### **3 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications**

- 3.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because the recommended actions will not have an impact on people with protected characteristics.
- 3.2 Staff resources for the project will come from the Environment and Specialist Services Teams in Planning and Building Standards.
- 3.3 The cost of relocating the symbol stones to the Royal Station in Ballater will come from the HAMP budget.

**Stephen Archer**  
**Director of Infrastructure Services**

Report prepared by: Marsaili Aspinall (Environment Planner)  
31 May 2016

## Appendix 1

<b>Historic Environment Scotland Scheduled Monument Description</b>
---

### **Tullich, church, burial ground and symbol stones Reference: SM86**

The monument consists of the remains of the medieval church and burial enclosure of Tullich, which is thought to overlie the archaeological remains of an earlier chapel, traditionally supposed to have been built by St Nathalan in the 7th century. Also included in the scheduling is a Class 1 Pictish symbol stone, a large font-stone and a collection of cross-incised markers. St Nathalan's relics were preserved at Tullich until the Reformation. In the 13th century the lands of Tullich and the church were given to the Knights Templars; they later passed to the Hospitallers. The rectangular-plan church is constructed in granite rubble and has recently been re-pointed. Its dimensions are 24.3m E-W by 8.9m N-S, over walls 1m thick. The walls are intact apart from a large gap in the N wall and in the E gable adjoining the N wall. The church was divided into three burial enclosures after its replacement in 1798. The E gable is intact but the W one has been reduced and capped. The S elevation contains 2 doorways, one at each end, and 4 windows, all of which are chamfered, square-headed and grooved for glazing. The doorway near the W end of the N wall is blocked, but has a pointed arch and early 15th-century mouldings, including a hoodmould with much-weathered sculptured dripstones. In this doorway, enclosed by padlocked metal railings, is a Pictish symbol stone with a double disc and Z-rod, elephant and mirror. This stone is thought to be of 7th-century date. There is also a large font-stone of pink granite which used to stand in the W end of the kirk. Also gathered here are three large (c.1.5m high) cross incised stones and twelve smaller cross-incised markers and three architectural fragments. A modern graveyard wall overlies the original burial enclosure wall, traces of which can be seen beneath the new wall along its S arc. The N portion of the original enclosure is obscured by a later cemetery extension. The dimensions of the old walled circular burial ground are 51m N-S, by 55m E-W; the visible portion of the enclosure wall extends 2m from the modern wall and is 0.6m high. The area to be scheduled is roughly circular, extending 6m from the old cemetery wall, measuring a maximum of 67m E-W by 63m N-S, excluding the path which cuts the S arc of the burial ground, as shown in red on the accompanying map.

#### Statement of National Importance

The monument is of national importance as an ecclesiastical building which provides above ground architectural evidence from the early fifteenth century. In addition it occupies the site of an earlier chapel and burial ground which have the potential to provide evidence, through excavation, that may clarify the location, ground plan and architectural development and contribute to our understanding of the diffusion of the early celtic church, monastic settlement and material culture in Scotland from the seventh century.