

Delegated or Committee Planning Application Report and Report of handling as required by Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2008 relative to applications for Planning Permission or Planning Permission in Principle

Reference No: 14/01018/PP

Planning Hierarchy: Local Development

Applicant: Isle of Luing Community Trust

Proposal: Variation of Condition 9 of Planning Permission 10/1059/PP – Change from West Highland Slate to SSQ Matacoua Slate

Site Address: The Atlantic Islands Centre, Cullipool, Isle of Luing

DECISION ROUTE

Local Government Scotland Act 1973

(A) THE APPLICATION

Development Requiring Express Planning Permission

- Variation of Condition 9 of Planning Permission 10/01059/PP – Change from West Highland slate to SSQ Matacoua slate
-

(B) RECOMMENDATION:

Having due regard to the Development Plan and all other material considerations, it is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions and reasons appended to this report.

(C) HISTORY:

10/01059/PP

Erection of building incorporating museum, licensed cafe, exhibition/function room and offices – Granted: 10/02/11

12/00532/NMA

Non material amendment to planning permission 10/01059/PP (Erection of building incorporating museum, licensed cafe, exhibition/function room and offices) - reduction in size of building – Granted: 13/03/12

13/02744/NMA

Non Material Amendment for adjustment of building siting, deletion of porch, amendment to plant room position, omission of viewing deck and changes to fenestration relative to planning permission 10/01059/PP – Granted: 19/12/13

(D) CONSULTATIONS:

Luing Community Council

Letter dated 10/06/14 not giving an opinion on the proposed development but setting out the views of residents, both for and against the proposal.

Conservation Officer

E-mail dated 05/08/14 confirming the approach to use new slates is acceptable but that the slate proposed is too regular in appearance and an alternative should be sought with details of alternatives given. Also advising that diminishing course work should be sought to the roof finish to ensure the new development integrates into its surroundings.

(E) PUBLICITY:

The proposal has been advertised in terms of a development affecting the setting of a Conservation Area, closing date 12/06/14 with the associated site notice closing date 05/06/14.

(F) REPRESENTATIONS:

32 representations have been received regarding the proposed development. 17 objections and 15 support

OBJECTION

Mr George Pearson, 17 Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (20/05/14)
Ms Pamela Baker, 3 Fladda, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UA (25/05/14)
Mr Ian Hitchins, Breadalbane Cottage, Toberonochy, Isle of Luing, PA34 4TY (26/05/14)
C J Hughes, Ferry House, South Cuan, Oban, PA34 4TU (02/06/14)
Mrs Anne Walton, 9 Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (09/06/14)
Mr Barry Wilson, Kinkell, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (10/06/14)
Mr Peter Lamont, Glenburn House, Toberonochy, Isle of Luing, PA34 4TY (11/06/14)
Ms Susan Cook, 27 Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (11/06/14)
Ms Linda Power, 52 Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (12/06/14)
Mr Andrew Wilson, 52 Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (11/06/14)
Mrs Julia Galbraith, 7 Toberonochy, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UE (12/06/14)
Mr Ian Law, Kinloch Cottage, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (12/06/14)
Mrs Jane Law, Kinloch Cottage, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (12/06/14)
Ms Edna Whyte, Gallery House, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4TX (11/06/14)
Mr Leonard V McGeoch, Cluain Siar, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4TX (13/06/14)
Mr Nicholas Bielby, Frizingley Hall, Frizingley Road, Bradford, BD9 4LD (06/08/14)
Ms Sheila Bielby, Frizingley Hall, Frizingley Road, Bradford, BD9 4LD (06/08/14)

(i) Summary of issues raised

- The proposed building is to be a heritage centre focusing on the history of the island which is world famous for its slate quarrying. It would be wholly inappropriate and hypocritical to have anything other than locally sourced slate on the roof.

Comment: The applicant recognises that the slate heritage of the island is an important aspect of the Atlantic Islands Centre and both the building and interpretive material on display will celebrate the local slate quarrying industry. It is indicated that the building will incorporate the reclaimed slate from the walls of the original building and Luing slate in the form of paving slabs, gravel and extensively in the hard landscaping around the building and car parking areas. It is considered in this instance, given the quantities required and the finite resource of West Highland slate, an alternative new slate would be acceptable for the building. However, the slate subject of the application is not considered appropriate, and therefore a condition is recommended with the requirement that samples from alternative sources are submitted for the further approval of the Planning Service. These could include other indigenous sources in the UK, such as Welsh or Cumbrian slate, rather than the Spanish slate proposed, as these would in size, texture and appearance more closely relate to West Highland slate.

- The reasons given for not using West Highland slate are all excuses, there is no shortage of supply and there is no shortage of evidence as to the longevity of reclaimed slate.

Comment: It is considered that the applicant has sufficiently demonstrated the reasons for the use of an alternative slate to one of West Highland origin.

- The building will have a large and prominent roof surface in close proximity to Cullipool House and in clear view of visitors approaching the conservation village by road. Any difference in slate type will be obvious.

Comment: It is considered that through a variation of the wording of the condition a sympathetic alternative to a West Highland slate can be secured the appearance of which would not be materially detrimental to the character and appearance of this part of the Cullipool Conservation Area.

- The granting of permission for this change would set a precedent which would make it difficult to justify refusing similar requests for other, older buildings being re-roofed.

Comment: Favourable consideration of the use of an alternative slate on this new, purpose built building would not set a precedent for the use of alternative slate on existing, older buildings, likely to require slate in smaller quantities.

- Galvanised corrugated iron would be a preferable alternative material to the slate proposed.

Comment: There is an intention to use natural slate and only the provenance and exact type of slate is at issue, so there is no requirement to consider the use of alternative types of roofing materials.

- The guidance from Historic Scotland is advisory rather than mandatory.

Comment: This is noted.

- As a development in the Conservation Area it is prudent that the requirement to use local materials is enforced.

Comment: Whilst it is considered important that the general form of any new development should reflect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, it is not considered that there would be sufficient justification in this case to insist on the use of a slate of West Highland origin provided the slate proposed is largely similar in appearance.

- It is believed that it was a condition by funders that the building be finished in local materials.

Comment: This is not a material consideration in the determination of this planning application.

- If permission is to be granted, the slate should be applied in diminishing courses.

Comment: This is noted and is recommended to be secured by way of condition.

SUPPORT

Mr Alastair Fleming, 23 Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (24/05/14)
 Ms Zoe Fleming, 23 Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (24/05/14)
 Mrs Fiona Cruickshanks, Kiloran Cottage, Cullipool, Isle of Luing (26/05/14)
 Mrs Denise Cowley, 39 Toberonochy, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UE (28/05/14)
 Mr John Laird, 10 Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (04/06/14)
 Mr Peter Hooper, The Swallows, South Cuan, Isle of Luing, PA34 4TU (29/05/14)
 Mrs Birgit Whitmore, 22 Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (11/06/14)
 Mr Norman Bissell, 51 Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (11/06/14)
 Mrs Jane MacLachlan, Jubilee Cottage, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4TX (13/06/14)
 Miss Rachel Cruickshanks, Kiloran Cottage, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (13/06/14)
 Mr Iain Cruickshanks, Kiloran Cottage, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (13/06/14)
 Miss Hazel Cruickshanks, Kiloran Cottage, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (13/06/14)
 Miss Megan Cruickshanks, Kiloran Cottage, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (12/06/14)
 Mrs Kirsty MacLachlan, Dunchannel, Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4TX (12/06/14)
 Mr Colin Brown, 38 Cullipool, Isle of Luing, PA34 4UB (12/06/14)

(ii) Summary of issues raised

- It is disappointing that sufficient quantity and quality of West Highland slate cannot be sourced for the building, but in their absence the slate proposed is a suitable alternative.
- The slate proposed has very similar characteristics to traditional slate and once weathered will be difficult to differentiate from the local material.
- Many roofs within the Conservation Area are finished in the slate proposed in this application.
- Applaud Historic Scotland's guidance which recommends against the use of West Highland slate for new buildings.

- The proposed slate provides a 75 year guarantee.
- The proposed slate has been used on listed and historic buildings throughout Scotland.
- We do not need to pretend that we have a plentiful supply of West coast slate, but we must move forward, acting responsibly and using common sense in our decision to use the resources recommended to us in a new build of this kind.
- It is important to reserve the dwindling stock of second hand West Highland slate for essential repairs to listed buildings in the conservation villages.

These comments are noted.

The above represents a summary of the issues raised. Full details of the letters of representation are available on the Council's Public Access System by clicking on the following link <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/content/planning/publicaccess>.

(G) SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Has the application been the subject of:

- | | | |
|-------|--|-----|
| (i) | Environmental Statement: | No |
| (ii) | An appropriate assessment under the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994: | No |
| (iii) | A design or design/access statement: | No |
| (iv) | A report on the impact of the proposed development e.g. retail impact, transport impact, noise impact, flood risk, drainage impact etc: | Yes |

There have been two general supporting statements and a letter from a local developer regarding the availability of West Highland slates and the suitability of the proposed Spanish slate. These are all detailed in Appendix B of this report.

(H) PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

Is a Section 75 agreement required: No

(I) Has a Direction been issued by Scottish Ministers in terms of Regulation 30, 31 or 32: No

(J) Section 25 of the Act; Development Plan and any other material considerations over and above those listed above which have been taken into account in the assessment of the application

- (i) List of all Development Plan Policy considerations taken into account in assessment of the application.**

'Argyll and Bute Structure Plan' 2002

STRAT DC 1 – Development within the Settlements
STRAT DC 8 – Landscape and Development Control
STRAT DC 9 – Historic Environment and Development Control
STRAT SI 1 – Sustainable Development

'Argyll and Bute Local Plan' 2009

LP ENV 1 – Impact on the General Environment
LP ENV 13a – Development Impact on Listed Buildings
LP ENV 14 – Conservation Areas and Special Built Environment Areas
LP ENV 19 – Development Setting, Layout and Design
LP COM 1 – Community Facility Development
Appendix A – Sustainable Siting and Design Principles

- (ii) **List of all other material planning considerations taken into account in the assessment of the application, having due regard to Annex A of Circular 4/2009.**

Argyll & Bute Sustainable Design Guidance (2006)
Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), 2014
Managing Change in the Historic Environment, Roofs, 2010
Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP) 2011

(K)	Is the proposal a Schedule 2 Development not requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment:	No
(L)	Has the application been the subject of statutory pre-application consultation (PAC):	No
(M)	Has a sustainability check list been submitted:	No
(N)	Does the Council have an interest in the site:	No
(O)	Requirement for a hearing:	No

In deciding whether to exercise the Council's discretion to allow respondents to appear at a discretionary hearing, the following are of significance:

- How up to date the Development Plan is, the relevance of the policies to the proposed development and whether the representations are on development plan policy grounds which have recently been considered through the development plan process.
- The degree of local interest and controversy on material considerations together with the relative size of community affected set against the relative number of representations, and their provenance.

The application has been the subject of 32 representations, 17 objections and 15 expressions of support, which is confirmation of local interest in the application.

However, this application is merely seeking to amend the detail of a condition imposed on the grant of a previous planning permission approved by Members at a Local Hearing. Given that the principle of development on the site has been established by the previous permission, it is not considered that a hearing would add value to the process of determining the current application. The application does not itself raise any complex or technical issues and the objections received are very detailed and provide sufficient information to enable a thorough and informed assessment to be undertaken.

It is therefore recommended that Members do not hold a hearing prior to the application being determined.

(P) Assessment and summary of determining issues and material considerations

Planning permission 10/01059/PP was granted in February 2011 for erection of a building incorporating a museum, licensed cafe, exhibition/function room and offices within the village of Cullipool on Luing. Two non-material amendments have since been granted, which show the building reduced in size and its siting adjusted along with other minor changes.

Condition 9 of the original permission required that the roof of the building be finished in a slate which should be of West Highland origin. This application seeks to vary that condition and use a specific Spanish slate which has been chosen as being of similar proportion, thickness and quality to that of traditional Scottish slate.

In terms of the adopted 'Argyll and Bute Local Plan 2009' Policy LP ENV 14, Development in Conservation Areas and Special Built Environment Areas, states that there is a presumption against development that does not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of an existing or proposed Conservation Area or its setting.

The main issue in respect of the proposal is whether the proposed slate is a suitable alternative to one of West Highland origin, and its impact on character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The proposal has elicited 32 representations, 17 objections and 15 expressions of support the vast majority of which are from residents of the Island.

(Q) Is the proposal consistent with the Development Plan: Yes if conditioned as recommended.

(R) Reasons why planning permission should be granted

Whilst it is considered important that any new development should reflect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, it is not considered that there would be sufficient justification in this case to insist on the use of a slate of West Highland origin provided the slate proposed is largely similar in appearance.

In this case whilst the proposed slate may match the size, thickness and quality of the traditional Scottish slate, it is considered it is too regular in appearance giving the overall effect of a roof with a different character to that of traditional Scottish slate. Accordingly whilst it is reasonable to consider new slate for the building given the quantities required and the difficulties of sourcing second-hand slate, it is considered appropriate that samples from alternative sources should be submitted for the further approval of the Planning Service. These could include other indigenous sources in the UK, such as

Welsh or Cumbrian slate, rather than the Spanish slate proposed, as these would in size, texture and appearance more closely relate to West Highland slate.

On this basis it is considered acceptable to vary the wording of the existing planning condition to remove the requirement for a slate of West Highland origin, provided samples from alternatives sources are submitted for further approval.

It is not considered that this approach would be materially detrimental to the character and appearance of this part of the Cullipool Conservation Area and would not represent a conflict with the provisions of the Development Plan.

(S) Reasoned justification for a departure to the provisions of the Development Plan

N/A

(T) Need for notification to Scottish Ministers or Historic Scotland: No

Author of Report: Fiona Scott **Date:** 05/08/14

Reviewing Officer: Angus Gilmour **Date:** 07/08/14

Angus Gilmour
Head of Planning and Regulatory Services

CONDITIONS AND REASONS RELATIVE TO APPLICATION REFERENCE 14/01018/PP

9. No roofing works shall commence on the building until a sample(s) of the proposed roofing slate to be used has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall be completed in accordance with the duly approved sample(s) which shall be applied to the roof in diminishing courses.

Reason: To ensure the use of a roofing material of local provenance to reinforce local distinctiveness in the interests of visual amenity and to safeguard the character and appearance of the conservation area.

NOTE TO APPLICANT

The planning application hereby approved only amends condition 9 of the original planning permission reference 10/01059/PP to the wording detailed above and it must be read in the context of the original permission. A full copy of the original planning conditions has been appended to this decision notice, and in all other respects permission 10/01059/PP remains unchanged.

1. That the development to which this permission relates must be begun within three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).

2. No development shall commence on site until the vehicular access at the junction with the public road has been upgraded in accordance with the Council's Road Engineers Drawing Number SD 08/004a, re-aligned to 90⁰ with visibility splays of 53.0m x 2.4m having been formed in each direction formed from the centre line of the access. Prior to work starting on site these visibility splays shall have been cleared of all obstructions above the level of the adjoining carriageway and shall be maintained free of obstruction thereafter to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.

The first 5 metres of the vehicular access serving the development from the junction with the public road shall be constructed with a bitmac surface and shall be formed to at least base course level prior to any work starting on the erection of the building which it is intended to serve with the final wearing surface of the access being applied prior to the first occupation of the building.

Reason: In the interests of road safety to ensure the proposed development is served by a safe means of vehicular access.

3. The proposed on-site vehicular parking and turning areas shall be formed in accordance with the approved plans and brought into use prior to the first occupation of the building and thereafter maintained in perpetuity.

Reason: To enable vehicles to park clear of the access road in the interests of road safety by maintaining unimpeded vehicular access over that road.

4. No development shall commence on site until a plan has been drawn up in consultation with the Council's Roads Engineer showing the provision of 1 passing place on the access to the development site and has been submitted to and has been approved in writing by the Planning Authority. Thereafter, the

passing place shall be formed in accordance with the duly approved plan and shall be brought into use prior to the first occupation of the building and thereafter maintained in perpetuity.

Reason: In the interests of road safety to ensure the proposed development is served by a safe means of vehicular access.

5. No development shall commence on site until details of the type and position of any extraction ventilation system to be installed, including details of the internal and external flues have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Planning Authority. No fans, vents or flues shall be installed other than in accordance with duly approved details.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance and to protect the amenity of nearby occupiers.

6. No development shall commence on site until full details, in plan form, of the proposed protective barrier have been submitted and agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity to ensure the proposal integrates well within its landscape setting.

7. No development shall commence on site until full details of a scheme for protecting the neighbouring residential properties from noise from the proposed development has been submitted for written approval by the Planning Authority in consultation with the Council's Public Protection Unit. Thereafter the duly approved scheme shall be implemented in full to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to protect the amenities of the area from noise disturbance.

8. No development shall commence on site until details of a scheme of boundary landscaping treatment has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The duly approved scheme shall be implemented concurrently with the construction of the building, with landscaping works being completed during the first planting season following the first occupation of the building. Any planting which fails to become established, which is removed, dies or becomes seriously diseased within ten year of planting shall be replaced in the subsequent planting season with numbers sizes and species equivalent to those originally required to be planted.

Reason: To ensure suitable integration of the development into the landscape.

- [9. Amended by Planning Permission 14/01018/PP]

10. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the details specified on the application form dated 21/06/10 and the approved drawing reference numbers:

Plan 1 of 6 (Drawing Number 06.39.01 A)
Plan 2 of 6 (Drawing Number 06.39.02 A)
Plan 3 of 6 (Drawing Number 06.39.03 A)
Plan 4 of 6 (Drawing Number 06.39.04 A)
Plan 5 of 6 (Drawing Number 06.39.05 A)
Plan 6 of 6 (Drawing Number 06.39.03)

unless the prior written approval of the planning authority is obtained for other materials/finishes/for an amendment to the approved details under Section 64 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).

Reason: For the purpose of clarity, to ensure that the development is implemented in accordance with the approved details.

APPENDIX A – RELATIVE TO APPLICATION NUMBER: 14/01018/PP

PLANNING LAND USE AND POLICY ASSESSMENT

A. Settlement Strategy

In terms of the adopted 'Argyll and Bute Local Plan', the site is identified as being within the Settlement Zone of Cullipool on the Island of Luing.

This designation stems from policy STRAT DC 1 of the approved 'Argyll and Bute Structure Plan' which states that within the 'minor settlements' encouragement is given to development which is compatible with an essentially rural settlement location on appropriate infill, rounding off, and redevelopment sites.

Policy LP COM 1 presumes in favour of new community facilities provided that they are of a form location and scale consistent with Policy STRAT DC 1 and subject to a series of other criteria. The proposal is consistent with the settlement strategy established by the local plan.

Policy LP ENV 14, Development in Conservation Areas and Special Built Environment Areas, states that there is a presumption against development that does not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of an existing or proposed Conservation Area or its setting.

The proposal has elicited 32 representations, 17 objections and 15 expressions of support the vast majority of which are from residents of the Island.

B. Location, Nature and Design of Proposed Development

Planning permission 10/01059/PP was granted in February 2011 for erection of a building incorporating a museum, licensed cafe, exhibition/function room and offices within the village of Cullipool on Luing. Two non-material amendments have since been granted which show the building reduced in size and its siting adjusted along with other minor changes.

Condition 9 of the original permission required that the roof of the building be finished in a slate which should be of West Highland origin. This application seeks to vary that condition and use a Spanish slate similar in proportion, thickness and quality to that of traditional Scottish slate.

The only issue for consideration is whether the proposed slate is a suitable alternative to one of West Highland origin and its impact on the Conservation Area.

In support of the application, there have been two general supporting statements and a letter from a local developer setting out the reasons for seeking to vary the condition to allow for the alternative slate. In summary, the statements set out the difficulties in obtaining a sufficient number of quality reclaimed slates to cover the roofs. 12000 slates are required for the building and the statement anticipates that due to the level of wastage between 24000 – 26000 slates will be required. The statement sets out the reasons why this is not a sustainable option as these slates should be retained for the ongoing repair of historic buildings and not for a new build development. The statements also consider that the reclaimed slate from the old engine shed will be utilised in the walls of the building and Luing slate will be incorporated into the development in the form of paving slabs, gravel and the hard landscaping. Full details of the supporting statements are detailed in Appendix B of this report.

The site is situated on the approach to the main village of Cullipool at the southern end of the main settlement. The site is bounded to the east by the original quarry pond and to the west by the un-adopted track which runs alongside the adjacent public road.

Policy LP ENV 14, Development in Conservation Areas and Special Built Environment Areas, states that there is a presumption against development that does not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of an existing or proposed Conservation Area or its setting.

Historic Scotland's Managing Change document recognises that Scottish slate is not currently in production and that second-hand supplies are limited. For repairs to historic buildings they advise that, where possible, existing slates should be re-dressed and reused. If it is necessary to specify new natural slate, regard should be given to finding the best modern equivalent in terms of colour, thickness, weight and texture.

The site forms part of the Cullipool Conservation Area but is situated on the periphery of the main part of the village and does not form part of the established pattern of development within the village. It is noted that there exists a wide range of slate in the immediate vicinity of the application site, the village and the wider Island.

Whilst it is considered important that the general form of any new development should reflect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, it is not considered that there would be sufficient justification in this case to insist on the use of a slate of West Highland origin, provided the slate proposed is largely similar in appearance.

In this instance, given this is a new building it is reasonable to consider the use of new slates given the quantities required, however, the appearance of the slate and how it is applied to the building will be critical to successful integration, given the amount of roofing work to be undertaken. In this case, whilst the proposed slate may match the size, thickness and quality of the traditional Scottish slate, it is considered that it is too regular in appearance and may not be the best solution for the building.

Accordingly, in this specific case it is proposed to vary the wording of the existing planning condition to remove the requirement for a slate of West Highland origin subject to samples from alternative sources being submitted for the further approval of the Planning Service. The applicant's agent has confirmed their agreement to this approach.

Advice from the Council's Conservation Officer indicates that slates from the Lake District or Welsh Quarries (Portmadoc) are potentially suitable alternatives and would give a far less uniform appearance than Spanish slate. Such alternatives are readily available. This approach is consistent with that taken elsewhere in Argyll and Scotland where alternative slates to West Highland have been used on buildings within Conservation Areas.

The alternative condition will also require that the slate is applied in diminishing courses in the traditional manner, to ensure the development is sensitively integrated into its surroundings.

On balance this approach is considered to be acceptable and would not be materially detrimental to the character and appearance of this part of the Cullipool Conservation Area and would not represent a conflict with the provisions of the Development Plan.

APPENDIX B – RELATIVE TO APPLICATION NUMBER: 14/01018/PP

Atlantic Island Centre – Supporting Statement

“History & Background

The last quarry to produce slate in the Atlantic closed in 1966, while the last commercial quarry at Ballachulish closed in 1955.

Several attempts have been made to re-open one or two of these quarries including the ‘Khartoum’ quarry at Ballachulish and indeed at Cullipool on Luing but for a number of reasons nothing has happened so far.

Following World War 1 it was perceived that slate was the roofing material of the past, the slums and the poor, while man-made tiles, such as the Rosemary Clay tiles were the materials of the future. This contributed to the downturn and eventual closure of the slate quarries.

The end result is that no new Scottish slate is available and there is a severe shortage of good quality, large second-hand slate. When demolition and restoration of Central Belt tenements was at its peak slates were set aside, but as this practice has all but ceased the availability of second-hand slates has declined. Further the quality of reclaimed slate is also often in question.

In Cullipool itself, the slates used on cottage roofs would have been at the lower end of the quality and size, scale with the best quality, large slates being sold.

It should also be noted that 90% of the natural slate used in Europe, now and historically, originates in Spain. Slates are quarried from rock that is 500 million years old and has a low water absorption index (0.4%) making it resistant to freezing and frost damage.

By the time a reclaimed slate has been re-dressed the size of slate available has decreased. Sufficient slates to repair an existing roof can often be found, but sourcing sufficient good quality, good sized slate to roof the entire AIC is less easy. In any event there are a considerable number of existing buildings with Scottish/West Highland slated roofs. In conservation terms, good practice suggests that the remaining reclaimed slates should be used to maintain existing historic buildings rather than squander them on new. The following is an extract from Historic Scotland Memorandum of Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, item 1.5.9: In view of the scarcity of the material, second-hand Scottish slate should not be used in new building work.

Second-hand slates do not carry a guarantee so any defects are not covered by a supplier. In any event most second-hand slates have been used for a minimum of 60 years, with many being in place for over 100 years.

Proposal

While it may seem incongruous to import a European slate to a Scottish slate island, we propose to use a Spanish slate that matches the size, thickness, quality and appearance of the traditional Scottish slate. In particular the Matacouta Ultra Heavy, a blue-black slate from the Matacouta quarry supplied to the SSQ Group, provides a good match to the Cullipool village slate. It has been tested in accordance with EN12326, carries a CE marking and carries a minimum 75 year guarantee.

This slate has been used on both listed and historic buildings across Scotland”.

Atlantic Island Centre – Additional Supporting Information

“The slate heritage of the Isle of Luing is an important aspect of the Atlantic Islands Centre and both the building and interpretive material on display will celebrate the local slate quarrying industry and the lives of the families involved.

Featured prominently in the entrance lobby of the new building will be an evocative image of the quarry workforce pictured outside the original Engine House in the early 1900s. The image will be accompanied by text explaining what the original building was used for and how the design of the new building has been inspired by it. It will also highlight the fact that the walls of the new building utilise the reclaimed slate from the walls of the original building. In addition, a number of original Luing roofing slates (approx. 300) signed by supporters and benefactors of the Isle of Luing Community Trust will be incorporated into a landscape feature adjacent to the building. Luing slate, in the form of both paving slabs and gravel, will also be used extensively in the hard landscaping around the building and car parking areas.

These are all sustainable use of reclaimed materials that enhance rather than detract from the historic environment of the island, Argyll or Scotland.

Within the building, the island heritage exhibitions will include pictures and text on the slate quarries and their importance to the island and its people for 200 years. The material for this is being co-ordinated by Luing History Group and will build on the information featured on the popular outdoor interpretative panels that they prepared as part of the Nadair project in 2008.

When complete, the Atlantic Islands Centre and its exhibitions will provide a fitting acknowledgement of a key feature of the island’s heritage.

Around 12000 slates will be required to cover the roof of the new building and given the wastage that results from utilising reclaimed slate, some 24000 – 36000 second hand slates would need to be sourced to provide adequate usable slates. While it would obviously be commendable to utilise Luing slates there is no single source for this quantity. In any event it is difficult to identify a Luing slate from any other Scottish/West Highland slate so there is no way of telling if a reclaimed slate was quarried on Luing. It could equally have been quarried in Ballachulish, Balvicar, Easdale, Islay, Jura, Aberfoyle etc. Furthermore if a sufficient quantity of consistent, good quality West Highland slate could be obtained, these slates would then not be available to roof a historic or listed building. In terms of both sustainability and conservation this is not good practice.

The statement goes on to quote from Historic Scotland’s Managing Change document concluding that “even existing buildings may require to make use of some new natural slates. Again, to ensure that the limited supply of existing reclaimed slates is not unnecessarily depleted, it is considered good practice to use new slate on new buildings supplied by a recognised, certified quarry to ensure quality and consistency.

Additionally, the IoLCT is under an obligation to the funders to maintain the building for at least 20 years. This will be achieved by ensuring that all materials used are suitable for the climate and exposure, meet current British & European Standards, and are generally fit for purpose. Second hand slate does not conform to any British or European standard and no contractor can guarantee its performance.

The proposed slate is guaranteed for 100 years and is particularly suited to the severe exposure of the west coast of Scotland. It comes from a single quarry ensuring that colour and quality is consistent. Its size, thickness and most importantly appearance,

including small flecks of iron pyrites, make it the best choice to compare with a West Highland Slate.

The publication, Managing Change in the Historic Environment Guidance Notes, also notes 'if new slate is needed to make up a shortfall, it should be laid in the same way...'

Diverse traditions of slate-laying, influenced by various materials and local conditions, are evident throughout the country. Some were laid in diminishing courses using regular width slates, some were laid in regular courses using random width slates; steep roofs on public buildings were roofed differently from small cottages in rural areas. Cost was a factor along with availability and local slating methods.

Using HS's guidance for historic and listed buildings, the AIC roofs will be laid in regular courses using regular width slates. The roofs in Cullipool village's cottages were roofed with left-over slates, generally small and similar in size as the large good quality slates were sold. Diminishing courses are not a particular feature of the area.

To protect our historic environment on Luing, in Argyll and throughout Scotland the sustainable, responsible choice must be to use new slates to roof the Atlantic Islands Centre”.

Statement on Availability of Reclaimed West Highland Slate by MacLeod Construction

“MacLeod Construction Ltd is Principal Contractor for the above project.

The Atlantic Islands Centre requires in the region of 12,000 slates to cover the 2 main roofs. If reclaimed West Highland slates were to be used we would, because of the level of wastage, require to source 24-36,000 reclaimed slates to cover the same area.

Reclaimed slates are supplied in crates of 1000, and it is currently not possible to obtain 36 crates from a single source. Even if this quantity was available, the slates within each crate would be of differing quality, colour, thickness and size, and will have originated from a variety of different quarries.

Each individual slate would require to be checked for quality, dressed, sized and holed before being installed on the roof.

While we have a stockpile of local slate in our stores, and can source small quantities from accredited suppliers, our company policy is to retain these for use on existing buildings where we require to match the existing.

We would be unable to offer any guarantees in relation to the life span of the reclaimed slates.

To provide a roof that looks like West Highland slates, is of high quality and has a guaranteed life span of 75-100 years, we would agree that the proposed slate is the best material for the building”.