



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA

Community and Stakeholder Update

Historic Environment Scotland – Arbroath Abbey Update (July 2025)

Welcome to the July Community and Stakeholder Update for Arbroath Abbey - we are delighted to share with you what's been happening in and around the Abbey over the last few months.



The dry summer has left a fingerprint of the past on the grass at the Abbey, a fantastic time to dial into your amateur detective and imagine what is under the grass. The dry weather has exposed faint shadows of underground masonry and architecture, parts of the site normally hidden under a mantle of green.

Key Updates

VISITOR ENGAGEMENT

We have welcomed 4,155 visitors between the beginning of April and the end of June which is 4% up on last year's numbers. Pictured below is Euan telling visitors about the importance of the Declaration of Arbroath.



Our Visitor Experience team are really interested in finding out where our visitors travel from and they have a map on which they record every new country - I am sure they would show you it to if you popped by. From the continent of South America, we have welcomed visitors from Brazil, Chile, Argentina & Uruguay already this season and I hope they also put a visit into Arbroath FC, founded in 1878 well before the first FIFA world cup final in 1930, where Uruguay were triumphant over Argentina. The above picture is from Arbroath FC when they used the Abbey as the backdrop for their kit launch last year.



In both Nov 2024 and again in June 25 this year, we participated in the Angus Outdoor Festival which is organised by the Angus Tourism Cooperative and partners.

We ran a guided outdoor photography workshop which was free to attend and was intended to encourage people of all abilities to pick up their camera or phone, and enjoy nature and the outdoor spaces, as well as realising the potential of our sites and bringing together the historic Abbey, its natural space and light. Fiona from our Visitor Experience team has experience as a photographer so she shared her knowledge with the attendees. Feedback from participants was very positive with the words *'Encouraging, enthusing and motivating'* used to describe their experience.

UPCOMING EVENT – 24 HR BIOBLITZ

Fiona from the Visitor Experience team is currently planning a 24hr Bioblitz for Arbroath Abbey and the Abbey Graveyard on 24 & 25 August. This is the first time that HES has organised an event like this which will consist of expert naturalists leading guided walks and organising surveys to discover, identify and record the biodiversity of our site. We are delighted to have the permission of Angus Council to include the graveyard, and the 2020+ festival group are allowing us to use the Scriptorium building as our HQ during the event.

Invited experts include individuals from the Dundee Naturalists Society and a member of NESBReC (North East Scotland Biological Records), and our own HES Ranger Service will be supporting the event along with a representative from our Climate Change Team (Sat only).

On the dates of the event participants will get into the site free and shown to the meeting hub whilst visitors to the Abbey (with tickets) will be able to enhance their visit by seeing what's going on and participating/chatting to our experts. I have attached our poster to this email, which I hope you can share across your available platforms.

CONSERVATION WORKS

Our District Architect and Works Team have been successful in getting agreement through the Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) process for our planned Conservation Works on the Abbot's House.



The first new cill which is made from St Bees sandstone has been cut by our stonemasons from the Arbroath depot and the work in progress can be seen in here. I think we will all agree, the stone looks magnificent and brings home the majesty of building such an Abbey all those centuries ago.

St Bees Sandstone is from Cumbria and was chosen as it is the best colour match of the sandstones that are available although

it's finer grained and more porous than the original stone. This should minimise risk of preferential weathering of the adjacent weathered/historic masonry.

This will soon be installed on the West face of the building once a mortar mix has been chosen from a set of samples. It is important to get the right mix of mortar to suit the requirements of the construction, this mortar will then be adopted for use for the project for consistency of application and appearance.

We have a further 9 lintols to replace in this area and there are also stabilisation works in the area of a crack that runs for a large proportion of the height of the wall. We will be installing helical bars which are used to insert into the mortar joints to prevent structural movement in the area of the crack and we will also be supporting some cracked lintols in the area with phosphor bronze bars, once more to prevent any excess movement. These works will be ongoing throughout the summer and we are also looking to find a solution for the main roof structure where there are challenges regarding the stock of stone slates.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SCAFFOLDING TOURS



When I wrote the last newsletter we took the opportunity to offer Scaffolding Tours to the community. After a couple of weeks we hadn't had much interest so, as it is important to us that local people get the chance to understand the work that is required/going on at the Abbey, the Courier supported us with an article which helped us to fill all the tours.

Our Works Manager (Jason) thoroughly enjoyed providing these tours as he is passionate about his trade and showing everyone the complex work involved in conserving an Historic Monument like Arbroath Abbey. Our hope is that we will put on tours again so that we can update on the work we are just about to start. Those who took advantage of these tours seemed to really enjoy them although it was disappointing that we had a few no

shows – on the flip side this gave some of our Visitor Experience Staff the opportunity to do the tours themselves!

An example of the great feedback received from Norman & Dorothy from the Scottish Castle Association:-

'We were quite blown away! Not by vertigo or windy weather, but by expertise and practical good sense imparted by Jason the Mason and his assistant Lewis.

We agreed it was quite the best presentation on architectural heritage we had experienced. It was informative, useful and relevant for anyone interested in preserving historic buildings. We not only could see the current state of the Abbot's House and the proposed repairs but

came away with a much better understanding of how it was constructed and the role of the Master Masons.'

OTHER ACTIVITIES

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Alice our Apprentice from the Angus Gardening Team put an entry into the Scottish Gardener's Forum Pallet and Planter Challenge at the Scone Palace Gardener's Fair recently.

Alice took inspiration from the Castle at Edzell and the 'Blue Door walk' in Edzell creating a display entitled 'A wander through Edzell'. She self-funded all materials and plants apart from the roses which will be used at the Castle once they dismantle the display. Lewis, one of our Arbroath stonemasons, kindly carved the Lindsay motto for it.

We were all delighted when she received a Gold Award from the Scone Palace judges and the display is available for visitors to see at Edzell Castle for the next few weeks before it is dismantled. Alice is pictured below with her award winning entry, and Sean and Grant who support her apprenticeship at Edzell and Arbroath.



Useful links

- High Level Masonry Inspection (HLM) overview [High Level Masonry Inspections | Historic Environment Scotland](#)

Contact

- Anne-Marie O'Reilly, District Visitor & Community Manager (anne-marie.o'reilly@hes.scot)