

General

Common problems of buildings in the target area include:

- General lack of maintenance and repair particularly of rainwater goods
- Large amounts of vegetation growth along the roof lines
- Masonry decay leading to structural problems particularly at chimneys

All of these are augmented by the multiple ownership of many buildings, making maintenance measures more difficult to organise.



Vegetation growth in a gutter causing a blockage

Remedial Steps:

The following steps in order of importance:

- Removal of vegetation growth
- Cleaning out, repair/replacement of rainwater goods where necessary
- Removal of cement pointing where this is causing damage
- Repointing using lime mortars
- Replacement of eroded stone
- Stabilisation of chimneys and other parts of the building where necessary
- Removal of impervious and cement paints
- Organise common repairs for buildings in multiple ownership (see newtenementhandbook.scot).

Who we are:

The Scottish Lime Centre Trust promotes the knowledge, understanding and traditional skills required for the conservation repair and maintenance of the historic built environment. We work nationally and internationally to provide advice, guidance and traditional skills training for anyone dealing with a historic structure, be it an A-listed building or a humble garden wall.



Cupar Stone and Slate Survey



The two stone types of Cupar: the local buff sandstone (centre left) and the grey sandstone (centre right)

Charlestown Workshops, 2 Rocks Road
Charlestown, Fife KY11 3EN

T: 01383 872 722 F: 01383 872 744

E: admin@scotlime.org

W: www.scotlime.org

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As part of the Cupar Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) and Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) operated by Fife Council and Fife Historic Buildings Trust, the Scottish Lime Centre Trust has undertaken a stone and slate building survey of the historic centre of Cupar to give a better understanding of the condition of the buildings and future conservation needs.

The survey conducted in Cupar during 2016 is presented in a publicly accessible report as well as individual property surveys. The report can be found at fifehistoricbuildings.org.uk/cupar-cars This leaflet identifies areas of need in the significant architectural heritage of Cupar and provides advice on next steps and sources of further information.



Building Stone

Cupar is built with two main stone types, the local buff sandstone as well as a better quality grey sandstone, possibly sourced from further away (see image overleaf). The buff sandstone in particular displays large areas of delamination and granular decay.

Many properties within Cupar are painted with impermeable or cement based masonry paint which can damage the stone beneath. Where visible, the building stone is usually buff sandstone.

Remedial Steps:

- Replace structurally compromised building stones with suitably matching stone.
- Remove cement based or moisture impermeable masonry paints and replace with lime paints or mineral paints. Paint removal is an intricate process which has the potential to damage the stone underneath and requires individual specification. For more information see the full survey report.

Finding a matching building stone:

Stone matching through thin section analysis and physical testing is an important step in the identification of a suitable replacement stone for long term masonry preservation (original and new). The use of incompatible replacement stone can lead to further decay of historic masonry. Many of the building stones in Cupar have been matched as part of this project. For more information contact the SLCT or Fife Historic Buildings Trust.

Roofing Slates

A number of different slate types were identified by visual survey throughout the centre of Cupar. The condition of the slate roofs in Cupar is generally good, with only a few slipped and missing slates. Slipped or missing slates should be replaced with like-for-like materials as soon as possible.

Also notable are the thack-stanes found at the base of many chimneys, indicating that the building was thatched in the past.



A traditional roof with random diminishing coursing and a thack stane (circled)

Like-for-like materials:

The exact origin of the slates used in Cupar is not definitively visually identifiable. Nevertheless, it is important to match the type of slate as well as the craftsmanship when repairing roofs. As such, the best replacement is reclaimed second hand slate with matching colour, texture and size, laid by a skilled roofing contractor with a good understanding of traditional roof coverings and in keeping with the coursing. Much of the Scottish slate was laid in random diminishing courses, as shown in the picture above. It is also considerably thicker than Welsh or Spanish slate.

Mortar

Many of the historic mortars used to bed stones and finish walls in Cupar were based on a moderately to eminently hydraulic hot-mixed lime combined with a local aggregate similar to that found today at Melville Gates, Ladybank.

Throughout Cupar, a number of buildings have more recently been rendered or harled with cementitious mortars. This has often had a negative impact on the stone underneath, leading to severe decay.



Damage to stone caused by cement pointing

Remedial Steps:

- Repoint masonry where necessary using lime mortars, particularly at high level, chimneys and open vertical joints in masonry
- Remove cementitious materials and repoint/render in lime based materials

For the repair of most mortars, specifications are based on the individual buildings. All specifications and repairs should be undertaken by building professionals and skilled contractors.