



Planning information leaflet

Conservation Areas

Materials and Maintenance



Development  
SERVICES



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## **This leaflet tells you about:**

- Materials and maintenance in conservation areas
- Windows and doors
- Masonry
- Roofing materials
- Exterior features
- Finding a tradesperson

### **Conservation Areas: Materials and Maintenance**

Scotland has over 600 conservation areas, 48 of which are in Fife. If your property is in a conservation area it may have implications for work you wish to carry out. You may need planning permission for some changes – e.g. replacing windows and doors – to protect the character of the area. If you live in a listed building you may also need listed building consent.

Before carrying out work to your property other than straightforward repairs and maintenance, contact your local planning office for advice (see useful contacts).

### **Maintenance**

It's important to maintain your building through regular checks, repair and maintenance. This is an easy way of avoiding large repair bills. A good starting point is gutters and drainage. On a regular basis ensure that you

- Clear downpipes and gutters of debris and plant growth
- Check drainage in wet conditions to find any leaks
- Repaint any cast ironwork

Roof coverings, ridge tiles and chimneys should also regularly be checked to ensure that they are secure and watertight. Timber doors and windows should be repainted every three to five years to protect against timber decay.

## Older buildings are different



When carrying out work to traditionally constructed buildings there are some important things to consider. Older buildings perform differently to modern ones. Using traditional materials for repairs and maintenance is important, as this will be in keeping with the building's character and will prevent problems longer-term. Introducing modern materials or components can often cause additional problems. Time spent on property maintenance and repair using appropriate materials is worthwhile, as property values of older buildings have been found to increase if period features remain intact, both internally and externally.

### Windows and doors

Timber windows are usually the right choice for traditional buildings. If you already have traditional timber windows, these should be repaired and not replaced where possible. With good care and maintenance, quality timber windows can last up to two hundred years as opposed to perhaps 20-30 for plastic replacements. Existing timber windows can often be upgraded to reduce heat loss - for example with secondary glazing or draught stripping. It is much more environmentally friendly to do this than to install a new window; and often cheaper.

If windows or doors do need to be replaced, you must install an appropriate replacement in a conservation area, such as timber for sash and



*timber sash and case windows are long-lasting if they are well maintained*

case windows, even if the original windows have already been replaced.

For more information see Fife Council's Planning Customer Guidelines on *Windows in Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas*.

## Masonry



*hard cement mortars cause stonework to deteriorate*

For hundreds of years, lime mortar has been used in masonry construction. Cement is a recent, 20<sup>th</sup> century development – and not appropriate for traditional buildings.

- If hard cement is used in masonry repairs or pointing, it will cause the stone to deteriorate over time - the impermeable cement forces water into the more porous stone. A lime mortar should be used instead.

- If masonry is rendered or harled, this should be using a breathable, lime-based render. Although cement renders may seem to protect masonry walls from weathering, they can cause a build up of moisture in the stone or brick beneath which will cause it to deteriorate and cause damp problems internally.
- Most stone buildings don't need to be cleaned – if the stone is blackened with age, this is part of its character. If you do need to clean any stonework, make sure this is done manually rather than by pressure washing, sand blasting or chemical cleaning to avoid long-term damage.
- Non-porous paint is not appropriate for exterior masonry. For more information see Fife Council's Planning Customer Guidelines on *Painting the exterior of listed buildings and unlisted buildings in conservation areas*.

### Roofing materials

Slate and pantiles are the most common roof coverings in Fife's conservation areas. Concrete tiles are not a suitable replacement for either: As well as being inappropriate for historic buildings in character and appearance, the extra weight can damage the roof structure. Small localised repairs along with good maintenance can prevent the need for full re-roofing. This is particularly important for Scottish slate, which can now only be sourced through salvage.

When repairing slate roofing, re-use original slate where possible and match new slate with existing, avoiding artificial slate, or imported slate that is different in colour and character. Most slate in





*pantiles should be reused where possible - new tiles can completely change the appearance of a building*

Scotland is fixed using single nails, so a skilled slater should be able to carry out small-scale repairs in isolation. It is also important to regularly check leadwork on the roof as defective flashings can lead to serious damp problems.

Traditional clay pantiles should also be re-used where possible. Moss should be removed by hand rather than with chemical treatment as this can damage the tiles. Clay ridge tiles and pantiles should be bedded in lime mortar rather than cement to avoid damage to the tiles and allow them to be re-used if necessary.

### **Exterior features**

Walls fronting the house should also be maintained, as should cast or wrought iron railings and gates, as these can be vital to the character of a conservation area. Paths, steps and other forms of access should be retained and maintained in their original materials.

There are also lots of important historic shop fronts in Fife, of many different periods and designs. If they are well looked after, they will enhance the conservation area and attract shoppers. For more information see Fife Council's Planning Customer Guidelines on *Shop Front Design Guidelines*.



*it's important to maintain cast and wrought iron features*

## Finding a Tradesperson

To maintain the character of your home it is vital that materials used in repairs match as closely as possible, and are compatible with, the original materials. These may need to come from a specialist supplier.

Similarly, it is important that work carried out to your home is done by a skilled professional with experience of working with traditional materials and on historic buildings. Find out as much as you can about a company or professional, and work that they have previously carried out.

## For more information contact:

development.central@fife.gov.uk / 08451 55 11 22

Planner (Built Heritage), Development Services,  
Town House, Kirkcaldy KY1 1XW 08451 55 55 55  
ext 473816/ 473742 LbConArch@fife.gov.uk

Historic Scotland Technical Conservation  
Group, Longmore House, Salisbury Place,  
Edinburgh EH9 1SH 0131 668 8668 /  
hs.technicalconservationgroup@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

## Further Information:

**Planning Customer Guidelines** have been produced to outline what is and isn't acceptable in terms of development and planning policy. These can be found on [www.fifedirect.org.uk/planning](http://www.fifedirect.org.uk/planning) and include:

*Windows in Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas*

*Painting the Outside of Listed Buildings and Buildings in Conservation Areas*

*Creating a Better Fife: Fife's Urban Design Guide*

**Historic Scotland** have produced a series of free publications giving advice on aspects of looking after historic buildings. The "Inform" guides are available to download at [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/learning/freepublications.htm](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/learning/freepublications.htm)