

SCOLPAIG FARM CULTURAL HERITAGE STRATEGY

PROPOSAL TO PLANNING AUTHORITY – CONDITIONS 11 AND 26

Introduction

Scolpaig Farm was purchased by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (the Comhairle) in June 2019. It is proposed to develop 'Spaceport 1' - a multi-user suborbital, vertical launch spaceport - at Scolpaig Farm. As per the planning application, the development is comprised of:

Construction of sub-orbital vertical launch spaceport, including access road, fencing, launch pad with demountable launch tower, water and liquid storage tanks with associated services and infrastructure, repair and use 1no former farm building for storage, water pumps and communications facility, stabilize 1no derelict former farm building, upgrade to existing farm track and water crossing, vehicle parking and periodic intermittent siting of storage containers.

The planning application was accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), supplemented by a Supplementary Environmental Information (SEI) Report to enable the assessment of the likely significance of effect of the proposed development on the wider environment.

Consent for the spaceport development was granted on 26 July 2023, subject to thirty-five conditions and adherence with the Schedule of Mitigation submitted as part of the EIA / SEI.

This proposal paper pertains to condition 11 and condition 26:

Condition 11 No development shall take place until a strategy to secure, and make wind and watertight, the farmhouse and farm buildings has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Comhairle as planning authority. The strategy shall be implemented in accordance with the details as approved.

Reason In the interests of preserving and protecting the historic character, cultural significance and special interests of Scolpaig Farm.

Condition 26 No use of the spaceport hereby permitted shall take place until a preservation and conservation strategy for Scolpaig Farm, including the farmhouse and complex of farm buildings has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Comhairle as planning authority. This strategy should identify:

- The works required for the restoration of the farmhouse and farm buildings
- Potential future use of the farmhouse and farm buildings
- Potential delivery mechanism for the strategy; and
- An implementation strategy

This strategy should be implemented in accordance with the details as approved. No works shall take place to these buildings unless in accordance with the strategy as approved.

Reason In the interests of preserving and protecting the historic character, cultural significance and special interests of Scolpaig Farm.

Approach to Discharging Conditions 11 and 26

It is responsibility of the Comhairle as Developer of Spaceport 1 to ensure that the conditions attached to the Planning consent are delivered.

Strategic oversight on all aspects of the delivery of the Spaceport 1 development is provided by the Spaceport 1 Project Board, which is comprised of senior officers from the Comhairle and Highlands and

Islands Enterprise. Additional strategic oversight of the project and wider developments at Scolpaig Farm is provided by the Comhairle’s Sustainable Development and Policy and Resources Committees.

In terms of day-to-day delivery of the Spaceport 1 project and ensuring that the work required to discharge the Planning conditions is commissioned and undertaken, this is the responsibility of the Spaceport 1 Project Manager.

Conditions 11 and 26 require that two strategies are submitted to and approved by the Planning Authority:

- A wind and watertight strategy for the farmhouse and farm buildings. Approval must be granted prior to construction commencing
- A conservation and preservation strategy – and associated implementation plan - for the farmhouse and complex of farm buildings. Approval must be granted prior to the operation of Spaceport 1.

As there were a complex range of factors to be considered in determining the best approach to discharging conditions 11 and 26, the Project Manager was supported by the following external consultants in developing this proposal paper. This grouping is referred to in the remainder of the document as the ‘Delivery Team’.

Consultant	Area of Expertise / Role
Fraser Architecture	Architectural support, Principal Designer for Spaceport 1 Enabling Infrastructure Project
Atlantic 58	EIA compliance, environmental advice, Construction Environment Manager for Spaceport 1 Enabling Infrastructure Project
Harley Haddow	Structural Engineering support
Campbell Construction Services	Asbestos survey and advice

In developing this proposal, consideration was given to a variety of factors, all of which have a bearing on how conditions 11 and 26 might be discharged:

- What is the current status of the Spaceport 1 project?
- What do we need to bear in mind from the Planning process?
- What work have we done since the SEI was submitted (January 2023) and what has that told us?

Current Status of the Spaceport 1 Project

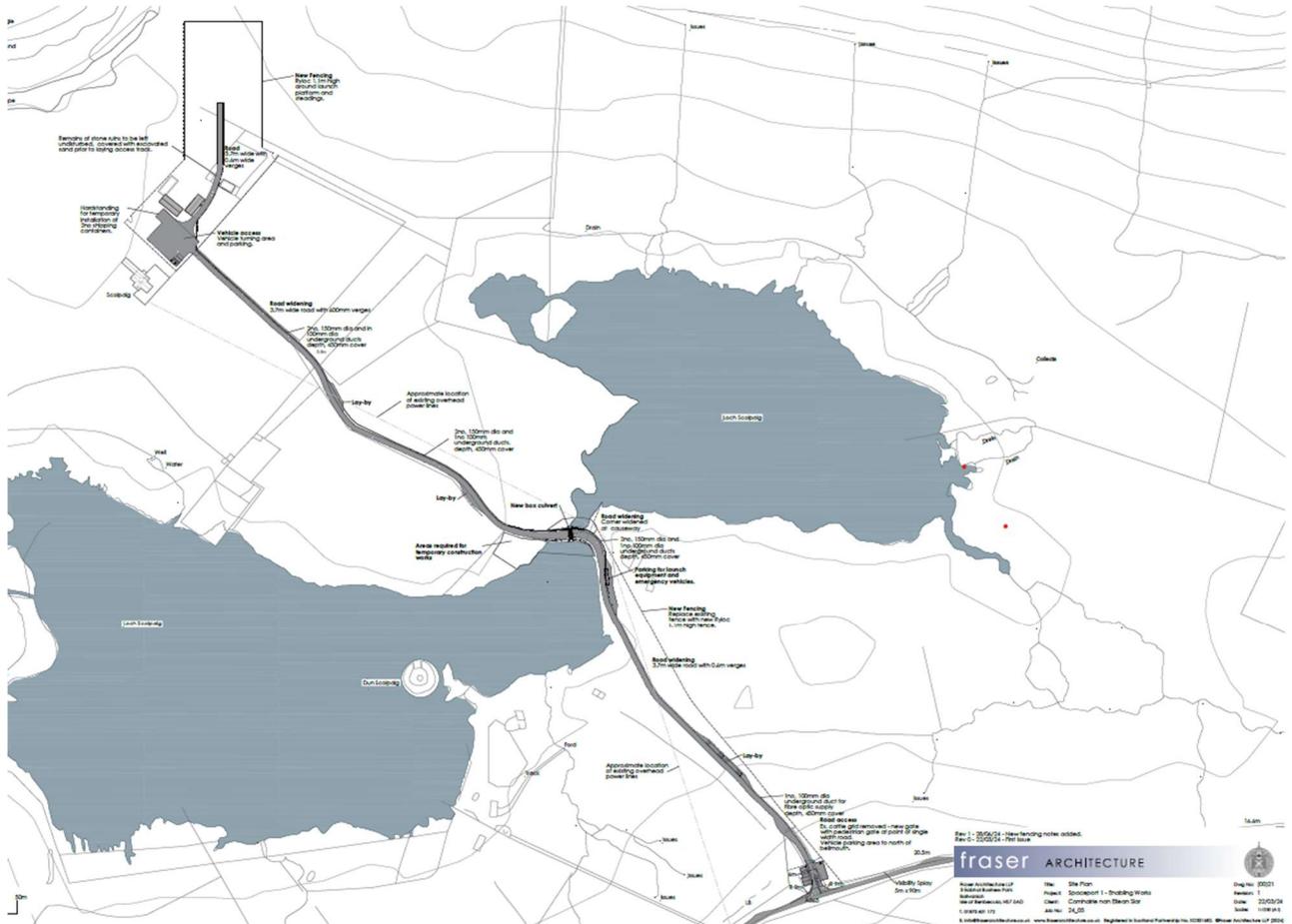
In January 2024, the Spaceport 1 Project Board agreed to take a phased approach to the development of the spaceport, whereby the Comhairle would lead on the construction of the ‘enabling’ infrastructure and a private sector operator would be procured to develop the ‘spaceport’ infrastructure and operate the facility.

Broadly speaking, the enabling infrastructure construction project includes:

- Upgrading the entrance and car parking adjacent to the A865
- Upgrading the access track to Scolpaig Farm and creating laybys
- Upgrading the causeway between upper and lower Loch Scolpaig,
- Creating the hard standing at Scolpaig Farm
- Creating a section of the road between Scolpaig Farm and the launch pad.

- Installation of fibre broadband from the Coastguard Station at Balemartin to Scolpaig Farm

The extent of the work is shown in Fraser Architecture LLP drawing 24-05 (00)21 Revision 1 Site Plan, an extract of which is shown below.



The spaceport infrastructure includes the remaining elements of the project which were consented in July 2023:

- Completion of road to launchpad
- Launchpad and pad loading area
- Teter points
- Containment tank
- Water storage
- Upgrading byre 2

The funding for the construction of the enabling infrastructure was approved in October 2024. Following a procurement process, Macaulay Askernish Ltd was appointed as Principal Contractor. It anticipated that the first phase of work will commence in November 2024.

Business Development and market engagement activities have been ongoing as part of the Spaceport 1 Project, and there is significant potential to secure private investment into the spaceport, Scolpaig Farm and the local community. Prospective users of Spaceport 1 have stated that at well as having legitimate business reasons for establishing more of a presence in Uist and developing relationships with local businesses, they

also seek to work in partnership with the Comhairle and others to ensure that the community benefit and social value objectives of the Project are met.

The investment objectives of the Spaceport 1 Project, as agreed by the Comhairle and supported by Highlands and Islands Enterprise are:

Spaceport 1 Project - Investment Objectives
<p>1: To Establish the UK’s Primary Suborbital Launch Site</p> <p>Specialising in commercial suborbital launch, Spaceport 1 will address the growing global market for suborbital launch related activities. By building a modest and adaptable launch facility at Scolpaig Farm, and leveraging existing infrastructure at the MOD Hebrides Range, Spaceport 1 will be the UK’s primary suborbital launch site.</p>
<p>2: To Provide Employment, Training and Economic Return</p> <p>Spaceport 1 will bring new jobs and training opportunities to the area, not just in terms of the operation of the spaceport but in the wider ‘spaceport ecosystem’. As a sector which is constantly refining and advancing technologies and procedures, training and development will be key priority for Spaceport 1 and its customers. Spaceport 1 will engage with key partners to ensure that appropriate training is provided to develop the space sector workforce of the future.</p>
<p>3: To be the Suborbital Launch Site of First Choice</p> <p>The planned facilities, business model and implementation approach will enable a sustainable and competitive service offering, addressing the market for launch systems developers and payload customers, and rejuvenating suborbital and microgravity research within the UK. With distinct advantages over competitor sites across the globe, Spaceport 1 will be positioned to be the suborbital launch site of first choice.</p>
<p>4: To Sustain Local Businesses</p> <p>Spaceport 1 offers the opportunity to increase business visitor numbers out of the main ‘tourist’ season, primarily launch company employees who would come to the region for the planning and preparation of their activities and then during the subsequent test or launch campaigns.</p> <p>The procurement of range services from MoD Hebrides Range, to support commercial operations, will increase the utilisation of the site, generate revenues for the MOD and QinetiQ and help to ensure the future sustainability of the facility and local employment.</p> <p>Spaceport 1’s core launch activities are highly likely to stimulate the requirement for local manufacturing and other support services as this will be more efficient than using long logistic chains.</p>
<p>5: Support Population Retention and Growth</p> <p>The retention and growth of population in Uist is a critical strategic issue. Spaceport 1 offers the potential of creating a new industry sector that will generate new jobs and new opportunities, thereby helping stabilise and sustain population.</p>

The Planning Process

For the purposes of identifying the way forward, the Delivery Team revisited the planning authority’s assessment of the likely effects of the Spaceport 1 development on the two main environmental receptors relevant to conditions 11 and 26 - landscape and visual impacts (including placemaking and design) and the historic environment and cultural heritage. Also considered were the representations from individuals which were submitted during the Planning process.

The relevant paragraphs of the Planning Board Report are replicated below for ease of reference.

Landscape and Visual Impacts, including Placemaking and Design

Not having considered Landscape and Visual Impacts (including placemaking and design) in the EIA, the Planning Authority requested that this be addressed in the SEI. A Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal was subsequently provided (SEI Appendix 8.1), supported by a Visualisation Pack (SEI Volume 2C). The Appraisal

was undertaken by Carol Anderson Landscape Associates Ltd, who has expertise in landscape and seascape character assessment and in landscape sensitivity / capacity assessment.

The Planning Authority's assessment of the likely effects on landscape and visual impact (including placemaking and design) is detailed in paragraphs 12.228 – 12.243 of the Planning Board Report.

The following paragraphs are of particular relevance to conditions 11 and 26:

At paragraph 12.239, the Planning Authority acknowledged that *'reuse of an empty building with relatively minor interventions would help secure its continued future use and its positive contribution to the wider landscape setting of the site'*. It was stated that this *'meets the aims in NPF4, at least in part, for the redevelopment of brownfield land and the reuse of vacant buildings.'*

The intermittent use of storage containers also forms part of the consented development. A permanent area for the siting of two containers will be constructed, with the containers arriving on site for use during each launch (if required) and then being removed. At paragraph 12.241, the Planning Authority stated that this approach is *'somewhat different from most other proposed developments for containers, which generally seek to use them as temporary buildings, which would be installed and remain in place for the duration of the permission. In contrast the current proposal envisages a permanent area for the siting of two containers, but with the likelihood that the containers would arrive at site, and be removed from it, for each launch'*

In paragraph 12.243 of the Report, the Planning Authority concluded that *'Although the permanent built elements of the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on landscape character and visual amenity, and the effects of the proposal on the National Scenic Area would not be unacceptable, it is concluded overall that the proposal would have a significant detrimental visual impact on views from one representative viewpoint. In addition, the proposal would also result in some localised harm to landscape character and other views. Whilst the extent of this additional harm would not in itself be significant, it would add further weight to the significant visual harm identified on the one representative viewpoint. As a result, the proposal would not fully accord as it currently stands with National Planning Framework 4 policies 14 and 29, or with the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan policies NBH1 and PD1.'*

Comments from the Public

The Delivery Team also revisited the representations from individuals which were submitted to the Planning Authority during the Planning process. Comments pertaining to the impact of the proposed development on landscape and visual impact and alternative uses for the site included:

- *"The farmhouse and outbuildings could be developed as a centre for recreational, cultural and field study activities, with accommodation. It is the ideal location for such a centre, and this would benefit the island in a range of ways."*
- *"The fact that a development involves the presence of periodic and temporary structures, does not alter the fact that at such times their presence will be detrimental to our perception and enjoyment of the landscape."*
- *"The proposal will erode knowledge, understanding and value of Scolpaig."*
- *"Temporary storage containers would have a profoundly negative impact on the landscape."*
- *"Photographs and drawings cannot replicate experience."*

Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage

Archaeology and Cultural Heritage were originally considered in Chapter 10 of the EIA. A request for SEI was subsequently made by the Planning Authority in order to respond to representations from / address issues raised by Historic Environment Scotland, the Comhairle's Archaeology Service and the public. The original assessment was updated and expanded in Section 10 of the SEI. The SEI work was undertaken by Headland Archaeology Ltd and was informed by the responses from the statutory consultees and members of the public, including the comprehensive submission from 'contributor 59': Their work was also informed by:

SEI Appendix 19.2 – Vibration Technical Note

SEI Appendix 10.1 – Archaeology Gazetteer

SEI Appendix 10.2 – Stage 1 Setting Assessment

SEI Appendix 10.3 – Structural Survey

Planning Authority's Assessment

The Planning Authority's assessment in relation to the impact of development on the historic environment and cultural heritage is detailed in paragraphs 12.301 – 12.359 of the Planning Board Report.

The following paragraphs were of particular relevance when determining the approach to discharging conditions 11 and 26.

At paragraphs 12.342 and 12.343, it was stated that 'a vacant building is prone to deterioration and, as such, it is generally considered important to find a viable use to support the ongoing retention of a heritage asset in the longer term. Whilst the farmhouse is not within the development site, it is considered that the construction of a suborbital rocket launching facility within relatively close proximity may impact on the feasibility and viability of its possible future re-use.

Consequently, it is reasonable to consider this a direct impact of the proposal. However, such potential impacts on the future use of the farmhouse and remaining farm buildings have not been assessed in the EIA Report or the SEI. Given the acknowledged heritage significant and sensitivity of the Farm complex, this is considered to be an omission. There has been therefore, a failure to identify whether a future residential reuse of the farmhouse would be feasible or to consider potential alternative viable uses of this important heritage asset, which is currently in poor condition. The future use of the farm buildings and, in particular, the feasibility of the future use of the farmhouse for residential use or to consider potential alternative viable uses for this important heritage asset, which is at risk, should have been considered and assessed within the Environmental Impact Assessment / Supplementary Environmental Information Report.'

In light of the above, at 12.344, the Planners stated that *'it would be both reasonable and necessary to require the applicant to undertake an assessment in this respect, within a reasonable timescale. This should identify the scope of works that would ultimately be required, firstly, to make the farmhouse building wind and watertight and, secondly, to restore the existing farmhouse and farm buildings within the complex, identify possible uses to which the buildings could be put, and potential mechanisms by which this could be achieved.'*

Comments from the Public

Comments submitted by individuals relating to the historic environment and cultural heritage and alternative uses for the site included:

- *“The proposal will ruin a site of historic importance.”*
- *“The value of the farmhouse and buildings in their current context remain worthy of protecting and similar weight should be given to their preservation.”*
- *“The farmhouse and outbuildings complex is an asset with potential for interpretation of the historic and cultural heritage. It is a fine example of a modest Tackman’s house with the unusual feature of adjoining worker’s accommodation.”*
- *“As owners, there is an obligation on the Comhairle to protect the buildings against further deterioration that might prejudice future repair and beneficial use.”*

Relevant Work Undertaken Since January 2023

Having submitted the SEI in January 2023, the project focus shifted to ‘pre-construction’ activities, and in particular:

- Assessments to identify any health and safety considerations at Scolpaig Farm
- Assessments to identify any additional ecological and archaeological constraints / mitigation requirements
- The work required to inform the detailed design and the preparation of the construction tender
- The ‘longer lead’ activities which related to discharging of the pre-construction Planning conditions.

Work that was relevant to this proposal is summarised in Table 1 below, together with the rationale for each activity, the outcomes and the implications for future activities at Scolpaig Farm.

Table 1 Post January 2023 Actions				
No.	Action	Rationale	Outcomes	Further Action Required?
1	Historic Building Record Headland Archaeology, January 2023	Comprehensive historic building record (HBR) – written, surveyed, drawn and photographic - serves as a permanent record of the structures and presents a summary of the history of the Scolpaig Farm site. Record to act as a baseline against which future updates to the HBR will be compared.	HBR submitted to Planning Authority.	Yes – needs consideration in Scolpaig Farm Cultural Heritage Strategy & Implementation Plan. Also, condition 21 requires an updated HBR survey to be carried out following the completion of construction works on site and before first use of the facility.
2	Asbestos Survey & Report Campbell Construction Services Ltd, April 2024	The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asbestos refurbishment / demolition survey is required where premises or part of it, need upgrading, refurbishment or demolition. • Duty to protect contractors, the public. 	Asbestos-containing materials and asbestos debris identified in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmhouse byre roof • Roof of byre no 1 • Roof of byre no 3 • Scattered throughout the site <p>In addition, the contractor noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>‘The extremely poor condition of the inside of the building’</i> • <i>‘Serious concerns about the stability of the first floor in areas up to the perimeter walls’</i> • Evidence of rat infestation 	Yes – needs consideration in Scolpaig Farm Cultural Heritage Strategy & Implementation Plan. Detail of initial action taken and further actions required are detailed at No.4, No 3 and No. 6.
3	Building inspection Fraser Architecture LLP, May 2024	An initial inspection was undertaken in May 2019, and it was considered appropriate that a further inspection was undertaken to allow comparison / note changes in the conditions of the buildings.	Photographic record and narrative produced and included in this document at pages 12 to 23.	Yes – needs consideration in Scolpaig Farm Cultural Heritage Strategy & Implementation Plan.
4	Initial phase of asbestos removal	The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012. Following on from Action No 2.	Removal of asbestos debris that was scattered throughout the site.	Yes – needs consideration in Scolpaig Farm Cultural

	Advisory support from Atlantic58 (ongoing) Removal work by Macaulay Askernish Ltd, July 2024		Removal of collapsed asbestos cement roof and roof timbers from inside and around byre 3.	Heritage Strategy & Implementation Plan For H&S reasons, the asbestos roofs structures to the Farmhouse byre and byre number 1 should be removed by a specialist contractor.
5	Air monitoring Atlantic 58, July 2024	The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.	Air monitoring carried out to confirm that initial phase of asbestos removal had been effective.	Yes – needs consideration in Scolpaig Farm Cultural Heritage Strategy & Implementation Plan Further air monitoring once second phase of asbestos removal works carried out by a specialist contractor.
6	Initial pest control contract awarded Rentokil, July 2024 & ongoing monitoring	Evidence of rat infestation noted during asbestos survey (Action No 2). Legal duty to address risk of leptospirosis which may be present in contaminated materials in Farmhouse and adjoining byre.	External control measures implemented and monitoring framework in place.	Yes – needs consideration in Scolpaig Farm Cultural Heritage Strategy & Implementation Plan Measures to eradicate rat infestation in Farmhouse and adjoining byre are required. Specialist contractor required to remove contaminated materials and carry out an environmental clean-up. This work cannot be undertaken until such time as the roofs of the Farmhouse and adjoining byre have been made safe.
7	Written Scheme of Investigation (Evaluation) Headland Archaeology Ltd, July 2024	Condition 6 - a written scheme for the archaeological investigation of the site and a programme of archaeological works to be undertaken in accordance	WSI approved – trenching & evaluation report to follow (see Action No. 10).	See Action No. 10.

		with such scheme shall be submitted for approval by the Comhairle as Planning Authority.		
8	Building inspection Fraser Architecture LLP & Harley Haddow, September 2024	To enable an update to be made to the Structural Commentary submitted during the planning process.	Update to Harley Haddow's September 2022 Structural Commentary (attached at Appendix 1). The contractor noted that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Given the worsening structural condition of the (farmhouse) byre and its danger to the public then serious consideration should be given to removing the roof structure and relieving the lateral forces acting on the wall head.' • 'We would recommend that entry into the Farmhouse is prohibited and that warning notes identifying this as a dangerous building are made prominent.' 	Yes – needs consideration in Scolpaig Farm Cultural Heritage Strategy & Implementation Plan As an interim measure, the Farmhouse and adjoining byre will be fenced off and warning signs displayed, until such time as the risks associated with the presence of asbestos and rodents can be addressed by specialist contractors.
9	Preliminary Roost Assessment Atlantic58, September 2024	Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended). It is an offence to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberately disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection • Deliberately obstruct access to a breeding site or resting place of a bat or otherwise deny an animal use of the breeding site or resting place As the proposed development includes works that involve repurposing byre no 2, and there is a requirement to make the buildings wind and watertight, a Preliminary Roost Assessment was triggered.	Preliminary Roost Assessment Report produced, with recommended programme of emergence surveys for 2025 on the basis that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The farmhouse has high potential for roosting bats. • Byre 1 has high potential for roosting bats. • Byre 2 has moderate potential for roosting bats. • Byre 3 moderate potential for roosting bats. 	Yes – needs consideration in Scolpaig Farm Cultural Heritage Strategy & Implementation Plan Programme of emergence surveys to be implemented from May 2025 onwards. Given potential of the farm buildings for roosting bats, no works can be undertaken until the outcome of the emergence surveys is known.
10	Archaeological Evaluation Headland Archaeology Ltd. Trenching, August 2024, Report, September 2024	Having developed the written scheme of investigation as per condition 6 of the Planning consent, Headland were commissioned to undertake the associated	Trial Trenching Evaluation Report produced following the excavation of 11 trenches across the site. 7 archaeological features were identified – 6	Yes – Considered at Action No. 11.

		<p>programme of archaeological works and produce an evaluation report.</p> <p>Scope of work was to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the archaeological potential of the development site and determine the location, character, extent and quality and date of any archaeological remains identified within it. • Provide information about the archaeological resource, to enable appropriate decisions to be reached regarding any requirement for further mitigation works. • Investigate the remains of a potential structure adjacent to the site access. • Investigate the area of structural remains to the north-east of Scolpaig Farm, to establish if earlier structures pre-dating the extant structures could be identified. 	<p>structural elements and a dumped spread. 3 modern features were also discovered.</p>	
11	<p>Written Scheme of Investigation (Advance Excavation / Construction Integrated Recording, and Protective Fencing)</p> <p>Headland Archaeology, October 2024</p>	<p>Condition 6 - a written scheme for the archaeological investigation of the site and a programme of archaeological works to be undertaken in accordance with such scheme shall be submitted for approval by the Comhairle as Planning Authority.</p> <p>Headland were asked to consider the construction project implications for three features (or parts thereof) which were uncovered during the August 2024 evaluation and one structure recorded within the HBR.</p> <p>Condition 7 - details of the type and siting of protective fencing or markers to be erected around cultural heritage assets must be submitted for approval by the Planning Authority.</p>	<p>As the proposed construction impacts on three structures (or parts thereof) identified in August 2024, and a small, ruined structure recorded within the HBR, Headland recommended that they be excavated and removed under archaeological conditions, either as part of the excavation phase or under Construction Integrated Recording conditions.</p> <p>This archaeological mitigation ensure that the archaeological remains are preserved by record – location, extent, nature and date of archaeological features and deposits.</p> <p>Headland also made recommendations on the siting of protective fencing around known Cultural Heritage Assets in the vicinity of the groundworks (including minimum standoff).</p>	<p>Yes – needs consideration in Scolpaig Farm Cultural Heritage Strategy & Implementation Plan</p> <p>Further input (and possibly excavation activities) may be required as part of the implementation of the Cultural Heritage Strategy.</p>

Inspections of the Buildings at Scolpaig Farm

As detailed in Table 1, the buildings at Scolpaig Farm have been visually inspected at several key points by Fraser Architecture – May 2019, May 2024 and September 2024. A Structural Engineer from Harley Haddow accompanied Fraser Architecture in September 2024 and subsequently updated their 2022 Structural Commentary. A Historic Building Record was published in January 2023 by Headland Archaeology and in April 2024, Campbell Construction Services surveyed the interior and exterior of the buildings to undertake an asbestos inspection.

Fraser Architecture LLP's observations on the condition of the buildings are provided in the following pages and provide a helpful commentary on the deterioration of the structures since May 2019. Commentary is restricted to what could be ascertained from the exterior of the buildings and through the windows and doors but is informed by the HBR and asbestos report. Harley Haddow's updated Structural Commentary is attached at Appendix 1.

Fraser Architecture LLP – Commentary on Conditions of Structures at Scolpaig Farm

Scolpaig Farmhouse

The farmhouse roof has been in a poor state of repair for many years. The temporary plywood roof repair was carried out after the storm of January 2005. There is a large section of slate missing on the north facing roof, there are many missing slates. The roof/skew junctions and roof/gable junctions have been poorly detailed and are allowing water ingress.

The quality of the stonework varies. The stonework to the main elevations is cut stone and is in reasonable condition while the gables and the rear of the original house are random rubble in poor condition. The north and east facing gable elevations have been cement rendered. Rendered gables on what is generally a pointed stone building normally indicate that there has been water ingress issues.

With the exception of one window, all openings have been boarded up.

Access to the inside of the building is not possible due to the poor building condition, the risk of floors collapsing and a reported rat infestation.

It is expected that an internal inspection will reveal extensive decay in the timber floors and rafters, particularly where they are built into the external stone walls.



View of NE Corner. (The original house has the gable window.) Extensive area of slate missing from the east 1890-1904 extension, slates missing from the original house, no under slate membrane, loose slates blocking the valley gutter, skewers eroded, east gable rendered.



View of NW Corner. Many missing slates with exposed sarking, no under slate membrane, loose slates blocking the valley gutter, skewers eroded, west gable poor and open pointing, more recent porch addition in very poor condition.



View of SE Corner. (The original house has the gable window.) Many missing slates with exposed sarking, no under slate membrane, loose slates blocking the valley gutter, skewers very eroded, loose pointing at skewers, gutters partly collapsed, cracking at lintel in 1890-1904 extension.



View of SW Corner. Many missing slates with exposed sarking, no under slate membrane, loose slates blocking the valley gutter, skewers very eroded, vegetation in valley gutters, pointing in poor condition on south gable elevation and west facing wall of original house, cracking in gable on line of flues. The chimney cope, on the north east side of the chimney on the south west gable has partly broken or eroded away. The stone below is also badly eroded.



There is cracking in the northwest and southeast walls of the original 1820's house close to the south west gable. While the cracking is not significant it does indicate some movement in the structure.



North west elevation showing missing slates, blocked valley gutters, sever cracking in chimney and settlement of the adjoining byre roof.

Byre adjoining the Farmhouse

The byre roof is asbestos cement sheeting over a timber roof structure. There is clear evidence of the roof settling and splaying. The asbestos cement roof sheeting is cracked in a number of locations. Asbestos cement roofing is hazardous and should be removed. The concrete skewes on the west gable are badly cracked and have dislodged some of the upper stones. The stone walls are in poor condition with open pointing, missing stones and bulging along the length of the walls. It is possible that the walls were built in an uneven way, but the more likely explanation is the lack of a sound foundation, lack of pointing, rainwater run-off from the roof (there are no gutters) and the movement in the roof structure.



North Elevation – Dipping in ridge line showing the settling and splaying in the roof.



North roof and west gable – Settlement and splaying in roof clearly evident. Note gap between the pointing on the house gable and roof sheeting. Skew badly cracked upper stone walls dislodged. Open pointing in gable stonework.



South roof and wall. - Settlement in roof clearly evident. Note gap between the pointing on the house gable and roof sheeting. Bulging in stone walls.



West gable – Open stone joints, settlement and splaying of roof. Loose and broken asbestos cement sheeting.



Eaves, North Elevation – Settlement of roof pushing support structure out beyond the wall head.



North East Corner – Open stone joints, missing stones, rotation of large stone on second course on gable, possible location of corner base stone, no evidence of any foundation. Loose and broken asbestos cement sheeting.

Byre No 1

The roof is asbestos cement roof sheeting fixed to timber purlins fixed to timber trusses. The timber trusses are tied to the wall with twisted fencing wire. Walls are stone and there is an earth floor. There are 2 door openings in the north elevation.

The asbestos cement roof sheeting is badly cracked in a number of locations. Asbestos cement roofing is hazardous and should be removed. There is considerable movement in the roof sheeting at the east end where there has been movement in the gable wall.

There is rot in a number of the roof purlins. The condition of the truss ends where they are built into the walls cannot be determined but we would expect to find some decay in these locations.

Windblown sand has built up against the stone walls on the west and south elevations. These walls are now retaining over 600mm of sand. There has been movement in the east gable which has dragged the concrete skew and roof sheeting away from its original location. Comparing photographs taken in 2019 against photographs taken this year, it can be seen that the movement in the wall is continuing. There is risk of the east gable wall collapsing. There are 2 door openings in the north elevation with internal timber lintels. These lintels are in poor conditions.



East gable and south elevation. Sand build up to south a west. Floor level is at the north side of the building. Cracking and bulging of east gable.



North elevations. Cracking in roof sheeting adjacent to east gable.



Interior view. Looking west.



South elevation showing cracking, bulging and distortion in east gable. Cracked to skew.



North elevation east end – Extensive cracking in wall and roof sheeting caused by movement in the east gable.



May 2019



May 2024

South elevation showing cracking, bulging and distortion in east gable. Cracking to skew. Note junction between upper and lower roof sheets where sheets are now out of line by more than half a corrugation. May 2019 photo shows roof sheets in line. This has been caused by movement in the gable. The movement is approximately 60mm.



West gable with gap between sheeting and concrete skew.

Byre No 3



Since the first inspection in May 2019 the complete roof of this building has collapsed along with the larger door and lintel above. The collapsed roof, which contained asbestos cement sheeting, has been removed from

the site. The structural report notes that the gable walls are unrestrained and is recommending that the spandrel panels are taken down.



South Elevation: Open joints in stonework, partial wall collapse in south west corner, timber lintels in poor condition, east gable appears to be developing a lean outwards. Photo Sept 24.



North Elevation: Open joints in stonework, roof debris including broken asbestos cement sheeting and timber. Photo May 24.



Internal of Byre looking west showing open joints in stonework and cobble floor. Photo Sept 24.



West elevation showing open joints in stonework, loose stonework in SW corner and area of cobble floor.



West gable showing loose and unstable stonework and concrete skew. Photo September 24.

Implications of Recent Surveys and Assessments

A significant number of surveys and assessments have been undertaken at Scolpaig Farm since the submission of the SEI. This work has revealed that there are several competing issues which – in the view of the Delivery Team – should not be considered in isolation and require specialist contractor input to plan, programme and resolve. These issues are:

- The buildings are structurally unsound and dangerous.
- Asbestos containing material is present in the roofs of the farmhouse barn extension and byre 1
- A rat infestation has been reported in the farmhouse (and possibly the byre extension due to the presence of material suitable for rat burrows). This presents a disease risk.
- Some of the structures have potential for roosting bats.
- The requirement to make the roofed structures (which includes byre 3), wind and watertight.
- The requirement to conserve / preserve the buildings and enclosures at Scolpaig Farm.

In addition, there have been several occasions where the farmhouse and outbuildings have been entered by members of the public, despite the fact that the buildings have been secured to prevent this. Given the factors above, this presents a serious risk to health and safety. Furthermore, if bats are present, unauthorised access constitutes the offence of ‘disturbance’ under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994 (as amended).

Using the farmhouse and adjoining byre as the example to demonstrate the complexity associated with resolving these competing issues:

Wind & Watertight - Tarpaulin Sheeting

Erecting tarpaulin sheeting is a recognised way to protect buildings from the elements and prevent further deterioration, and in theory, doing so would be in line with condition 11.

However, given the condition of the farmhouse and adjoining byre, this would be a highly risky approach as the tarpaulin could blow away in inclement weather, causing significant damage to the farmhouse. The weight of the tarpaulin could cause the roofs to collapse completely, damaging the asbestos sheeting and exacerbating the health and safety concerns on the site.

This approach could potentially (we can’t verify their presence until the emergence surveys are undertaken) obstruct access for bats, which is an offence.

Furthermore, the buildings would remain structurally unsound and unsafe to enter and as such, the asbestos and vermin issues could not be addressed.

Short term ‘conservation’ - Removing the roofs and stabilising the walls

In theory, and this relatively ‘light-touch’ approach to conservation has been adopted elsewhere on the islands, removing the roofs and shoring up the walls could make the structure less dangerous and allow specialist contractors to deal with the asbestos and vermin issues.

However, doing so would be at odds with condition 11 and wouldn’t be in the true spirit of condition 26 as it would potentially prejudice the future preservation and conservation of the farmhouse and adjoining byre.

Furthermore, if bats are present, then removing the roofs would constitute disturbance and damage under the relevant legislation.

Conclusion

The Delivery Team is concerned that any attempts to resolve one or more of these issues quickly or in isolation - without first employing specialist advisors, undertaking further bat surveys and engaging with key stakeholders to develop an informed cultural heritage strategy and implementation plan – could result in further damage to the buildings and be counterintuitive to their future conservation / preservation and / or use. Any disturbance to bats or obstructing or destroying structures they use would constitute an offence.

Similarly, immediate actions will not allow for meaningful consultation with key stakeholders such as the soon to be procured Spaceport 1 Operator, the yet to be convened Habitat and Amenity Advisory Forum and with the local community.

Having reviewed the outcomes of the post-January 2023 work, together with points made during the Planning process and views expressed by members of the public, it became apparent that a holistic approach to the remediation or redevelopment of the buildings at Scolpaig Farm is required.

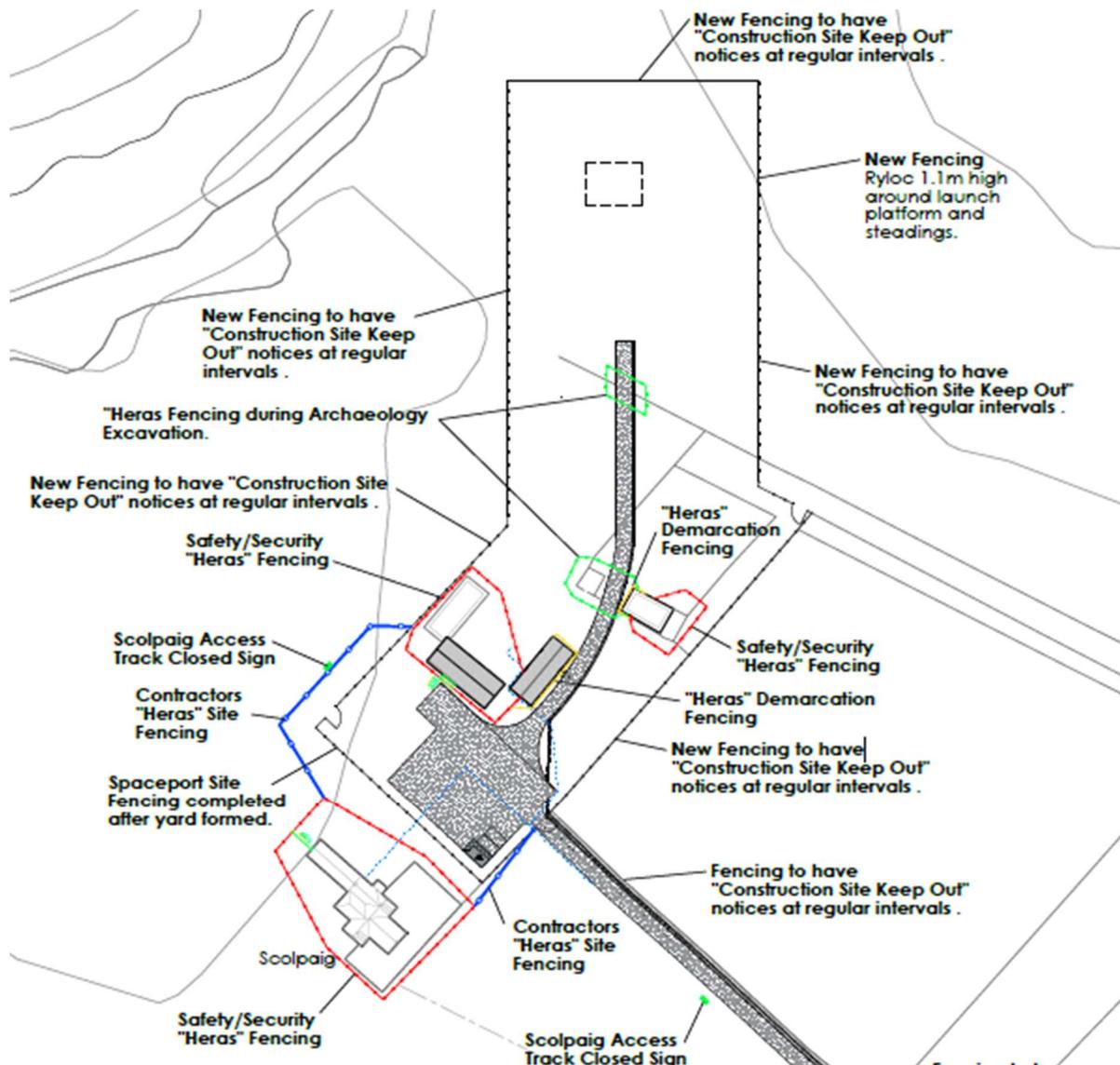
Before settling on a final proposal – which is laid out on pages 28 to 30 - the Delivery Team undertook a high-level review of the strategic context applicable to the Scolpaig Farm scenario

It has however been agreed by the Delivery Team that a necessary course of action which must be implemented as a matter of urgency for Health and Safety reasons is to install Heras fencing around:

- The Farmhouse and adjoining byre
- Byre 1 and immediate surrounds
- Byre 3 and immediate surrounds.

Headland Archaeology was consulted on the type and siting of the protective fencing, and the fencing proposal has been submitted to the Planning Authority in furtherance of the discharge of condition 4 to the Planning consent.

The drawing overleaf illustrates the extent of the safety / security fencing (delineated in red).



Review of Strategic Context

With an all-encompassing approach to the conservation and redevelopment of Scolpaig Farm starting to emerge as the most prudent way forward, it was important for the Delivery Team to test this concept against the 2024 strategic environment.

A high-level review of national policy was therefore undertaken. Key policies of relevance are noted below.

National Planning Framework 4

Policy 1 -To encourage, promote and facilitate development that addresses the global climate emergency and nature crisis.

Policy 2 -To encourage, promote and facilitate development that minimises emissions and adapts to the current and future impacts of climate change.

Policy 4 - To protect, restore and enhance natural assets making best use of nature based solutions.

Policy 7 – To protect and enhance historic environment assets and places and to enable positive change as a catalyst for the regeneration of places.

Policy 9 - To encourage, promote and facilitate the reuse of brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings to help reduce the need for greenfield development.

Policy 12 – To encourage, promote and facilitate development that is consistent with the waste hierarchy.

Policy 14 – To encourage, promote and facilitate well-designed development that makes successful places by taking a design-led approach and applying the Place Principle.

Policy 25 – To encourage, promote and facilitate a new strategic approach to economic development that also provides a practical model for building a wellbeing economy at local, regional and national levels.

Policy 29 – To encourage rural economic activity, innovation and diversification whilst ensuring that the distinctive character of the rural area and the service function small towns, natural assets and cultural heritage are safeguarded and enhanced.

Policy 31 – To encourage, promote and facilitate development which reflects our diverse culture and creativity, and to support culture and creative industries.

National Islands Plan

The National Islands Plan sets a direction for the Scottish Government and provides a framework for action to meaningfully improve outcomes for island communities. Proposals relate to Increasing population levels; improving and promoting sustainable economic development; improving and promoting environmental wellbeing, improving digital connectivity.

Delivering Economic Prosperity – Scotland’s National Strategy for Economic Transformation

This strategy contains 4 key priorities to create sustainable economic growth:

- *investing in people and infrastructure to safeguard Scotland's future*
- *fostering a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship and research and development*
- *stimulating inclusive growth and creating opportunity through a fair and inclusive jobs market*
- *promoting Scotland's international trade, investment, influence and networks*

Scotland’s Labour Market Strategy

Key outcomes from the Strategy are a skilled and productive workforce, a sustainable working population, high employment and low unemployment, equal opportunities and fair work.

Inclusive Growth

The Scottish Government defines inclusive growth as ‘growth that combines increased prosperity with greater equity; that creates opportunities for all; and distributes the dividends of increased prosperity fairly’.

The five Inclusive Growth outcomes are:

- *Productivity – Businesses are competitive, and economic growth is resilient and sustainable*
- *Population – Scotland has a sustainable working age population*
- *Participation – Inequality of opportunity to access work is addressed and jobs are fulfilling, secure and well-paid*
- *People – Scotland’s population is healthy and skilled and economic benefits are spread more widely, with lower levels of inequality*
- *Place – Communities across Scotland have the natural and physical resources to ensure they are strong and sustainable*

Update to Climate Change Plan 2018-2032: Securing a Green Recovery on a Path to Net Zero

‘The Scottish Government has been clear in its commitment to securing a just and green recovery, which prioritises economic, social, and environmental wellbeing, and responds to the twin challenges of the climate emergency and biodiversity loss’.

Conclusion & Recommended Proposed Approach to Discharging Conditions 11 and 26

Conditions 11 and 26 require two strategies to be submitted and approved by the Planning Authority:

- A wind and watertight strategy for the farmhouse and farm buildings. Approval must be granted prior to construction commencing
- A conservation and preservation strategy – and associated implementation plan - for the farmhouse and complex of farm buildings. Approval must be granted prior to the operation of Spaceport 1.

In developing the proposal to address these conditions, the Delivery Team considered the following:

- The Planning Authority's assessment of the likely effects of the Spaceport 1 development on landscape and visual impacts (including placemaking and design) and the historic environment and cultural heritage
- Representations from members of the public, submitted during the Planning process
- The outcomes of various pieces of work undertaken since January 2023
- The relevant strategic policy context.

'Scolpaig Farm Cultural Heritage Strategy'

The view of the Delivery Team is that conditions 11 and 26 are inextricably linked and should be discharged by way of a single, comprehensive 'Scolpaig Farm Cultural Heritage Strategy' (SFCHS), accompanied by a deliverable implementation and maintenance plan.

The main aim of the SFCHS is to preserve and protect the historic character, cultural significance and special interest of Scolpaig Farm. Central to this will be investigating the potential for Scolpaig Farm to simultaneously contribute to the national and local policy agendas around (amongst others) innovation, inclusive growth and sustainable development.

It is proposed to procure a multi-disciplinary consultancy team – including (but not limited to) a conservation architect / surveyor, a structural engineer and a quantity surveyor - that has relevant experience to undertake this piece of work.

The Delivery Team will consult with relevant stakeholders - including Historic Environment Scotland and the Comhairle's Archaeologist - on the precise brief for the work and contractor specification. An initial approach to Historic Environment Scotland requesting support for this has already been made.

The British Standards Institution's 'Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings' has been used to inform the initial draft brief.

Draft Brief

- In consultation with key stakeholders such as Historic Environment Scotland and the Comhairle's Archaeologist, synthesise existing archaeological assessments into one comprehensive baseline heritage record.
- Outline the drivers for change locally – social, cultural, economic and environmental – taking the views of a range of stakeholders and the community into consideration. Assess the capacity and resources available to support change at a local and national level.

- In consultation with a range of stakeholders, including the Habitat and Amenity Action Plan (HAMP) Advisory Forum, investigate the feasibility of adaptive reuse of the buildings whilst ensuring that the buildings maintain their authenticity and remain a vital part of Scolpaig Farm.
- Present an options appraisal to the HAMP Advisory Forum, the Comhairle and other key stakeholders as appropriate.
- Develop a SFCHS and costed implementation plan, detailing immediate, medium and long-term actions. Immediate-term activities should include priority actions required to address urgent health and safety and/or conservation needs and make the buildings wind and watertight.
- Develop a monitoring and maintenance plan.

During the Planning process, the Comhairle committed to establishing a HAMP Advisory Forum to oversee the development and implementation of a HAMP. The aim of is for the Group / Plan to support aspects relating to the ongoing management and development of the site. Key statutory and non-statutory stakeholders will be invited to participate in the Forum, in addition to relevant community representatives. It will be for the Advisory Forum to support the expansion habitat enhancement activities currently being undertaken and integrate them with commitments made during the Planning process. Commitments made and development principals centred around the following:

- Habitat enhancement for specific species and habitats
- Public (including users of limited mobility) access
- Agricultural use
- Fisheries
- Cultural heritage

It is this focus on cultural heritage in the HAMP which provides a natural link between the development of the SFCHS and the HAMP Advisory Forum.

At the time of submitting the Planning application, it was envisaged that the HAMP Advisory Forum would be established and led by the Spaceport 1 appointed Environment Officer. As the spaceport operator is yet to be procured (anticipated to be on-contract by Spring / Summer 2025), the establishment of the Advisory Forum will be led by the Comhairle employed Spaceport Project Manager.

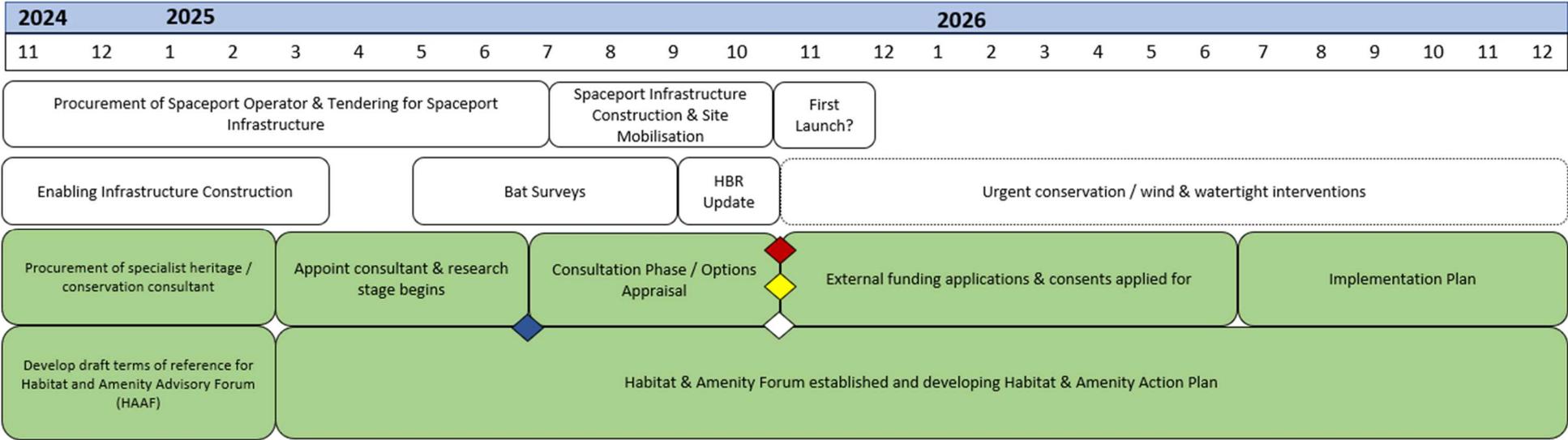
The Comhairle's Spaceport Project Manager will also lead on the procurement of the specialist contractor who will take forward the SFCHS.

The drawing overleaf summarises the anticipated timeline for development and implementation of the SFCHS. Recognising the impetus for moving forward at pace, an initial allocation of £53k was secured from the Comhairle and Highlands and Islands Enterprise in October 2024.

The timeline will be kept under constant review by the Delivery Team. Where possible, timeframes for particular tasks will be condensed.

The potential for a 'third' phase of the SP1 development – i.e. implementation of the SFCHC – has already been flagged to the Comhairle and HIE and the funding landscape will be monitored by the Comhairle's Economic Development Team.

Scolpaig Farm Cultural Heritage Strategy Timeline



-  Planning Approve SFCHS
-  Planning Approve HAMP
-  Fisheries Forum Established
-  Environment Officer in Post

Conclusion

Determining the preferred way forward in relation to discharging conditions 11 and 26 involved consideration of a range of complex, interdependent factors.

The proposal is to undertake a considerable piece of work in order to develop an informed way forward which will see meaningful activity to ensure the protection and preservation of the cultural heritage assets at Scolpaig Farm.

The national policy framework presents an opportunity, not just to protect what used to be, but to repurpose existing assets in line with the modern day requirements of Scolpaig Farm and in line with local aspirations. Scolpaig Farm will be far more than the site of Spaceport 1, and the desire of the Comhairle from the outset has been to deliver additional value to the local economy and make the 276-hectare site a true community asset.

This aspiration is shared by the prospective operators and users of Spaceport 1, and the timeline suggested for developing the SFCHS allows for the private sector to fund and participate in future developments.

As well as investing in the development of the SFCHS, the Comhairle and HIE will also support the development of the Habitat and Amenity Advisory Forum. The Forum will have a key role to play in shaping what comes next at Scolpaig.