

Historic Scotland to consult on safety measures at Edinburgh Castle



Latest phase of Edinburgh Castle rock safety programme unveiled

The next stage of Historic Scotland's programme to enhance the safety of Edinburgh Castle's rock face has been unveiled.

The agency is about to embark on a community consultation process to discuss the £1million project for the southern face of the rock which rises above Johnston Terrace.

The proposals will involve constructing a 3 metre high x 170 metre long barrier to form a protective area at the base of the rock on Johnston Terrace, to further improve public safety. This arrangement has been developed following extensive rock-fall modelling and expert advice from specialist geo-technical engineers.

The decision to create this barrier offers enhanced long-term mitigation to the ongoing natural processes of weathering and erosion which can result in rock falls. The proposal is also part of Historic Scotland's long-standing safety management strategy for the faces of the castle rock.

The project will be carried out in two phases. The first being the installation of a temporary barrier on Johnston Terrace during March, which will remain in place during the development of a more permanent solution in the second phase.

Phase one will also include spray treatment to eradicate invasive plant growth, which can over time penetrate and loosen rock joints.

The design and the visual impact of the permanent solution will form part of the community stakeholder consultation which will get underway in late March.

While some metal netting has previously been installed over a limited area of the northern face of the rock to provide protection for the railway line, this solution was not felt appropriate for the southern face. It was felt that this would have a significant detrimental visual impact on the castle's iconic south elevation.

Barbara Cummins, Historic Scotland's Director of Heritage Management who is overseeing the project, said: "Firstly, it is important to stress that this work is not in response to any increased risk of rock falls. This is part of a long-term strategy we have been rolling out over the last few years to improve the safety of the rock which involves taking a proactive approach to minimising the potential for any loose rocks caused by erosion or weathering to reach the ground.

"These proposals will ensure our commitment to public safety around the castle is enhanced."

Barbara added: "We are about to embark on a consultation process involving numerous community groups and stakeholders to inform them of the proposal and encourage their input to the wall's design."

The creation of the wall will result in some minor realignment of the road carriageway along Johnston Terrace. However, two way traffic will still be able to flow on this road once all

the works have been completed.

It is anticipated – subject to planning approval and other matters – that the permanent solution will be in place by the end of 2014.