

Hurst Castle Collapse – notes.

Following the Collapse of part of the southern wall of Hurst Castle on Friday 26 March, SPS was contacted, via the secretary, for comment.

A holding reply was sent on Sunday:

“Dear Jo,

With regard to your question, forwarded to me by the Secretary of the Solent Protection Society, we have been concerned about the deteriorating state of Hurst Castle during the past two winters seasons and have, at times, been in contact with staff associated with Hurst. We cannot confirm the source quoted in the [Lymington Times and Advertiser](#) article but have previously raised general concerns about the state of the sea defences given the likelihood of increased wave action due to the rise in winter storm frequency and intensity predicted with changing climate.

In my opinion the statement you quote, that '*urgent and vital works were required to prevent the castle collapsing*' could only be accurately made by a skilled historic buildings architect or engineer and as such, is not directly attributable to the Society. However, with architecture, planning and coastal engineering skills amongst our council members, the general concern expressed in the following articles certainly can.

An [article published in October 2020](#) highlighting our concern, and a contemporary article written by our previous Chair, [reproduced here on our website](#).

If you'd like to discuss this further, please get back to me directly.

With kind regards,

Bob Comlay

Chair [Solent Protection Society](#).”

On Monday morning, March 1st, the following response from chair@solentprotection.org, based on input from members of the Council received throughout Sunday/Monday morning:

“Dear Jo,

A little further background on our concerns regarding Hurst Castle.

We had contact with New Forest District Council and the National Park authority on the subject of the erosion of the Spit at the site of Hurst Castle in the autumn

of 2019. *While we are aware that responsibility for the Spit is complicated, reinforcement work has since been undertaken to the parts by both NFDC and English Heritage. In conversation with Alison Naylor, from English Heritage at an SPS Council Meeting in September 2019, we understood that English Heritage foresaw difficulties with funding their part of the works. Unfortunately there does not seem to be a satisfactory national funding system to preserve heritage assets.*

Since that time and given the very visible damage to the foundations underpinning the structure, we have remained concerned and were looking forward to reporting on the remedial works which were due to commence this Spring.

English Heritage's primary stated objective for conservation is to conserve England's 'historic sites and artefacts, putting those with the greatest need first'. We will be writing to English Heritage to ask for their position on where Hurst Castle sits in their list of priorities and what their plan of action will be. Given its location at the western gateway to the Solent, the preservation of this site is as important to Solent Protection Society as the protection of the Spit on which it was built.

Feel free to quote.

Kind regards,

Bob Comlay

Chair [Solent Protection Society](#)."

Gerard added the following personal observations for internal discussion:

1. This is the south facing wall of the castle and not particularly vulnerable to storm damage.
2. The south facing edge of the spit has been eroding for years and the eventual loss of the castle wings was inevitable.
3. The erosion was largely caused by the 'longshore drift' effect of marine traffic. This traffic was heavily reduced in the 1980s and stopped altogether in the 1990s. However the shingle continued to erode and there is now nothing left to support any sort of defence for the castle.
4. I believe HE and local authority did all they could. (Up to last week)
5. I do not understand why they did not signal the impending disaster and thereby set about defusing the likely fallout.
6. Even if started 30 years ago, I do not think any man made intervention would have prevented the eventual collapse.
7. I think HE should look at demolishing the Victorian wings and set about saving (maybe moving) the Tudor castle. The Landmark Trust managed a similar feat at Kimmeridge. Perhaps this should be viewed as an opportunity

What looks like a reasonably considered Blog post on the subject, published today, March 1st, can be found at 'The Critic'. See this link - [Hurst Castle could have been saved](#)

Also, [take a look at this drone footage](#) spotted online by Cassie: