



Coaltown of Wemyss Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



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1. Introduction and Purpose

1.1 Conservation Areas

In accordance with the provisions contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 all planning authorities are obliged to consider the designation of conservation areas from time to time. Coaltown of Wemyss Conservation Area is one of forty-eight conservation areas located in Fife. These are all areas of particular architectural or historic value, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Fife Council is keen to ensure that the quality of these areas is maintained for the benefit of present and future generations.

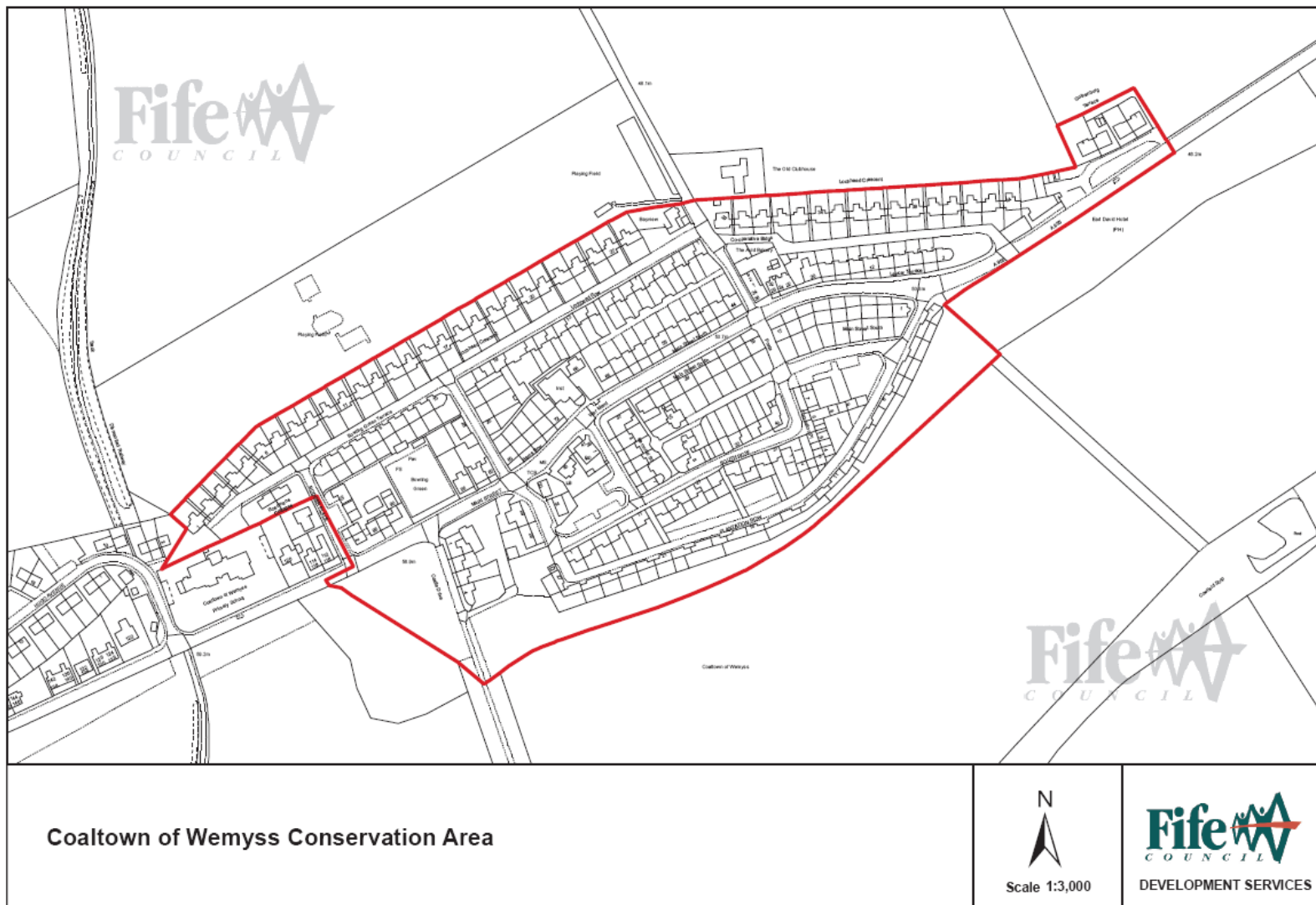
Conservation area designation is not a means to preserve an area without change, but there is a joint responsibility between residents and the council to ensure that change is not indiscriminate or damaging, and that the unique character of each area is respected. In this way, communities can benefit from living in an environment that is of recognisable value.

1.2 The Purpose of this Document

Conservation Area Appraisals are a non- statutory form of planning guidance recommended as part of an ongoing system of management for new and existing conservation areas. This Appraisal and Management plan has been prepared according to the most recent guidance in Planning Advice Note 71: Conservation Area Management.

The purpose of the Coaltown of Wemyss Conservation Area Appraisal is:

- To confirm the importance of the designation of the area and to review the current Conservation Area boundaries
- To highlight the significance of the area in terms of townscape, architecture and history
- To identify important issues affecting the area
- To identify opportunities for development and enhancement
- To stimulate interest and participation in conservation issues amongst people living and working in the area
- To provide a framework for future management



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2. Background and Development

2.1 Origins of Settlement

As its name indicates, Coaltown of Wemyss has long been associated with the mining industry. A plaque on a house in Barns Row rebuilt in 1912 is dated 1645, indicating a settlement here at that time. The first records of the town are from 1755 when it is recorded as having a population of 393. At this time it played a supporting role to the nearby village of West Wemyss and the Wemyss Estate and the population would have been almost wholly employed by the estate; primarily in agricultural work and, to a lesser extent, coal mining. In 1795, the first Statistical Report for Scotland stated that the coal in the area had been mined for some centuries, and was of particularly good quality.

The village was originally in two parts, Easter and Wester Coaltown, but when more houses were built by the Wemyss Coal Company around 1860 for a growing mining population, the two were amalgamated.

2.2 Settlement Development

The population fell to its 18th century level once more after an increase in the first half of the 19th century. Prior to 1850, Coaltown covered less than half of the area it does today. The Eastern Boundary was formed by properties on the northern side of South Row; and Barns Row and the Schoolhouse formed the western side. Part of Memorial Square was in existence in the form of the properties adjacent to Main Street and part of Coronation Place. In addition a further row, which is no longer in existence, stretched from Barns Row in the Main Street to the edge of Coronation Place in a north-east to south-west direction.



Postcard of the early 20th century showing the tram route through Coaltown

In the second half of the 19th century there was a further increase in the coal export market from West Wemyss. In order to satisfy this demand an underground railway was constructed from the Lochhead Colliery via Coaltown of Wemyss to West Wemyss, making Coaltown the central growth point between the two collieries with a population increase from 391 in 1891, to 731 in 1901. Additional building work took place on both sides of Main Street, with development to the south and east on the southern side of South Row and Plantation Row and to the north and west at Lochhead Crescent. Main Street itself was extended north and south from Barns Row. In addition to the residential developments a number of community buildings emerged, including the village school and the School of Needlework built in the 1880s, and the old schoolhouse converted into a reading room in 1904. The school of needlework was founded by Dora Wemyss to teach miners' daughters skills they might need in order to find employment in service, and remains open today to restore historic embroidery. Also in 1904 the village bowling green was opened, and in 1911 Lady Eva Wemyss, as part of a charitable venture, opened the Gothenburg Public House, now the Earl David Hotel. The concept originated from the Gothenburg Temperance Society of Sweden, and in this context described a cooperative where profits were used to benefit the local community. In 1925 the Miners' Institute was opened in Main Street.



Signs at the Wemyss School of Needlework and the Earl David Hotel

Unusually for this size of settlement Coaltown has never had its own place of worship, the nearest church being at East Wemyss.

By 1937 many of the properties were in need of modernisation. The two-roomed cottages in Lochhead Crescent, Lancer Terrace and Main Street were extended accordingly, with the addition of a further room at the rear of each of the properties. In the northern part of South Row a number of the small cottages were amalgamated, reducing the number of dwellings. At Coronation Place infill development took place linking the old and new development. All of this work was carried out by Wemyss Development Company.

In 1947 the National Coal Board acquired approximately half of the miners' rows from Wemyss Estates, including most of the properties in the west of Main Street. The mining boom lasted until the 1960s when the Michael Pit disaster of 1968 resulted in the closure of the two main pits in the area, the Michael and Lochhead Collieries. The recession in the coal mining industry had a marked effect on the population of Coaltown of Wemyss, who were forced to seek employment outside the local area. As a consequence the population declined substantially. Further housing has been built in the area, including local authority housing in the 1980s, but there is no longer any substantial industry and the village remains a dormitory settlement.

A substantial number of properties in the village were placed up for sale by the Wemyss Estate in 2007, causing consternation among the current tenants, many of whom felt that they could not compete against investors in order to afford their own property. An appropriate resolution was found through the transfer of the 47 homes in question to Kingdom Housing Association.

2.3 Archaeological and Historical Significance of the Area

The village of Coaltown is one of a number of planned workers' settlements around Fife, which were created with the aim of housing employees close to their workplace, often in single-industry groupings for core production areas including lime and textiles as well as coal. In this case, the village originated as an agricultural and coal mining settlement serving the Wemyss Estate, based at Wemyss Castle. In the later 19th century the settlement became focussed primarily on mining. In this respect it is significant in the context of the industrial history and development of Fife, and is a good example of a concentration of "miners' rows" in a vernacular style peculiar to Fife.

3. Townscape Analysis

3.1 Location and Setting

Coaltown of Wemyss is situated on the A955, the main route between Kirkcaldy and Leven. Kirkcaldy is five miles to the west, Leven four miles east, and it is one mile to the nearby coastal village of West Wemyss.

3.2 Topography and Street Pattern

In spite of Coaltown's position near the coast, the topography is relatively flat. There are therefore no significant views out, with the main view being straight through the village from east to west, enhancing the initial impression of the repetitive character of the eaves heights and architectural elements of the cottages.

In terms of the street pattern the area is roughly divided by the A955. The settlement has developed from an initial nucleus at South Row, Coronation Place, Memorial Square and Barns Row (as described in section 2.2), radiating outwards in later years as represented by the regular rows of cottages on both sides of the main street. The northern part of the village is the oldest part, and therefore constitutes the Conservation Area. 20th century local authority housing schemes and private development form the remainder of the village outside the Conservation Area boundary.

3.3 Building Styles

The architecture of Coaltown is typical of the Fife traditional style, depicting such features as crow-stepped gables, clay pantiles and scroll skewputts on the terraced "but and ben" cottages. The homogeneity of the architectural character is due essentially to the consistency of three factors – scale, materials and setting – and by the short time period in which the development took place. A further factor was the single source responsible for the majority of development, namely the Wemyss Coal Company. The Tod family, who worked as architects and factors to the Wemyss Estate for three generations, ensured a continuity of approach and consistency of design in the building work in the village.



Scroll skewputts and uniformity in chimney stacks and harling/ roofing materials



Examples of crow-stepped gables

The scale is almost totally domestic, consisting primarily of one-storied cottages which in themselves have a sufficiently strong influence to absorb the variations in details.

A link to the Low Countries (in addition to clay pantiles, as discussed in the following section) is the prevalence of crowstepped gables, alleviating the solid mass of the terraced cottages. Scroll skewputts are also a feature, with a fine example at South Row.

Sash and case windows with twelve panes are originally the most common form of fenestration, with more recent developments reducing the number of panes to eight. Unfortunately, aside from Coronation Place and Barns Row, the majority of the windows have been replaced with UPVC, which detracts from the overall uniformity of the housing and architectural character of the area.

Departures from the style described above come in the form of the two listed buildings (the Earl David and the Miners' Welfare Institute), and the two-storey buildings of Coronation Place. Coronation Place was one of the first groups of buildings in Coaltown of Wemyss and illustrates the links with past farming practices through the presence of stables. The stables are now used for storage and garages. The two-storey smooth-rendered building has dormer windows, scroll skewputts at the gable ends, and exposed margins. Modification of the original layout by extension and linkages of the older buildings into one unit, partially enclosing a rose garden, has produced an arrangement that is more akin to an English village – providing a striking contrast with the miners' rows which surround it.

The main feature of the architecture of the village is its domestic scale, and the notable absence of large-scale public buildings or a church.

3.4 Building Materials

The range of materials used represents a common theme of simplicity, economy, the use of local sources and those locally imported. The most common roofing material is red clay pantiles, used in coastal areas in Scotland since the 17th century, having initially been imported from Holland. An indigenous pantile industry had developed by the 18th century, enabled by the clay rich soil found in many areas of Fife, and they continue to be ubiquitous in many of Fife's coastal settlements. Such tiles are a development of the half round latin tile, incorporating what is virtually a double roll. These make a lightweight roof covering with very little overlap between courses, due to a side overlap which is not available in plain tiles. The tiles have a rich red/orange colour that weathers into a more muted shade, blending in with the muted colours used elsewhere in the buildings in Coaltown.



Slate used on the rounded corner of an end terrace cottage roof.



Slate dormers on Coronation Place

Plain tiles were used on the cottages of Gothenburg Terrace and Main Street (north), and grey slates used on Lancer Terrace, some of Main Street, the Earl David hotel and on many of the porches and rounded corners of the terraces. The use of these other materials may have corresponded with the decline in the availability of the tiles, or a change in preferred style. On many of the roofs a mixture of slate and pantile can be seen, as slate is often used for the bottom 3 - 5 courses of a pantile roof (known as an “easing course”) to slow and spread rainwater as it is shed from the roof. Other variations occur where the roofs are hipped or curved, in Main Street (south) and Memorial Square respectively. In the two-storey housing of Coronation Place slated dormer windows break through the eaves of the pantile roof.

The walls of the cottages of Coaltown are harled, also traditional practice in much of Fife’s vernacular architecture. The colour of the harl varies and in some cases has been painted.

3.5 Listed Buildings

There are two listed buildings within the Conservation Area at present, both added to the statutory list in March 1999 and both category C(S).



The Earl David Hotel



The former Miners' Welfare Institute of 1923

The Earl David Hotel, a two-storey public house and tenement, is particularly distinctive due to its prominent position at the eastern entrance to the village and its height in comparison with the small terraced cottages. It is white—

harled with margins picked out in black. Decorative aspects include corniced bow windows to the south east and shaped pedimented dormerheads. It was conceived as a charitable project (as described in section 2.2), but was sold not long after to Group Captain Tulloch of the RAF and renamed the “Earl David”. The interior has been altered greatly and is now missing its original full circle gantry bar. The coloured glass is retained in the bow windows, as is a floor mosaic depicting a swan.

Also by Alexander Tod, the former Miners’ Welfare Institute of 1923 is a single-storey L-plan harled design utilising traditional details including a piend pantile roof. It relates to the domestic scale of the cottages more than the Earl David, but has several unusual aspects such as a small verandah and ogee topped cupola.

The classical war memorial at the Miners’ Welfare Institute has a roll of honour beneath the inscription “In Memory of the Men of this Village Who Fell in the Great War ‘4-‘8”. A stone commemorating those killed in WWII is inserted at the base of the pilasters.

3.6 Trees and Landscape

In spite of the density of the urban grain of Coaltown, there is a considerable number of small gardens and provision for communal green space. The density is also eased by the rural hinterland. The eastern entrance to Coaltown of Wemyss is marked by an area of lawn and young trees in front of Gothenburg Terrace, allowing for a smooth transition between open fields and the village itself.



Traffic calming measures



Well-maintained green space within the village

3.7 Activity and Movement

The main pedestrian and traffic route in Coaltown is the A955, passing through the village with routes off for access to the lanes on either side. A number of the lanes radiating out from the main spine of the village have bollards to restrict them to pedestrian use.

In spite of the town being bisected by this main route between Kirkcaldy and Leven, there are measures in place to prevent excessive traffic speed, including a speed limit of 20 mph.

3.8 Public Realm

The choice of street furniture and signage in Coaltown does little to enhance the area and an overhaul, particularly of street lighting, could be beneficial. Whilst little in the way of historic surfaces remain, the paving remains neutral; mainly blacktop and whin kerbs, with inlaid setts as a feature in some pedestrian areas.



Street lighting out of keeping with the domestic scale of housing



More recent pedestrian scheme and associated lighting

3.9 Negative Features

The most notable detraction from the historic character of Coaltown is the replacement of architectural features with inappropriate modern materials. This includes use of cement harling, concrete roof tiles and UPVC doors and windows. Such changes, although small-scale, can serve to dilute the overall continuity so important to the character of the Conservation Area. It is vital that owners are encouraged to use appropriate materials when carrying out maintenance or upgrading properties.

4. Conservation Strategy

4.1 Management Plan

Following on from the issues highlighted in the preceding sections a number of development and enhancement opportunities can be outlined for the conservation area.

Architectural Features and Building Materials

The appraisal has illustrated that the value of Coaltown of Wemyss as a conservation area is reliant on repetition of architectural features and building materials. It is vital, therefore, that in order to maintain this unique character, exterior changes to properties are monitored to ensure their appropriate nature. This refers to all works covered by the 2005 Article 4 Direction as outlined in section 4.4. Retention of existing fabric will be encouraged in houses and ancillary buildings integral to the overall design of the area such as garages, porches and sheds. Where replacement is necessary, appropriate design and materials will be specified. Where windows need to be replaced, a like-for-like replacement of the original design will be specified.

Residents will be made aware of the need to apply for planning permission when carrying out works to the outside of buildings other than straightforward small-scale repairs and maintenance.

Public Realm

As has already been identified, there are a number of issues relating to a need for public realm improvements in Coaltown, such as lighting and street furniture. The present street lighting scheme is not in keeping with the small domestic scale of the buildings along the main street, although it is a main traffic route so a balance will have to be achieved. Opportunities for public realm enhancement and additional street furniture will be investigated. When the street lighting is to be replaced, a more appropriate scheme in terms of scale and design will be investigated. Street surfaces will be maintained and repaired adequately after installation of utilities/ services.

Interpretation

Fife Council is committed to producing interpretation panels or boards for all conservation areas as part of the Fife Signage Strategy. Interpretation will be produced for Coaltown of Wemyss outlining its heritage significance.

4.2 Planning Policy

The policies contained in this management strategy complement the conservation area appraisal, and comply with:

- the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas)(Scotland) Act 1997
- the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953
- Town and Country (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992
- Historic Scotland Memorandum of Guidance – 1998
- Historic Scotland Scottish Historic Environment policy - 2008
- Scottish Planning Policy (Historic Environment) – 2009

- Planning Advice Note 71: Conservation Area Management – 2005
- The Finalised Fife Structure Plan 2006-2026 – Adopted by Fife Council April 2006
- Fife Council Kirkcaldy Area Local Plan – Adopted March 2003
- Mid Fife Local Plan – to be adopted 2011
- Article 4 Directions (Article 4 of the Town and Country (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992)
- Fife Council Urban Design Guidelines
- Fife Council Design Guidance Notes - Various

The Fife Structure Plan seeks to safeguard Fife's heritage and natural environment by encouraging the re-use of buildings of historical or architectural interest; prioritising the use of brownfield sites for housing or other appropriate development; and encouraging development which would assist in urban regeneration. Policy SS1: Settlement Development Strategy puts the onus upon Local Plans to focus future development within existing settlements, and amongst other things the policy states that “the Council will have regard to the protection of built heritage or natural environment”. Although the Structure Plan has no specific policy relating to built heritage it does recognise the importance of Fife’s historic environment and for the need to preserve and enhance this environment. Once again the Structure Plan puts the emphasis upon the Local Plan Policies to provide for protection for the built and historic environments and for archaeology.

The Kirkcaldy Area Local Plan, adopted in March 2003, will be superseded in 2011 by the updated Kirkcaldy and Mid Fife Local Plan. The existing Local Plan for the area pays due attention to the seven Conservation Areas within the Plan area; namely Kinghorn, Burntisland, Dysart, Kirkcaldy Abbotshall and Central, Kirkcaldy Harbour and Port Brae, Coaltown of Wemyss and West Wemyss. The Plan specifies that Conservation Area Appraisals should be prepared for each area, as well as Article 4 Directions put in place. Policy BE9 further states:

Development proposals within Conservation Areas and designated extensions will be required to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. They should be compatible in terms of setting, design, finish, density, scale, massing and use of authentic replacement elements.

4.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance

In addition to the statutory plan framework outlined above, Fife Council has a series of Planning Customer Guidelines that supplement the adopted policy framework and provide general and specific guidance and set design standards for conservation areas. Relevant Planning Customer Guidelines from the series include:

- Windows in Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas
- Display of Advertisements

- Creating Better Places – The Fife Urban Design Guide

Fife also takes enforcement action against unauthorised development. In particular, it has a track record of ensuring that the quality and attractiveness of historic buildings and areas are not eroded by unauthorised or inappropriate development. This is further supplemented by the use of urgent and full repairs notices that are most commonly applied under Building Regulations legislation. Where necessary the Council is also committed to the use of Compulsory Purchase to secure the repair and redevelopment of buildings and sites.

4.4 Article 4 Directions

In order to properly ensure that the character of a conservation area is not affected by inappropriate alteration or development additional controls are generally used by making what is known as Article 4 Directions (Article 4 of the Town and Country (General Permitted Development) Scotland, order 1992). Article 4 Directions are in place in all existing conservation areas in Fife and they can be varied according to the particular needs and character of an area.

The combined effect of conservation area status and an Article 4 Direction is that the following type of work will require planning permission or Conservation Area Consent:

- Any alteration to the exterior of a building, including windows, doors, walls, roof, chimneys, paint work and rainwater goods
- Any extensions to buildings, including canopies, porches, conservatories, car ports, whether or not they are at the 'back of' the building
- Erection of satellite dishes or C.B. aerials
- Construction of any walls or fences
- Formation of major areas of hard surfacing on garden ground
- Demolition of buildings or structures (with certain exemptions)
- Works affecting trees e.g. felling, lopping or pruning
- Article 4 Directions also generally cover some work undertaken by Local Authorities and Statutory Undertakers (e.g. gas, electricity).

Details of the Coaltown of Wemyss Conservation Area Article 4 Directions are provided in Appendix 1.

4.5 Monitoring and Review

Policies relating to the Conservation Area will be reviewed at five year intervals with the production of the Local Plan covering Coaltown of Wemyss.

4.6 Further Advice

For any advice on conservation areas and listed buildings contact:

Planner (Built Heritage)
Fife Council Development Services
2 Wemyssfield

Kirkcaldy
KY1 1XW
Telephone 08451 555 555 ext.473742/ 473816

www.fifedirect.org.uk The Fife Council website offers general information on listed buildings and conservation areas.

www.historic-scotland.gov.uk The Historic Scotland website is a useful source of general advice on maintaining listed buildings and also provides full listing details of all of Scotland's listed buildings.

COALTOWN OF WEMYSS CONSERVATION AREA ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS

The Coaltown of Wemyss Conservation Area was designated in 1980, and Article 4 Directions under the 1981 GDPO cover the area in Use Classes I (1,2); II(1,2); XI, XV (4,5) and XX. The following Article 4 Directions under the 1992 GPDO updated and replaced the previous Directions for the area in 2005.

USE CLASS	SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF USE CLASS	REQUIREMENT FOR USE CLASS
Part 1 Class 1	The enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwellinghouse.	To protect the special character, fabric and layout of an historic building and the surrounding area in order to prevent uncontrolled site coverage.
Part 1 Class 2	Any alterations to the roof of a dwellinghouse including the enlargement of a dwellinghouse by way of an alteration to its roof.	To protect the special character, fabric and layout of an historic building and the surrounding area in order to prevent uncontrolled site coverage.
Part 1 Class 3	The provision within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse of any building or enclosure, swimming or other pool required for a purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse, or the maintenance, improvement or other alteration of such a building or enclosure.	To protect the historic fabric, special character and visual amenity of the area.
Part 1 Class 6	The installation, alteration or replacement of a satellite antenna on a dwellinghouse or within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse.	To protect the special character, fabric and layout of an historic building and the surrounding area in order to prevent uncontrolled site coverage.
Part 2 Class 7	The erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure.	To prevent indiscriminate repair of the historic fabric (boundary walls) through use of inappropriate building methods and materials or inappropriate alteration or new build within garden ground boundaries.
Part 2 Class 8	The formation, laying out and construction of a means of access to a road which is not a trunk road or a classified road, where that access is required in connection with development permitted by any class in this Schedule other than Class 7.	To prevent unmitigated development and inappropriate alteration and/or development within garden ground.
Part 9 Class 27	The carrying out on land within the boundaries of a private road or private way of works required for the maintenance or improvement of the road or way.	To prevent unmitigated development and inappropriate alteration and/or development within garden ground.
Part 12 Class 30	The erection or construction and the maintenance, improvement or other alteration by a local authority of certain buildings, works or equipment.	To protect the special character, fabric and layout of an historic building and the surrounding area in order to prevent uncontrolled site coverage.

Part 12 Class 31	The carrying out by a roads authority on land outwith but adjoining the boundary of an existing road or works required for or incidental to the maintenance or improvement of the road.	To protect the historic fabric of the area and ensure the replacement and repair of such areas is carried out sympathetically using appropriate building methods and materials where applicable.
Part 12 Class 33	The carrying out within their own district by a planning authority of works for the erection of dwellinghouses; any development under the Housing (Scotland Act 1987 (b); any development under any enactment the estimated cost of which does not exceed £100,000.	To protect the townscape and aesthetic integrity of the area by ensuring that new development is sympathetic in design, layout, fabric and character.
Part 13 Class 38	Development for the purposes of water undertakings.	To protect the special character, fabric and layout of an historic building and the surrounding area in order to prevent uncontrolled site coverage.
Part 13 Class 39	Development for a public gas supplier required for the purposes of its undertaking.	To protect the historic fabric of the area and ensure the replacement and repair of such areas is carried out sympathetically using appropriate building methods and materials where necessary.
Part 13 Class 40	Development by statutory undertakers for the generation, transmission or supply of electricity for the purposes of their undertaking.	To protect the historic fabric of the area and ensure the replacement and repair of such areas is carried out sympathetically using appropriate building methods and materials where necessary.
Part 13 Class 41	Tramway or road transport undertakings.	To protect the historic fabric of the area and ensure the replacement and repair of such areas is carried out sympathetically using appropriate building methods and materials where necessary.
Part 13 Class 43	Development required for the purposes of the Post Office.	To protect the townscape form indiscriminate installation of boxes, pouches or machines.
Part 13 Class 43A	To allow permitted development rights to East of Scotland Water for development consisting of the erection, construction and maintenance in relation to their statutory functions.	To protect the townscape from indiscriminate installation of pipelines and equipment and cabins, antennae and other plan machinery or equipment.