

# Douglas Head

## Proposal for Designation as a Conservation Area

Submission to the Cabinet Office



**David Wertheim  
Charles Guard**

August 2018  
Revised January 2019  
With Addendum June 2021

# **Douglas Head - Proposal for Designation as a Conservation Area**

Submission to the Cabinet Office

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS:**

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Historical Context .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. Description of Proposed Boundaries .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Isle of Man Planning Considerations .....</b>	<b>5</b>
A. Draft Area Plan for the East – The Written Statement .....	5
B. The Town and Country Planning Act, 1999 .....	7
C. The Douglas Local Plan 1998 – Written Statement .....	7
<b>5. Identification of Special Character .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6. The Piers .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>7. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>8. References .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Addendum, June 2021 .....</b>	<b>17</b>

## DOUGLAS HEAD: PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA

### 1. Introduction:

The authors have prepared this submission in the belief that Douglas Head represents a unique area in the Isle of Man and presents an unparalleled planning opportunity through designation as a Conservation Area.

Starting in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the development of Douglas Head has included an unusually rich and diverse range of human activities and uses. These include residential, recreational, entertainment, industrial and defensive use, each component of which has left its mark and for the most part still endures today.

Bounded on the north by Douglas Harbour and Douglas Bay, on the east by the cliffs rising steeply from the Irish Sea and to the west covered in the characteristic gorse and bramble of the Manx countryside, Douglas Head embodies a uniquely diverse and vibrant slice of Manx history, heritage, culture and environment that justifies the full and proper protection afforded by Conservation Area status.

### 2. Historical Context:

The headland which forms the southern marker of the long sweep of Douglas Bay is not only visually striking, but has also been the site of an extraordinary diversity of uses, which makes it unique on the Island. Rising nearly 100 metres from the sea below, its shape has long been familiar to countless thousands of people who have arrived on the Island via the port of Douglas, as visitors or residents.

From the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Douglas Head has provided land for the purposes of residential accommodation, industrial locations, tourism facilities and defensive purposes; Douglas Head also provides shelter for the Island's main harbour and it is here that the Douglas river enters the sea. For centuries the harbour has provided a safe haven for vessels bringing tourists and trade to the Island. In the days before the Manx lighthouses were built, marker towers were constructed to delineate one headland from another. Perhaps the most well-known is the Herring Tower on Langness, but Douglas Head also has such a tower. Built in 1813, this circular tower, with Gothic crenellations at its top, is now absorbed into the Douglas Head Apartments which were completed in 1998 having been converted from the former Douglas Head Hotel.

Some of the earliest residences date from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, most notably Fort Anne. Built by an exiled Irishman, Buck Whaley between 1796-8, it dominated the headland above the harbour until its demolition in 1979. It has been replaced by a suite of offices that attempt to echo some of the Gothic feel of the original building. However, the original building opened the way to a series of dwellings on the head which enjoyed magnificent views over the bay and provided somewhat exclusive accommodation. The earliest terrace was Taubman Terrace, which dates from 1829, and this was followed by the offer of plots on what was the old bowling green attached to the Fort Anne from as early as 1833. These houses formed Fort Anne Terrace and became the eastern part of Fort William, which was started around 1849. Other historic residential properties include Harold Tower and Ravenscliffe, the latter designed by John Robinson, the architect of what is now the 'wedding cake' section of Government buildings.

## DOUGLAS HEAD: PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA



*The Bridge Control Building*

As the residential occupation continued, the head was also fulfilling a host of other requirements. At its western end there was industry. As boats delivered coal, gas was manufactured for use throughout the town. Large gasometers stood in an area created from extensive quarrying. These quarries, the stone from which built much of early Douglas, are thought to be the earliest commercial quarries on the Island. Industrial units and compounds for harbour machinery and shipbuilding lined South Quay, and the installation of a swing bridge in 1895 saw the erection of the bridge control building, housing extraordinary accumulator machinery, specifically designed for Douglas harbour by the engineers Armstrong Whitworth. The machinery is still *in situ* and is one of the few remaining in the British Isles.

The South Quay forms a part of Douglas' historic harbour. Along from the bridge is the Fort Anne Jetty. Dating from 1837 it was one of the earliest attempts to provide shelter for the inner harbour. Such protection was further enhanced with the

building of the Battery Pier finally completed in 1879. The Battery Pier was substantially extended in the early 1980s and was officially opened in July 1983 by HRH Princess Alexandra and renamed in her honour. It was from Fort Anne that Sir William Hillary, in the 1820s and 30s saw numerous shipwrecks in Douglas bay. He performed many heroic rescues and was inspired to found the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, and the lifeboat station, situated on South Quay, was built in 1924.

Along with the industry, the quarrying, the residential premises and the harbour requirements, it is perhaps as a tourist attraction that Douglas Head was most famous.



*Visitors enjoying the amusements on Douglas Head*

From the earliest years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Douglas Head was a popular place to visit. On its slopes and summit there were any number of attractions. Ferries carried visitors across Douglas harbour and landed them on the Battery Pier from where they could walk past amusement booths, take a funicular railway to the top of the paths, visit a unique Camera Obscura, take refreshments, be entertained in an outdoor theatre, ride a roller coaster and take an electric tram along the Marine Drive, south, to more amusements.

For many years there was a bowling green and then a golf course, the remains of which can still be seen. A visit to the Douglas Head lighthouse was also popular. Originally built in 1832, it was replaced by a taller light in 1892. Part of the interest in visiting the lighthouse

## DOUGLAS HEAD: PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA



*The secret RADAR station on Douglas Head during WWII*

was the fact that the path led past Port Skillion, a bathing creek with a seawater pool, changing rooms and diving boards. It was for men only but that didn't stop passing ladies taking in the view: 'modest nymphs with powerful field glasses' as one newspaper described them.

During World War II, Douglas Head took on an entirely new role. It became a top-secret radar training school, specialising in harbour radar. Some 30,000 cadets were processed through the training rooms of a specially constructed concrete building as part of HMS *Valkyrie*, one of the Royal Naval shore stations. The land below the Douglas Head Hotel bristled with masts and aerials. After the war in 1947, Douglas Harbour became the first harbour in the world to be equipped with radar and the old training building on the head eventually became the current home of the Island's national radio station, Manx Radio.

It is clear, then, that the area of Douglas Head outlined on the accompanying plan, represents one of the most intensely used and socially diverse areas of the Island. It has enormous historic connotations both for industry and for Manx society. It has provided key facilities for the Island, its residents and its visitors for several centuries, and must surely be worthy of conservation as a unified whole for future generations.

### **3. Description of Proposed Boundaries:**

It is proposed that the boundary of the Douglas Head Conservation Area to the north and east should include South Quay and follow the quay eastwards from a point immediately in front of the Manx Gas building to the Battery Pier. Logically it would include the pier and then follow the coast line eastwards past Douglas Lighthouse and then southwards to a point just beyond the ornamental toll gateway.

## DOUGLAS HEAD: PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA

To the south and west the boundary would follow a straight line from the point on the coast defined above to the highest point of the skyline on Douglas Head. The boundary would then follow the skyline to the west to a point south of the starting point on the South Quay. On the western side it would then be joined in a line with the point on the quay except where it needs to deviate to include the whole of the quarry wall enclosing the South Quay Industrial Estate. These proposed boundaries are shown on the accompanying illustration.

It is recognised that there are several industrial areas included, as these have been permitted developments within the former quarries. From a practical standpoint it may be necessary to provide them with a degree of exemption from the Conservation Area restrictions, but imposing a reasonable cap on overall future building heights.



*Outline of proposed Conservation Area*

### 4. Isle of Man Planning Considerations:

#### A. Draft Area Plan for the East – The Written Statement: Draft (2018)

The Written Statement Draft dated 25 May 2018 includes a number of key statements that directly or indirectly embrace Douglas Head; these are highlighted and underlined by the authors of this document:

3.2.3

*In terms of the Island Spatial Strategy (ISS) for Douglas and the East, the key elements are:*

- *continued regeneration within Douglas, particularly around the Promenades and Quayside and Douglas Regeneration Area to create further housing, employment, retail and leisure opportunities;*
- *maintaining the International Shipping Gateway role of Douglas Harbour and;*
- *continued policy of urban containment with the new Area Plan for the East examining the issue of maintaining the distinctive character of the various settlements."*

3.4.6

*Built heritage will continue to be recognised as being vital to the East's identity and its distinctive sense of place. There will be the sensitive reuse and protection of this built heritage wherever possible, to reinforce local character and the relationships between older and newer buildings connected by the spaces between them that people can enjoy.*

4.3 Objectives

iii *To protect landscapes and significant open spaces that contribute to character, identity and sustainable environments.*

While 4.4 Desired Outcomes states:

iii *The natural landscape is recognised for its aesthetic value and as a fully functioning system.*

and 4.4.1 states that to support these outcomes:

*Specific proposals will be made to seek to protect vulnerable views and viewpoints from inappropriate development.*

Under 4.7.12 Douglas Head is addressed specifically under Landscape Proposal 6:

*Douglas Headland is exposed and prominent from many viewpoints. This is considered an outstanding natural feature and one which should be conserved. In order to conserve this vista of seascape and coastal views, applications for planning approval for new development in this area will generally not be supported. It is acknowledged that maintenance and upkeep to standard may lead some existing development to seek planning approval from time to time.*

*In cases where new development is proposed, applications must demonstrate that it can be suitably integrated into the surrounding landscape setting through reasonable mitigation measures and include considering siting, colours, materials, finishes and the general scale.*

## DOUGLAS HEAD: PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA

and Landscape Proposal 8:

### **The open, expansive headlands of Douglas and Onchan shall be protected from visual intrusion.**

Designation of Douglas Head as a Conservation Area is thus fully consistent with the Draft Plan and would both formalise the desired status and ensure protection and conservation in future at the same time as regulating future planning and development proposals.

### **B. The Town and Country Planning Act, 1999**

The Town and Country Planning Act, 1999 provides that:

- (1) *The Cabinet Office shall determine which parts of the Island are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and shall by order designate such areas as conservation areas. (S. 18 (1), p. 22)*
- (2) *Before making an order under subsection (1) the Cabinet Office shall consult – every local authority in whose district the area in question, or any part of that area falls. (S. 18 (2), p. 22)*

### **C. The Douglas Local Plan 1998 – Written Statement**

10.3 (p. 47)

*The definition of a Conservation Area; in the Isle of Man is:*

*“An area of special architectural or historical interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance”.*

10.7 (p. 47)

*44 Buildings were registered in Douglas out of an Island total of 175, at the end of 1998.*

10.21 (p. 51)

*We are extremely fortunate in having such a rich stock of buildings which make up the streetscape of the Capital: however because these buildings form such a national asset, their protection for future generations becomes more vital and the gradual erosion of this central core must be arrested. Under existing legislation the only way of achieving this is to award them Conservation Status at an early date.*

14.28

*Douglas Head:*

*Need for co-ordinated long-term strategy in relation to nature conservation.*

It is submitted here that this need extends beyond nature conservation to include all aspects of conservation and in order to achieve this Douglas Head should be designated as a Conservation Area.

**5. Policy CA/1: Identification of Special Character**

**Policy CA/3: Conservation Area Appraisal**

The Policy and Guidance Notes for the Conservation of the Historic Environment of the Isle of Man Planning Policy Statement 1/01 in Policy CA/1 state that: *“It is the quality and interest of areas, rather than individual buildings which should be the prime consideration”*.

Ten features are presented as examples. The proposed Douglas Head Conservation Area is analysed against each of these below. This analysis will also serve to provide the basis of an appraisal as proposed under Policy CA/3.

i) The historic street pattern and definition of property boundaries:

Douglas Head is served by only two roadways, namely 1) Douglas Head Road including its sub-components presently named as Taubman Terrace, leading to Fort William, which in turn leads to Fort Anne, and 2) South Quay extending from the Trafalgar along the south side of the outer harbour as far as the breakwater. Douglas Head Road ends with a large turning area adjacent to The Point apartments and immediately below Douglas Head Apartments, from whence leads Marine Drive, extending along the east side of the headland. Douglas Head Road is little changed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The South Quay extension replaces a former footpath that provided pedestrian access to the harbour-facing terraces.

The parkland below Douglas Head Road has been in use as such since it was gifted to the Douglas Town Commissioners in 1870 by Sir John Goldie Taubman (see below).

ii) A particular mix or variety of uses:

Most of the properties on Douglas Head are located either on or accessed from Douglas Head Road or the South Quay. The only exceptions are the Lighthouse, the Great Union Camera Obscura and the former Coastguard Station (now a private property).

1) Douglas Head Road

a) Head Road. Starting at the bottom the road is bounded to the south by the Manx Gasworks building (partial late 19<sup>th</sup> century façade with stone ‘Romanesque’ styled arched windows and terra cotta tile decoration) and to the north by the former Trafalgar public house (now a private residence). This historic building, first recorded as a public house in 1857, but certainly somewhat older, provides a successful architectural solution to a difficult, wedge-shaped site. Its modest Victorian decoration, enhanced by three prominent oriel windows facing the quay, echoes the façades of the buildings it faces across the harbour, and it offers the template for any nearby redevelopment on the South Quay and Douglas Head Road.

It is an historically important remnant of the once unified architecture of the south quay and acts as a clearly defined and suitably scaled marker at the foot of Douglas Head Road. Behind the gasworks is an industrial estate within the confines of a former quarry.

## DOUGLAS HEAD: PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA



*A gasometer, the footprint of which is now a car park*

To the left of the Manx Gas building is the base of a former gasometer, now used for private parking. Beyond that the road becomes residential with six terraced houses on each side dating from the late 19th century. Those on the north side facing the harbour (numbered 15 – 25) have crenellated full height bays over three stories. Those on the south side (numbered 18 – 28) are three-storey (with a two-storey extension to the right of No 18, numbered 16) facing the road and are flat fronted.

b) Taubman Terrace: The road then levels out along Taubman Terrace, which is one of the earliest terraces of houses constructed in Douglas and dating from c. 1829. The terrace consists of eight 3-storey houses, the first with a bay, the next five flat fronted, and the last two, apparently of later construction, possessing bays over three stories. The land on the opposite side of the road from Taubman Terrace cannot be developed so as not to

adversely impact the views to the north from the terrace. All properties on the north side of the road overlook Douglas Harbour.

Beyond Taubman Terrace to the south, two large modern low-rise blocks of flats have been built on each side of the road (The Arches). The one on the south is bounded to the east by a small industrial estate built within the confines of the former stone quarry. This includes a small, modern, stone-faced 2-storey office building (Ivy House) adjacent to the road. Next to this is the Boat House, a modern two-storey private residence. There are no further buildings on the south side of the road until the top where the Manx Radio building and Douglas Head Apartments designed by HLA and completed in 1998 (on the site of the former Douglas Head Hotel – Architect: John Robinson 1869) are located. The building encloses the registered Marker Tower built by Thomas Brine in 1813.

c) Fort William: From here the road becomes Fort William. The north side has a total of fourteen large 3 and 4-storey Victorian terraced houses in two terraces with frontages overlooking the harbour, broken in the middle by two residential building plots on which there is a small office and garage. A number of these remain in use as single-family homes while others have been converted into flats.

At the end is a stone tower building of similar vintage to Harold Tower (see below) connected to the Victorian terrace by a modern infill, and all now utilised as flats.

d) Fort Anne: This is followed by the modern office building known as Fort Anne, which replaces the former home of Sir William Hillary first built in 1796-8 by Thomas ('Buck') Whaley and later converted into a hotel, but demolished in 1979. The present office building has been constructed as some sort of a replica of the building it replaced.

After Fort Anne there are two large residential properties, Harold Tower (3 acres) and Ravenscliffe, both of which are registered (see below). Ravenscliffe Mews abut the road and carry the date 1849. Finally, the south side is bounded by the extensive Douglas Head parkland area (see below).

## DOUGLAS HEAD: PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA

The parkland includes three memorials, one to Sir William Hillary (founder of the RNLI and former resident of Fort Anne), one to ‘Lord Horatio Nelson and the gallant Manxmen that served alongside him’ commemorating the Battle of Trafalgar and erected in 2006, and one to the Solway Harvester.

Other former Douglas Head attractions were the Douglas Head Funicular Railway (installed 1896; closed 1954) and the Port Skillion men’s bathing pool (built 1872), the remains of both of which can still be seen.

Douglas Head Road, accessed by the steps from South Quay, serves as the gateway to the almost 100-mile Isle of Man Coastal Path (Raad-ny-foillan). As such it is the gateway from and to the capital for many visitors to the Island, as well as residents who choose to follow this route.

### 2) South Quay

From the bottom of Douglas Head Road to the registered Harbour Swing Bridge Tower the properties are currently light industrial, though some are scheduled for residential redevelopment. Adjacent to the Swing Bridge Tower is a flight of 93 stone steps connecting South Quay to Douglas Head Road, the so-called Gas Works Steps (dating from at least the mid-19th century). Next to these is a small industrial area formerly owned by Manx Petroleum. Thereafter the quay is bounded by the Manx stone perimeter walls of the Fort William and Fort Anne properties. There are then several blocks of modern flats looking out over the harbour. The RNLI Douglas Lifeboat Station (built 1924) is on the harbour side of the quay. Finally the road reaches the fuel storage facilities for Manx Petroleum and extends on to the Battery Pier with the gas storage facilities for Manx Gas.

#### iii) The use of materials or styles local to the particular area or Island:

The Trafalgar, all the Victorian terraced houses and Ravenscliffe all have typical rendered facades on Manx stone with slate roofs. The Towers, Harold Tower and Douglas Head Apartments are all of Manx stone construction or have mostly stone facades.

#### iv) The quality of period architecture:

9% (4 out of 44) of the buildings registered in Douglas in 1999 were on Douglas Head:

- i. Harbour Swing Bridge Tower & Mechanism (#115) is dated 1895 in a stone panel over the door
- ii. Great Union Camera Obscura (#77) built in 1892
- iii. Douglas Lighthouse (#149) rebuilt in 1892
- iv. Douglas Head Hotel (#113) originally built in 1868 and rebuilt as Douglas Head Apartments – completed in 1998. The Marker Tower remains as a registered building.

To these have been added:

- v. Harold Tower (#179 Registered in 2000), which dates from 1833 and was designed by John Welch; and
- vi. Ravenscliffe (#213 – Registered in 2003), which was built in 1850 and was designed by John Robinson.

## DOUGLAS HEAD: PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA



*Present-day Victorians enjoying the Camera Obscura*

lighthouse and the ornamental Toll Gateway on Marine Drive) are in close proximity.

A number of other buildings and structures of varying significance are located on Douglas Head including: a portion of the former Manx Gas office façade together with the gasometer base, the Manx Radio building (itself a fairly non-descript commercial building but nevertheless significant as together with the Douglas Head Hotel they housed HMS *Valkyrie*, a highly important radar training school during WWII) together with the WWII structures on the footpath on the headland, and the open-air amphitheatre dating from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century situated adjacent to the Douglas Head Apartments. This is the only structure of its kind on the Isle of Man.

There are three largely intact Victorian terraces situated along Douglas Head Road and facing north towards Douglas Harbour. They are of high quality and are fine examples of the vernacular urban design and architecture in Douglas in the mid/ late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. These terraces form an imposing backdrop to the harbour and are highly visible to anyone entering or leaving Douglas by sea. They are also highly visible from the harbour area itself. Their group value has a very significant impact on this most important marine gateway to the Isle of Man.

Both Harold Tower and the similar stone built crenellated tower building at the end of Fort William, are fine examples of mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Gothick-style buildings constructed in local Manx slate.

v) The quality and detail of contemporary buildings:

One contemporary building is of note, namely 'The Point', a low-rise apartment building abutting the turning circle at the top of Douglas Head Road and overlooking the sea. This is harmoniously designed by Hugh Logan in a modern 'art deco' style and fits well with its

In addition the ornamental Toll Gateway, Marine Drive (Braddan) (#233) was registered in 2006. The gateway is dated 1891, the year of the opening of the Marine Drive and the architects were Maxwell & Tuke, Manchester. The Marine Drive also served as the route of the Douglas Southern Electric Tramway, which opened in 1897 and operated until WWII.

Five of these Registered Buildings are located on or very close to Douglas Head Road and the other two (the

## DOUGLAS HEAD: PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA

surroundings. It was completed in 2002 to replace a building of similar form and houses eight apartments.

The other modern structure of interest is Douglas Head Apartments, a relatively recent development by Dandara containing 46 apartments (architect: Hugh Logan; completed 1998). This replaces the former Douglas Head Hotel of which little remains apart from the façade and the early 19th century Marker Tower by Thomas Brine, which it incorporates. It sympathetically echoes the building it replaces.

The modern Fort Anne office building (architect: Ellis Brown; built 1998) replacing the Fort Anne Hotel is essentially a pastiche of the former building.

vi) The survivals of building types or features, such as shop fronts, street furniture, decorative ironwork:

A number of the houses in the older section of Fort William (Nos 9 – 16) originally had cast iron balconies facing the harbour. Most of these have been removed and, in some cases, replaced with modern equivalents. The balcony on No 11 is apparently of the original cast iron design, though not in good condition. Nevertheless, this has allowed moulds to be taken so that the reinstatement of the balcony on No 9 could be undertaken using a combination of old and replacement iron castings. Nos 1 – 5 and 8 have two-storey, three- sided bays facing the harbour and hence no balconies.



*An aerial view of Fort Anne and Fort William*

All of the front (harbour facing) doorways in Nos 1 – 12 are of the original design though in several cases (notably Nos 2 – 5) the doors are replacements.

Most of the architecturally designed rear door porticos facing Douglas Head Road are original. None of the houses in Fort William have suffered from the imposition of dormers facing the harbour, though two of the owners of the three-storey ones (Nos 13 and 15) have been allowed to increase the height of their front façades to match the adjacent four-storey ones (Nos 9 – 12); in addition, No 11 Fort William has a small dormer to the rear elevation, facing the road.

## DOUGLAS HEAD: PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA

### vii) The presence and form of hard and soft landscaping:

All of the terraced houses in Taubman Terrace and Fort William have front gardens. In addition those in Fort William have long stretches of steeply sloping land in front of their gardens all the way down to South Quay and accessed by footpaths leading from the quay.

Starting at Fort William the south side of the Head Road is undeveloped and consists of open scrub land. Much of this is covered in gorse and hence provides a backdrop of bright yellow blossom and dark green foliage for much of the year.

There is a substantial public park on the flank of Douglas Head. This was part of the former Nunnery Estate and was gifted by Sir John Goldie Taubman to the Douglas Town Commissioners in 1870 for public use. This area has a long history of public use and recreation. The present Great Union Camera Obscura is all that remains of the many Victorian entertainments that once provided visitor attractions on Douglas Head; it was constructed in 1892.

### viii) The quality of enclosure, spaces between buildings and vistas along streets:

As already noted, the terraced houses comprising Taubman Terrace and Fort William each have their own small defined gardens to the front, facing north towards the harbour. Additionally, those on Fort William share a communal space down the steep hillside to the stone walls on the South Quay. All have spectacular north-facing views across Douglas Bay.

The rears of the Fort William properties all have imposing porticos in the boundary walls serving as entrances to the extended walkways, an innovative solution to accessing properties built on steeply sloping land. As a consequence they each have sunken south-facing rear yards opening off the lower ground floors.

Once the parkland area towards the top of Douglas Head is reached, the vistas open out to provide superb views across Douglas Bay and to the centre of the Island.

### ix) The presence of green open spaces and trees as ‘breathing spaces’:

See above under vii). Douglas Head has a significant number of trees lining the path between South Quay and Douglas Head Road (next to Fort Anne) as well as in the grounds of the larger residential properties.

### x) The presence of water in the landscape:

Douglas Head is quite steeply sloping and there are no freshwater features. However, the Head is bounded on one side by the harbour and on the other by the sea, thus offering extensive vistas across Douglas Bay and the Island’s central hills to the north, and the open sea to the east.

### **Damage:**

The three most vulnerable elements are windows, pitched roofs, and cast-iron balconies, and the majority of these latter have been lost (but see (vi) above).

### **Windows:**

Many of the windows have been replaced with modern uPVC, featuring anachronistic glazing patterns. A few owners have recognised the benefit of retaining and refurbishing the original century-and-a-half old pine windows.

### **Roofscapes:**

A number of the terraced houses on Douglas Head Road, in particular Taubman Terrace, have had dormers inserted into them marring the roof lines. Fortunately those on Fort William have not suffered this fate excepting the rear elevation of No 11 (as noted above) and No 13, though this is largely hidden behind a parapet. As also noted above, two of the three-storey houses (Nos 13 and 15) were given planning consent to raise their front parapets to the level of their four-storey neighbours, damaging the parapet line in the process. Planning consent was recently denied to the owner of No 8 to install full-width dormers on the rear after withdrawing an application to install them on the front (harbourside), and it is to be hoped that this has established a new and important precedent. None of these interventions is irreversible in the future.

All the houses have retained their slate roofs, some of which have recently been sympathetically replaced.

There is some variation in the colour schemes of the harbour-facing frontages and an appropriate scheme common to all should be encouraged as it would represent a major improvement.

### **6. The Piers:**

Douglas Harbour has historic connotations going back many centuries. In the 18th century it was part of a hugely lucrative network of smuggling. From the 19th century onwards it became the gateway to the Island for hundreds of thousands of tourists who arrived on a fleet of Steam Packet boats, which sailed to all the major ports around the Irish Sea.

The harbour was also used for industries, such as the important herring fishery and the importing of supplies for Island life, such as coal and timber. As the Island's economy grew, the need for a more sheltered harbour, protecting vessels and offering access at all states of the tide became imperative. One of the early promoters of an all-purpose harbour was Sir William Hillary. From his vantage point of Fort Anne, he saw not only the disadvantages of an unprotected harbour, but he prepared a grand scheme to provide one of the best harbours in the Irish Sea.

Directly below the site of his former house is the Fort Anne Jetty. Dating from 1837 it was one of the earliest attempts to provide shelter for the inner harbour. Today its slipway provides entry into the water for small craft at all states of the tide.

## DOUGLAS HEAD: PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA

In 1861 an early attempt to offer further protection from the easterly gales ended in disaster. The Scottish engineer James Abernethy suggested erecting one of his piers at the eastern entrance to the harbour. His design was based on creosoted timber resting on a rubble foundation, the idea being that the surging tide would run through it. Unfortunately, very quickly, the surging tide carried it away altogether. There was a heated dispute about who should pay as the Island authorities had borrowed £45,000 for the work, which they now stood to lose.

By 1872 the matter had been resolved and at last Douglas harbour had plans for a pier to protect it from the easterly gales. The Battery Pier was opened in 1879 and gets its name from a battery of canon that once stood on the platform above the pier (the area is still discernible today), placed there in 1797 to defend the harbour during the Napoleonic scare. In the early 1980s the Battery Pier was substantially extended. Huge concrete stabs, moulded on a farm just outside Douglas and conveyed, one-at-a-time on low-loaders, were carefully lowered into place on the eastern side of the pier strengthening it and extending it considerably. It was officially opened in July 1983 by HRH Princess Alexandra and renamed in her honour.

### 7. Conclusion:

Douglas Head enjoys a very valuable place in the development and history of Douglas. For over three centuries it has played a key role in the residential, recreational, entertainment, industrial and defensive development of the town and the Isle of Man as a whole. It retains today a combination of mostly residential period properties of varying styles, many of which are of high status and have mostly survived intact or in good condition with limited adverse changes or losses; many of the changes that have been made could be reversed. In addition there are a number of important historical elements in both the recreational areas dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries as well as a remnant from the Island's defensive role during WWII. Finally Douglas Head continues to serve an important part in tourism starting at the Gas Works Steps, connecting South Quay with Douglas Head Road, which provide the gateway from the capital to the Coastal Path (Raad-ny-foillan).

The value lies as much in the coherence of the group of buildings as in the individual ones that have already been registered. To passengers arriving by sea, the buildings of Douglas Head present a rich mix of styles that absolutely justify protection as part of the sweep of Douglas Bay. Since the Promenade has already been afforded Conservation Area status and protection, Douglas Head, with its rich cultural evolution and mix of buildings, deserves equal recognition to guard against inappropriate alteration, development or demolition in the future.

24<sup>th</sup> January 2019  
David Wertheim  
Charles Guard

## DOUGLAS HEAD: PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA

### **8. References:**

The Douglas Local Plan 1998 – Written Statement

Draft Area Plan for the East – The Written Statement (2018)

The Town and Country Planning Act, 1999

Slack, Stuart: Streets of Douglas – Old and New, The Manx Experience, 1996

Tutt, Patricia: An introduction to the architecture of the Isle of Man, Lily Publications, Ramsey, Isle of Man, 2013

## ADDENDUM

28th June 2021

### **Introduction**

As a result of meetings with the Minister for Policy and Reform (Mr R Harmer) and the Head of Planning Policy (Ms D Brown) at which the proposed conservation area was discussed, it was suggested that prior to public consultation it might be reviewed in the light of the passage of time and the publication and Tynwald approval of the Area Plan for the East. Notwithstanding that the designation of conservation areas is a process independent from the Area Plans, this review has been undertaken.

### **Boundary Review (page 5)**

Based on recommendations made during the course of discussions, the proposed boundary has been redrawn to follow the cliffs along the south east edge of the area and the eastern side of the Alexandra Pier (see new map below).

### **Trafalgar House (Registered Building #296) (formerly The Trafalgar Hotel) (page 8)**

Pursuant to an application by the authors of this report, Trafalgar House has been designated as a registered building (#296). This increases the number of registered buildings within the proposed conservation area to eight.

The first reference to the Trafalgar as a public house has now been traced back to 1851. However, it almost certainly existed as a tavern as the South Quay Tavern is first mentioned in 1839 in a sale notice. Accordingly, a public house existed on the South Quay before the 1850s.

### **Modern Buildings (page 9)**

The Arches relates to the block of flats on the north side of Douglas Head Road. The block of flats on the south side is named Cliffside.

To the north of the Manx Radio building is a derelict, modern residential building, currently for sale.

### **Harold Tower (Registered Building #179) (page 9)**

The sandstone house sign for Harold Tower has been replaced by an incongruous polished stone tablet inscribed Douglas Castle.

### **Survival of building features (decorative ironwork) (page 12)**

A cast iron balcony has been reinstated on number 10, Fort William using new castings from the moulds taken from the original iron work.

### **Windows and Doors (pages 12 & 14)**

Two more of the 14 houses comprising Fort William have replaced original wooden frames with uPVC profiles, in both cases without planning permission. The front doorways of numbers 1- 12 Fort William are no longer all of the original design. The front doorway of number 8 has been replaced with a uPVC frame and plastic-clad door.

**New planning approval - 18/01342/B 31-39 South Quay, approval for 38 flats**

The site has now been cleared in preparation for the construction of a substantial block of apartments next to Trafalgar House, which was originally to have been demolished as part of the scheme. The new six-storey building replaces a series of single storey industrial units.

**Area Plan for the East**

The proposal to designate Douglas Head as a Conservation Area provides substance and structure to the objectives and recommendations in 6.3 and 6.4 (page 49).

Section 5.11.4 (page 39) identifies the potential for a future designation of a wildlife site. The designation as a Conservation Area is wholly consistent with this and will provide additional interim protection.

**6.11.2 (page 55)**

The proposal includes a full character appraisal which is consistent with 6.11.2.



Outline of proposed Conservation Area (Amended June 2021)