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HURST CASTLE: ONE YEAR ON

26 February marks one year since collapse in east wing

22,000 tonnes shingle and rock used to guard against sea's onslaught

Geotechnical investigations will give greater understanding of castle's future

One year on since the collapse of part of the east wing at Hurst Castle in Hampshire, and English Heritage announced today that it has completed the stabilisation of the damaged section. The conservation charity will soon complete a new sea defence which will protect the east wing for the next 50 years. English Heritage will then go on to undertake a major study to ascertain how best to protect this most challenging of heritage sites, at the forefront of sea level rise and climate change.

With teams working tirelessly over the last year and 22,000 tonnes of shingle and rock armour transported along the spit to protect the east wing, English Heritage has committed approximately £3m – with thanks to the Culture Recovery Fund – on works to stabilise the breach and protect Hurst Castle, bringing in a team of specialists including those with skills in marine engineering and coastal defence construction.

In forthcoming weeks, a permanent revetment sea defence engineered to provide protection for the next 50 years will be completed. Following this the charity has commissioned a feasibility study of extensive geotechnical investigations around the castle and on the spit itself. This will look into understanding the forces at work on this exposed shingle causeway; and the geology under the castle and is essential in informing the best course of action with regards to the future repair of the breach. The study will take at least 6 months to complete. During this time, the east and west wings as well as the beach will remain closed for the public's safety.

Rob Woodside, English Heritage Estates Director, said: "A year since the collapse of part of the Victorian east wing and English Heritage has made great strides in working to protect Hurst Castle, but there is more work to be done.

"We will soon complete the revetment to provide a permanent sea defence for the east wing. We can then turn our attention to an in-depth and technical feasibility assessment to understand, as best is possible, the immense forces at work on the spit and the castle. We have always been clear that there can be no quick fix to the complex issues facing the castle. This is an ever-changing environment and despite our efforts, Hurst Castle's east wing and west wing – where we have also detected movement – are at risk from myriad threats; from coastal erosion to harsh sea storms.

"With changes in longshore drift, rising sea levels and more frequent storms, Hurst Castle is amongst the most difficult heritage sites to protect in England. It's practically challenging because of the inaccessibility of the castle for bringing in materials, the time constraints posed by the tides, and the ever-changing nature of the spit the castle sits on and the sea around it. And it's complex from a regulatory point of view, falling under the jurisdiction of marine and other agencies combined with our own responsibility to respect the historical significance of the building. The threat of coastal erosion and climate change are threats also faced by heritage organisations around the world. We're hoping, through our work, to share lessons learnt with those facing similar challenges."

On Friday 26 February 2021, a section of the wall on the 19th-century east wing of the castle collapsed after the sea exposed and undercut its foundations. English Heritage was days away from commencing a programme of works to underpin the east wing of the castle when the collapse occurred and for all involved the collapse as a result of the harsh climate and coastal erosion was a wrenching blow.

A temporary revetment was built to shelter the castle and allow heavy plant to access the breach and in November 2021, English Heritage contractors injected a specialist resin to stabilise the foundations either side of the breach in the east wing and began to clear the fallen stonework – cataloguing the archeologically significant material. That work was successfully completed before Christmas and contractors have since undertaken repairs to the groynes to the west of the revetment, adding a further 2,000 tonnes of shingle which has once again become depleted.

As in 2021, from 1 April 2022, the Tudor keep at Hurst Castle – the most historic part of the castle – will open to the public for the season. A regular ferry service will run from Keyhaven to the castle and refreshments will be available from outside the castle entrance.

For more on English Heritage's project on site see: [https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/Hurst \(/visit/places/hurst-castle/\)](https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/Hurst(/visit/places/hurst-castle/)).

To book tickets to the castle visit: <https://www.hurstcastle.co.uk> (<https://www.hurstcastle.co.uk/>)

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