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Probe to open into Raasay House blaze

[DAVID ROSS, Highland Correspondent](#)

January 20 2009

FIRE investigators and loss adjusters are expected to visit the island of Raasay today to examine the ruins of the historic Raasay House which was all but destroyed by fire in the early hours of Sunday morning.

Historic Scotland is expected to send a representative to the island later in the week to assess the impact of the fire on the Grade-A listed building.

It had been undergoing a £4m refurbishment which was due to be completed before Easter.

The outdoor activity centre, which had been based at the house for the past 24 years, had already taken bookings for courses and was due to host a wedding in April.

The mansion where Johnson and Boswell stayed during their Tour of the Hebrides in 1773 was taken over by the community from previous owners Highlands and Island Enterprise (HIE) in 2007.

It was owned by the Raasay House Community Company, but HIE was overseeing its upgrading which involved new bathrooms, more bedrooms, upgraded IT facilities, new conference rooms, a bar and central heating. Inverness builder Rok was awarded the contract by HIE last year.

David Westgarth, RHCC chairman, said: "The island is devastated by what has happened to this iconic building, but it is not destroyed completely. The facade is still standing and the early indications are that it can be rebuilt, which 99% of the people of Raasay clearly want it to be.

"It was just such a horrendous night. But what has been so heartening is that we have had calls from right round the world. People who had visited the island were all shocked to hear the news."

Robert Muir, HIE's manager for Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, went to Raasay yesterday. He told The Herald: "It is a huge blow to the island, but the community company is determined that we should try to see what can be done and whether it can be rebuilt - but we will have to wait for the investigators' reports.

"We don't yet know how much of the building will still be structurally sound, how much can be rebuilt. But there is a determination on the island."

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