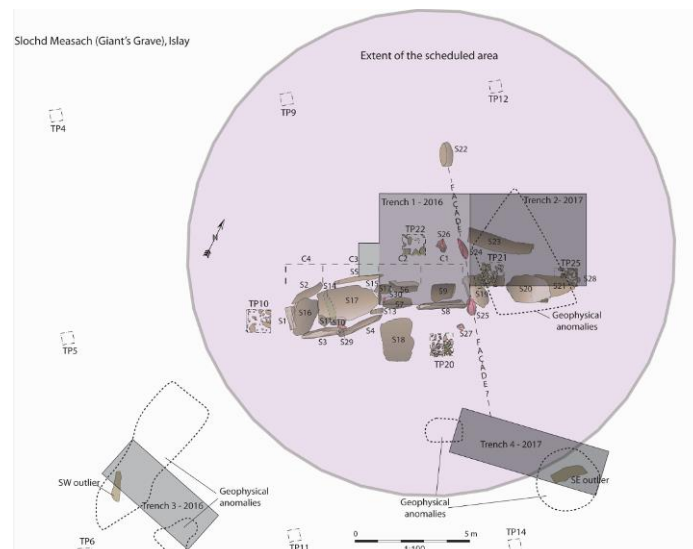
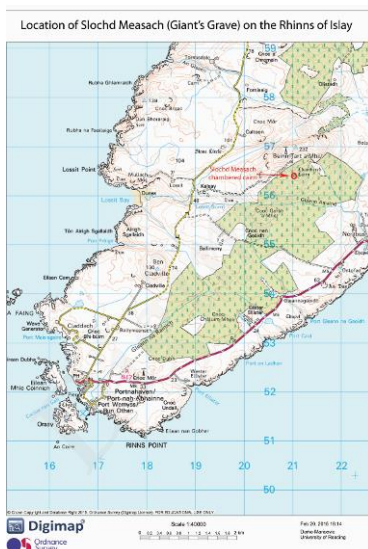


Case reference	SMC-ABC-001
Application details	Archaeological Excavation/recording of monument
Site address	Slochd Measach, Giants Grave, Chambered Cairn, Nereabolls, Islay
Applicant	University of Reading
Determining Authority	Historic Environment Scotland
Local Authority Area	Argyll & Bute Council
Reason(s) for notification	Notification Direction 2015 - requires Historic Environment Scotland to notify Ministers if it intends to grant Scheduled Monument Consent where the works go beyond the minimum level of intervention that is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in a monument.
Representations	Nil
Date notified to Ministers	6 July 2016
Date of recommendation	25 July 2016
Decision / recommendation	Clear

Description of Proposal and Site:

- Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is sought for geophysical survey, archaeological excavation of four trenches and recording at the site of a prehistoric cairn known as the Giants Grave on the Rhinns of Islay.
- The monument contains the denuded remains of an Early Neolithic chambered burial cairn (dating from 4000-3200 BC). It was scheduled on 23rd February 1977.



- Four trenches are proposed and are being deliberately targeted to answer the research aims set out in paragraph 2 below. Trench 1 is to be 5m x 4m in plan with a 2m x 1m extension on one side. Trench 2 is to be 5m x 4m in plan and will be an extension of Trench 1. Trench 3 will be 5m x 2m but is wholly outside the scheduled area. Trench 4 will be 6m x 2m and is partially outside the scheduled area. The dimensions are restricted to the minimum possible to achieve the project aims, however they do cover a substantial proportion of the monument estimated to be approx. 15%.

Consultations and Representations:

- No representations have been received with respect to this application.
- PAD consulted SG Culture and Historic Environment Division following notification and they do not consider that the SMC application raises issues of national interest that would merit Ministerial intervention.

Assessment:

1. The SMC application has been notified to Scottish Ministers because HES are minded to grant consent for archaeological excavations which will impact on the Scheduled Monument as the insertion of trenches and related ground disturbance goes beyond the minimum level of intervention which is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in the monument. This is a significant departure from policy as set out in section 3.16 of the HES Policy Statement June 2016.
2. The application has been made by the Islay Prehistory Group. Their Project Design sets out a detailed research background, methodology and community outreach programme and aims to gain a better understanding of:
 - the morphology, stratigraphy and construction of the cairn;
 - the site prior to the cairn's construction;
 - the ways in which the monument/site were used in the Neolithic and subsequent periods;
3. The works will allow for a chronology for all parts of the archaeological sequence to be reconstructed and contribute to a longer term project where previous phases were granted SMC in 2015. The project team have undertaken a programme of intensive research, survey and investigation over the last two decades and established that western Scotland has a rich Mesolithic record on the Inner Hebrides and Argyll coastline and level of which is almost unique to Scotland.
4. All four trenches would be returned to existing levels and form upon completion as the cairn will be reinstated, according to the 3D records obtained prior to excavation, so it resembles its original appearance and stratigraphic order as closely as possible. The project results would significantly enhance the understanding of the monument and it has been chosen specifically because of its relationship to a nearby settlement site - other sites on Islay do not share this characteristic.

5. HES consider the application is compliant with section 3.19, 3.20 and 3.22 of the HES Policy Statement June 2016 and adequately demonstrates that there is considerable public benefits, the project conforms to current archaeological standards and is carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed and properly planned. Some aspects require further control and HES have recommended that two conditions be attached to the consent. We have no reason to disagree with this assessment.
6. No European protected species or habitats have been identified as having the potential to be affected by these works. The site does not lie in a SSSI, SAC or Special Protection Area.
7. In summary, the SMC application does not raise any issues of national importance that would merit intervention by Scottish Ministers.

Recommendation:

- The application should be cleared back to Historic Environment Scotland to issue the SMC with conditions.