

Case reference	SMC-EDB-002
Application details	Excavation and removal of Runestone (within scheduled area of Edinburgh Castle - SM 90130)
Site address	Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh
Applicant Determining Authority Local Authority Area	Dr Simon Gilmour, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Historic Environment Scotland (HES) City of Edinburgh
Reason(s) for notification	Notification Direction 2015 – works to be granted Scheduled Monument Consent by Historic Environment Scotland go beyond the minimum level of intervention that is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in a monument
Representations	One
Date notified to Ministers Date of recommendation	6 November 2017 22 November 2017
Decision / recommendation	Clear

Description of Proposal and Site:

- Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is sought for the removal of an 11th century Swedish carved runestone artefact located within a fenced off area in Princes Street Gardens, beneath the castle esplanade. The stone's location is within the larger scheduled area of Edinburgh Castle (in red below).
- The monument comprises all structures, fortifications and open spaces associated with Edinburgh Castle. The scheduled area is irregular and includes the area around the castle in which traces of activities associated with the castle may survive. It is of national importance because of its supreme historical, architectural, archaeological and cultural significance.



Scheduled area



Location of runestone



Carved runestone detail

Consultations and Representations:

- A consultation response from Scottish Natural Heritage was received. They noted there are natural heritage assets of national importance on the site but confirmed these will not be affected by the proposals and no conditions were proposed.
- PAD consulted SG Culture and Historic Environment Division following notification and they are not aware of any broader context or issues surrounding the case and have no further comments to make.

Assessment:

1. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) are minded to grant consent for the recording, excavation and removal of the carved runestone which will impact on the Scheduled Monument as the related ground disturbance and its complete removal 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 HES' Policy Statement.
2. The application has been submitted by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Originally from Lilla Ramsjö, Vittinge, Westmanland, Sweden, the grey granite runestone was donated to the society by Sir Alexander Seton of Preston and Ekolsund in 1787 and has been in its current location since 1821. The runestone is approx. 1000 years old, 5 feet high and 3 feet wide, in a weathered condition. Runestones are memorials to the dead and would have been brightly painted when first made. They are usually large boulders or stones with a carved runic inscription dating from 4th century AD to 12th century AD, with most examples found in Scandinavia dating from the Viking era.
3. The objectives of the project are to record the carved runestone, investigate its historic context and excavate it by trench, conserve and treat off- site and relocate it in order to enhance both its understanding and public access. The recording, archaeological investigation, monitoring and conservation will be carried out by AOC Archaeology Ltd.
4. The proposed trench will be hand-excavated at the base of the stone, only to the depth required to ensure that the stone is not destabilised prior to its careful removal. The trench will be designed to minimise disturbance to other archaeologically sensitive remains and any features will be recorded and excavated only if disturbance is likely as a result of the removal of the stone. After removal of the stone for conservation works, the trench will be re-instated by back filling with spoil and gravel as required, compacted with top soil replaced and grass seeded, all under archaeological supervision.
5. The stone is to be relocated permanently to an outdoor landscaped area outside 50 George Square, within the University of Edinburgh's campus. No. 50 houses the School of Literature, Landscapes and Cultures of which Scandinavian Studies is a part. The ownership of the runestone will transfer to National Museums Scotland who have agreed a long term loan of the stone to the university. A detailed programme of interpretation, promotion and community engagement is proposed.



Proposed location map



George Square relocation visualisation

6. HES considers that the works would not affect the cultural significance of Edinburgh Castle but would have a greater effect on part of the monument. The physical impact of the proposed works on the cultural significance of the carved runestone would be limited to the required conservation and its relocation. This is because the inherent interest is as a carved stone artefact. It also has been moved various times and is not historically connected to its current location or the wider scheduled area. Its current location limits wider public appreciation and increases the likelihood of damage resulting from vandalism or works in the vicinity.
7. As the works have been proposed in order to ensure the long term preservation of the runestone and the size of the intervention is minimal compared to the overall scheduled area, HES considers that the benefits to ensure its appreciation and security are greater than the negative impacts of removal of archaeological deposits and relocating the runestone outwith a scheduled area.
8. HES believes the application accords with sections 3.17 and partially meets 3.20 of their Policy Statement, because it has been demonstrated that the works have been carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed and properly planned and that the public benefits of the project outweighs the impact on the cultural significance of the monument.
9. Three conditions of consent are required to enable the application to be compliant with paragraph 3.20, covering the provision of a Written Scheme of Investigation and the production of method statements for the stone's conservation and one for its excavation and extraction.
10. In conclusion, HES considers that the project is broadly consistent with relevant policy, has clear long term preservation and public benefits and encourages outreach and engagement while raising awareness.
11. In summary, the SMC application does not raise any issues of national importance that would merit intervention by Ministers.

Decision/Recommendation:

- The application should be cleared back to Historic Environment Scotland to issue Scheduled Monument Consent with three conditions.