

Case reference	SMC-ABC-002
Application details	Excavation of two trenches
Site address	Dun Fhinn, Dun, Islay (SM 4016)
Applicant	Kilmartin Museum
Determining Authority	Historic Environment Scotland
Local Authority Area	Argyll and Bute Council
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	Nil
Date notified to Ministers	5 February 2018
Date of recommendation	28 February 2018
Decision / recommendation	Clear

Description of Proposal and Site:

- Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is sought for trench excavations at Dun Fhinn near Kildalton in the south east of the island of Islay.
- The monument comprises a prehistoric defended settlement, probably dating from the Iron Age (between 500 BC and AD 500). The dun stands on a rocky knoll above rough moorland at the end of a prominent ridge. It contains a perimeter drystone wall enclosing an oval area which measures 18m by 11m transversely. It is of national importance because of the inherent potential to make a significant addition to our understanding of the design and construction later prehistoric small defended settlements in western Scotland and has good potential for well-preserved remains surviving within and immediately outside the dun.



Figure 2: Location of Dun Fhinn in SE Islay

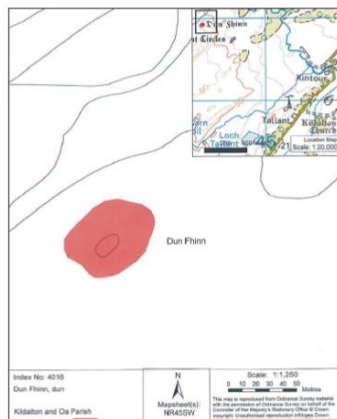


Figure 3: Dun Fhinn Scheduled area

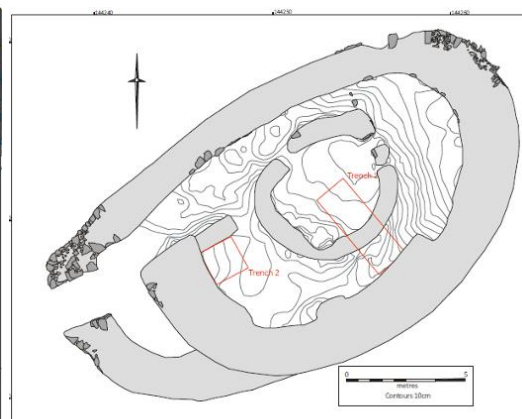


Figure 6: Plan of Dun Fhinn and location of proposed excavation trenches

Consultations and Representations:

- No representations were made during consideration of the application.
- PAD consulted SG Culture and Historic Environment Division following notification and they are content and have no further comment to make.

Assessment:

1. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) are minded to grant SMC for this application, however the proposal to dig two trenches goes beyond the minimum level of intervention which is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in the monument. This conflicts with policy as set out in section 3.16 and 3.18 of HES' Policy Statement.
2. The application has been submitted by Kilmartin Museum on behalf of Islay Heritage.
3. The works are part of a wider research project called the Kintour Landscape Project, a partnership between Kilmartin Museum and Reading University. It also forms part of a framework of projects initiated by Islay Heritage to examine the significance and nature of duns across the Ardtalla Estate and throughout Argyll. The project design sets out the research themes in line with the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF) and seeks to identify the chronology of related dun structures and their relationship with the wider landscape. Dun Fhinn is identified as particularly suitable because it contains an internal structure which may be a roundhouse or hut circle suggesting occupation over an extended period. The proposal aims to archaeologically investigate the remains of the dun structure and internal circular structure by hand digging two trenches.
4. Trench 1 would measure 8m by 3m and be positioned to run from the internal face of the dun wall to the possible hut circle. Trench 2 would measure 3m x 3m and be positioned to examine the nature of an earthwork that may be a dividing wall at the west end. Topsoil and vegetation would be stripped by hand and the turf stacked for future re-turfing after backfilling. Any rubble collapsed from surrounding walls will be cleaned, recorded and removed to allow the underlying deposits to be examined. Any cut features, such as pits or postholes, would be 50% excavated. Any structural walls would be left in situ. The site's original profile would be reinstated.
5. All works would be supervised by a Director and another experienced archaeologist with volunteers and students included at a ratio of 1:3 - one archaeologist to three less experienced people. Kilmartin Museum and Reading University work in accordance with recognised standards of good practice including the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Code of Conduct.
6. HES consider that the works would affect a relatively small proportion of the primary deposits and leave the walls associated with the monument intact. With the exception of vegetation removal, the site would be returned to its former state at the end of works, therefore HES believe the works are not extensive and have been justified in accordance with paragraph 3.17 and 3.20 of their policy

statement as the benefits are greater than the negative effects of the removal of archaeological deposits and they believe the works has been carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed and properly planned.

7. In conclusion, HES consider the works to be broadly consistent with policy. While the controlled archaeological excavation affecting a small area of the primary deposits within the monument will be destructive, the trench dimensions have been minimised and the clear research aims and public benefits of increasing awareness and understanding of the Islay duns overrides the negative impacts.
8. 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 grant Scheduled Monument Consent.