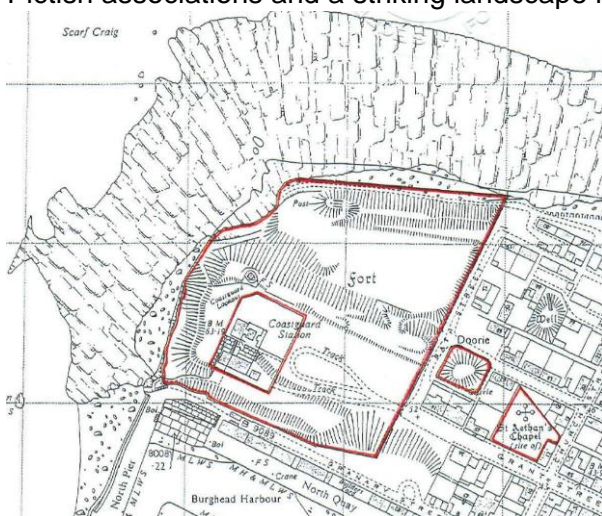


Case reference	SMC-MRY-001
Application details	Excavation of ramparts and test pitting of lower citadel
Site address	Burghhead fort, graveyard and chapel, including the Clavie (SM 2205), Burghhead
Applicant	University of Aberdeen
Determining Authority	Historic Environment Scotland
Local Authority Area	Moray 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	8 March 2018
Date of recommendation	26 March 2018
Decision / recommendation	Clear

Description of Proposal and Site:

- Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is sought for the excavation of 3 trenches and 6 test pits at Burghhead Fort. The monument comprises the remains of a massive promontory Iron Age hillfort located to the north of Burghhead, a planned town overlooking the Moray Firth. The surviving portion of the fort covers an area about 150 x 170 metres. Other remains were demolished with the town's grid planned expansion from 1808.
- The designated area is in three separate sections i), the fort and ramparts [with the Coastguard Station excluded] ii), the old graveyard on Grant Street containing the below ground remains of St Aethans Chapel; and iii), Doorie Hill and the Clavie Stone; as outlined in red below. The site is important because it is a high status settlement with Pictish associations and a striking landscape impact.



Consultations and Representations:

- No representations were received by HES during their consideration.
- PAD consulted SG Culture and Historic Environment Division following notification and they have no comments to make on the proposal.

Assessment:

1. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) are minded to grant consent for archaeological excavations at Burghead Fort which, with its related ground disturbance and removal of material, goes beyond the minimum level of intervention which is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in the monument.
2. The works are part of the Northern Picts Project being undertaken by the University of Aberdeen. The project team have been working at Burghead since 2013 and have had pre-application discussions with HES. The investigations respond to key research areas suggested by the Scottish Archaeological Framework (ScARF) and seeking to address the date, construction and development of the ramparts; the survival on internal deposits in the lower citadel; the use of space within the fort and its overall character and development sequence; and management issues relating to the extent of survival and impact of erosion.
3. The proposed works involve excavating trial trenches and test pits to provide information on the survival and location of archaeological remains. Trench 1 measures 2m x 9m and is to target the lower citadel north rampart. Trench 2 measures 2m x 9m and is placed to investigate features adjacent to Bath Street. Trench 3 measures 3m x 5m and would reopen a previous excavated area to allow for modern analysis. The 6 test pits would measure approximately 2m x 2m with limited sample excavation to for environmental and dating samples.
4. HES consider the works to be broadly consistent with relevant policy and would involve controlled excavations within a relatively small part of the monument. The application is accompanied by a project design that sets out a well-considered and appropriate methodology and makes provision for post excavation analysis and reporting. The project team are experienced and have an established track record of successful delivery of archaeological projects.
5. HES consider the benefits of the proposed works are greater than the negative effects of the removal of archaeological deposits. They are the minimal necessary to achieve the project objective which leaves the majority of archaeological deposits intact with no visual alterations. HES believe the works to be broadly consistent with policy and the application meets section 3.20 of their policy statement because it has demonstrated that works have been carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed and properly planned. However, the proposal is not considered the minimum necessary, consistent with conserving the cultural significance of the moment, hence the requirement to notify Ministers.
6. In summary, this 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.