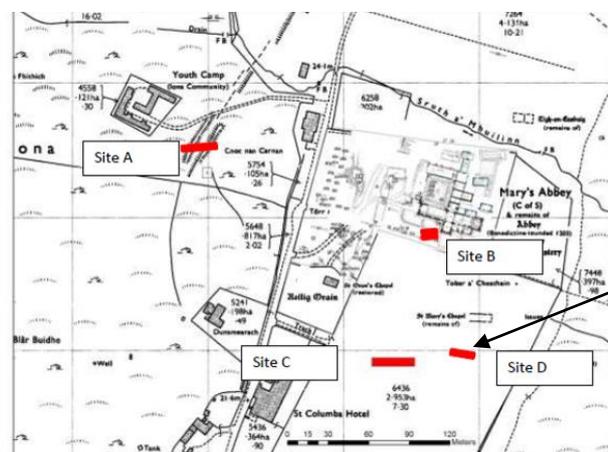
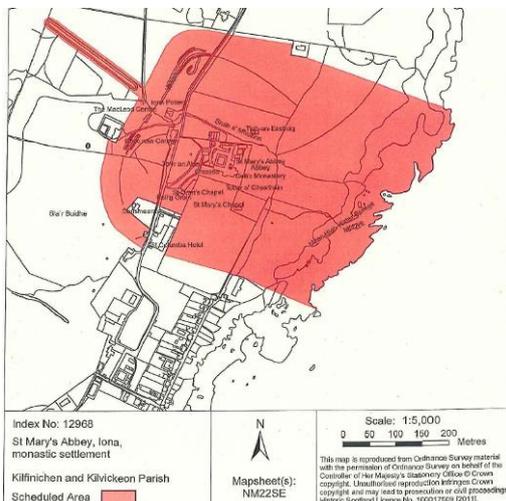




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|-----------------------------------|--|
| Case reference | SMC-ABC-003 |
| Application details | Small scale trench across ditch to answer specific research questions - Site D |
| Site address | St Mary's Abbey, Iona (SM 12968) |
| Applicant | University of Glasgow |
| Determining Authority | Historic Environment Scotland |
| Local Authority Area | Argyll & 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 | 24 April 2018 |
| Date of recommendation | 15 May 2018 |
| Decision / recommendation | Clear |

Description of Proposal and Site:

- Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is sought for archaeological excavation of a trench across a possible ditched enclosure (at site D as shown below) in the field south of St Mary's Abbey, on the west coast of the island of Iona in Argyll.
- The monument comprises the archaeological remains of a large monastic settlement founded by St Columba in AD 563 and parts of buildings associated with the later abbey founded around AD 1200 (scheduled area in red below). Iona was crucial in the role it played in converting people across the British Isles to Christianity. It remains a place of international cultural significance and is known as the birthplace of Scottish Christianity. The abbey is a Property in Care of HES and open to the public. Parts of the bank and ditch that surrounded the settlement remain visible above ground and complex archaeological remains survive below ground.



Illus 1 General location of 2017 and proposed 2018 trenches in relation to Iona Abbey

Consultations and Representations:

- No representations were made during consideration of the application.
- 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 SMC for this application, however the proposal to excavate a trench goes beyond the minimum level of intervention which is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in the monument.
2. The application has been submitted by University of Glasgow. The proposed works include the hand excavation of the backfill of a disused modern pipe trench and the hand excavation of a trial trench 1.5m wide with maximum length of 7m. The trench would be reinstated to the profile as found before the excavation and re-turfed.
3. The research objectives of the proposed works have been clearly set out and the investigation is intended to address a lack of understanding about the nature, date and function of a feature identified during previous geophysical survey. The feature, which may be an enclosure, is unusual in a monastic complex. The proposed trench follows on from a series of re-excavated trenches, undertaken in 2017, at sites A to C.
4. The project responds to research aims set out at national, regional and site-specific levels. Of particular relevance is the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF) and Regional Archaeological Research Framework for Argyll which suggest focussing on monastic enclosures and prehistoric ritual practices.
5. HES consider the application has been accompanied by a detailed description and project design that sets out a well-considered, appropriate and careful methodology. The project team are highly experienced and have an established track record of successful delivery of similar archaeological projects. HES believe the works have been justified in accordance with paragraph 3.17 of their Policy Statement 2016. The project design does not set out a method of approval for post excavation analysis and reporting so a condition is required as outlined in paragraph 3.22 of their Policy Statement.
6. HES consider the works are not extensive as they affect only a very small proportion of one feature of the monument and, once completed, the works would not visually alter the monument. Therefore, they believe the benefits of the proposals are greater than the negative removal of archaeological deposits and the proposal is broadly consistent with relevant policy. However, the proposal is not considered the minimum necessary consistent with conserving the cultural significance of the monument, hence the requirement to notify Ministers.
7. In summary, the SMC application does not raise any issues of national importance that would merit intervention by Ministers.

Recommendation:

The application should be cleared back to Historic Environment Scotland to grant Scheduled Monument Consent with one condition.