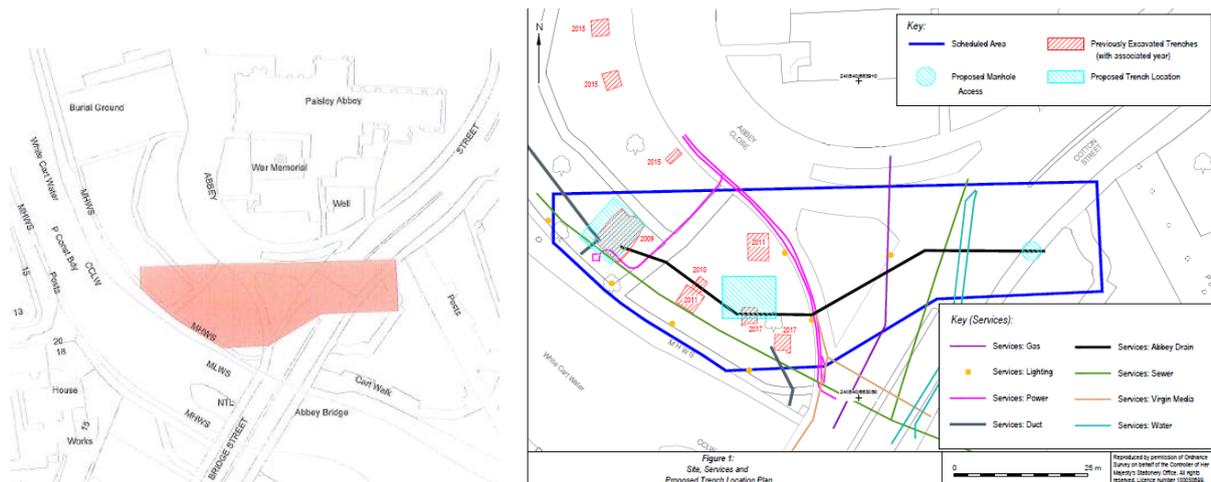




Case reference	SMC-RFS-003
Application details	Excavation of 2 trenches - The Big Dig Project, Abbey Quarter, Paisley
Site address	Drain 75M SSW of Paisley Abbey, Paisley (SM 8078)
Applicant	GUARD Archaeology Ltd
Determining Authority	Historic Environment Scotland (HES)
Local Authority Area	Renfrewshire 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 April 2019
Date of recommendation	29 April 2019
Decision / recommendation	Clear

Description of Proposal and Site:

- Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is sought for hand excavation of two trenches at Paisley Abbey drain. The monument comprises a medieval stone drain constructed to carry waste water through the monastic precinct of the Abbey which survives for at least 90m from east to west lying beneath an area of level ground to the south of the Abbey on the East bank of the White Cart water. The earliest parts of the drain date from 1350 to 1400 with most portions built 1400 to 1500 and some modern repairs and additions. The buried remains and silting deposits are unusually well-preserved and have been little disturbed by modern development.
- The 'Big Dig' application has been submitted by GUARD Archaeology Ltd, in conjunction with Renfrewshire Council (site owners) It follows on from a previous SMC for the 'Wee Dig' project, as part of the Year of History, Heritage and Architecture 2017. The 'Big Dig' application is for the extension of these previously excavated areas allowing for two trenches, at a maximum size of 10m x 8m each, at the western end and central area of the drain.
- The monument is of national importance because it makes a significant addition to our understanding of the past, especially monasteries of the later Middle Ages.



Consultations and Representations:

- No Representations were made during consideration of the application.
- PAD consulted Scottish Government's 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 consent for archaeological excavations which will impact on the Scheduled Monument as the insertion of two 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 HES' Policy Statement 2016.
2. The aims of the project are to investigate, identify and characterise archaeological deposits especially in relation to the abbey and town structures; provide structural information to discuss a possible increase in public access; monitor modern day impacts on the drain and expand public engagement with and interest in the drain as part of Paisley's historic centre.
3. Works are scheduled to start on 21 May and will be carried out by professional staff from GUARD, students and volunteers, working at a ratio of no more than 5 volunteers to 1 professional archaeologist. All significant archaeological deposits will be cleaned by hand and recorded, but not excavated. HES Heritage Directorate has undertaken pre-application discussions with the applicants and these works accord with the agreed outcome.
4. HES consider the works would involve controlled archaeological excavation within a relatively small part of the monument and be the minimum necessary to achieve the project aims. These aims are clearly set out especially relating to the public benefits which accords with paragraph 3.17 of their policy statement. Overall HES believe these benefits, such as improving the understanding of the drain, are considered to be greater than the negative effects of the removal of archaeological deposits and that the proposal is broadly consistent with relevant policy but not the minimum necessary, hence the requirement to notify Ministers.

5. 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 without conditions.