



Case reference	SMC-ABC-008
Application details Site address	Archaeological Investigation of potential North/Sea gate of the Castle Tarbert Castle
Applicant Determining Authority Local Authority Area	Tarbert Castle Trust Historic Environment Scotland (HES) Argyll & Bute
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 Date of recommendation	9 April 2020 12 May 2020
Decision / recommendation	Clear

Description of Proposal and Site:

- Tarbert Castle is a scheduled monument. It was constructed on an early medieval fortification, overlooking East Loch Tarbert and the bay below. It is of national importance because it contains the remains of what was once one of the most important castles in western Scotland, and evidence of the Scottish crown's relationship with the inhabitants of Argyll and of how it was built and inhabited. Location plans are provided in the attached annex.
- Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is sought by Tarbert Castle Trust for archaeological investigation to recover any evidence of the northern gate, possibly a seagate, into the castle.
- The project seeks to open an archaeological trench over the potential location of the gate to identify whether or not it was there, the date and phasing of the surrounding masonry, and the condition of these features. This will inform further debate about the castle's presentation and interpretation.
- The proposed works also include the removal of mortar samples and reinstatement following excavation.

Consultations and Representations:

- No third party representations were received.

- PAD consulted the Scottish Government's Culture and Historic Environment Division (CHED) who advised that the proposal does not appear to raise any specific issues of national importance.

Assessment:

1. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) has concluded that the proposal is broadly consistent with relevant policy and intends to grant consent for it. However, they consider that should excavations be extended to the disturbance of in situ deposits or structures, the proposal would not be the minimum necessary consistent with conserving the cultural significance of the monument. HES has therefore notified Scottish Ministers of its intention to grant consent, as required by The Scheduled Monument Consent (Notification of Applications) Direction 2015.
2. HES considers that the proposals form part of a research project that has been well-targeted to ensure that impacts on the monuments are minimised. The project can be expected to deliver important public benefits, including increasing understanding of the monument and the historic environment in general. HES considers that the accompanying Project Design/Written Scheme of Investigation sets out a well-considered, appropriate and careful methodology and that the project team is highly experienced. However, HES concludes that further information (including on the size of the trench and a mortar sampling strategy) is required. The consent would be subject to conditions requiring this information; requiring the ground to be reinstated following completion of the investigation works; and requiring HES to be notified of the timetable for the works.
3. CHED considers that the proposed SMC does not appear to raise any specific issues of national importance. They believe that the proposed excavation would have minimal impact and could offer additional intelligence in terms of understanding the monument. There will be expert archaeological monitoring during the works, which will ensure no permanent impact to the monument, and there are opportunities for increased community engagement and education.
4. 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 determine.

Annex: Location Plans

