



Case Information

Reference/Case ID	300018762		
Scheduled Monument	The Chesters, fort, Drem		
Index no	SM90072	Grid ref	NT 50600 78200
Date application validated	28 November 2016		
Summary of proposed works	Pest Control Works		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that approval be granted

2. Background

The Chesters is a later prehistoric fort, one of the best preserved examples of this class of monument in lowland Scotland. Measuring approximately 250m E-W by 140m N-S, the fort is defined by a series of substantial earthwork ramparts enclosing an interior where the remains of circular buildings can be traced. Although its ramparts give the appearance of strong defence, the fort is overlooked by higher ground immediately to the south and would have been extremely vulnerable to attack from this side. This implies that the elaborate fortifications are a display of status and power rather than being purely defensive. The fort also overlooks an area of fertile farmland to the north where the remains of extensive contemporary field systems have been discovered.

The scheduled area is irregular in shape with maximum dimensions of 370m E-W by 190m N-S, to incorporate the upstanding remains of the monument and an area where buried archaeological remains relating to its construction, occupation and use can be expected to survive.

The monument is of national importance because of its outstanding field characteristics and preservation which give it exceptional potential to contribute to our understanding of high-status settlement in the later prehistoric period.

The application is for rabbit control measures comprising gassing, shooting and the erection of a rabbit-proof fence along the southern edge of the site. It will affect

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



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selected areas of the ramparts where rabbits are active, and a long linear section of the southern side of the monument. The application has been submitted by Historic Environment Scotland's Conservation Directorate, after an assessment of the conservation needs of the site as part of their ongoing monument audit process.

The application is accompanied by a descriptive plan, an erosion survey, and a Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological monitoring of ground-breaking works.

HES Heritage Management Directorate has undertaken pre-application discussions with the applicant regarding the scope and timing of works, and this application accords with the outcome of those discussions.

3. Proposals

Rabbit control measures comprising gassing, shooting and the installation of a rabbit proof fence incorporating up to two access gates and six drop-box traps.

The consented works are as follows –

- Gassing: gassing will be carried out by a suitably qualified specialist pest-control contractor. Burrows will be blocked as necessary using turf brought onto the monument from an external source. Once the gas has dissipated, the turf and any carcasses on the ground surface will be removed from the site.
- Installation of fence: the new fence will follow the route of an earlier fence line. It will be a stob and wire fence comprising round posts every 10 feet with larger strainer post every 100 yards strung with wire. 18 gauge rabbit proofing mesh will be attached to the bottom of the fence extending 3ft upwards from the base and 12-18 inches along the ground surface on the south side. An electric wire will be strung along the top of the new fence as a stock control measure.
- Gate: a 12 foot timber gate is proposed within the scheduled area to allow stock management. This will require foundations measuring 900mm by 400mm wide and 800mm deep. The gate posts will be set in concrete within the foundation holes.
- Drop traps: four drop traps are proposed along the fence line within the scheduled area. These will be set in pits 3 feet by 3 feet wide by 2.5 feet deep.

It should be noted that it is not possible to grant consent for some elements of the works described in the application as they are located outside the monument (e.g. sections of the fence) or do not require consent as they do not fall within a category of works requiring consent laid out in the Act (e.g. rabbit control through shooting or gassing).

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



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Aims – to control and ideally eradicate rabbits on the monument. Rabbit burrows can cause extensive damage to archaeological deposits and can also create unstable ground conditions which are potentially hazardous.

Timetable – the applicant aims to initiate works in January 2017

Personnel – works will be carried out by specialist contractors and Historic Environment Scotland staff under the supervision of HES Conservation Directorate. Archaeological supervision will be conducted by Kirkdale Archaeology.

4. Representations received

No third party representations were received.

5. Report

a) Policy considerations

The application should be considered with the following legislative and policy considerations in mind:

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

Part 1 Section 2: Control of works affecting scheduled monuments.

Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement June 2016

3.14. A monument is included in the schedule to secure the long-term legal protection of the monument in the national interest, in situ and as far as possible in the state it has come down to us. Scheduled monuments have an intrinsic value as monuments, not related to any concept of active use. It is the value of the monument to the nation's heritage, in terms set out in the section on Scheduling in Chapter 2 of this policy statement that is the primary consideration in determining applications for scheduled monument consent.

3.15. Monuments are subject to decay and the threat of destruction, from natural and human causes. Conservation work is normally needed to prolong the life of a monument, but there is a risk that this can be so invasive that it irreversibly modifies the monument's character and affects the special interest or features that made the monument important in the first place.

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



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3.16. Works on scheduled monuments should therefore normally be the minimum level of intervention that is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in a monument.

3.17. As each monument will require treatment specific to its individual nature, characteristics, significance and needs, any proposed change to it must be fully and explicitly justified.

3.18. Scheduled monument consent applications must be considered in terms of the cultural significance of the monument and the impact that the proposals would have upon this cultural significance. The more important particular features of the monument are to its cultural significance, the greater will be the case against interventions which modify these features.

3.20. Where change is proposed, it should be carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed, properly planned and executed, and where appropriate in the context of an individual monument, reversible.

b) Assessment

The proposed works involve the control and eradication of rabbits on the monument through gassing, shooting and the installation of a rabbit proof fence with drop trap inserts. This is intended to prevent any further damage to the monument from rabbit burrowing activity.

The proposed works involve a series of pest control works amongst which is to install permanent rabbit fencing. This is intended to support the long term conservation of the monument by reducing damage through rabbit activity.

The physical impact of the proposed works would be as follows –

- Temporary addition and removal of turf elements to block rabbit burrows during the gassing process.
- Ground disturbance and excavation to facilitate the erection of a rabbit proof fence, gate and drop traps. The disturbance will comprise the driven insertion of fence posts and excavation to allow for the insertion of strainer posts, gate posts and drop traps. All excavation will be subject to archaeological monitoring.

The works are targeted on areas known to have been disturbed previously and will result in the physical disturbance of an extremely small area of this substantial monument. The physical impact of these works on the monument and its cultural significance would be comparatively minor, but the benefits to the long term preservation of the monument would be significant.

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



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The damage to the monument from rabbit burrowing is significant and ongoing. If the works as set out in the application are not undertaken with some urgency, the physical integrity of the affected areas of the fort will continue to deteriorate with the outcome that historic fabric and archaeological evidence will be lost. Areas of the fort which have been destabilised by rabbit burrowing could also be vulnerable to collapse if walked upon by people or livestock. As the monument is a Property in Care with open unsupervised public access during daylight hours, this destabilisation poses a risk to public safety. It is therefore to the benefit of the long term preservation of the monument that the works should be undertaken as quickly as possible.

The impact of the works has been mitigated by targeting the rabbit proof fence at an area that has already seen disturbance from previous fencing, and by using a design which minimises ground disturbance.

The works proposed would affect an extremely small proportion of the scheduled monument (approximately 0.1%). They are therefore not considered to be extensive.

The application is supported by a detailed erosion survey which shows that rabbits are an ongoing threat to the monument and that the less interventionist control measures that have been tried to date have not been effective. Any rabbits removed from the site are rapidly replaced from the large population in the surrounding area. As a result of this evidence, the applicants now consider the insertion of a physical barrier to prevent rabbits accessing the site is the only effective option.

The application is also accompanied by a detailed Written Scheme of Intervention for archaeological supervision of the works which will act to mitigate or minimise any physical impact on archaeological deposits and features that may be encountered.

c) Other material considerations, including impact of the works on Protected Species and Places

No known impact on Protected Species and Places.

d) Conclusion

The application should be viewed as works as set out in both Part 1 Section 2 of the AMAA Act 1979 and paragraph 3.4 of the policy statement.

The proposed works, comprising the installation of a rabbit proof fence with drop traps and gated access, are the minimum necessary to conserve what is culturally significant in this scheduled monument and are therefore compliant with paragraphs 3.16 and 3.18 of the Policy Statement.

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



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The works have been proposed in order to ensure the long term preservation of the monument and to enhance public safety on the monument. As such, they are justified in accordance with paragraph 3.17 of the Policy Statement.

The application is supported by sufficient detailed information to show that that the works have been carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed and properly planned. As such, the application meets the requirements of 3.20 of the Policy Statement. Consequently, no conditions are considered necessary.

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6. Recommended decision

The works proposed are considered acceptable in meeting the terms of national policy for scheduled monuments, and also accounting for other material considerations.

I recommend consent is **granted without conditions**.

7. Conditions

No conditions have been attached to this decision.

8. Approval

Case officer	Deirdre Cameron	Date	14 December 2016
Approved by	George Findlater	Date	16 December 2016

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Chesters Hill Fort: site plan, proposed new rabbit fence (099/072/028 Rev C)
- Written Statement of Investigation: The Chesters Fort: rabbit-proof fence installation (Kirkdale Archaeology, 27th November 2016)
- The Chesters, Drem, East Lothian: Erosion Survey (Rampart Scotland Project 002, Season 4, April 2014)