



Scheduled Monument Consent Report on Handling

Case Information

Reference/Case ID		300046737	
Scheduled Monument	Dunfermline Abbey		
Index no	SM90116	Grid ref	NT 08900 87200
Date application validated		13 April 2021	
Summary of proposed works		Installation of access ramp to Parish Church	

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that consent for installation of an access ramp be granted with conditions.

2. Background

The application is for installation of an access ramp. It is being proposed in order to improve access to the 19th century Dunfermline Abbey parish church by the north door. It follows a previous application for the archaeological excavation of five foundation pits to hold the ramp's foundations. It has been submitted by Fife Council. It is accompanied by an archaeological method statement explaining how gravestones in one of the foundation trenches would be moved; a report on the archaeological excavation; the Engineer's Foundation Options Assessment; a Hutton Gravestone Report; a Location Plan; drawings showing the ramp elevation, plan and sections; and a Ramp Foundation Drawing.

The monument is the remains of buildings and archaeological deposits associated with Dunfermline Abbey. The buildings include parts of the refectory, dormitory range, latrines, gatehouse, kitchen and royal palace, but not the upstanding parts of the abbey church. The scheduling includes the ground beneath the Abbey Church nave and the Parish Church of 1818, but specifically excludes all above ground elements of the present church buildings extending down from the base of the floor slabs and all existing service ducts. The scheduling excludes the above ground elements of the graveyard toolhouse and of the steps leading into the church buildings. The scheduling excludes plots where



rights of burial exist and the above ground elements of all gravestones and burial enclosures in the graveyard and the war memorial but does include St Margaret's Shrine. The scheduling excludes the above ground elements of all modern structures including boundary walls, steps, fences, gates, fixtures and fittings, signs, lights and street furniture. The scheduling excludes the top 200mm of all surfaced paths, tracks and yards.

The monument is of national importance because it can make a significant addition to the understanding and appreciation of the past, particularly of medieval abbeys and royal burial places. It contains remains of Scotland's first Benedictine monastery, most important royal mausoleum, and a major royal palace.

The application relates to an area immediately north of the 19th century parish church north door. The parish church occupies the footprint of the east end of the 12th century church of Dunfermline Abbey, erected c.1130-1160. The archaeological excavation conducted in preparation for the construction of the ramp revealed 18th/19th-century gravestones and plot markers in two of the five foundation holes. While they contribute to the overall understanding of the burial ground they are not a major component in the overall cultural significance of the scheduled monument.

3. Proposals

- Reopen the previously excavated foundation trenches
- Extend Trench 1 to the minimum extent needed to fully reveal and lift the 18th/19th-century gravestones and plotmarkers in the foundation pad footprint
- Lift these stones and install them in the vicinity of the ramp
- Complete the excavation of trench 1 as necessary to allow the foundation pad to be installed
- Protect and shutter the two stones that remain in place in Trench 2
- Install the foundation pads and ramp
- Install two new stretches of tarmac path

Works

The proposed works would comprise re-excavation of foundations holes dug and recorded by archaeologists in 2020. 18th/19th-century gravestones and plotmarkers in Trench 1 would be carefully removed and excavation of the foundation trench would be completed. In Trench 2, the stones previously exposed would be left in place but protected with membrane and compressible board. The foundations would then be installed and the ramp would be built. The installation of the ramp would also involve the laying of two new stretches of tarmac path around the ramp, on ground that is currently grassed. The two new tarmac paths would involve limited sub-surface ground disturbance. The existing turf would be lifted, the exposed surface would be reduced to a



maximum depth of 0.15m, consolidated, and overlain with 75mm of compacted granular sub-base, upon which the new tarmac surface would be laid. The lifting of the turf and the ground reduction would be undertaken by the site archaeologist.

The access ramp is needed to facilitate parishioner and visitor access to Dunfermline Abbey Parish Church. In the opinion of the project engineer, there is no practicable alternative to the ramp foundation design proposed (see the attached: *Engineer's Foundations Options Assessment*). The ramp and its five foundation pads have been designed in order to minimise impact on the ground surface and buried deposits. The installation of the pad in trench 1 would involve lifting and relocating 18th-19th century gravestones within the Hutton family plot. Fife council has placed a press advertisement about the proposals to give any relatives the opportunity to give a view on the works. No responses were received within the three week timescale set in the advert.

Personnel

The moving of gravestones would be performed by Fife Council's Cemetery Management Team (Bereavement Services) under archaeological supervision. The supervising archaeologist would be Peter Klemen. The ramp would be installed by Fife Council.

Timetable

The proposed works would be undertaken in summer 2021.

4. Representations received

No third party representations were received. Fife Council placed a press advert about the proposed relocation of gravestones but no responses 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.

Scheduled Monument Consents Policy



Scheduled Monument Policy Aim

A monument is included in the schedule to secure its long-term protection in the national interest, in situ and as far as possible in the form it has come down to us. The aim of this policy is to ensure this long-term protection wherever possible.

Scheduled Monuments Principles

- 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 that is the primary consideration in determining applications for consent at scheduled monuments.
- The principle of preserving scheduled monuments will only be set aside in circumstances where wider considerations are deemed, on balance, to be of greater importance to the national interest.
- The more important particular features are to the monument's cultural significance, the greater will be the case against interventions which modify those features.
- Each monument will require treatment specific to its individual nature, characteristics, significance and needs. Any proposed change to it should be fully and explicitly justified.
- The management of scheduled monuments should be informed by current policy and guidance, up-to-date professional and academic research and, where appropriate, relevant consultation.

Scheduled Monument Policy 1

When undertaking works to scheduled monuments, their significance should be maintained.

Scheduled Monuments can have meaning and value beyond their physical remains. Many have important historical, cultural or emotional associations that give them a particular significance in the life of the nation, or of the local community within which they are set. Many also have outstanding landscape or picturesque values. When undertaking works to them, it is therefore essential their significance is maintained and not reduced.

Scheduled Monument Consent Policy Aim

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

Scheduled Monument Consent Policy 1

Works to scheduled monuments will normally only be permitted if they have minimal impact upon a monument's cultural significance.



Scheduled Monument Consent Policy 4

Proposals for change should be carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed, and properly planned and executed. The level of information provided should be in proportion to the sensitivity of the monument or feature and the level of change proposed.

For all applications where change is proposed, the following factors will be taken into account when considering if works meet this policy:

- a. the use of appropriate assessment methodologies to determine the full impact of any proposed management, use or development on a monument's fabric and/or cultural significance.
- b. the avoidance of irreversible change particularly wherever its effects cannot be adequately assessed.
- c. that where change is necessary, strategies should be adopted to mitigate its impact and limit intervention.
- d. that the management and execution of alteration, including remedial work, is sympathetic to the historic character and wider cultural significance .
- e. that appropriate skills and techniques, materials and construction techniques are specified where appropriate.
- f. that an appropriate level of record is made before, during and after any work and deposited in local and national archives, and, where appropriate, published.
- g. that it is possible, on close inspection, to differentiate new work from old particularly on masonry structures.
- h. that any archaeological excavation or other intrusive investigation should be based upon a detailed research strategy, with adequate resources, using appropriately skilled and competent archaeologists with a satisfactory record of the completion and publication of projects.
- i. that the design, planning and execution of works on scheduled monuments are undertaken by people with appropriate professional and craft qualifications, skills and experience.

b) Assessment

The physical impact of the proposed works would be the re-excavation of five foundation trenches and additional excavation to one of those trenches, plus shallow excavation to allow laying of short stretches of path. The impact would also include the lifting and relocation of 18th/19th century gravestones that are presently buried and the installation of a ramp.

The archaeological excavation in 2020 shows that the foundation pads would be installed in 18th/19th century deposits. The large stone to be relocated from Trench 1 commemorates John Hutton (1741-1821) and his family. It was probably installed in the



later 1850s. This ground is identified as John Hutton's plot on a map made in 1855. The low, triple-headed kerbstone probably dates from 1821 and represents the boundary edging to the plot purchased for the burial of John Hutton in 1821. The stone immediately beneath it could be an earlier Hutton family gravestone or it might simply be an unrelated gravestone fragment used as a foundation stone to prevent the recumbent Hutton family slab from sinking into the ground. The 1855 plan indicates that the ground at Trench 2 was John Anderson's plot. The stones to be protected and retained in place in this plot are probably of similar date to those in the Hutton plot. It is probable that the stones lie significantly above the level of articulated human remains. The stones contribute to the overall understanding of the abbey burial ground and its continued use in the 19th century, but do not form a major component of its cultural significance. The stones in the Hutton plot were previously obscured but would be lifted and re-laid in the immediate vicinity so that they would be visible. The stones in the Anderson plot were not previously visible and would remain buried. The other three foundation pads would be placed in foundation trenches that have already been excavated and were found to be sterile. The physical impact of the ramp installation on the monument's cultural significance is considered to be minimal.

The proposed works would have a residual aesthetic impact on the monument through the introduction of a modern access ramp. However, this is relatively small in scale and would stand next to the large, early 19th century parish church, whose fabric is excluded from the scheduled monument. The ramp would be readily readable as a modern intervention and could easily be removed if necessary. We consider that the aesthetic impact on the setting of the scheduled monument would not be significant. It is, therefore, concluded that the works would have a minimal impact on the monument's cultural significance.

The applicant has looked at a number of design solutions in an effort to minimise ground impacts and avoid sensitive archaeological deposits. The current proposal is considered to be the least invasive. Consideration was also given to designs which could avoid the removal of the Hutton gravestone. This was not technically feasible due to the need for support in this location, and known presence of other burial liars in the near vicinity. The applicant's investigations suggest there are no close relatives associated with the Hutton gravestone. An advert in the local press has similarly failed to make any contact or raise any queries from the wider public. The gravestone will be retained in close proximity, and the burials, which are thought to be at a much deeper level, will not be disturbed. The ramp will provide significant public benefits through improved access to the church.

The application has been accompanied by an archaeological method statement that sets out a generally well-considered, appropriate and careful methodology. However, there is no timetable for reporting and no detail about what method would be followed if additional gravestones were revealed when shallow excavations are conducted to allow small stretches of tarmac path to be laid.



Further information is therefore required to ensure that the proposed works are appropriate. To ensure this it is recommended that conditions are applied requiring the submission of a WSI prior to the installation of additional stretches of tarmac path, and the submission of a Data Structure Report within an appropriate timescale.

These conditions would enable the application to be considered compliant with Scheduled Monument Consent Policy 4.

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

No impact on Protected Species and Places considered likely.

d) Conclusion

The application should be viewed as works as set out in both Part 1 Section 2 of the AMAA Act 1979 and Section 15 of the Scheduled Monument Consent Policy.

The proposed works would have minimal impact on the cultural significance of the monument and so are compliant with Scheduled Monument Consent Policy 1.

The application is, on the whole, carefully considered, sensitively designed, and properly planned. However, further information would be required in advance of the works to enable the application to be fully compliant with Scheduled Monument Consent Policy 4. Consequently, conditions are required.

The proposal is concluded to be broadly consistent with relevant policy. However, the proposal is not considered the minimum necessary consistent with conserving the cultural significance of the monument. There is therefore a requirement to notify Scottish Ministers as per The Scheduled Monument Consent (Notification of Applications) Direction 2015.

6. Recommended decision

Subject to compliance with the schedule of conditions, 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, subject to the conditions detailed below.**



7. Conditions

1. Within 3 months of the end of the archaeological fieldwork the applicant shall submit to Historic Environment Scotland a Data Structure Report (as defined in Historic Scotland 1996 Project Design, Implementation and Archiving. Historic Scotland Archaeological Procedures Paper 2). A short report on the work shall also be submitted to Discovery and Excavation in Scotland and an OASIS online reporting form shall be submitted to the website <https://oasis.ac.uk/>.

Reason: to enable Historic Environment Scotland to monitor the progress of the work which is subject to consent and to ensure that a written record of the archaeological work is presented in an accessible form.

2. No works to install additional stretches of tarmac path shall begin until the applicant has submitted to Historic Environment Scotland a method statement setting out steps to be taken should gravestones be uncovered in the footprint of the paths and has had this WSI approved in writing by Historic Environment Scotland.

To ensure that additional path works that are proposed do not impact adversely on gravestones that may be buried at a shallow depth.

8. Approval

Case officer	Richard Heawood	Date	22 April 2021
Approved by	Iona Murray	Date	26 April 2021

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Archaeological Method Statement
- Dunfermline Abbey Wheelchair Ramp, Fife: Archaeological Evaluation Data Structure Report
- Engineer's Foundation Options Assessment
- Hutton Gravestone Report
- Location Plan
- Drawing showing the ramp elevation, plan and sections
- Ramp Foundation Drawing