



# Overview of Survey Results and Action Plan – Scheduled Monument Consent Application Process



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# SUMMARY

1. Scheduled monuments are nationally important sites which are given legal protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.
2. Most works to scheduled monuments require Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) which is administered by Heritage Directorate on behalf of Historic Environment Scotland (HES).
3. From September 2017 to February 2018, HES conducted a survey which invited the views of those applying for SMC via a series of questions on Survey Monkey. HES determined a total of 159 applications for SMC during this time period.
4. HES has reviewed the feedback from the survey and will continue to periodically carry out surveys, and if necessary make improvements in the future to improve the service.

## Background to the survey

The consultation ran for a period of 6 months from September 2017 to February 2018 and was accessible to everyone who applied for SMC and had their application determined within the timescale of the survey period. The aims of the survey were to identify how satisfied customers are with the SMC application service, and to use this information in order to monitor and, if necessary, improve the service.

A section of the survey asked for feedback on the Heritage Portal at <http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/>. As a previous survey on users of the Portal was low for SMC applicants, some questions about the Portal were included as part of the survey.

## Report Objectives

The objective of this report is to provide an overview of the key results and issues raised through the survey and to set out the actions Historic Environment Scotland (HES) will take to respond to the issues raised.

## Methodology

The response data were recorded, organised and summarised on a report generated by Survey Monkey. A frequency count was made of the overall number of responses by answer choices and of free text responses to certain questions. The summarised data for each question were reviewed and key themes and views were identified.

The findings of this report are specific to the survey and do not necessarily reflect the weight or range of views within the population as a whole.

## Distribution and Advertising

As noted above, the consultation ran for a period of 6 months and was accessible to everyone who applied for SMC and had their application determined within the survey timescale. It was not advertised more widely as the aim was to capture the views of normal day-to-day applicants.

# RESPONSES

## Introduction

This report provides an overview of the responses to the survey. The report also identifies areas where HES proposes to take action to respond to comments made about how the service can be improved.



The survey asked for responses to a number of questions about their experience of applying for SMC. In addition, questions were asked about the Heritage Portal in order to assess user's knowledge and awareness of it and how it can be used to track SMC applications. This was followed by questions about the users themselves which is not published in this report.

During this time period, 159 SMC applications were determined. A total of 2 applications were refused and 1 application was part refused. HES met their target Key Performance Indicator (KPI) on 94.6% of these applications. A total of 4 questionnaires were completed.

## Applicants

A breakdown of responses by type of applicant is provided in the table below.

Applicant	Number	% of total (respondents)
Academic	1	25%
Consultant	1	25%
Contractor	1	25%
Other	1	25%

Half of the respondents had applied for SMC before.

## Applicant Experience

Applicants were asked how satisfied they were with their application experience, including our pre-application service. Applicants were asked to score their experience as follows: 1 = extremely satisfied and 5 = not satisfied at all.

Specific Yes/No question were asked about whether the applicant had applied for SMC previously, how easy they found completing the application forms, how useful the guidance notes were and how satisfied they were with the timescales and overall performance.

Applicants were also asked how satisfied they were with the decision to grant or refuse consent and the report of handling. Applicants were asked to score their experience as follows: 1 = extremely satisfied and 5 = not satisfied at all.

In addition, applicants were asked 2 Yes/No questions about the Heritage Portal. These were have they used the portal before, and did they know they could track the progress of an SMC application on the portal.

A final question invited any other comments or suggestions not covered in the previous questions.



## Results

Clearly, the response rate is low and it is therefore difficult to extrapolate broad trends or identify general concerns from such a small dataset.

However, the responses that HES did receive suggest that applicants are satisfied with the SMC application service overall. Most applicants for instance found the pre-application service and guidance notes helpful. However, one respondent highlighted their concern that the pre-application service varied in levels of helpfulness. The respondent suggested that in some cases, detailed information about the monument including the sensitivity of certain areas of the monument and what information should be submitted is provided. In other cases, only basic information about the SMC process is provided.

Issues relating to the application forms were also raised. This included being confused about particular sections in the forms. Parts B and C were highlighted by one applicant for example as being confusing. Minor concerns about the application forms are that page two of Part A is blank and that the section numbering in the forms is incorrect.

A further comment was made about the fact that there are both PDF and E-application forms. A suggestion is made that HES use one type of form which is available to complete online, which curates the data and uses prompts from the guidance notes to aid the applicant.

Most respondents were not aware that they could use the Heritage Portal to track the progress of their SMC application. This was true if even if they had used the portal before for other purposes.

## Follow-up actions

Given that the response rate was low, a further survey consisting of 1 year should be carried out once issues highlighted below have been addressed.

If it is considered that there are varying levels of pre-application advice offered, HES could produce a checklist to ensure that all the relevant information is provided by all staff (e.g. basic information about the SMC process; detailed information about the monument, including the sensitivity of certain areas of the monument; and what information should be submitted, etc.).

Application forms should be reviewed to ensure that they are clearly set out and easily understood, and that any minor issues are addressed.

When applications are submitted, applicants should be alerted to the fact that they can use the Heritage Portal to track the progress of their application.



# ACTION PLAN

Issue Identified	Proposed Action	Timescale
The reponse rate was low.	A further survey consisting of 1 year should be carried out - ideally once the issues highlighted have been addressed.	Starting in financial year 2018-19
There are varying levels of pre-application advice offered.	Produce an internal checklist and training to ensure that all relevant information is provided by all staff.	During financial year 2018-19
There is currently no service standard for pre-application service.	Introduce a service standard.	During financial year 2018-19
The application forms can cause confusion for some.	Review application forms to ensure that they are clearly set out and easily understood, and that any minor issues are addressed.	During financial year 2018-19
Lack of awareness that SMC applicants can track the progress of their application on the Heritage Portal.	Include information about this on acknowledgements and include further questions in future SMC survey.	During financial year 2018-19

## Conclusions

Most respondents were satisfied with the service overall.

There are a small number of areas which could be improved in order to address concerns or suggestions made by respondents and these are set out in the Action Plan.

## Acknowledgements

HES would like to thank all those who responded to this survey.

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