

Case information

Reference/Case ID	201504491		
Scheduled Monument	Borve Castle, Benbecula		
Index no	M5568	Grid Ref	NF773505 77300.0000 850500.0000
Date of Application	16 October 2015	Application Received	16 October 2015
Summary of proposed works	Archaeological Mortar Survey		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends approval of the proposals to remove mortar samples for archaeological and dating analysis due to the minimal impacts and significant benefits this will produce.

2. Background

Borve Castle is one of only a small handful of proper castles to survive in the Western Isles. It remained in use until the seventeenth century. Its earliest phases, however, remain obscure. It may be very early and have once been one of, if not the principle seat of the MacRuaris, prior to or contemporary with the building of the better known Eilean Tioram. Understanding its date would have profound implications for the understanding of castle building throughout the western seaboard and the development of lordships there.

The proposed works are part of wider project to date west coast castles and churches, allowing the development of an innovative technique being pioneered by the applicant. HES and its predecessors have been involved in developing the project design and are funding the works.

3. Proposals

Removal of samples for archaeological mortar analysis

The proposals would result in the removal of relatively small samples of exposed medieval mortar from various phases of the castle. This would enable dating and analysis of the mortar composition, which in turn can have implications for understanding the extent of trading networks, lordships and local environments.

4. Representations received

No representations were received.

5. Report

a) Policy considerations

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

The works are subject to the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the Scottish Historic Environment Policy (2011) (SHEP).

SHEP sets out the relevant considerations to be taken into account when assessing applications for change at scheduled monuments:

3.14. Scottish Ministers include a monument 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 SHEP, that is the primary consideration in determining applications for scheduled monument consent.

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.

3.19. Extensive intervention will only be allowed where it is clearly necessary to secure the longer-term preservation of the monument, or where it will clearly generate public benefits of national importance which outweigh the impact on the national cultural significance of the monument. Such public benefits could come from, for example, interventions which make public access to scheduled monuments easier, or assist public understanding, or will produce economic benefits once the works are completed.

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

Whilst historic materials will be affected, the size of the samples is relatively small. No details of the sample locations has been provided. This is because it will not be possible to determine the exact location prior to access to the site (given the limited scale of likely impacts, it would be disproportionate to ask for this to be provided beforehand).

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

None

d) Conclusion

The works would be minimal and therefore not conflict with para 3.16 of SHEP. The results will be disseminated and have the potential to significantly alter Scottish castle studies and the technique being developed will have international ramifications. There will therefore be considerable wider public benefits. The interventions have also been carefully considered. The proposals are therefore also compliant with paras 3.19 and 3.20 of SHEP. However, it is necessary to impose conditions to ensure that the sample locations are recorded and that the report is produced in a timeous manner.

6. Recommended decision

I recommend consent is **granted, subject to the conditions detailed below.**

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.

7. Conditions

1 A short report detailing the location of the mortar samples shall be submitted to Historic Environment Scotland within three weeks of the works being completed on site.

Reason: to ensure that an accurate record of works to the monument is maintained.

2 Within six months of the works being completed on site the final report on the results of the mortar analysis shall be submitted to Historic Environment Scotland.

Reason: to ensure that an accurate record of works to the monument is maintained.

8. Approval

Officer	John Raven	Date	05/11/2015
Approved by	George Findlater	Date	05/11/2015

Annex A – list of supporting documents

1. Borge Castle Mortar Sampling Methodology (SC14/BCB/PRE/02)