

Case information

Reference/Case ID		201505694	
Scheduled Monument	Stenness, stone circle and henge		
Index no	M90285	Grid Ref	HY306125 330600.0000 1012500.0000
Date of Application	4 December 2015	Application Received	4 December 2015
Summary of proposed works	Access improvements at the monument: installation of a replacement gate and associated works giving access to the Stones of Stenness, and installation of a new style of gate and associated works giving access to Barnhouse.		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends approval for access improvements at the monument comprising the installation of a replacement gate and associated works giving access to the Stones of Stenness, and the installation of a new style of gate and associated works giving access to Barnhouse which is a contemporaneous settlement site.

2. Background

Comprising a stone circle and henge, the Stones of Stenness may be the earliest henge monument in the British Isles dating to around 3100 to 2900 cal BC. Its ditch and bank encircle the 4 remaining standing stones (originally 12) and a large central hearth. The monument is part of the core of a mainly third and second millennium BC (although including elements which may be of late 4th millennium BC date) ritual landscape and is one of the component parts of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site.

As well as being scheduled, the monument is a Property in the Care of Scottish Ministers. Access issues at the monument were identified and discussed at a site meeting and these were further highlighted in a community meeting in September 2015. Following this, the applicant engaged in pre-application discussions regarding the proposals.

3. Proposals

The works aim to address access issues at the monument. They involve the installation of a replacement gate and associated works giving access to the Stones of Stenness, and the installation of a new style of gate and associated works giving access to Barnhouse, a contemporaneous settlement site.

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:

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.

3.20. 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 proposals are considered necessary to address access issues at the monument. Currently, the existing gate and style do not facilitate easy access to the site, and are frequently subject to ponding. In light of this, the potential impact on the monument from the proposed works is considered to be justified and the proposals have been carefully considered.

Both gates require new foundations in locations where no previous archaeological excavation has been carried out. In order to ensure that these ground breaking works are appropriately monitored and recorded by a professional archaeologist, an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) is included with the application. The WSI states that should any significant remains/artefacts be discovered, excavation will cease and Historic Environment Scotland will be informed and consulted. We are content with this approach.

Because the monument is operated as a visitor attraction, the proposed works will also have wider public benefits – particularly enabling and facilitation access to a scheduled monument which is also a popular visitor attraction, and one of the component parts of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site.

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

There will not be any significant impacts on Protected Species and Places.

The monument is a Property in the Care of Scottish Ministers which is operated by Historic Environment Scotland as a visitor attraction.

d) Conclusion

The proposed works are compliant with Section 3.16 of the SHEP in that they are the minimum level of intervention that is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in the monument. The works have also been carefully considered in order to mitigate any impacts, they are also equally compliant with Section 3.20 of SHEP. While this is not considered to be an extensive intervention as per Section 3.19 of the SHEP, the proposals will nevertheless have an additional public benefit.

As there are no proposals to provide photographs to Heritage Management, a related condition has been recommended.

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

7. Conditions

1. Two weeks after completion of the works on site, the applicant will provide photographs of the work area, before, during and after the works, to Historic Environment Scotland's Heritage Management Directorate.

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

8. Approval

Officer	Nicola Hall	Date	17/12/2015
Approved by	John Raven	Date	18/12/2015

Annex A – list of supporting documents

Scheduled area

Works locations and construction details

Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI)