Case information

Reference/Case ID	201504853

Scheduled Monument	Whiteyett, earthworks 575m SSE to 935m S and 650m S to 1060m S of		
Index no	M12767	**Grid Ref**	NY249936 324900.0000 593600.0000

Date of Application	30 October 2015	**Application Received**	30 October 2015
Summary of proposed works	Tree felling at Slippery Knowe		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends approval of the proposed works, without conditions.

2. Background

The Whiteyett earthworks are two parallel dykes, running approximately N-S and separated by about 200m. They are separately scheduled as part of a single designation. They may have formed prehistoric defensive features protecting a series of (unscheduled) settlements to the west, towards the White Esk. Alternatively, they are the remains of prehistoric enclosure of the land towards the White Esk. The eastern dyke is formed by a bank and ditch with a maximum height of 1m over the ditch base and a maximum width of c.5m. The eastern edge of the ditch is covered by a modern spruce plantation which is almost mature. The owner (FCS) plans to sell this plantation as standing timber for felling.

FCS consulted HES at pre-app stage in late October, with a draft proposal to hand fell timber and to extract and process the timber by harvesters that would not enter the scheduled area. The main bank of the dyke lies mostly outwith the plantation, but the shallow ditch is partly within the felling area. An email summing up HES recommendations was sent to the applicant, and these recommendations have been incorporated into the application material, which includes detailed mapping and a method statement.

No previous SMC applications have been received for this monument, and there is no planning history.

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3. Proposals

Machinery will be used to fell and process the trees on the site and then to extract the timber to roadside. Where these works impinge on the scheduled area, it is proposed to tape off the boundary of the scheduled area with a 5m buffer beyond and designate this an excluded area for machinery.

The trees in this area will be hand felled outwards so that the harvesters can lift, remove and process them without breaching the taped line. If it is not possible to fell the trees outwith the scheduled area they will be felled as far as possible and then winched out by a machine sat on the main site outside the taped line. The area of overlap is only approximately 10 metres wide and so this is unlikely to occur as the trees are large enough to be able to be felled out to machinery sitting outwith the monument. Brash and branches will be removed as far as is reasonably possible, although some loose branch elements and brash would remain on the ground.

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 Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP)
The assessment below relies on the following paragraphs of SHEP:
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 monument has not been visited by the field officer since it was scheduled in 2010. However, the scheduling proposal includes a sketch of the remains, and the site is described in the 1997 RCAHMS volume on Eastern Dumfriesshire. Looking at the sketch there appears to be at least 10 trees growing on the edge of the shallow ditch. The shallow ditch has already been ploughed into as part of the forestry works prior to scheduling, although it does remain visible. Access by machinery could pose a risk to the integrity of the ditch. However, machines will not access the 5m buffer beyond the edge of the scheduled area, so the only risk is from hand felling.

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With the trees being felled towards the eastern boundary of the scheduled area, this would reduce the risk that the ground loading would impact on buried remains, particularly within the ditch itself. The proposed lifting (rather than dragging) of these felled trees would minimise the risk of further damage within the scheduled area. As no harvesters would access the scheduled area, there is no need for brash matting or for the risks associated with its removal/long term retention. Therefore, the risk of adverse would be slight, but the applicant has taken reasonable steps to mitigate these risks.

The scheduled area would be given an appropriate buffer in the next Castle O'er LTFP and FDP. The 2009 FDP remains in effect and predates the scheduling, but a 20m buffer is envisaged in that. As replanting will not occur until the next LTFP, the felling would open up an area in which the monument could be understood and appreciated in an appropriate setting. The proposed works would also reduce the risk of windblow to the ditch deposits. These changes to the monument should be considered to be of a positive nature.

On balance, the works would have a positive benefit for the monument. On that basis, it is considered that the works represent the minimum necessary as defined in SHEP 3.16 and fully consistent with SHEP 3.20.

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

None predicted – however, FCS has the responsibility as a Crown body to establish if there would be impacts.

d) Conclusion

The proposed method statement covers the detail of the proposed works in line with our previous recommendations to the applicant. Work is scheduled to start in week 1 of 2016 to accommodate the needs of other stakeholders and to conclude within 1 month of commencement, with any alteration of this to be notified to Historic Environment Scotland. On that basis, there is no requirement for notification conditions or other conditions relating to the methodology.

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.

7. Conditions

None

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8. Approval

Officer	**John Malcolm**	**Date**	**18/12/2015**
Approved by	**John Raven**	**Date**	**18/12/2015**

Annex A – list of supporting documents

Map Showing area to be felled and conflict with SAM site to west (Map 1)

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