

Case information

Reference/Case ID	201504837		
Scheduled Monument	Leadhills, remains of lead mining and smelting		
Index no	M5817	Grid Ref	NS879136 287900.0000 613600.0000
Date of Application	29 October 2015	Application Received	30 October 2015
Summary of proposed works	Replacement of on one electricity pole and the excavation of two trenches		

1. Summary recommendation

It is proposed to replace one electricity pole, and excavate two trenches (for a service cable and an earth cable to serve an existing dwelling) from an existing pole, within the scheduled area of the monument. This report recommends approval without conditions.

2. Background

The monument consists of the principal remains of lead working in the Leadhills area. The remains comprise shafts, spoil heaps, hushes (gullies caused by hydraulic extraction of ore) and a smelter, together with associated tracks, tramways, water courses and remains of buildings. The applicant's archaeological contractor initially contacted us at the end of October in order to establish the need for SMC.

These discussions demonstrated that the proposed works are outwith any of the upstanding remains which contribute to the cultural significance of the monument. This conclusion is based on a general knowledge of the site, field officer sketches which show the location of the poles, and two monument warden photos of the relevant parts of the monument. On that basis, it was agreed that archaeological monitoring works would not be necessary in this case. It was also established that the proposed locations of the works are not within any key views within the scheduled monument which would contribute to its setting. This is consistent with

pre-application advice given by colleagues for other similar works proposed in the vicinity.

There have been a number of applications for works in the area since 2009. The previous pole replacement case (in 2014) was a pre-application query which was not taken forward as an application. The case officer's advice in that case was that as visible remains were not present, a watching brief was not required.

3. Proposals

Consented works: The replacement of one electricity pole and the excavation of two trenches.

The existing pole would be lifted vertically by machine and the replacement inserted in the same hole to a depth of 2.1m. The cable and earth trenches leading from the other pole will be 0.8m x 0.5m x 7m long and 0.8m x 0.5m x 15m long respectively. The works would be carried out by a mini-digger for excavation work, and a 30-ton tracked excavator with a grabbing mechanism for the pole removal and replacement.

The pole replacement work would occur just beyond the base of the former railway embankment that linked the Leadhills complex with the main West Coast rail line, known as the Lowther Light Railway. The embankment is now used as a public footpath. The pole location lies between the embankment and a stock fence that separates it from adjacent grazings. There are some bings and structures flanking the embankment in the general vicinity, but the pole lies well away from these. Vehicles would access the site along the base of the embankment.

The service trench and earth cable trench are required to connect an adjacent dwelling to the grid. At present, the dwelling has an overground connection to the line which carried a high risk of failure during high winds, and the proposed works would remove this risk. The trenches represent the minimum distance for the earth cable from the property in order to make the supply safe. There are no visible remains within approximately 50m of the property, with a sunken track (almost certainly a former light rail track leading between pits) approximately 65m to the south. The nearest extent of the works (the earth cable trench) would be approximately 50m from this feature.

Vehicles would access the work site from the adjacent property and the farm gate leading into the adjacent field. The affected ground would be restored to the existing profile once the pole has been erected and the two cables laid.

Representations received

No representations have been received.

4. Report

a) Policy considerations

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

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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

As noted above, the cultural significance of the monument is determined by the presence of visible remains of mining activity including pits, shafts, bings, mining structures and former houses, as well as the connecting tracks and former railways/tramways. Views between these features, and the sense of place experienced within different parts of the site also contribute to this cultural significance.

The proposed pole replacement and cable trenches would have a minimal impact on these elements, even though they involve excavation. The replacement of an existing pole of the same dimensions would not alter views within the site, and the access and removal work would not affect the relatively robust visible remains.

The scheduling document does not refer to 'remains associated with its construction and use' but rather 'it includes the visible remains of working and an area around in which traces of activities associated with mining, transport of ore and smelting may survive, as marked in red on the accompanying map'. This strongly points to the fact that buried remains with no visible ground trace do not form a primary element in the cultural significance of the affected parts of the monument, although this will vary according to the part of the site and the nature of the remains encountered.

On that basis, it is unclear what benefit a watching brief would have for the pole removal or the trenching works. It would be expected that any artefacts, stratigraphy or ecofacts would relate to the pre-17th-century period and (while potentially of interest) would not form part of the reasoning behind why the monument has been scheduled to cover the locations of the works. Therefore, while there would be physical impact on the monument, this impact should not be considered to have an adverse impact on the cultural significance of the monument.

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

No Protected Species or Places would be adversely affected by the proposals, based on assessment of our GIS layer files for these designations. The applicant has not provided any material regarding such designations, other than to confirm that there would be no impacts.

d) Conclusion

The proposed works would not have a significant adverse impact on the cultural significance of the monument, either in direct or indirect terms. The direct impacts could only be mitigated through archaeological excavation in advance of the works or a watching brief, but as the information that would be revealed would not contribute to an understanding and appreciation of the national importance of the monument, it is considered that this mitigation would not be useful or proportionate in this case. On that basis, the application does not conflict with paragraph 3.16 of SHEP as outlined above. It would also deliver a public benefit in terms of maintaining the electricity connection to Leadhills, and also to a property that has been subject to repeated outages in stormy conditions.

The works are intended to start as soon as consent is granted, so it is not proposed to attach a notification condition. As ground reinstatement to match pre-existing profile is proposed, and no archaeological works are taking place, no other conditions are deemed necessary.

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 proposed.

8. Approval

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

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- 1) Location Plan
- 2) Method Statement