Case information

Reference/Case ID	201504825

Scheduled Monument	New Abbey Corn Mill,mill,mill pond,lade,fish pond and curling pond		
Index no	M90323	**Grid Ref**	NX961662 296100.0000 566200.0000

Date of Application	29 October 2015	**Application Received**	29 October 2015
Summary of proposed works	Floor strengthening and wall restraint fixings to support displayed mill stone at second-floor milling chamber.		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends approval without conditions.

2. Background

The monument consists of the 18C corn mill at New Abbey and its (medieval) water-works, the mill pond and the lade. In addition the fish ponds to the W of the mill, fed from the mill pond overflow, and a curling pond further S, also fed by the same system, are also part of the monument. The monument is of national importance because it is a fine example of a medium sized lowland water mill, with its machinery intact. Such mills were once very common in the life of rural Scotland but are now rare.

The application proposals and justification were submitted following the recommendations made by Heritage Management after initial discussions with the applicant.

The interior works at New Abbey Corn Mill have been commenced after the 2011 reroofing works, undertaken under SMCP. The rewiring of the electrical system (201307741) is continuing under SMCP. Other completed works have taken place since 2011 - to replace exterior and interior signage, to provide protection from dust produced during occasional milling displays, and to minor repairs to the lade channel and the mill pond.

3. Proposals

Floor strengthening and wall restraint fixings to support displayed mill stone at second-floor milling chamber.

This involves installation of strengthening plates to existing first floor joist and fixed bearer to floor above. This would also require fixings into internal wall masonry joints for metal clamps.

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

A repaired millstone sits on the timber second floor of the mill building, retained only by its own weight. The millstone clearly illustrates to visitors the appearance of the in situ millstone, which is mostly concealed from public view by protective screening. A health and safety risk has been established, in that the present floor structure is insufficiently strong to safely hold the stone, and that the lack of restraints for the stone might lead to a risk of crushing. Removing the repaired millstone outwith the building would lead to a loss of contextual information for visitors.

Three separate elements are proposed for this work:

- Attaching metal load-bearing plates to each side of the joist immediately underlying the affected area;
- The placing of a timber retaining piece to prevent the stone rotating away from its intended position. This would be attached to the two underlying metal load-bearing plates through gaps in the floorboards, using steel fixings;

- The use of two stainless steel clamps to retain the upper part of the millstone, preventing toppling. Each of these would be screwed into a timber packer, which would be retained by a steel nail into a suitable masonry joint, and neoprene inserts would protect the stone from the steel surface of the clamps.

The applicant has argued that as the stone is an integral part of the overall interpretation of the internal space of the mill, it should be retained internally. Given that the *in situ* millwheel (which is used for occasional milling displays) is not safely visible, this is a reasonable argument.

Our civil engineer has assessed the ground load of the stone, and considers that the existing floorboards and the three underlying joists (while sound) are insufficient to safely retain the stone. The steel plates measure 650mm long by 250m high by 6mm thick, and would be bolted (by six bolts up to 25mm deep) onto each side of the joist directly underneath the stone, in order to spread the load across a wider section of the joist, and thus reduce the risk of the joist failing. These joists are not original and post-date the taking of the building into care in the 1920s. While there would be a direct physical impact from this element of the work, the joists themselves are not primary elements in determining the cultural significance of the monument – therefore, the impact would be of no more than a slight nature. While the steel plates would be visible from the floor below, they would be painted in a dark bronze finish. In the relatively dark conditions experienced at the windowless first floor, the plates would only be visible from very close range. This suggests that the indirect impact would also be slight.

The millstone is presently retained by two chamber chocks, matching the colour of the floorboards. A bespoke timber retaining plate would be inserted beneath the stone, attached to the underlying steel plates using 8mm screws through gaps in the floorboard. The direct impact of this would be negligible, while the indirect impact would be no greater than the existing chocks.

The clamps would represent new interventions into the walls of the structure, as each would be retained by a steel rod threaded into masonry joints. The mortar used in the build is a cementitious type, covered by limewash. This material all postdates the taking of the monument into care. While there would be direct impact on this fabric, it does not contribute to the cultural significance of the monument and the impact should be considered to be of a slight nature. It would also remove the risk of the repaired millstone or the internal floors being damaged by toppling of the stone. In terms of indirect impacts, the two clamps would be clearly visible, but they would not impact on the ability to understand and appreciate the internal space.

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

None predicted by applicant. Likelihood of protected species being disturbed by internal works to floor timbers that are not encased is very slight.

d) Conclusion

There would be a slight adverse impact on the fabric of the structure from these works, but this fabric is not of primary importance in understanding and appreciating the cultural significance of the monument. They would also mitigate a health and safety risk to the monument and to visitors. These works are not inconsistent with SHEP policy 3.16 as set out above.

The applicant proposes to carry out the works within three months of obtaining consent, and the works would have a slight impact on the cultural significance of the monument. We would not ordinarily inspect such works, and would rely on the post-works photo record that will be submitted. On that basis, no notification condition is necessary.

No recording is proposed, and so no reporting condition is necessary in this case.

On the basis of the above, the works are consistent with policy on scheduled monuments, no suspensive conditions are deemed necessary, and it is therefore recommended that consent is granted.

6. Recommended decision

I recommend that consent is **granted without 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

None

8. Approval

Officer	**John Malcolm**	**Date**	**21/12/2015**
Approved by	**George Findlater**	**Date**	**22/12/2015**

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Drawing (A3): 'First Floor Mill Stone Display: Support Location & Details 90323-15091-001A

- Document: Floor Strengthening & Restraint for Existing First Floor Mill Stone Display dated 29/10/2015
- Drawing (A4) Location Plan