

Case information

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| Reference/Case ID | 201507043 | | |
| Scheduled Monument | Crinan Canal, Crinan to Cairnbaan | | |
| Index no | M6500 | Grid Ref | E178990 N694370 |
| Date of Application | 08 February 2016 | Application Received | 08 February 2016 |
| Summary of proposed works | Install ducting along existing soft towpath from Crinan Basin to service new moorings | | |

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that consent be granted with a condition.

2. Background

The monument is the north part of the Crinan Canal. It is of national importance as a significant feat of Georgian civil engineering, by the eminent Scots engineer John Rennie. The application relates to a length of towpath about 345m long between NGR NR 78984 94385 and NR 79240 94160.

The towpath is an important element of the canal infrastructure. The upper deposits of the towpath surface are likely to be of modern origin. In 2015, scheduled monument consent was granted for the upgrade of this section of towpath from soft surface to hard surface. The ducting installation proposed in this application would be conducted in advance of that upgrading in order to avoid re-excavation of the new surface.

Pre-application discussions regarding the proposal have been undertaken with HES Heritage Management Directorate.

3. Proposals

Consented works

Install service ducting along existing towpath from Crinan Basin to service new moorings.

Description of works

Works would include excavating a trench 300mm wide and 500mm deep along a 345m long section of towpath that currently has a soft surface. A sand layer would be laid at the base of the cut and three service ducts installed. Arisings from the excavation would be used to backfill over the ducting; any additional material would be spread thinly on the seaward side of the embankment and in order to allow regeneration of natural vegetation. At Crinan Weir, where the duct would pass over a historic masonry structure, the ducting would be attached to a modern steel gantry on the seaward side of the canal.

A heritage impact assessment has been submitted with the application. This assessed the potential for archaeological remains to survive beneath the current towpath surface. The assessment noted that, with the exception of the extant Crinan Weir noted above, no other structures were depicted on early mapping. It assessed the potential for earlier archaeological remains to be low, because they were likely to have been destroyed by the major earth-moving operations involved in the canal's construction. The assessment noted that cobbled towpaths had not been recorded elsewhere on the Crinan Canal and it is more likely that earlier surfaces were compacted stone chippings. The assessment concluded that there was some potential for remains related to such surfaces to survive beneath the current towpath and that an archaeological watching brief could be conducted to record any such surfaces, should they exist.

4. Representations received

No representations have been received.

5. Report

a) Policy considerations

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

AMAAA 1979, Part 1 Section 2:
control of works affecting an ancient monument.

The Scottish Historic Environment Policy (2011):

1.28. Scottish Ministers are committed to protecting and managing Scotland's rich and diverse historic environment in a sustainable way so that current and future generations can understand, appreciate and benefit from it. Scottish Ministers have put in place, and will continue to support, a range of actions to achieve this.

3.4. Scheduled monument consent is required for any works that would demolish, destroy, damage, remove, repair, alter or add to the monument or to carry out any flooding or tipping on the monument. It is a criminal offence to carry out any of these works without consent.

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 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.

3.18. Scheduled monument consent applications must be considered in terms of the cultural significance of the monument and the impact that the proposals would have upon this cultural significance. The more important particular features of the monument are to its cultural significance, the greater will be the case against interventions which modify these features.

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.

3.22. Where consent for the range of works set out in paragraph 3.4 is granted, conditions are normally applied to ensure the works are undertaken in an appropriate manner. Common requirements are:

- a. the use of appropriate assessment methodologies to determine the full impact of any proposed management, use or development;
- b. the avoidance of irreversible change particularly wherever its effects cannot be adequately assessed;
- c. that where change is necessary, strategies should be adopted to mitigate its impact and limit intervention;
- f. that an appropriate level of record is made before, during and after any work and deposited in local and national archives, and, where appropriate, published;
- h. that any archaeological excavation or other intrusive investigation should be based upon a detailed research strategy, with adequate resources, using appropriately skilled and experienced archaeologists with a satisfactory record of the completion and publication of projects (see Note 3.10); and,
- i. that the design, planning and execution of works on scheduled monuments are undertaken by people with appropriate professional and craft qualifications, skills and experience.

b) Assessment

The proposals would involve excavating a trench 300mm wide and 500mm deep along the existing towpath before installing ducting and backfilling. It is likely that the

upper layers of the towpath are of modern origin, but there is potential that earlier surfaces survive beneath it.

Parts of the towpath edge are retained by a stone revetment wall so it would not be possible to avoid excavations in the scheduled monument altogether. Where the proposals have the potential to impact on a historic structure (Crinan Weir) they have been designed to avoid this impact and the ducting would be attached to a modern steel gantry.

Elsewhere, it has been proposed that archaeological monitoring should allow identification and recording of the remains of earlier surfaces should they survive. Traces of such earlier surfaces are of some archaeological interest but would be an insignificant component with regard to the monument's role as an example of civil engineering, and hence do not contribute substantively to its cultural significance.

The trench for the ducting would be backfilled prior to re-surfacing associated with a previously granted application for scheduled monument consent (Case 201504731). Where the ducts cross a masonry structure (Crinan Weir) they would be attached to a modern steel gantry. Hence the works should have no material visible impact on the canal when complete.

The works would be unlikely to have a significant impact on the cultural significance of the monument. The proposals appear to have been carefully considered, sensitively designed and properly planned. Associated works may reveal some archaeological remains of some interest and it has been proposed that these may be appropriately recorded by means of archaeological monitoring.

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

Scottish Canals have completed an environmental appraisal during the planning phase of the project and this has been summarised in a supplementary email from their Senior Environmental Specialist (23 March 2016). The appraisal included consideration of possible impacts on Moine Mhor SSSI and SAC and concluded that they should not be impacted by the works. The appraisal recommended one action: that excavations left open overnight should be covered to protect nocturnal animals transiting along the towpath.

d) Conclusion

The work would allow the servicing of moorings and would contribute to the ongoing use of the canal, which may be considered to accord with SHEP 1.28.

The proposals would involve relatively limited disturbance along an existing towpath in advance of a surfacing upgrade. Once completed the works should not have a material visual impact on the canal.

Excavations may uncover some archaeological traces of earlier towpath surfaces. Removal of limited sections of such surfaces would not have a material effect on the

monument's cultural significance and it is considered that archaeological recording would produce a suitable record of any such traces prior to their destruction. Hence, it is concluded that the works should not have an adverse effect on the overall cultural significance of the monument and accord with SHEP para 3.18 and are not contrary to SHEP 3.14. and 3.16.

The works have been accompanied by a Heritage Impact Assessment and appear to have been carefully designed in accord with SHEP 3.20.

With regard to other material considerations the works have been accompanied by an Ecological Appraisal, which has considered their potential impacts and proposed mitigation where appropriate.

The Heritage Impact Assessment has not been accompanied by a methodology for the proposed archaeological monitoring. A methodology for the monitoring, and subsequent reporting and archiving, is required. This issue may be dealt with through the imposition of an appropriate condition.

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.

7. Conditions

1. Work shall not start on site until the applicant has commissioned a programme of archaeological investigation in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved in writing by Historic Environment Scotland's Heritage Management Directorate. This scheme shall be fully implemented during the course of the excavation of the trench.

Reason: to ensure that archaeological information relating to the areas of the monument affected by trench excavation is recovered, recorded and reported on to a satisfactory standard.

8. Approval

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| Officer | Simon Stronach | Date | 29/03/2016 |
| Approved by | John Raven | Date | 29/03/16 |

Annex A – list of supporting documents

Location plan

Install methodology

Sketch showing typical cross section and plan for ducting track

Email from Scottish Canals Senior Environmental Specialist (23 March 2016)

Heritage Impact Assessment for the Excavation of a Ducting Trench under the Crinan Canal Towpath at Crinan