

Case information

Reference/Case ID	201507323		
Scheduled Monument	Lachlan Castle		
Index no	M292	Grid Ref	NS005953 200500.0000 695300.0000
Date of Application	15 February 2016	Application Received	19 February 2016
Summary of proposed works	Erection of timber screen and seat; removal of tree.		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that consent be granted with a condition.

2. Background

Lachlan Castle is an impressive ruined fortification on a promontory overlooking Loch Fyne. It was probably built in the 15th century and consists of two blocks, on the east and west sides of a narrow open court connected at the north end by a small building with a small wheel-staircase. The Castle was occupied by the Maclachlans until 1746, when it was attacked by a government warship.

The monument is of national importance because it is a fine example of a late medieval, small stone castle situated in a typically strategic, and very picturesque, location by a sea loch on the Atlantic coast. The courtyard and the surviving structures around it are noted to be particularly striking and unusual. The Castle's fabric and associated archaeological remains preserved below ground have the potential to provide much information about the lives of its inhabitants and it has important historical associations with a particular family and national events.

The proposed works are part of a project designed to improve public access to the Castle, particularly to allow safe access to the courtyard.

3. Proposals

The works are designed to facilitate public access to the Castle and improve its appreciation. They include:

- Erection of a timber screen within the courtyard with a gate and interpretation panels.
- Fixing of a timber bench to the northwest of the Castle.
- Removal of a tree to the south of the Castle.

The timber screen is designed to allow safe public access into the courtyard of the Castle, which is one of the most dramatic and unusual features of the monument. It is intended to be temporary until the Castle has undergone further consolidation. It would be built from larch boards secured onto a frame. The frame would be secured to the surrounding structures using stainless steel rods fitted into masonry joints. The screen would have a gate to allow restricted access into the courtyard. It would be braced with stainless steel and fitted with a steel bolt and padlock. The larch board screen would have four round and two rectangular interpretation panels.

A bench made from green oak boards with stainless steel fixings would be erected to the northwest of the Castle. It would be fitted to a green oak deck bolted into the existing ground and rock by means of stainless steel rods (20mm diameter). The proposed drawings showed a total of ten fittings. Email correspondence during the application (6 April 2016) has confirmed that this number would be reduced to eight, and that this is the minimum number possible.

It is also proposed to remove a tree in proximity to the Castle on its south side. No methodology for this has been included in the application.

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:

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 proposal works would add a timber screen with interpretation panels within the courtyard of the Castle. It would not be widely visible when outside of the Castle. The erection of the screen is intended to be temporary and to allow public access to the Castle's courtyard. The screen is designed so that it should cause no damage to the fabric of the monument as it will be fixed into joints. Erection of the screen will represent a change to the monument, but one that is entirely reversible and is designed to increase the public's appreciation of an important element of the Castle (the courtyard).

The bench would be erected around 40m from the Castle using small steel rods inserted into the existing rock and ground surface. The number of rods (eight) has been minimised and their insertion would cause very limited disturbance. This is not likely to have a material impact on any sub-surface remains that may be present. The bench is of a sympathetic design and would not be visually intrusive at this location. It may encourage more public use of the monument.

The tree is in a location that obscures important views to the Castle from the B8000 across Lachlan Bay. Its roots may be causing damage to sub-surface archaeological remains. Its removal would improve visibility of the Castle from the surrounding area and may improve preservation of below-ground remains. However, no methodology for the tree's removal has been included with the application and this has potential to cause damage if not undertaken sensitively. Removal should be preceded by submission and agreement of a suitable methodology with HES HMD and this may be dealt with by applying a relevant condition.

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

The application site does not lie close to any SSSI, SPA or SAC designation. National Biodiversity Network GIS data sets indicate no evidence for Protected Species in the relevant 100m grid squares.

d) Conclusion

The proposals would erect a timber screen in the courtyard of this Scheduled Monument. Because the screen is located in the Castle's interior it would not materially change the appearance of the monument when outside of it. It would change the appearance of the courtyard but there would be no safe public access to the courtyard otherwise. Erection of the screen should have no adverse physical impacts on the fabric of the monument. The screen and its erection has been sensitively designed and is entirely reversible. It would provide public interpretation that would improve understanding of the monument.

The number of fixings for the bench have been minimised and it is unlikely to have any adverse physical impacts on the monument. The bench has been sensitively designed and located so it would not have an adverse visual effect on the monument. It should encourage public access and enjoyment of the monument.

The removal of the tree would improve important views to the monument from the south and may improve the preservation of sub-surface remains. However, a methodology for this work has not been submitted and if it is undertaken in an inappropriate way it has the potential to cause damage to the monument.

It is concluded that the works should cause negligible impact to the cultural significance of the monument, which accords with SHEP para 3.18. The proposals appear to be carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed and properly planned and should accord with SHEP para 3.20. By removing a tree they should also contribute to the long term preservation of the monument (according with SHEP 3.14) and there is no conflict with policy at SHEP para 3.16, which notes that interventions should normally be the minimum consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in a monument. The erection of the screen is entirely reversible and aimed at enhancing safe access and public understanding of the monument. The erection of the bench may increase public appreciation of the monument, as may removal of the tree. Hence the works would bring public benefits in accordance with SHEP 3.19.

Condition 1 is required to ensure that the removal of the tree is undertaken according to an appropriate methodology.

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. The work to remove the tree shall not commence until Historic Environment Scotland has agreed in writing a methodology for its felling and removal.

Reason: to ensure that the removal of the tree does not cause physical damage to the monument.

8. Approval

Officer	Simon Stronach	Date	7/04/2016
Approved by	John Raven	Date	8/4/16

Annex A – list of supporting documents

Email from Martin Hadlington (6 April 2016)

Castle Lachlan Site Plan (Proposed)

Castle Lachlan SMC Application 02/16

Old Castle Lachlan Access Project Oak Bench-Deck Mounted

Old Castle Lachlan Courtyard Barrier and Gate Sketch

Old Castle Lachlan Deck and Bench