

Case information

Reference/Case ID	201507976		
Scheduled Monument	Kilspindie Castle, castle and settlement		
Index no	M5997	Grid Ref	NT461799 346100.0000 679900.0000
Date of Application	18 March 2016	Application Received	21 March 2016
Summary of proposed works	Excavation of possible Anglian timber buildings in the Glebe Field, Aberlady.		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends approval for excavation of possible Anglian timber buildings on the Glebe Field, Aberlady be granted without conditions.

2. Background

The historic environment asset and its cultural significance

The monument comprises the remains of a castle of late sixteenth century date and an area of settlement around it dating from the Anglian to medieval period.

The monument lies on the coast, on the north periphery of Aberlady in the field known as the Glebe. The castle is represented by its north wall which is visible for a length of some 11m and contains a door and gunloop, and by the return of its west wall. The north wall survives to a maximum height of approximately 2m. Elsewhere the masonry has been largely removed and the interior of the structure is under cultivation.

Metal detecting over several years has recovered a rich assemblage of artefacts, the quantity and concentration of which suggest that settlement in this field dates back to the Anglian period and possibly earlier. A 2nd century AD fibula is the earliest datable find but it cannot by itself support an equally early date for the settlement.

By contrast finds from the Anglian period include a substantial assemblage of coins and metalwork far in excess of what might be expected from a series of stray finds.

Additional material suggests continuous occupation between the late 1st millennium AD and the destruction of the castle in the seventeenth century.

The monument is of national importance because of its potential to add to our understanding of settlement in southern Scotland during the period of Anglian influence. The possibility of tracing the continuous development of settlement through the Anglian and medieval periods, without the overburden of subsequent buildings, makes this a site of considerable rarity and importance. The scheduled area encompasses the castle and the area around it in which the concentrations of artefactual material suggest that occupation has been focussed.

Applicant

The Aberlady Conservation and Historical Society (ACHS) has been awarded grants from East Lothian Council, Gullane Area Community Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund to undertake a project called Aberlady Angles. The project proposes a series of community-led activities including a schools' learning programme, community training workshops and a research excavation. The SMC application is for the research excavation component.

Aberlady Conservation and History Society was established in 2001. The Society aims to research, conserve and promote the village's historic and natural environment. The Society has undertaken a number of projects to conserve, understand and promote the heritage of Aberlady. The Aberlady Angles Project is part of this long term strategy, creating opportunities for local people and school children to take an active part in the discovery of their heritage.

Pre-application discussions

Pre-application discussions have taken place between 5 February 2013 and 23 February 2016 involving HES staff and the applicant's archaeological contractors regarding the latest proposals for archaeological excavation to inform consent. The present application has been adapted as a result of these pre-application consultations and it accords with the outcome of these discussions.

3. Proposals

Consented works – Excavation of possible Anglian timber buildings in the Glebe Field, Aberlady

Initial excavation of one 50m x 5m trench with potential to extend to an area 30 x 50m.

The original application outlined an excavation strategy for machine striping of area 30m x 50m, followed by hand excavation of the area. Following preliminary assessment of the application, and in light of representations received, the applicant agreed to amend pages 42 and 43 of the Project Design and Methodology document which is presented as an addendum to the application.

4. Representations received

One representation was received from East Lothian Council Archaeological Service (ELCAS). ELCAS supports the project, and especially its wider aims of community involvement and education. Nevertheless, they have concerns about some aspects of the project methodology as outlined in the project design. The archaeological remains are of exceptional importance, and the site is also likely to be extremely complex, with the geophysical surveys and finds recovered previously from the site suggesting multiple phases of activity, from prehistoric and Roman through to medieval periods. ELCAS would therefore recommend that the areas excavated are limited in size, in order to reduce the impact on the buried remains, and that the areas stripped of topsoil are fully excavated. This would ensure that the maximum information possible is extracted from the excavated areas, while minimising the overall impact on the site.

ELCAS recommends therefore:

- Trenches are hand excavated rather than using a machine to strip the topsoil.
- Trenches are stripped in spits, of 10-20cm depth, to allow for metal detecting of the trench base after each spit.
- The total area proposed to strip should be reduced, to an excavation area that can be excavated more fully in the time given.

5. Report

a) Policy considerations

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

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

Part 1 Section 2 - Control of works affecting scheduled monuments.

Part 3 Section 42 – Restrictions on use of metal detectors.

The Scottish Historic Environment Policy

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, which 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.

3.17. As each monument will require treatment specific to its individual nature, characteristics, significance and needs, any proposed change to it must be fully and explicitly justified.

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.

3.19. Extensive intervention will only be allowed where it is clearly necessary to secure the longer-term preservation of the monument, or where it will clearly generate public benefits of national importance which outweigh the impact on the national cultural significance of the monument. Such public benefits could come from, for example, interventions which make public access to scheduled monuments easier, or assist public understanding, or will produce economic benefits once the works are completed.

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 Project is a series of community-led activities, including a schools learning programme, community training workshops, and a research excavation at the scheduled monument of Kilspindie Castle, to which this application relates.

Overview of works

The work proposed to this monument is an archaeological excavation of sub-surface archaeological features within a single evaluation trench with potential to extend within a larger area, depending on the outcome of the preliminary evaluation trench. The works to which this SMC application relates will be carried out over a two week period.

The preliminary excavation trench has been located to target a probable large structure, of possible Anglian date. Identified through previous geophysical survey in the 1990s, further geophysical detection is required to rectify previous poor surveying controls to accurately locate the structure for the excavation.

Methodology

Excavation of the preliminary trench will be done by hand or machine excavation (depending on the specific topsoil depths) of the topsoil in spits and every base layer metal detected and sieved. Excavation of sub-topsoil layers will be by hand and it is proposed to excavate 50% of main features and 100% of pits/post holes.

The preliminary trench to be opened is 50x5m which represents an intervention of 250m² the monument which has total area of 40,000m², being 0.7%. The majority of archaeological deposits will be preserved and this would constitute a representative sample. Nevertheless, this excavation will result in the total destruction of part of the monument and as such the works cannot be seen to be the minimum works necessary to conserve what is culturally significant in a monument. Consequently Policy at 3.14 is not met and therefore the application must comply with policy at 3.19.

To comply with Policy for extensive intervention at 3.19 where there is demonstration of the public interest, and 3.20 for demonstration of correct methods and planning, the following considerations are pertinent to a research excavation: (1) quality and importance of research agenda; (2) level of expertise of main contractors; (3) feasibility of implementation; (4) adequate financial support; (5) post excavation strategy; and (6) reinstatement methods.

(1) Quality and importance of research agenda

The excavation is designed to investigate a possible large high status building of the Anglian period. The Anglian period in Scotland is a key period to understanding the development of Christianity and major settlements in southern Scotland. Nevertheless, while there is strong place-name and documentary evidence, archaeological evidence for the period is not extensive. This project therefore has

two key research aims: at a site level, this excavation intends to provide the first archaeological context for the discovery of the high status Anglian finds from the 1990s. At a wider level the project will attempt to provide the first evidence to place the site in the wider context of Anglian settlement in this part of Scotland. The research agenda as outlined in pages 3-29 of the project Design and Methodology document intends to meet current academic research aims. These aims are to establish an initial estimate of the importance of the site in the wider Anglian settlement, specifically to test the level of ecclesiastical activity and this connection with other known important centres at Lindisfarne. It also has the potential to inform the major strategic aims of the national and peer-reviewed Scottish Archaeological Research Framework. Specifically, it meets the strategic theme of development of North Britain to Scotland and, where researchers, working from site-specific work to regional analysis, can explore how Scotland came to be.

The wider project is also designed to provide a wide and meaningful series of community engagement opportunities and schools learning projects. Through the volunteering part of the excavation project as a central part, the project aims to ensure (1) heritage of the East Lothian area is better understood and explained; and (2) heritage skills are developed in the local community. These wider community aims are fully in line with the Scottish Government's Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland, and Historic Environment Scotland's national archaeology strategy. These wider strategic policy aims are outlined on pages 29-39.

Therefore, I consider that the research agenda is robust and intends to deliver public benefits of a national level.

(2) Level of expertise of main contractors.

AOC Archaeology Group (AOC) has been appointed as the main contractor to deliver the research excavation and key community and schools work. AOC is a registered archaeological contractor through the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. AOC has undertaken numerous research and community projects in East Lothian. AOC has provided CVs of the main archaeologists on site and all appear to have the relevant training and expertise to work on a site of national importance.

To meet the wider community aims of the project, the excavation will use a limited number of local volunteers. It is intended that the ratio of professional to volunteer will be no more than 1:3 which is acceptable on a site of national importance. AOC have appointed an archaeologist to the dedicated community liaison point.

Therefore, I consider that the project team has the necessary level of expertise to work on monument of national importance.

(3) Feasibility of implementation

The approach and methods for the excavation works have been outlined fully in the Project Design and Feasibility document. This part of the document is drafted in line with relevant industry standard levels.

The trench layout and the specific justification for the trench in relation to the project aims set out above has been agreed by the applicant and Historic Environment Scotland. Further the documents outline appropriate industry standard methodology for excavation of the archaeological deposits, including appropriate strategies with regard to environmental samples and artefact collection.

Taking into account the level of expertise of the main archaeological contractors, I conclude that the method for excavation of the trench within two weeks is feasible, and that the post excavation strategy is realistic and well resourced.

(4) Adequate financing support

The project is funded by East Lothian Council, Gullane Area Community Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund. AOC Archaeology Group has provided assurance to Historic Environment Scotland, which has been accepted, that sufficient funds are in place to conduct a two-week excavation of this scale and also adequately deal with post excavation analysis, finds conservation and reporting. AOC have confirmed that they have evaluated risk for unexpected discoveries and are confident it can be managed within existing AOC infrastructure.

(5) Post excavation strategy

An initial post excavation strategy is outlined on pages 47- 50. The project design meets Historic Environment Scotland's procedure for post excavation reporting and analysis of finds and environmental samples. This includes a clear intention to final reporting of the project in a peer-reviewed academic journal and final deposition of project archive in the National Monuments Record of Scotland.

(6) Reinstatement method.

The original application did not contain a clear strategy for reinstatement of the site. The applicant subsequently provided assurance to Historic Environment Scotland that a proper reinstatement strategy has been formulated.

Taking in consideration the above factors, the outcomes of the project in relation to archaeological knowledge, public understanding, and developing skills represent a range of nationally important benefits. The adverse impact of the excavation as set out above has been judged in balance against those benefits and it is considered the proposals meet the public benefit test set out in SHEP 3.19.

It is also considered that the research design and methods have been fully and explicitly justified and have been carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed, properly planned and executed. Thus policy at 3.16 and 3.29 has been met.

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

The application has no impact upon protected species or places.

d) Conclusion

The application, being a research excavation, should be viewed as works as set out in both Part 1 Section 2 of the AMAA Act 1979 and section 3.4 of SHEP, and also use of metal detecting equipment as set out in Part 3 Section 42 of the AMAA Act 1979.

The application, requiring intrusive excavation works, which forms part of a wider community engagement and schools learning project, is more than the minimum necessary to conserve what is culturally significant in this scheduled monument.

The application is compliant with SHEP 3.19, 3.20 and 3.22 to demonstrate that there is a public benefit of national importance and that it is carefully considered, is based on good authority, sensitively designed and properly planned.

From the information provided with this application, and based on pre-application discussions with the applicant, further conditions as outlined in SHEP 3.22 to ensure the works are undertaken in an appropriate manner are not required.

6. Recommended decision

I recommend consent is **granted**.

7. Conditions

None

8. Approval

Officer	George Findlater	Date	11/04/2016
Approved by	Aonghus MacKechnie	Date	12/04/2016

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Full Project Design and Methodology
- Email Clarifying Project Methodology – 4 April 2016
- Updated pages for Project Design and Methodology – 11 April 2016