Case information

Reference/Case ID	201507485

Scheduled Monument	Caledonian Canal, Fort Augustus to Loch Ness		
Index no	M3614	**Grid Ref**	NH375091 237500.0000 809100.0000

Date of Application	25 February 2016	**Application Received**	25 February 2016
Summary of proposed works	Concrete shuttering to stabilise the ram pit walls to hold a fibre grate cover		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that consent be granted.

2. Background

The monument comprises that stretch of inland waterway known as the Caledonian Canal running from the top (west) lock at Fort Augustus eastward to Loch Ness. The area scheduled includes the canal, an area extending up to 20m on both sides and the flight of locks, but excludes the modern lock gates and their hydraulic control gear.

The canal was designed by Thomas Telford and built between 1803 and 1822. It was for a time the world's largest canal. It is of national importance because it is a superb example of 19th century civil engineering.

The ram pits are chambers below ground level at either side of each lock gate, which house parts of the mechanism required to open them. They were refurbished in the 1950s or 1960s by the placing of heavy sheet steel covers supported on a lime brick internal lining. The sheets allow the location of the pits to be walked over while maintaining access for maintenance. Both the lime brick lining and the sheet steel are reaching the end of their useful lives and require to be replaced. This is also considered desirable because of Health and Safety considerations (the sheets are heavy to lift and slippery when wet). Consequently, it is proposed to replace them with fibre grate covers supported on a new poured concrete wall lining the pits.

There have not been any pre-application discussion regarding the proposed works at this section of the canal. However, similar repairs have been undertaken at many other sections of the canal.

3. Proposals

The proposals involve the refurbishment of 12 ram pits at Fort Augustus flight. It is proposed to remove the steel sheets and lime brick lining using hand tools or mechanical chisels. Once the pits are cleared, wooden shuttering would be secured into the concrete base of the ram pit, or into mortar joints (not masonry). Concrete would be poured into the shuttering, which would be removed when the concrete is set. The new concrete lining would form the base for fixing new supports for the fibre grate covers, which would then be installed.

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):
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.

b) Assessment

The proposed work would replace ageing and failing parts of the canal infrastructure. The affected elements are not original and were replacements made in the 1950s or 60s. They do not form part of the original canal design and do not contribute significantly to its importance as an example of 19th Century civil engineering.

The works have been designed not to be invasive with regard to the original fabric of the canal, which would survive physically intact around the proposed new concrete lining. The proposed works would improve the safety of staff and visitors at the flights. They would facilitate ongoing maintenance of the lock mechanisms.

The concrete lining would be below ground and so not readily visible. The grates would present a slightly different appearance in comparison to steel sheets on a small part of the ground surface at either side of the locks. As noted above the steel sheets are not original and the change is not likely to be a noticeably adverse aesthetic change.

It is concluded that the work would have minimal impact on the monument's cultural significance while allowing its ongoing safe use and maintenance.

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 evidence for one Protected Species in the relevant 100m grid squares: bats. However, because of the nature of the proposed works there is no potential for any significant impacts on bats.

d) Conclusion

The proposed works would have minimal effect on the cultural significance of the canal and are necessary to allow its ongoing maintenance and use. It is concluded that they are compliant with Sections 3.14, 3.16 and 3.18 of SHEP. The works appear to have been carefully considered and planned, and are therefore compliant with Section 3.20 of SHEP.

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

Granted without conditions

8. Approval

Officer	**Simon Stronach**	**Date**	**20/04/2016**
Approved by	**John Raven**	**Date**	**20/04/2016**

Annex A – list of supporting documents

Area Map (Ref 1)
Top View Map (Ref 2)
Engineers Drawing (Ref 3)
Method Statement (Ref 4)
Site Photos (Ref 5)