

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA

Case information

Reference/Case ID	201600112		
Scheduled Monument	St Kilda village and related structures		
Index no	M2276	Grid Ref	NF010994 1000.0000 899400.0000
Date of Application	13 April 2016	Application Received	13 April 2016
Summary of proposed works	The retention of automatic weather recording stations and the erection of temporary netting to catch sheep.		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends approval for the retention of automatic weather recording stations and the erection of temporary netting to catch sheep.

2. Background

The monument contains the abandoned remains of several millennia of farming, which came to an abrupt end in the middle of the 20th century, when the island was abandoned. The remains therefore represent a relict farming system and settlement pattern which has then been overrun by natural processes. Its abandoned and natural qualities are also key to the island's dual World Heritage Site (WHS) designation for both natural and cultural purposes.

The works are necessary for the running of the Soay Sheep Project on the island. The existing consent for these works expired recently, and the current application has been submitted so that the applicant can renew their activities. HES have had pre-application discussions with the applicant and NTS (the landowner and manager), and are satisfied that there will not be any significant impacts to the monument.

3. Proposals

The proposed works comprise the continued use of automatic weather stations which have been in position since 1999-2000. These are used to measure various aspects of the weather that might affect Soay sheep and are placed in Signals Meadow, at the Quarry and at St Brianan's. The weather stations are fixed on tripods to the ground.

The proposals also comprise the erection of temporary netting in order to catch Soay sheep during a two-week period each August. This method has been in operation each August since 1987. The netting subdivides the catch area, prevents sheep from climbing over walls and creates small corrals in which they are captured. It involves placing 1.7-2.0 m high nets around Village Bay in various locations. Some of these nets are free standing, while others are secured by poles placed at 10 m intervals into the ground to a maximum depth of 50 mm.

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:

Ancient Monument and Archaeological Areas Act (1979)

Part 1 Section 2: Control of works affecting an ancient monument.

Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement (2016)

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 (see Note 3.2). A consent under section 42 of the 1979 Act is also required to use a metal detector within a scheduled monument (see Note 3.3). It is a criminal offence to carry out any of these works without 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. (Annex 1 sets out guidance as to how cultural significance and national importance should be determined.)

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 proposals would have a minimal impact on the historic fabric and cultural significance of the monument.

The automatic weather stations are situated on tripods which secure them into the ground. However, as they have been in position since 1999-2000, their continued use will not impact on the monument. Although they are 2m high, their location near to MOD infrastructure means that they have a minimal impact on the character of the monument.

The erection of temporary netting would have a minimal impact on the monument. The pegging will not be much below the turf line, meaning that impacts upon underlying archaeological deposits should be minimised. The positioning of each pole or peg varies at random from year to year along the net, meaning that impacts caused by concentrated pegging in one area should also be limited. The exception to this is the netting placed on the street at No. 10, where sandbags are used to hold the netting down. The materials used are also wooden and therefore easily break against rock, so it is in the interests of the applicant to seek deeper soils, where underlying archaeology should be better protected.

In addition, the NTS archaeologist is consulted in advance and is usually present when the activities take place, thereby ensuring that any potential impacts are further mitigated. For example, the head dyke is reinforced prior to the works being undertaken, and the small holes that are created by the poles are closed over soon after.

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

None.

d) Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposed works are compliant with Section 3.16 of the policy statement in that they do not conflict with objective of ensuring the minimum level of intervention consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in the monument.

As the works have also been carefully considered in order to mitigate any impacts, they are therefore equally compliant with Section 3.20 of the Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement.

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.

I therefore recommend that consent is **granted without conditions**.

7. Conditions

None

8. Approval

Officer	Nicola Hall	Date	07/06/2016
Approved by	John Raven	Date	07/06/2016

Annex A – list of supporting documents

St Kilda Document