Old Invercauld Bridge

Scour Protection Works

Assessment of Impact

Introduction

This document accompanies an application to undertake repairs at Old Invercauld Bridge, following damage caused by Storm Frank. Works include grouting of the inside of one cutwater, infilling of the bedrock under the arches and bank repairs. No groundbreaking is proposed as part of these works.

Historical Background

Invercauld bridge was built in 1752 by engineer Major William Caulfield. It carried the military road from Blairgowrie to Fort George. At the time of the construction of the road and the bridge, Corgarff and Braemar Castles, both of which were served by the road, were being converted into small garrison posts. It is a 6 arch hump-backed rubble structure, each span being a different size. The bridge stands on a rocky bend in the river with bedrock below the flow. Blasting preceded construction on the site.

During its use, the bridge was lengthened at each end, with the addition of two flood arches on the N approach and one on the S. The cutwaters also seem to be additions and appear to also serve as buttresses, particularly toward the ends of the bridge. The bridge was superseded in 1859 by new Invercauld Bridge.

Archaeological background

The bridge itself is unlikely to contain much of archaeological interest although works below the cobbling may disturb earlier surfaces and evidence of the build-up of fill. As the piers of the bridge are built on rock outcrops there will have been no need for timber piles or grillage in the river bed.

The overgrown section of road to the N is less likely to have been disturbed and should be treated as archaeologically sensitive.

The road surface was excavated in 1973 and 1980/1 as part of a waterproofing exercise, and revealed an earlier cobbled surface, similar in character to that found on lesser bridges on the same route.

A watching brief was carried out in 2007 on the excavation of a new drain near the south end of the bridge. The excavation found two deposits of mortar and boulders at the E and W sides of the road aligned with the E and W walls of the bridge. These were interpreted as crude banks built to keep sandy road deposits from washing away.

Assessment of impact

The proposed works will have little or no discernible impact on the archaeological significance of the bridge, although care should be taken to ensure that the repairs are not overtly visible.

Clay infill to voids: These repairs are within the framework of the existing fabric and will not be discernible.

Concrete bags and grouting: As noted above, care should be taken to ensure that the concrete bags do not interfere with the appearance of the bridge. It is not clear whether these are intended to be permanent additions.

Diversion of steam: The diversion of the stream is likely to have a positive effect on the appearance of the monument as it will help to prevent future voiding.

Concrete: The stream runs over bedrock and there was blasting at the site before the bridge was built, as noted above. Therefore, these works will not have an archaeological impact. As noted previously, care should be taken to ensure that the repairs are discrete.

Building up of banks with soil/sand: No excavation is required in association with these works, only building up to restore material lost in the storm.

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