

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



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Case information

Reference/Case ID	201602533		
Scheduled Monument	Crinan Canal, Crinan to Cairnbaan		
Index no	M6500	Grid Ref	NR788944 178800.0000 694400.0000
Date of Application	08 August 2016	Application Received	09 August 2016
Summary of proposed works	Installation of five towpath cycle/pedestrian counters from Ardrishaig to Crinan Basin		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that consent be granted without conditions.

2. Background

Scottish Canals have identified a need to create cycle/pedestrian counters along their canal network including five along the length of the Crinan Canal.

The monument is of national importance because it comprises part of the Crinan Canal, an excellent example of Georgian civil engineering and the work of its designer, Scots engineer John Rennie. This ship canal runs across Knapdale between Loch Crinan and Loch Gilp, creating a route from the Firth of Clyde to the Inner Hebrides which avoids the open seas around the Mull of Kintyre. It was built between 1794 and 1809 and there has been relatively little change to the canal since its construction.

The physical fabric of the canal makes varying contributions to its cultural significance, depending on its age and condition. In general, the towpath surfaces and the adjacent grassy verges are of modern derivation. Therefore, the areas affected by this proposal do not make a significant intrinsic contribution to the national importance of the monument. However, they represent a significant contribution as views along the towpath and channel are key to understanding and appreciating the form of the monument and the manner in which it functioned as a piece of industrial infrastructure, as well as contributing to the character of the canal and how the canal is appreciated and enjoyed by visitors today.

No pre-application discussions have taken place. Additional information was sought and received from the applicant at various points with the final material submitted on September the 23rd 2016.

Similar schemes of work for the Forth and Clyde Canal, Caledonian Canal and the Union Canal are also under consideration for SMC – full details of these can be examined on the HES Decisions Portal.

3. Proposals

It is proposed to erect five pedestrian and cycle counters along the towpath of the Crinan Canal, at points spread along its entire length. The counters would measure the numbers of pedestrians and cyclists passing along the canal. A counter system is being installed across the canal network and is intended to provide information on user numbers.

The counters would be comprised of a pedestal cabinet within which the equipment is housed and sensors in a cement panel within the towpath.

Each of the counters will be cited by the outward edge of the towpath, that is, the side furthest from the canal. The pedestal cabinet would be mounted on a pole set within a 35cm² concrete foundation. The cabinet and poles would be painted green to reduce visual obtrusiveness. The sensors will be placed within a concrete plinth inserted into the fabric of the towpath. The plinth will be 10cm in depth, extend across the towpath, and be around 75cm in length. The concrete plinths would be flush with the tow path and would follow the camber of the path.

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 Monuments 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. It is a criminal offence to carry out any of these works without consent.

3.14. A monument is included 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 this policy statement 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.

3.17 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.

3.20. 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

Proposed justification

The works are a response to a 14-year project, which is nearing completion, to upgrade the towpaths of Scotland's canals. The towpath upgrades secured significant funding from third parties, including the Scottish government. The works are intended to promote the towpaths as a sustainable, green, and active way of travel, as well as encouraging recreational use of the canal. It is a condition of recent funding from Sustrans that the success of towpath use can be accurately measured, thus demonstrating the benefits of increased and sustained use. Widening access to and appreciation of the monument and encouraging more visitors to use it for leisure purposes are consistent with the policy statement's key principles, particularly paragraph 1.9d.

On balance, this appears to be a reasonable justification, and the determining factor in this application is therefore whether the impact of the proposed works is consistent with policy and legislation.

Impact of the Proposed Works

There will be direct and indirect impacts from the proposed works, which can be summarised as:

- The physical impact of the five excavations of 350mm square trenches to a depth of 350mm and the creation of concrete plinths running transversely across the towpath
- The impact on the setting of the monument through altering the towpath and the placement of the counters in close proximity to it

Excavation to create the concrete plinths would impact upon the fabric of the towpath. However, the towpath has been repaired and renewed many times during the life of the canal, and any original fabric is likely to lie at a much deeper level than the 10cm proposed in the works.

Erecting the pedestal cabinets would involve ground disturbance to create a concrete base c 35cm² in diameter. This excavation would take place by the tow path on the outward side of the canal and would therefore impact on the embankment, which is in most cases likely to be composed of homogenous construction material. Although this does have potential to disturb original fabric, the size of the disturbance would be limited compared to the size of the overall monument which has miles of artificial canal embankments along its length.

On balance, it is considered that the physical impact of the works would have no adverse impact on the cultural significance of the monument.

The counters would be clearly visible when moving along the towpath, and would add to the general signage, interpretation material and other modern infrastructure on the canal. Their recessive colour and relatively small size would mean they would only be clearly visible from within 40m or so, and then gradually fade into the background. On balance, although the creation of the plinths and counters would create a very slight adverse effect this would not be likely to significantly alter the visual amenity of the canal in any locations. The proposed works would not significantly distract from or obscure the relationship between the canal and its associated structures. Part of the significance of the monument is that it remains a working structure, and many modern objects such as signs, gates, or bollards can be seen along the towpaths.

These proposed works would be in keeping with these other structures and would be therefore unlikely to negatively affect the visual amenity of the monument.

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

The application site does not lie in a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Area, although it borders the Moine Mhòr SSSI. National Biodiversity Network GIS data shows that otters have been spotted in the vicinity. A protected species assessment was made along the canal in late August and advice from Scottish Canal's senior Environmental Specialist made it clear that the works should have no impact on EPS or species associated with the nearby SSSI.

d) Conclusion

The proposed works would have a very slight adverse impact on the cultural significance of the monument, and are therefore consistent with Policy Statement 3.16 as outlined above. The proposed works are also reversible in such a way that there would be no lasting impact on the monument beyond the intended three month duration, and are therefore consistent with Policy Statement 3.20 as outlined above. Finally, there would be a limited public benefit through the ability to monitor flows of towpath users, which would enhance future management of the canal. Encouraging more visitors to use it for leisure purposes is consistent with the policy statement's key principles, particularly paragraph 1.9d.

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 recommend consent is **granted without conditions**.

7. Conditions

None

8. Approval

Officer	Kevin Grant	Date	23/09/2016
Approved by	John Raven	Date	26/09/2016

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Survey sheets describing the location and character of each site for the proposed counters. One supplied for each site.
- Sketch drawing of design for plinths to be fitted within towpaths.
- Sketch drawing of design for cabinet plinths.
- Methodology document for installation of pinth