Scheduled Monument Consent:
Report on Handling

Case information

Reference/Case ID	201602990

Scheduled Monument	Loch Thom-Overton, water cut		
Index no	M3244	**Grid Ref**	NS246720 224600.0000 672000.0000

Date of Application	01 September 2016	**Application Received**	02 September 2016
Summary of proposed works	Initial site preparation works including vegetation removal and trial pits, in advance of repair of flood damaged spillway and overflow channel.		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends approval without conditions.

2. Background

The monument is a significant part of an early 19th-century civil hydraulic engineering scheme. The system was devised to supply enough water for the burgeoning population of Greenock and to provide power for the rapidly developing industries of the area. The well-preserved aqueduct, sluices and associated structures are an important survival of a defining period in industrial and civic history, not only in Inverclyde but across Scotland and further afield.

The site of the proposed works is an upper spillway, stilling pond, sluice and lower spillway that take water from the Overton Basin, a small headwater reservoir and channel overflows towards a nearby burn. At a site meeting in January 2016, it was established that the outer walls of the lower spillway (a 1950s concrete reconstruction of an original spillway) had significantly eroded due to excessive rainwater from the basin. There was also significant erosion beside the sluice gate at the stilling pond, again immediately behind the rear wall. Following this meeting, the applicant was sent a detailed list of agreed points and a general guide to applying for SMC.

Scottish Water are carrying out other maintenance works and upgrades to the water cut and its reservoirs, as part of preparation for a small hydroelectric scheme outwith the scheduled monument. No other SMCs have been received for this part of the monument since 2009.

3. Proposals

The proposed works are being undertaken to finalise the design of repairs to the damaged spillway channel. These include:

- Initial site preparation and vegetation removal at the upper spillway, including dewatering the basin. These works do not require SMC.
- The hand excavation of a trial pit (approximately 1m wide by 3m long) the east end wall of the stilling basin, to establish the extent of the voiding behind the wall. The wall would then be temporarily propped and the excavation backfilled while a finalised repair is designed.
- The hand excavation of 4 trial pits (each 1m by 2m) at the lower spillway, two on each side of the concrete channel, to establish ground conditions and the level of voiding. The spillway walls would then be temporarily propped and canalised, with the excavations being left open or backfilled as dictated by the condition of the masonry.

4. Representations received

No representations were received. Scottish Water are sole applicants and site owners.

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 (as amended)

- Part 1 Section 2 - Control of works affecting an ancient monument. This is what you will have used to decide if SMC is required for the works described.
- Part 1 Section 2 (3) – authorises works where Scottish Ministers or Historic Environment Scotland have granted consent (scheduled monument consent) for the execution of the works where the works are executed in accordance with the terms of the consent and of any conditions attached to the consent.

Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement

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.

3.16. 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.

3.20. 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 monument is of national importance because it has an inherent potential to make a significant addition to our understanding of the past, in particular to the study of hydraulic engineering and development of water provision for drinking and industry in 19th-century Greenock.

The upper spillway, sluice and stilling pond are all original features constructed in stone. The sluice gate leading to the lower spillway is a modern timber replica, and the lower spillway is a concrete channel retained by timber planks on the outer edge. Map regression suggests that the concrete channel is a replacement of a stone original, and is of similar dimensions to that original feature. Therefore, the present form of the monument may appear to be partly of modern derivation, but closely resembles the original appearance. It is possible to understand and appreciate how Thom envisaged the functions of the water system, and this is a very important aspect of the cultural significance of the monument.

The maintenance and repair of the lower spillway will have involved significant excavation of the surrounding ground and replacement of the spillway masonry. It is believed that much of the repair work was carried out between the 1950s and c.1971.

The proposed works represent only the preparation phase prior to design of the full repair methodology, and which will be part of a separate application. The sole impact of the works will be through the removal of soil behind the walling of the sluice and the lower spillway. This material is likely to be partly original banking and partly material backfilled from modern repair works. In neither case does this material contribute to a detailed understanding and appreciation of the cultural significance of the monument. Therefore, while the interventions will involve the removal of material, this would not constitute a significant adverse impact on the monument.

No mitigation is proposed other than a detailed topographical survey and a photo record by on-site Scottish Water staff. This would mean that any archaeological material would be lost without recording, and this is largely likely to mean small finds deposited accidentally or deliberately during the 1820s or 1950s-1970s. This material is not an important element in the cultural significance of the monument. Moreover, it would not be likely that any such finds would contribute to the well-

documented history of the water cut or to enhance our understanding of the scheduled monument. On balance, the loss of this material would not have an adverse impact.

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

No other considerations are required. The separate Protected Species and Places Assessment demonstrates that no biodiversity or natural environment issues would transpire, based on our GIS information and the type of works undertaken.

d) Conclusion

The proposed works would not have an adverse impact on the cultural significance of the monument. They would also inform a detailed design for repairs to the Overton Basin spillway. As this feature is an important element in the cultural significance of the monument, this repair design will be crucial to maintaining the overall appearance of the water cut. On that basis, it is considered that the proposed works do not conflict with paragraph 3.16 of the HES Policy Statement. The works are also carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed, and properly planned, and are therefore also consistent with paragraph 3.20.

The applicant wishes to commence works in the first week of October and envisages that the work will take one week. The importance of these works is to facilitate a detailed design for the proposed repairs, and that design represents our main concern in this case. It is therefore unlikely that we would need to either inspect the works or see a detailed report as a consequence of this application. On that basis, no notification or reporting conditions are recommended, as this would not be proportionate or reasonable in this case.

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	**John Malcolm**	**Date**	**23/09/2016**
Approved by	**John Raven**	**Date**	**26/09/2016**

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- 109053_Overton_Scope of Works_Issue02
- Overton Basin Enabling Works