



## Case Information

<b>Reference/Case ID</b>	300018464		
<b>Scheduled Monument</b>	Elgin Cathedral		
<b>Index no</b>	SM90142	<b>Grid ref</b>	NJ 22200 63000
<b>Date application validated</b>	07 September 2016		
<b>Summary of proposed works</b>	Installation of a weak lime screed underneath selective table top tombs to prevent ground disturbance by wildlife		

### 1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that approval for the installation of a weak lime screed underneath selective table top tombs to prevent ground disturbance by wildlife be granted **without conditions**.

### 2. Background

#### The historic environment asset and its cultural significance

The monument comprises the surviving portions of Elgin Cathedral, its ancillary buildings, graveyard, boundary wall and gates. The remains include the nave with (rare) double aisles and N and S porches; twin western towers having a superb portal and window between them; transepts, above which rose a great central tower (which collapsed in 1711); a choir with aisles and presbytery; and a detached octagonal chapter-house, rebuilt in the 15th century. The cathedral was founded in 1224 and dedicated to the Holy Trinity. Much of the remaining work is from that century, but a series of fires in 1270, 1390, 1402 all left their mark on the cathedral, and the central tower collapsed and was rebuilt on several occasions.

The cultural significance of the monument is vested in its survival as one of the best preserved medieval cathedrals in Scotland. Its three towers (of which two survive) demonstrate the importance of the cathedral's foundation; the double aisles flanking the nave are unusual for major churches within the British Isles; and the graveyard contains the largest collection of medieval memorials of any Scottish cathedral - the number and complexity of the micro-architecture exhibited in some of these



memorials demonstrates the importance of Elgin as a burial place for nobility and higher-status individuals.

## The applicant

The cathedral is cared for by HES Conservation Directorate as a Property in Care, and it is operated as a popular paid-for visitor attraction. Recent works to the monument have focused on improving public access and signage, and on the installation of a new stone display in the north and south towers.

The proposed works are in response to regular ground disturbance beneath table top tombs caused by wildlife; the regular disturbance of human remains through natural processes is a sensitive issue, especially when this happens at a popular visitor attraction, and these works are designed to help prevent such disturbance occurring.

## Pre-application discussions

The applicant has discussed the proposed works with HES HMD, and the current application accords with the outcome of these discussions.

## **3. Proposals**

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- Laying of a weak lime screed on geotextile membrane (bounded by temporary shutters as required) underneath selective table top tombs to prevent ground disturbance by wildlife.

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## **4. Representations received**

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No representations were received.

## **5. Report**

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### **a) Policy considerations**

The application should be considered with the following legislative and policy considerations in mind:



Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

Part 1 Section 2: Control of works affecting scheduled monuments.

Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement June 2016

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.

3.19. Extensive intervention will only be allowed where it is clearly necessary to secure the longer-term preservation of the monument, or where it will clearly generate public benefits of national importance which outweigh the impact on the national cultural significance of the monument. Such public benefits could come from, for example, interventions which make public access to scheduled monuments easier, or assist public understanding, or will produce economic benefits once the works are completed.

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 works involve the installation of a weak lime screed underneath selective table top tombs to prevent ground disturbance by wildlife.



## Overview of works

The physical impact of the lime screed works on previously undisturbed archaeological deposits will be negligible, as by their very nature the works are only taking place at table top tombs where there has been ground disturbance by wildlife. The use of the geotextile membrane will mean that the lime screed is separated from historic fabric, and will enable the works to be easily reversible if required. There will be a residual aesthetic impact of the works, as the space under a selected number of table top tombs will change from being disturbed bare soil to a loosely compacted screed, and as such there will be an impact on the character of these table top tombs.

## Methodology

The drawings attached to the application set out a basic methodology for the works. A geotextile membrane will be laid underneath each of the table top tombs that require attention, and temporary timber shutters will then be used to contain the weak lime mix whilst it cures. The temporary shutters will then be removed. The weak lime screed mix is stated as being 3:3:1 of Bluehill 6mm Chip, Rothes Glen Sand, and St Astier NHL5 Lime, and this is considered a suitable finish.

## Summary

The works are required in order to respond to regular ground disturbance beneath table top tombs caused by wildlife; the regular disturbance of human remains through natural processes is a sensitive issue, especially when this happens at a popular visitor attraction, and these works are designed to help prevent such disturbance occurring. They have been designed to be low key in approach and reversible. Whilst there will be an aesthetic impact from there being loosely compacted lime screed beneath a number of table top tombs instead of disturbed earth, this change is not considered significant. The works do not, therefore, conflict with paragraph 3.16 of the policy statement.

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

No impact on Protected Species and Places.

### **d) Conclusion**

As works to support the conservation of a monument, the application should be viewed as works as set out in both Part 1 Section 2 of the AMAA Act 1979 and paragraph 3.4 of the policy statement.



The works have been designed in such a way that they do not impact on the cultural significance of the monument. As such, the work is justified under paragraph 3.16 of the policy statement. The methodology is such that the works are reversible, low key, and can be undertaken without detriment to the surrounding graveyard, and they are considered well planned. As such, the application complies with paragraph 3.20 without the need for any conditions.

## 6. Recommended decision

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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

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No conditions have been attached to this decision.

## 8. Approval

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<b>Case officer</b>	Oliver Lewis	<b>Date</b>	28 October 2016
<b>Approved by</b>	George Findlater	<b>Date</b>	01 November 2016

### Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Location plan - 459/142/1058
- Annotated photographs