

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



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Case Information

Reference/Case ID		300018540	
Scheduled Monument	Wigtown Castle		
Index no	SM11055	Grid ref	NX 43700 55000
Date application validated	04 November 2016		
Summary of proposed works	Removal of 3 Electricity Poles from Powerline Infrastructure		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that approval for removal of 3 electricity poles be granted.

2. Background

The monument comprises the remains of Wigtown Castle, a royal medieval castle, which now survives as earthworks. The monument is located in an agricultural field. It is crossed by two overhead electricity lines.

The castle is likely to have been built by 1264. It was probably destroyed on the orders of Robert I around 1315.

The monument is of national importance because it includes the remains of a medieval royal castle. It had an important role during the Wars of Independence. Related archaeological remains and the documentary record have the potential to contribute to our understanding of this important period of Scottish history.

The works are being proposed as part of the replacement of two electrical circuits. The new circuits will be located outside of the scheduled monument. Three poles within the scheduled monument will therefore be redundant. It is proposed to remove these carefully. The works have been discussed in advance with HES Casework, this included a site meeting. The design of the works has been modified to take account of those discussions.

3. Proposals

- Removal of three electricity poles from two overhead line circuits.
- Reinstatement of the resulting holes.

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Two electrical circuits (Newton Stewart to Sorbie 33kV SP66021 and Newton Stewart to Wigtown 11kV SP68412) are being replaced. The new route taken by the circuits will be different to the current route and will bypass Wigtown Castle Scheduled Monument.

This will result in three redundant poles being present in the Scheduled Monument. It is proposed to remove these poles from the Scheduled Monument in order to return the land to the condition it was prior to the erection of the existing circuit.

Access to the poles would be within a route marked by taped cane markers and agreed with HES during a site visit beforehand. The route avoids earthworks that form part of the monument.

The existing poles, numbers 81077635 and 11520532 (from Newton Stewart to Sorbie 33kV SP66021 circuit), and 10814116 (from Newton Stewart to Wigtown 11kV SP68412) would be carefully lifted vertically out of the ground and sockets by a 7.5-ton mechanical excavator with low ground pressure tracks. This would be achieved by attaching a chain around the pole to the bucket of the excavator, tightening the chain and lifting the pole vertically. No excavations are proposed.

The resultant approximately 0.3m diameter post socket holes would be backfilled using locally sourced soil obtained from outside of the scheduled monument. The backfilled holes would reflect the existing ground surface and be seeded with grass.

Canes used to mark access routes would be removed.

It is currently envisaged that poles would be removed from one circuit at one time, and the other circuit at a later date due to the scheduling of the erection of the rest of the line. No date has been set for the proposed works. HES would be notified one week in advance of the site works.

4. Representations received

No representations have been received.

5. Report

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.

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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.

3.18. 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.

b) Assessment

The proposed works involve the removal of three electricity poles. They are intended to remove redundant poles and restore the land to the state it was in prior to the erection of the poles.

The work has been designed so that machine access to the poles would avoid damage to earthworks in the monument. The poles would be lifted vertically to avoid disturbance beyond their existing sockets. Therefore there should be no physical impact on earthworks or sub-surface archaeological deposits associated with the monument. The removal of the poles would remove modern structures from the monument and improve its visual appearance.

The works would not affect the long term preservation of the monument or adversely affect its cultural significance. The removal of the poles and the restoration of the resulting sockets would improve the appearance of the monument. The removal of the overhead line from the monument would also remove the need for further maintenance or upgrading work within the monument. Consequently, the proposed work is assessed as having benefits for the preservation and appreciation of the monument.

The application has been informed by site discussions with HES Casework. It has been carefully designed to avoid adverse effects on the monument. The method of working, including a plan showing proposed access, has been included with the application documents. It reflects all pre-application discussions and no conditions are considered necessary.

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

No impact on Protected Species and Places considered likely – see PP&S assessment.

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d) Conclusion

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, comprising removal of three redundant electricity poles, are being done to elements of the monument in such a way that they will have no impact on the preservation or cultural significance of the monument. They do not, therefore, conflict with paragraphs 3.14 and 3.18 of the policy statement.

The works have been proposed in order to remove redundant modern infrastructure and would therefore be likely to improve the appearance of the monument.

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

No conditions have been attached to this decision.

8. Approval

Case officer	Simon Stronach	Date	11 November 2016
Approved by	John Raven	Date	14 November 2016

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Wigtown Castle Scheduled Monument SP Energy Networks Drawing
- Wigtown Castle Job Sheet