

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA

Case Information

Reference/Case ID	300018813		
Scheduled Monument	St Serfs Church, Dumbarton		
Index no	SM9654	Grid ref	NS 39300 75000
Date application validated	08 December 2016		
Summary of proposed works	Removal of trees adjacent to Church		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that approval for removal of trees be granted.

2. Background

St Serfs Church in Levensgrove Park, Dumbarton, includes the remains of a medieval parish church that was heavily consolidated in the 19th century.

The church is a rectangular ruin surviving to a length of 16m and width of 6m on a low mound enclosed by a modern chain-link fence.

The nave contains a number of 19th-century burials marked by headstones. The north and south walls of the nave survive to a height of about 1m. The entrance at the west end is probably a result of 19th century remodelling and the chancel was rebuilt in the 19th century as a burial aisle.

The earliest reference to a church here occurs in the 13th century and in the early 14th century this was the parish church for Robert I's nearby manor at Cardross. The rector of Cardross played an important part in the funeral arrangements of Robert I in 1329, and a tradition emerged as early as the 17th century that the viscera of Robert I were buried in this church following his embalming.

The scheduled area is a circle around 33m in diameter centred on the church. It includes the ruins and an area around them in which burials are likely to exist.

The monument is of national importance because of its potential to contribute to our understanding of medieval ecclesiastical architecture and medieval life generally. Moreover,

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA

the site has a traditional association with King Robert I (Robert the Bruce), who is an iconic figure in Scottish history.

The application is accompanied by a Method Statement and a plan identifying the trees that would be felled. Three yew trees would be retained.

The proposed work has been discussed with HES and the removal of trees was discussed as early as 2013. The removal of trees, and the modern fence around the church, have been recommended by HES in order to improve the setting of the monument. The trees may also have adverse effects on the fabric of the monument. The works form the first stage of a more extensive programme of improvements that would be subject to a SMC application in due course. The application has been made by West Dunbartonshire Council who own the monument.

3. Proposals

The existing post and chain-link fence would be removed by cutting at ground level. Because this would not involve sub-surface disturbance, or otherwise impact the monument, this element of the proposals would not require SMC but is included here for completeness.

Eight trees would be felled using chainsaws by suitably qualified personnel and the debris cleared from the site. Stumps would be ground out to 100mm below ground level and avoiding any disturbance to surrounding deposits.

The post and chain-link fence would be cut at ground level and removed from site.

The trees would be inspected for the presence of bats by operatives trained for this task. If bats were found a qualified ecologist would be contacted for advice and appropriate actions taken. The work would be undertaken in January and February 2017 to avoid impacts on nesting birds.

Trees would be section felled using a mobile elevating work platform. Debris would be lowered to the ground using ropes and pulleys. The structure of the church and surrounding ground would not be disturbed during the work.

Wood would be processed through a chipper or cut into sections and removed from site.

Stumps would be ground out to a depth of 100mm below ground level with no disturbance of surrounding ground.

4. Representations received

No third party representations were 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.

Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement June 2016

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.

b) Assessment

The works would remove trees surrounding the scheduled monument that are adversely affecting its setting and fabric. The trees do not contribute positively to the significance of the monument and detract from its appreciation. Therefore, the works would not adversely affect the cultural significance of the monument while enhancing its appreciation and contributing to its preservation.

The works would be undertaken by suitably qualified personnel and have been carefully designed to avoid damage, including accidental damage, to the monument.

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

The Method Statement sets out a suitable method for assessment and mitigation with regard to ecological impacts. With these controls in place no impact on Protected Species and Places is considered likely – see PP&S assessment.

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.

Scheduled Monument Consent: Report on Handling



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA

The works, comprising removal of trees, are being done to elements of the monument in such a way that they will have no impact on the cultural significance of the monument. They will also improve the condition and long term prospects for the monument. Therefore, they comply with paragraphs 3.16 and 3.18 of the policy statement.

The works have been proposed in order to improve the setting and contribute to the preservation of the monument and so are justified in accordance with paragraph 3.17 of the policy statement.

No conditions are considered necessary.

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	12 December 2016
Approved by	John Raven	Date	15 December 2016

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Method Statement - Tree Felling, St Serf's Church, Levensgrove Park, Dumbarton
- St Serf's Church - Tree Downtakings Drawing (60516173_640.1)