



Case Information

Reference/Case ID	300018975		
Scheduled Monument	Craw Stane, symbol stone and enclosure 575m E of Mains of Rhynie		
Index no	SM69	Grid ref	NJ 49700 26300
Date application validated	21 December 2016		
Summary of proposed works	Small-scale evaluative excavation		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that approval for the excavation of a 8mx8m trench to assess the limits of the metalworking deposit uncovered in 2016, and to more fully contextualise its discovery be granted without conditions.

2. Background

The monument comprises a Class 1 Pictish symbol stone, known as the Craw Stane or Rhynie No 1, which is situated on a south facing slope just below the crest of a hill in a pasture field which overlooks a valley below. The symbol stone stands within a multi-vallate enclosure which survives as a buried feature visible on some aerial photographs.

The Craw Stane is a rectangular block of grey granite, measuring 0.9m in breadth and 0.4m wide and 1.85m in height set in a concrete base. Its SW face bears the incised figure of a fish and, immediately below it, a Pictish beast. The symbols are grooved, pecked and reasonably clear. The symbol stone stands at the eastern edge of the cropmark of a roughly oval enclosure. It is formed of three concentric rings, which represent palisade ditches. The outer ring has a maximum diameter of 66m SW-NE.

Recent survey and excavation at the monument has shown that the Craw Stane (and two other symbol stones whose findspots were downslope from the monument) was associated with a high status, probably royal site, encompassing settlement and ritual dimensions, that dates to the 5th-6th century AD.

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The cultural significance of the monument therefore lies in the association of Pictish symbol stones with a high status settlement and ritual site, thus providing context to carved stones that is all too often not possible to attain. The range of evidence for metalworking in this part of the outer ditch also provides the first well contextualised and potentially best dated metalworking production assemblage in Britain, and this contributes to the cultural significance of the monument.

In 2016 a section of the outer ditch on the NNW side of the enclosure was dug as part of a wider excavation and it uncovered a rich assemblage of metalworking evidence from smelting to production of the final objects. Whilst the assemblage is not exceptional in terms of finds, it is in terms of range, and it has the potential to provide a snapshot in time of a Pictish metal workers workshop. Due to the unexpected complexity and time constraints, excavation of the sondages in this area were left unfinished. It is this section of outer ditch that is the subject of this application.

The application is for an 8mx8m trench to complete the excavation of the metalworking deposit uncovered in 2016, not necessarily to retrieve all objects within the deposit but rather to record the full depth of the stratigraphy and to more fully contextualise its discovery. The application is accompanied by a detailed project design that sets out the context and justification for the works, and a methodology as an appendix to the project design.

The application has been submitted by the Northern Picts Project (comprising researchers from the Universities of Aberdeen, Chester, and Glasgow), who have been undertaking reconnaissance survey and fieldwork at a number of sites across Northern Scotland from Aberdeenshire to Easter Ross in recent years, and this work (especially that at Rhynie since 2011) has led to new key evidence for the nature, chronology and importance of Northern Pictland in the emergence of the early kingdoms of Scotland. The project has a wide popular appeal, a strong social media presence, has received extensive media coverage in previous years, and includes a spin-off community initiative called Rhynie Women which links local arts and culture to the archaeological work.

The current phase of the project over 2017-19 aims to contextualise key evidence recovered at the Craw Stane excavations in 2016 and previous years by completing the excavation of the metalworking assemblage and its environs, and then characterising a series of hill forts within the landscape context of Rhynie.

The Northern Picts Project was supported financially by Historic Environment Scotland in 2016-17 and will again be in 2017-18, because it helps to deliver the aims of the Scottish Archaeology Strategy: enhancing understanding, caring and protecting, encouraging greater engagement, and innovation and skills.



The applicant has discussed the proposed works in detail with HES Heritage Directorate, and HES have commented on various iterations of the project design. The current application accords with the outcome of these discussions. The project design also addresses other excavation proposals at nearby Tap O' Noth fort, Wheellemont fort, and Cairnmore fort, as the work is very much seen as part of resolving and contextualising the Craw Stane complex within its wider landscape setting.

3. Proposals

- Excavation of a 8mx8m trench to assess the limits of the metalworking deposit uncovered in 2016, and to more fully contextualise its discovery. This will be achieved by reopening part of the 2016 trench to complete excavation of the sondages, and the excavation of an additional area to the immediate west of the 2016 trench to assess the limits of the assemblage and to identify any possible structures or production evidence that might explain the provenance of this assemblage.

Consented works – the works comprise the excavation of a 8mx8m trench to assess the limits of the metalworking deposit uncovered in 2016, and to more fully contextualise its discovery.

The physical impact of the excavation is that it would remove archaeological deposits and artefacts from the monument and would consequently be destructive. The works would involve removing the topsoil by machine stripping (the field is in regular cultivation) and re-exposing part of the backfilled trench from 2016, along with an area to the SSW of the 2016 trench that hasn't previously been exposed. All further excavation will be by hand, and will utilise a 'strip and map' approach that has been used elsewhere on the monument and is effective in identifying the shallow and ephemeral archaeology on this site. Artefact recovery is anticipated, and the focus will be on establishing the provenance of imported objects to the site and assessing the evidence for production; in both instances, achieving secure material for radiocarbon dating will be a priority.

Aims – the purpose of the works is to assess the limits of the metalworking deposit uncovered in 2016, and to more fully contextualise its discovery. This will likely add significant value to the information obtained so far from the deposit.

Timetable – the applicant hopes to undertake the work within 2017.

Personnel – the excavation will be undertaken by the Northern Picts Project, with two experienced site directors, a team of supervisors, and additional site assistants employed from AOC Archaeology all leading a selection of volunteers and students. The ratio of experienced to non-experienced diggers will not exceed 1:3.



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

3.14. 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,

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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 excavation of a 8mx8m trench to assess the limits of the metalworking deposit uncovered in 2016, and to more fully contextualise its discovery. This will be achieved by reopening part of the 2016 trench to complete excavation of the sondages, and the excavation of an additional area to the immediate west of the 2016 trench to assess the limits of the assemblage and to identify any possible structures or production evidence that might explain the provenance of this assemblage.

The trench dimensions are restricted to the minimum possible to achieve the project aims and cover a relatively small proportion of the scheduled monument. Given that the trench has been specifically proposed to target the metalworking assemblage, there is no alternative location for the proposed works. Whilst the excavation will have a negative effect on the archaeological value of the monument (through loss of deposits) and therefore an impact on the cultural significance of the monument, the ongoing cultivation of the monument means that there is an opportunity here to recover material that has the potential to add significant value to material already excavated, and this would be of benefit to the cultural significance of the monument and its artefacts.

It is clear that the project as a whole responds to nationally important research issues as identified in the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (SCARF), and this specific piece of work focussed on the metalworking assemblage offers an unparalleled opportunity to better understand Pictish metalworking production. By inference, dating this assemblage will help cast light on the chronology of Pictish objects and art from elsewhere in Britain and Ireland. The project design sets out that the final record of the work will be a monograph; to date the excavations at Rhynie and its environs have produced three major journal articles and book chapters, popular engagement through social media, and numerous elements of TV and print media coverage. This would advance our understanding of Pictish metalworking production and the creation of such a record is assessed as a considerable benefit. The proposed work would be accompanied by a range of activities that would engage the wider public and the local community. As such, the works should enable an enhanced appreciation of the monument and the historic environment in general.

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The application has been accompanied by a detailed project design that provides a context and justification for the works and sets out a well-considered, appropriate and careful methodology. The project design sets out a suitable method and timetable for reporting, and sets out an approach for sampling, artefact recovery, and subsequent post-excavation. The project team are highly experienced and have an established track record of successful delivery of archaeological projects through to publication. Accordingly, the specified method of the work is appropriate to ensure it is undertaken to a professional standard, including post excavation, reporting and archiving. It reflects all professional expectations.

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

No impact on Protected Species and Places is considered likely.

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 an excavation of a 8mx8m trench to assess the limits of the metalworking deposit uncovered in 2016 and to more fully contextualise its discovery, would involve controlled archaeological excavation within a relatively small part of a scheduled monument. The excavations are the minimum necessary to achieve the project's objective and would leave the vast majority of the site's archaeological deposits intact.

The objectives of the proposed work have a clear public benefit, as they will help address research aims set out in SCARF and in previous excavations of the monument, and will enhance wider understanding of Pictish art and metalworking culture. As such, the works meet with paragraph 3.17 of the policy statement.

Although the works are effectively destructive in nature, the works have the potential to recover material that will add significant value to material and artefacts already excavated not only at this site but also more widely across Britain and Ireland. As such, they will generate benefits of national importance that outweigh the impact that the loss of in-situ archaeological deposits will have on the cultural significance of the monument. The works therefore do not conflict with paragraph 3.19 of the policy statement.

The application meets with paragraph 3.20 of the policy statement because it has demonstrated that the works have been carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed and properly planned. Consequently, 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	Oliver Lewis	Date	13 February 2017
Approved by	John Raven	Date	13 February 2017

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Project design, including methodology.
- Updated trench plan – received by email on 11 January 2017.