HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND | ÀRAINNEACHD EACHDRAIDHEIL ALBA

Scheduled Monument Consent
Report on Handling

Case Information

Reference/Case ID	300031695

Scheduled Monument	Dunnottar Castle		
Index no	SM986	**Grid ref**	NO 88108 83875

Date application validated	11 October 2018
Summary of proposed works	Installation of information signs

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that consent for installation of information signs be granted.

2. Background

The monument is a medieval castle that stands on a dramatic coastal promontory potentially used in the prehistoric and Early Historic periods. There are extensive upstanding buildings that date from several periods. The oldest standing part is the early 15th century keep. A range of buildings extending east of the keep contains stables and storehouses. The buildings to the northeast of the site are grouped around a courtyard and include a mansion house, lodgings and chapel. They date from the late 16th or early 17th centuries. A huge water tank lies within the courtyard and there is also a bowling green to the west of this range. The gatehouse, on the west side, is approached by a steep path defended by three tiers of splayed gun-loops.

The scheduled area is the whole headland and an area to the west that includes the access to the castle. There are no exclusions.

The monument is of national importance because it is a substantial medieval castle with later components in a very dramatic setting on a high promontory ringed by cliffs. It can make a significant addition to the understanding and appreciation of the past and retains its structural characteristics to a marked degree. It makes a very significant contribution to both the historical and modern landscapes, and its importance is enhanced by documentary references that shed light on its use from the reign of William the Lion (1165-1214) until it was finally forfeited in 1716.

This application relates to the Stable Block, the West Range, the Keep, and the Kitchen. It is for four information boards for visitors. It has been submitted by the owner.

The application is accompanied by an overall site map showing the proposed locations of the signs, an aerial photo showing the buildings where the signs would go, photographs of the sign locations, and images showing the appearance and wording of each sign.

3. Proposals

Installation of four information signs at Dunnottar Castle

Consented works – Dunnottar Castle - Installation of four information signs

It is proposed to fix two signs to the external walls of the West Range and Stable Block, and to fix two signs internally within the Keep and Kitchen. The signs would be made from an aluminium composite material. All signs would be mounted onto a plywood backing board. They would be fixed to the walls by inserting 6mm stainless steel rods 100mm long into mortar joints. The rods would be retained by epoxy resin.

Aims – the aim is to improve the interpretation of the castle for visitors.

Timetable – the timetable for installing the signs is not specified.

Personnel – the signs would be installed for the site owner.

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.

3.20. 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 proposed works involve installing four information signs. This is intended to improve the interpretation of the site for visitors.

The physical impact of these works on the monument and its cultural significance would be comparatively minor, but the benefits for the interpretation of the monument for the public would be significant.

The impact of fixing the signs to the monument would be minimised by inserting the fixing rods into mortar joints. Attaching the signs to walls in this way avoids the need to dig foundations for freestanding signs, removing any impact on buried archaeological remains. It also avoids the potential visual intrusion that free standing signs can cause.

The proposal is based on visitor feedback that showed more information was required at various points around the castle. The signs should therefore enhance the public's appreciation and understanding of the monument.

The proposed sign installation has been carefully considered, sensitively designed and properly planned. Fixing the signage is potentially reversible, and the site could be returned to its former state in future. 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.

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 proposed works would be done to elements of the monument in such a way that they would have minimal impact on the cultural significance of the monument. They do not, therefore, conflict with paragraphs 3.16 and 3.18 of the policy statement.

The works have been sensitively designed and include the following public benefits: increasing public appreciation and understanding of the monument. The works are therefore justified in accordance with paragraphs 3.17 and 3.20 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	Richard Heawood	**Date**	26 November 2018
Approved by	Iona Murray	**Date**	04 December 2018

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- site map showing the proposed locations of the signs
- an aerial photo showing the buildings where the signs would go
- photographs of the sign locations
- images showing the appearance and wording of each sign.