HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND | ÀRAINNEACHD EACHDRAIDHEIL ALBA

Scheduled Monument Consent
Report on Handling

Case Information

Reference/Case ID	300040104

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

Date application validated	20 September 2019
Summary of proposed works	Installation of solar panel and light to serve the steps in the Keep

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that consent for installation of a solar panel and light be granted.

2. Background

The application is for a new light for the keep stairwell and for a solar panel to power the light. It is being proposed to address a safety issue for visitors. Access to the first floor of the keep is via a flight of uneven stone steps. The stairwell is dark, daylight being available only via one small window. Handrails are provided to both sides of the stairs, but increasing visitor numbers are causing congestion here and a trip hazard has been identified. Without lighting, the site owner may need to withdraw public access to the first floor of the keep.

The application has been submitted on behalf of the owner. It is accompanied by maps and photographs showing the proposed location of the panel and light, and by visualisations of the keep and stable block.

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.

The application relates to the keep and an area of ground behind the keep and an adjacent storehouse, close to the cliff edge. As the oldest standing building on the site, the keep is an important component of the monument.

3. Proposals

- Lay polythene and pour a shuttered concrete slab on top of the existing ground surface behind the storehouse
- Install solar panel on the slab
- Install light in the keep stairwell
- Install wiring to connect solar panel to light

Works

Polythene would be laid over an area of rough grass sited immediately behind the storehouse and keep, measuring 1400mm x 800mm. Shuttering would be installed and a conctete slab 100m thick laid over the polythene. A solar panel 1150m wide x 665mm high would be installed about the slab, fixed at a 70 degree angle to the vertical. Cabling between the panel and the keep would be installed at ground level, and would then run through a small window and up the wall of the stairwell to a new light, with fixings being made into mortar joints in the masonry.

The aim is to light the stairwell, and reduce the falls risk during busy periods to a level where the keep stair can remain open to the public.

Personnel

The proposed works would be undertaken by for the castle owners.

Timetable

A timetable for the proposed works has not been confirmed but we understand the aim is to complete the work before the next summer season.

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.

Scheduled Monument Consents Policy

Scheduled Monument Consent Policy 1

Works to scheduled monuments will normally only be permitted if they have minimal impact upon a monument's cultural significance.

Scheduled Monument Consent Policy 4

Proposals for change should be carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed, and properly planned and executed. The level of information provided should be in proportion to the sensitivity of the monument or feature and the level of change proposed.

For all applications where change is proposed, the following factors will be taken into account when considering if works meet this policy:

a. the use of appropriate assessment methodologies to determine the full impact of any proposed management, use or development on a monument's fabric and/or cultural significance.

b. the avoidance of irreversible change particularly wherever its effects cannot be adequately assessed.
c. that where change is necessary, strategies should be adopted to mitigate its impact and limit intervention.
d. that the management and execution of alteration, including remedial work, is sympathetic to the historic character and wider cultural significance .
e. that appropriate skills and techniques, materials and construction techniques are specified where appropriate.
f. that an appropriate level of record is made before, during and after any work and deposited in local and national archives, and, where appropriate, published.
g. that it is possible, on close inspection, to differentiate new work from old particularly on masonry structures.
h. that any archaeological excavation or other intrusive investigation should be based upon a detailed research strategy, with adequate resources, using appropriately skilled and competent archaeologists with a satisfactory record of the completion and publication of projects.
i. that the design, planning and execution of works on scheduled monuments are undertaken by people with appropriate professional and craft qualifications, skills and experience.

b) Assessment

The physical impact of the proposals would be minimal. The slab and solar panel would be laid on the existing ground surface presently covered in rough grass. The cable would be run from the panel at ground level, and the only physical impact would be attaching the cable and light fixture within the keep stair well by inserting pins into mortar joints. The works would be fully reversible.

In terms of visual impact, the location of the panel has been chosen to make it as inconspicuous as possible. The panel would be placed on a small area of rough grass close to the cliff edge, concealed by the east wall of the keep and the south wall of an adjacent storehouse. The panel would therefore not be visible from the castle courtyard; from within the castle, it would only be readily visible from one small window within the keep. In views to the castle from the adjacent headland to the west, the panel would be hidden by the bulk of the keep. It is only likely to be visible in views to the castle when observed from a headland 270m south of the castle. In this view from the south, it is likely to be partially obscured by a raised area of rough grass on the cliff edge. This means that the visual and aesthetic impact on the castle would be very limited.

It is, therefore, concluded that the works would have minimal impact on the cultural significance of the monument.

The works are not extensive, but they would generate significant public benefit by ensuring that the first floor of the keep, part of the oldest structure on the site, can remain

accessible to members of the public. If the works were not conducted, public access to the dark stair would have to be restricted because of the risk to public safety.

The application sets out a well-considered, appropriate and careful design for the installation of the solar panel and light.

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 Section 15 of the Scheduled Monument Consent Policy.

The proposed works would have minimal impact on the cultural significance of the monument and so are compliant with Scheduled Monument Consent Policy 1.

The application is carefully considered, sensitively designed, and properly planned and so is compliant with Scheduled Monument Consent Policy 4, and 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.

We recommend consent is **granted without conditions**.

7. Conditions

No conditions have been attached to this decision.

8. Approval

Case officer	Richard Heawood	**Date**	07 November 2019
Approved by	Simon Stronach	**Date**	08 November 2019

Annex A – list of supporting documents

1. Visualisation - aerial view of castle
2. Visualisation - aerial view of the castle showing the keep and stable block
3. Visualisation - aerial view of the keep and proposed location of solar panel
4. OS map - with line of sight from south headland
5. Photograph - from south headland
6. Photograph - proposed solar panel location
7. Photograph - proposed route for cable
8. Photograph - proposed solar panel location
9. OS map
10. Drawing - SM boundary