



Case reference	SMC-FIF-003
Application details	Evaluation of one of a series of 'Nuclear'/complex hillforts
Site address	Norman's Law, fort
Applicant	University of Aberdeen
Determining Authority	Historic Environment Scotland (HES)
Local Authority Area	FIFE COUNCIL
Reason(s) for notification	Notification Direction 2015 – works to be granted Scheduled Monument Consent by Historic Environment Scotland go beyond the minimum level of intervention that is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in a monument
Representations	NIL
Date notified to Ministers	27 October 2020
Date of recommendation	20 November 2020
Decision / recommendation	Clear

Description of Proposal and Site:

- Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is sought by the University of Aberdeen for archaeological excavation of three small trenches measuring 2m x 4m at Norman's Law fort scheduled monument overlooking the Firth of Tay.
- The excavation is needed to obtain samples for characterizing and dating the central citadel defences and a sample of the outworks. The work forms part of a wider study of seven "nuclear hillforts" by the University of Aberdeen.
- The monument comprises a central citadel surrounded by a stone wall, with a series of outer enclosures clustered around. It is of national importance as a hillfort with well-preserved field characteristics with potential to enhance considerably our understanding of the nature and development of prehistoric and possibly also later defensive sites. It is also of importance as one of a number of hillforts sited around the Tay, contributing to our understanding of the distribution and role of defensive sites in the region.

Consultations and Representations:

- No representations were made during consideration of the application.
- PAD consulted the Scottish Government's Culture and Historic Environment Division (CHED) following notification. They responded that the proposal does not appear to raise any specific issues of national importance.

Assessment:

1. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) have notified Scottish Ministers of their intention to grant Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) for the proposed works. HES have concluded that the proposal is broadly consistent with relevant policy. However, the proposal is not considered the minimum necessary consistent with conserving the cultural significance of the monument. Therefore, there was a requirement to notify Scottish Ministers as per The Scheduled Monument Consent (Notification of Applications) Direction 2015.
2. HES's report of handling sets out that the works would involve controlled archaeological excavation for the purposes of research and are the lowest level of intervention consistent with achieving the project's objective and would have minimal impact on the cultural significance of the monument. It states that the works have been clearly justified as having public benefits increasing public understanding of hillforts in Southeast Scotland. Their report of handling concludes that the application is carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed, and properly planned and is considered acceptable in meeting the terms of national policy for scheduled monuments, and also accounting for other material considerations.
3. The Scottish Government Culture and Historic Environment Division consider that the proposed excavation should offer valuable intelligence in terms of understanding the monument, especially as a part of the wider 'Comparative Kingship' project. CHED commented that there will be expert archaeological monitoring during the works, which will ensure no permanent impact to the monument, and there are opportunities for increased community engagement and education. CHED are content that the proposal doesn't raise any issues of national significance.
4. It is considered that the SMC application does not raise any issues of national importance that would merit intervention by Scottish Ministers.

Recommendation

- The application should be cleared back to Historic Environment Scotland to determine.

Location Plans and Visualisations

Location Plans



Aerial visualisation



Plan of Norman's Law – trenches labelled

