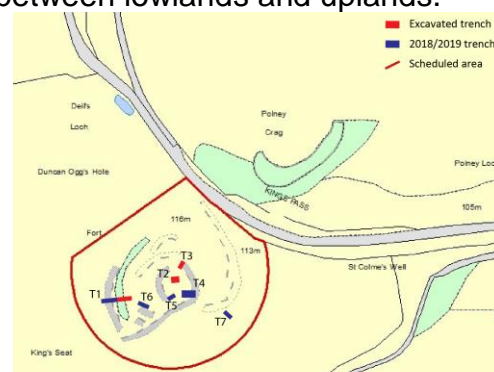




Case reference	SMC-PAK-007
Application details	Community archaeological excavation
Site address	King's Seat hillfort, Kings Seat, Dunkeld (SM 1598)
Applicant	Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust
Determining Authority	Historic Environment Scotland (HES)
Local Authority Area	Perth & Kinross Council
Reason(s) 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 July 2018
Date of recommendation	6 August 2018
Decision / recommendation	Clear

Description of Proposal and Site:

- Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is sought for archaeological excavations at King's Seat fort, a hillfort situated in a commanding position above a bend in the River Tay near Dunkeld. This application relates to a previous SMC application for the excavation of five trenches at King's Seat (SMC-PAK-005) which was notified to PAD and cleared in June 2017. The proposed works include an extension to an existing trench plus two new trenches 6 and 7.
- The fort comprises the substantial upstanding remains of a later prehistoric or early historic fort. The defended settlement survives as a series of concentric ramparts and terraces enclosing a central walled citadel on the summit of the hill. Due to its remote location, remains of occupation and related activities survive relatively undisturbed. The cultural significance of the monument lies in its morphology, its apparent intactness and its likely position as a seat of royal power in Atholl during the early historic period. Due to its prime geographical location at the foot of the Highland Edge, it dominates lines of communication north and west wards of the Tay valley, marking the transition between lowlands and uplands.



Consultations and Representations:

- No representations have been received with respect to this application.
- PAD consulted SG Culture and Historic Environment Division following notification and they advise that they have no comments to make on the proposals.

Assessment:

1. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) are minded to grant SMC for archaeological excavations which will impact on the Scheduled Monument as the insertion of trenches, related ground disturbance and removal of material goes beyond the minimum level of intervention which is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in the monument. This is a significant departure from policy as set out in section 3.16 of the HES Policy Statement.
2. The application has been made by Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT) who are working in partnership with Dunkeld and Birnam Historical Society on the ongoing King's Seat Archaeology Project. The project is helping address research aims set out in the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (SCARF) and deliver the aims of the Scottish Archaeology Strategy. It will build on recent work undertaken by Glasgow University's Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot (SERF) project and the Tayside Landscape Partnership's ongoing research at Moncreiffe Hill and Moredun Top, previously notified cases.
3. The project is being delivered by PKHT officers working with three staff from commercial archaeological contractor, AOC Archaeology Ltd, as well as a team of approx. 20 volunteers and students from the local community. It is directly related to the previous King's Seat SMC application. Pre-application discussions were undertaken with HES regarding the updated project design (dated July 2018) incorporating feedback from the findings of the 2017 excavation season. These findings have led to the request to examine additional elements to better understand the site in accordance with the original excavation aims. However as these works are considered a material change, a new SMC is required.
4. The new trenches are to be opened up in the 2018-2020 season. Trench 4 is to be expanded across the SE summit rampart within the central enclosure to 6m by 12m (from 2m x 5m - In 2017 this trench revealed over 100 individual finds and further excavation may provide evidence that King's Seat is a high status or royal site). Trench 6 measures 3m x 10m and is to be located in the interior of the West enclosure. Trench 7 measures 3m x 8m and is to be located across the bank/wall of the interior of the East enclosure. With the exception of the removal of vegetation, the site would be returned to its former state after the project is complete.
5. HES consider the works would involve controlled archaeological excavation within a relatively small part of the scheduled monument, which is the minimum necessary to achieve the project objectives leaving the vast majority of the site's deposits intact. The works would not visually alter the monument and would have minimal effect on the overall significance. The impact on the existing trench to be expanded would be mitigated by the expected results. In addition,

archaeological remains have been adversely affected by vegetation growth and this would be cleared and brought under control, thus helping to preserve the monument in the long term.

6. HES require the same condition to be imposed relating to the post-excavation findings as the previous SMC application. This single condition will enable the application to be considered fully compliant with paragraph 3.20 of HES' policy statement. The condition requires the applicant to provide HES with an updated Post Excavation Research Design, in addition to the usual Data Structures Report, within 6 months of the end of fieldwork
7. HES believe that the significant wider benefits the works would bring are greater than any negative effects, therefore the proposal is concluded to be broadly consistent with relevant policy. However, the proposal is not considered the minimum necessary consistent with conserving the cultural significance of the monument, hence the requirement to notify Scottish Ministers as per The Scheduled Monument Consent (Notification of Applications) Direction 2015.
8. In summary, this SMC application does not raise any issues of national importance that would merit intervention by Ministers.

Recommendation:

- The application should be cleared back to Historic Environment Scotland to issue Scheduled Monument Consent with one condition.