



Case reference	SMC-ZET-002
Application details	Ground investigation works
Site address	Skaw radar station, Unst, Shetland (SM 13097)
Applicant	Shetland Space Centre c/o AOC Archaeology Group
Determining Authority	Historic Environment Scotland (HES)
Local Authority Area	Shetland Islands 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	1 September 2020
Date of recommendation	23 September 2020
Decision / recommendation	Clear

Description of Proposal and Site:

- Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is sought for ground investigation works, composed of numerous peat probes and machine dug test pits, within the southern portion of Skaw radar station. It is located on rough grazing land over two headlands (Lamba Ness and Blue Jibs) at the northeast corner of Unst. These preliminary works aim to assess the potential of the site to accommodate a space rocket launching facility, known as Shetland Space Centre.
- The monument comprises the remains of a WWII Chain Home radar station, one of the first batch of stations to be built and it was operational in 1941. Due to the position of Shetland, between mainland Europe and the Atlantic to the west, it was an important strategic reporting station. The station is spread over two sites (main and reserve site) which had over 50 buildings and structures reflecting its core early warning function and with supporting infrastructure, such as blast walls, and domestic blocks. (See Figure 1). The Skaw radar complex is the furthest north of its type and was part of a wide network of early warning radar stations found along the coastline. By 1945 there were over 300 such sites across Britain (with 17 built in Scotland) providing early warning reports for the overall air and sea defence.
- The monument is of national importance because it makes a significant addition to the understanding of the past, in particular the advance of radar technology and the development of an early warning system protecting the sea and airspace around the United Kingdom. It survives in good condition as a complete example of the technical, support and domestic buildings and structures necessary to provide an early warning reporting function. The loss of the monument would significantly diminish our future ability to appreciate and understand the scale of the efforts employed on the home front in the defence of Britain.

Consultations and Representations:

- No representations were made during the consideration of the application.
- PAD consulted Scottish Government's Culture and Historic Environment Division (CHED) following notification. They consider the proposed works do not raise any specific issues of national importance as the investigations are minimal with a temporary impact and includes a watching brief from an archaeologist. It is worth noting that the principle of the monument as a potential rocket launching facility has not been accepted by HES - any future development plans for this site will require separate SMC and planning applications to be considered in their own right.

Assessment:

1. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) are minded to grant SMC for the ground investigation works which impacts on the Scheduled Monument as the removal of material goes beyond the minimum level of intervention which is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in the monument.
2. The application has been submitted by Shetland Space Centre in conjunction with AOC Archaeology Group. The AOC project team are highly experienced and have an established track record of successful delivery of archaeological projects.
3. The proposed works involve numerous peat probes and machine dug test pits spread across much of the main complex on Lamba Ness. Individually, approximately 307 probes, of very small diameter (up to 40mm), would be hand driven into each of three proposed launch pads, at a proposed satellite tracking station, a proposed assembly and storage area and along the proposed access roads. The probes would be laid out in an approximate 25m grid or at 25m intervals along, and to the north and south of, the extant and proposed access roads. It is anticipated that these probes would extend between 1m and 2m in depth, as the peat on the site is thought to be relatively shallow. The probing would cease at any obstruction, and this would help ensure they would not disturb structural remains that may survive below ground.
4. There will be a monitoring archaeologist employed when all site works are undertaken to ensure that remains would be avoided, inadvertent damage would be avoided and mitigations are appropriately applied, especially as seven of the probes are within large cut earthwork features (possibly related to construction of elements of the base) and seven are proposed within an area of post-medieval cultivation. The significance of these features derive from their overall form and the probes are not likely to have a material effect on any archaeological deposits within them, which would be large and not particularly sensitive.
5. Around 48 machine dug test pits are proposed to be undertaken within the monument. Initial test pit locations include the proposed launch pads; along existing and new access tracks; a proposed satellite tracking area; and the assembly and storage area as shown on a figure that supports the application. Test pits have been designed to avoid known archaeological features and

wherever possible to maintain a 5m buffer from such features, and particularly standing structures, to avoid inadvertent damage. The test pits are proposed to be around 1m wide by 2m long and would be machine excavated using a tracked JCB, using a toothless ditching bucket and be backfilled on completion.

6. HES consider the revised Written Scheme of Investigation submitted with the application sets out a well-considered, appropriate, careful and detailed methodology for archaeological fieldwork, recording, reporting and archiving. HES notes that the results would be used to undertake constraints mapping that should inform the proposed rocket launching facility's design but state any proposed development would be subject to a future application and is not considered further at this stage.
7. HES have assessed these works and consider they are likely to have a minimal impact on the cultural significance of the monument despite the significant disturbance. The applicant has confirmed that the extent of work proposed is the minimum required to achieve their aim of providing information on ground conditions across the monument in order to inform the design of their proposed development.
8. HES consider the works as relatively widespread and the application as an extensive intervention but conclude that the site investigation works should only affect soft deposits of low archaeological sensitivity and so would have a minimal impact on the monument's cultural significance. Consequently, HES consider the proposed works are compliant with Scheduled Monument Policy 1 and Scheduled Monument Consent Policies 1 and 3 and that the application is carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed, and properly planned and so is also compliant with Scheduled Monument Consent Policy 4.
9. HES believe 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, hence the requirement to notify Scottish Ministers.
10. In summary, and for the reasons set out above, this SMC application does not raise any issues of national importance that would merit intervention by Ministers.

Decision/Recommendation:

- The application should be cleared back to Historic Environment Scotland to issue Scheduled Monument Consent without conditions.