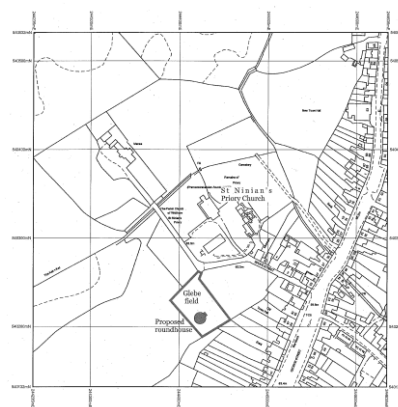


<b>Case reference</b>	SMC-DAG-001
<b>Application details</b>	Construction of replica Iron Age roundhouse in the Glebe Field
<b>Site address</b>	Whithorn Priory, Monastic Settlement and Priory – M12992
<b>Applicant</b>	The Whithorn Trust
<b>Determining Authority</b>	Historic Environment Scotland (HES)
<b>Local Authority Area</b>	Dumfries and Galloway
<b>Reason(s) for notification</b>	Notification Direction 2015 – requires Historic Environment Scotland to notify Ministers if it intends to grant Scheduled Monument Consent where the works go beyond the minimum level of intervention that is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in a monument.
<b>Objectors</b>	1 representation and 1 petition with 79 signatures
<b>Date notified to Ministers</b>	7 June 2016
<b>Date of recommendation</b>	22 June 2016
<b>Decision / recommendation</b>	Clear

## Description of Proposal and Site:

- Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is sought for the construction of a replica Iron Age roundhouse in the Glebe Field at Whithorn Priory, a site in the care of Scottish Ministers.
- The monument comprises the buried remains of a large Early Christian monastic settlement founded in 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD and closely associated with St Ninian; buried remains of later Viking and medieval settlements, including graves, and the remains of a medieval priory and cathedral that served as the pilgrimage centre for the cult of St Ninian.



- The monument is of national importance because it has an inherent potential to make a significant addition to our understanding of early historic monastic settlements and medieval centres of pilgrimage. The site retains exceptionally complex and well-preserved archaeology. Archaeological deposits offer a particular potential to illuminate the arrival of Christianity in Scotland during the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries and developments in the 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries when Northumbrian control waned and Norse and Irish cultural influence was strong. (The scheduled area is highlighted in red above)
- The proposed works involve the erection of a full-scale experimental reconstruction of an iron age roundhouse (approx. 13 metres wide and 9 metres high) to be surrounded by a kitchen garden, in the Glebe Field part of the Priory complex. It is to be constructed on a concrete raft foundation, 450mm deep, to avoid the need of ground penetration and will have a conical roof of reed thatch supported on two concentric rings of upright timbers, traditional wattle and daub clay walling and a single entrance with porch.



- The replica would be based on information derived from excavations, sponsored by the Whithorn Trust, at the Black Loch of Myrton in 2015, about 5 miles to the west of Whithorn. This work uncovered a roundhouse whose dimensions have been used to base the proposed reconstruction on.
- There has been some opposition and concerns raised by the local community which has resulted in recent local press coverage.

### Consultations and Representations:

- 1 representation was received with an associated petition. They highlighted they are critical of the project due to a lack of public consultation and worried about the impact of the construction and access for vehicles. These concerns are valid and HES has attempted to address them in their assessment and condition setting.
- PAD consulted SG Culture and Historic Environment Division (CHED) following notification and they are unable to comment on the case because the land to which the proposal relates is part of a Property in Care of Scottish Ministers. Based on advice received from HES, CHED has agreed in principle to lease the field to the Whithorn Trust solely for the purposes of the works set out in this application.

## Assessment:

1. The SMC application has been notified to Scottish Minister because HES are minded to grant consent for the construction of a large replica roundhouse within the scheduled area at Whithorn Priory. This will impact on the Scheduled Monument as the building of the roundhouse structure goes beyond the minimum level of intervention which is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in the monument. This is a departure from policy as set out in section 3.16 of HES Policy Statement June 2016.
2. HES considers that no alternative locations for the roundhouse can be identified outside the scheduled area. They consider the proposed roundhouse would have an adverse impact on the ability to understand and appreciate the overall Whithorn monastic complex, as it would become the dominant features in views from throughout the site and would be different in appearance and historic form from the key features of the complex. However, it would be in the periphery of views from the main approach and visually separated from the core complex. Overall, HES consider the scale of the roundhouse would detract from the cultural significance of the site which is why they have notified the application.
3. HES considers that the proposed concrete raft foundation and terram membrane detail would have a minimal impact on archaeology below the ground but that the effective removal of that area from exploration over the lifetime of the roundhouse would adversely impact on the ability to carry out further research. However, they state that no research is planned, the foundations and structure are reversible and the design and mitigation steps to be taken have been carefully considered and properly planned. It would also be located adjacent to the new community garden, the Trust's existing facilities and the Whithorn Priory visitor attraction site managed by the Trust in partnership with HES.
4. HES considers that the Whithorn Trust is a key historic environment stakeholder in the Galloway region and the project would put the Trust on a sustainable footing so it could continue and enhance its charitable activities in promoting, interpreting and presenting the wider site. The Trust is a charitable body established in 1986 to promote and explore the archaeology of Whithorn and the Machars region. They have undertaken extensive excavations and interpretation at the site over many years. The Trust expects to attract new audiences, volunteers and participation through community events, exhibitions and more school visits to the 'outdoor classroom' as a result of the project. The project also contributes to the strategic priorities set out in section D - Value: Share and Celebrate in *Our Place in Time – The Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland*.
5. A related planning application (16/P/1/0054) was granted by Dumfries and Galloway Council on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2016. HES nor the Council Archaeologist raised any objections to the proposal. One objection was received by a local resident.
6. The project has been awarded HLF funding and Leader funding in principle.
7. HES consider, on balance, that the adverse impact on the context of the scheduled monument would not be sufficiently significant to warrant a refusal of

the application and impacts would be offset through enhanced opportunities to sustain the Whithorn Trust and its activities. They wish to grant SMC subject to the imposing of two conditions, covering timescales and ground protection for vehicle access and takes into account objectors comments.

8. The SMC application has also been assessed for the impacts on protected species or habitats. It highlights that there is a presence of Bats and Common Otters in the vicinity. However none are recorded as being in the immediate vicinity and no trees are to be removed, so any impacts are not considered to be likely.
9. This SMC application does raise issues in terms of the significant impacts on the cultural significance of the monument as identified by HES in their assessment. However on balance the Trust's proposal is an important education and community project which has clear aims and objectives and HES are satisfied that the public benefits associated with the proposal outweigh other policy considerations. The location of the roundhouse structure at the periphery of the Whithorn Priory complex is accepted, is reversible in nature and can be removed at a later date with no physical damage to the underlying archaeology.
10. Taking all considerations into account, the assessment by HES is reasonable and there are no outstanding issues of national importance to merit call-in.

**Decision/Recommendation:**

- On balance, the application should be cleared back to Historic Environment Scotland to issue SMC.