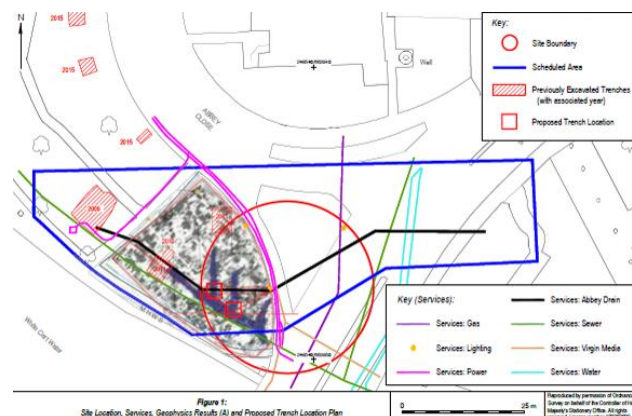


Case reference	SMC-RFS-002
Application details	Archaeological excavation of two trenches
Site address	Drain 75m SSW of Paisley Abbey (SM 8078)
Applicant	GUARD Archaeology Ltd
Determining Authority	Historic Environment Scotland
Local Authority Area	Renfrewshire
Reason(s) for notification	Notification 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	14 August 2017
Date of recommendation	31 August 2017
Decision / recommendation	Clear

Description of Proposal and Site:

- Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is sought for archaeological excavations of a medieval drain near Paisley Abbey. The drain survives for at least 90m from east to west and it lies beneath an area of level ground to the south of the Abbey on the East bank of the White Cart water.
- The monument comprises a large and impressive stone drain constructed to carry waste water through the monastic precinct of Paisley Abbey. Earliest parts date from 1350 to 1400 with most portions built 1400 to 1500 and some modern repairs and additions. The drain is mostly dressed stone and parts have a roof carried on pointed or semi-circular ribs. The buried remains and silting deposits are unusually well-preserved and have been little disturbed by modern development.

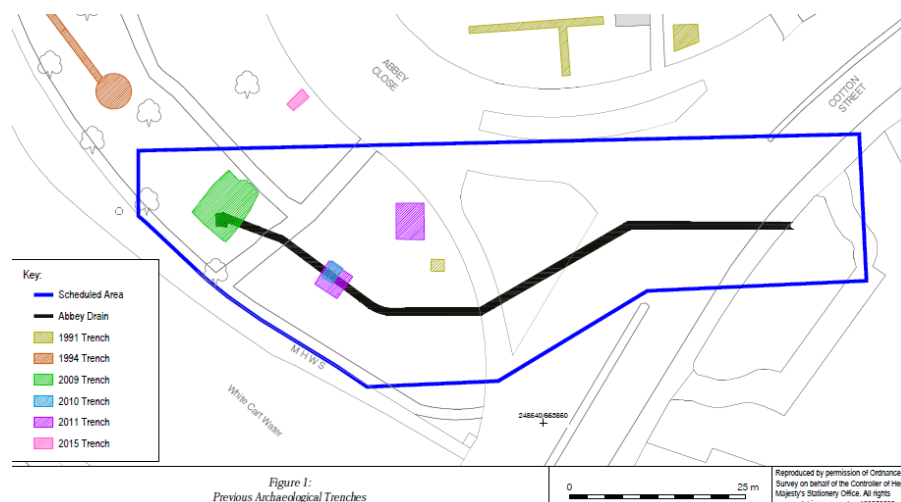


Consultations and Representations:

- No representations have been received with respect to this application.
- PAD consulted SG Culture and Historic Environment Division following notification and they are not aware of any broader context or issues surrounding the case and cannot identify any reasons why the case should be called in by Ministers.

Assessment:

1. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) are minded to grant consent for archaeological excavations which will impact on the Scheduled Monument as the insertion of two 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 HES' Policy Statement.
2. The application has been submitted by GUARD Archaeology Ltd, in conjunction with Renfrewshire Council (site owners), and with support from the HLF 'Stories, Stones and Bones' Fund. The 'Wee Dig 2017' project is part of the Year of History, Heritage and Architecture and involves locals schools, community groups and volunteers under the supervision of GUARD staff.
3. The objectives of the project are to further the understanding of the role that the abbey drain played in the monastic complex and its relationship with the medieval and later burgh of Paisley. The four key research areas are identification of artefacts, features and deposits that may relate to the monastic precinct surrounding the abbey; determining the character, extent and significance of any archaeological deposits encountered in relation to the abbey, drain and later development of the burgh; assessment of the impact of recent building/ demolition/ landscaping on the structure of the drain; and condition, future management and conservation requirements of the drain.
4. Previous small scale excavations have revealed medieval features and finds associated with its construction and use as well as evidence of domestic occupation from the medieval period to 19th century. The locations of and dates these areas were excavated are highlighted below.



5. The two trenches, to be opened up between 18-23 September 2017, are primarily for research and designed to assess the date and relationship of subsidiary drains to the main drain. A 3m x 3m trench will be located on the known line of the main drain at the junction with a subsidiary drain. Another 3m x 3m trench will be located to the immediate south targeting geophysical anomalies identified in 2012 and suggestive of another drainage feature.
6. A machine will be used to excavate the upper layers of modern overburden (the upper 0.5m material is excluded from scheduling) but the turf will be removed by hand and then re-laid once the trenches are backfilled. Use of a machine maximises the time available to investigate features and makes the project more accessible to a wide range of volunteers. The work will be carried out by a team of professional archaeologists who will supervise the volunteers and primary schools pupils (staff ratio 1:6).
7. HES consider the trenches will cover a relatively small proportion of the monument and will not result in any physical fabric of the drain being affected or removed. The trench locations have been targeted to have as limited an impact as possible whilst answering nationally important medieval research questions set out in Scotland's Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF). They also consider the project will build on heritage-led regeneration initiatives in Paisley which meets the aspiration of the community to enhance knowledge and understanding of their urban realm and contributes to Paisley's bid for UK City of Culture 2021 status.
8. In conclusion, HES considers the project has clear public benefits and encourages outreach and engagement while raising awareness. They believe the application accords with sections 3.18, 3.19 and 3.20 of their Policy Statement, because it has been demonstrated that the works have been carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed and properly planned and that the public benefits of the project outweighs the impact on the cultural significance of the monument.
9. In summary, the 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.