



Case reference	SMC-ANG-002
Application details	Excavation of ring and square enclosure ditches
Site address	Melgund Cottage near Aberlemno (SM 6471)
Applicant	University of Aberdeen
Determining Authority	Historic Environment Scotland
Local Authority Area	Angus Council
Reason(s) for notification	Notification Direction 2015 – works to be granted Scheduled Monument Consent by <b>Historic Environment Scotland</b> 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	16 April 2018
Date of recommendation	16 May 2018
Decision / recommendation	Clear

### Description of Proposal and Site:

- Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is sought for the excavation of a single trench at a site near Melgund Cottage near the village of Aberlemno.
- The monument contains a cairn and enclosure of prehistoric date. Its importance is enhanced by the extremely unusual nature of the double-ditch enclosure. The monument is of national importance because of its potential to contribute to our understanding of prehistoric or early historic ritual and funerary practice.



Location map of Melgund Cottage, Aberlemno, with excavation trench overlaying limits of scheduled area.

### Consultations and Representations:

- No representations were received by HES during their consideration.
- PAD consulted SG Culture and Historic Environment Division following notification and they have no comments to make on the proposal.

## **Assessment:**

1. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) are minded to grant consent for archaeological excavations at Melgund Cottage which, with its 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.
2. The works are part of the Aberlemno Environs Project being undertaken by the University of Aberdeen, a component of the university's Comparative Kingship Project. The Kingship Project aims to use various methodologies along with modelled chronologies to understand the changes that led to the formation of state societies beyond the Roman Empire. A major element of the project is researching Pictish kingdoms of early Scotland and the Aberlemno Environs Project aims to improve understanding of several enclosed sites in the vicinity of the Aberlemno Pictish stones to test hypothesis that the stones and enclosures may represent a Pictish power centre comparable to that identified recently at Rhynie. This would respond to key research areas suggested by the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF).
3. The proposed works involve excavating a single trench measuring 3m x 7m to uncover the east side of the ring ditch and the east side of the square enclosure ditch. The aim would be to establish the date and contemporaneity of the features and proposals follow study of aerial photographs and LiDAR data.
4. HES consider the works to be broadly consistent with relevant policy and would involve controlled excavations within a relatively small part of the monument. The application is accompanied by a project design that sets out a well-considered and appropriate methodology and makes provision for post excavation analysis. The project team are experienced and have an established track record of successful delivery of archaeological projects.
5. HES consider the benefits of the proposed works are greater than the negative effects of the removal of archaeological deposits. They are the minimal necessary to achieve the project objective which leaves the majority of archaeological deposits intact with no visual impact. HES believe the works to be broadly consistent with policy subject to the condition to be imposed to ensure that the post excavation research design is updated after fieldwork. The application meets section 3.20 of HES policy statement because it has demonstrated that works have been carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed and properly planned. However, the proposal is not considered the minimum necessary, consistent with conserving the cultural significance of the monument, hence the requirement to notify Ministers.
6. In summary, 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 with one condition.