

## Case information

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<b>Case ID</b>	300016711		
<b>File Reference</b>	AMH/474/2/1		
<b>Name of Site</b>	Ring Hillock, cairn 640m ESE of Netherside, Castletown		
<b>Local Authority</b>	Highland Council		
<b>National Grid Reference</b>	ND 199 659		
<b>Designation No. (if any)</b>	SM474		
<b>Designation Type</b>	Scheduled monument	<b>Current Category of Listing</b>	N/A
<b>Case Type</b>	Amendment		
<b>Received/Start Date</b>	26/03/2015		
<b>Decision Date</b>	22/02/2016		

## 1. Decision

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The monument was first scheduled in 1938 but the legal documents are not adequate to support definition of the extent of the scheduled area. The assessment against the criteria (Scottish Historic Environment Policy, Annex 1) demonstrates the monument continues to be of national importance. The decision is to amend the existing entry in the Schedule of nationally important monuments as Ring Hillock, cairn 280m S of Breezy Brae.

## 2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

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### 2.1 Designation Background

The monument was scheduled in 1938.

No previous amendments to the scheduling have taken place.

### 2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals.

### 3. Assessment

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#### 3.1 Assessment information

The monument was assessed for amendment as part of the S18 Highland scheduling project and visited on 22 April 2015.

#### 3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

The monument was assessed for scheduling against the criteria for determining national importance and found to meet the criteria (see **Annex A**).

*The designation criteria are found in the Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP), pp. 71-85. <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/shep-dec2011.pdf>*

#### 3.3 Other considerations

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## ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria\*

### SM474 Ring Hillock, cairn 280m S of Breezy Brae

#### 1. Description

The monument is the remains of a grass-covered cairn probably dating to the Bronze Age (between about 2500 BC and 800 BC). It is conical in shape and measures about 15m in diameter and 1.5m high. Occasional cairn stones protrude through the turf. The cairn is positioned on a low rise about 65m above sea level, and there are relatively long views in all directions, including northwards to Dunnet Bay.

The scheduled area is irregular on plan to include the remains described above and an area around in which evidence relating to the monument's construction, use and abandonment is expected to survive, as shown in red on the accompanying map. To the east, the scheduling extends up to but excludes a stone dyke. The monument was first scheduled in 1938; the present amendment provides documents to current standards.

#### 2. Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria (SHEP 2011, 71-73\*\*)

\* This assessment is based on our current state of knowledge. It will form the basis of any new or updated scheduled monument record.

\*\* A monument may be found to meet the scheduling criteria but in some circumstances may not be added to the Schedule. The purpose and implications of scheduling are issues that require to be taken into account when assessing monuments for scheduling. Scheduling may not be the only, or the most appropriate, mechanism to secure the future of all sites, even those that may otherwise meet the criteria.

#### Cultural significance

Characteristic	Assessment
<b>Intrinsic</b>	
Condition in which monument survives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The monument is an artificial mound interpreted as a prehistoric burial cairn.</li><li>• It is mostly grass-covered and survives in good, stable condition, retaining much of its original form. The shape of the mound has been slightly modified by ploughing at the edges in the past, and by a sunken road to the east, but there is no evidence that it has ever been excavated.</li></ul>
Archaeological, scientific, technological or other interest or research potential of the monument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The lack of evidence for significant disturbance suggests that important archaeological information is likely to survive within and beneath the mound.</li><li>• Excavation of similar mounds in Scotland has revealed human bone and prehistoric pottery. There is very good potential for this mound to contain burials in the form of cremations or inhumations.</li></ul>

	<p>There is also potential for the survival of associated artefacts or grave goods such as tools or pottery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This monument has the potential to help us understand more about burial practice and religious beliefs, the construction and use of burial monuments, and about society and the environment in general during the time that it was constructed and in use.</li> </ul>
Apparent developmental sequence of monument (either long or short may provide insights of importance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cairns such as this are typically Bronze Age in origin, dating most commonly to between about 2000 BC and 800 BC, though it is possible that the site has earlier origins as a place of ritual or burial.</li> <li>• Bronze Age cairns often show evidence for an initial primary burial or phase of use, and then re-use for later, secondary burials. There is potential for an extended development sequence here.</li> </ul>
Original or subsequent functions of the monument and its parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As well as having a burial function, the mound is likely to have had a prominent place within a social group's territory and may have been a focal point in the landscape, possibly reinforcing social/ancestral ties to the land.</li> </ul>
<b>Contextual</b>	
Present rarity or representativeness of all or any part of the monument, assessed against knowledge of the archaeology of Scotland and of the region in which the monument occurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burial cairns are relatively common in Caithness as in most areas of Scotland. However, this conical mound appears well-preserved and there is no evidence that it has been excavated as have many other examples. Burial cairns vary in form, size and location, and this is a good example of a medium-sized cairn in a relatively prominent location.</li> </ul>
Relationship of the monument to other monuments of the same or related classes or period, or to features or monuments in the vicinity. (Particularly important for monuments forming part of a widespread but varied class)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are 12 other cairns or probable cairns located within 5km of this example, mainly distributed to the west and northwest. The nearest lies less than 1km to the west northwest (Trothanmas Hillock, Canmore ID 8385); it is larger than Ring Hillock and was disturbed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when a cist was discovered and then covered over again. Other cairns lie in elevated positions on the Hill of Orlig and Hill of Clindrag. These and possibly others appear intervisible with Ring Hillock.</li> <li>• There is potential to study the Ring Hillock cairn alongside these other sites to help us understand the significance and meaning of the placing of such monuments in the landscape, and their relationships with each other and with settlement and society.</li> </ul>
Relationship of the monument and its parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mound has a similar setting to many other burial cairns in Caithness. It is sited on a natural rise,</li> </ul>

with its wider landscape and setting	increasing its prominence, in a position that offers views out over the surrounding landscape.
<b>Associative</b>	
Historical, cultural and social influences that have affected the form and fabric of the monument, and vice versa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>
Aesthetic attributes of the monument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>
Significance in the national consciousness or to people who use or have used the monument, or descendants of such people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>
Associations the monument has with historical, traditional or artistic characters or events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>

### Assessment of national importance

Criteria	Assessment
Its inherent capability or potential to make a significant addition to the understanding or appreciation of the past	<p>The monument can make a significant contribution to our understanding of the past, particularly the design and construction of burial monuments and the nature of belief systems and burial practices during the Bronze Age. Ritual and funerary monuments are a major source of evidence for human activity during the Bronze Age in Scotland and are particularly important for enhancing our understanding of Bronze Age society, its organisation, economy, religion and demography. This mound retains good field characteristics and appears little disturbed, allowing us to interpret its original form and function. It retains high potential for buried archaeological remains including burials, artefacts and palaeoenvironmental evidence. Burial monuments such as this are rare surviving components of what would have been a wider prehistoric landscape of land-use, settlement and ritual. This example is particularly interesting as it has a relatively open aspect within the landscape, with views to several other cairns. The loss of the monument would diminish our future ability to appreciate and understand funerary practice and approaches to death and burial in prehistoric times, and the placing of such monuments</p>
Its retention of the structural, decorative or field characteristics of its kind to a marked degree	
Its contribution, or the contribution of its class, to today's landscape and/or the historic landscape	
The quality and extent of any documentation or association that adds to the understanding of the monument or its context	
The diminution of the potential of a particular class or classes of	

monument to contribute to an understanding of the past, should the monument be lost or damaged	within the landscape.
Its place in the national consciousness [a factor that may be considered in support of other factors]	

## References

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Historic Environment Scotland <http://www.canmore.org.uk> reference number CANMORE ID 8422 (accessed on 14/8/2015)

The Highland Council Historic Environment Record reference is MHG1398.

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