

Case information

Case ID	300016784		
File Reference	AMH/2390/2/1		
Name of Site	Leachonich, two chambered cairns		
Local Authority	Highland Council		
National Grid Reference	NH 6842 8594 and NH 6846 8583		
Designation No. (if any)	SM2390		
Designation Type	Scheduled Monument	Current Category of Listing	N/A
Case Type	Amendment		
Received/Start Date	01/05/2015		
Decision Date	10/05/2016		

1. Decision

The monument was first scheduled in 1964 and the documentation does not conform to current standards. The assessment against criteria demonstrates that the monument continues to be of national importance. The decision is to amend to the entry in the Schedule as **Leachonich, two chambered cairns 145m N and 265m NNW of.**

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

Monument first scheduled in 1964; no subsequent amendment.

2.2 Development Proposals

N/A

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The site was visited on 01/05/2015.

3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

An assessment against the Scheduling criteria has been carried out (see **Annex A**). The monument was found to meet the criteria for scheduling.

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

N/A

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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria*

Leachonich, two chambered cairns 145m N and 265m NNW of

1. Description

The monument consists of two burial cairns dating from the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age (around 3500- 2500 BC). The cairns are located on the southeast slope of Struie Hill at 75m and 85m above sea level and have open views to the Dornoch Firth.

The northern cairn survives as a mound of loose stones measuring approximately 21m in maximum diameter. The southern edge of the cairn is marked by at least two kerb stones which appear to be in-situ. The largest kerb stone measures approximately 0.8m in height. The second cairn is located 120m to the south, and survives as a mound of earth and stone measuring approximately 17m in maximum diameter and up to 1.3m in height. In the centre of this cairn there is an orthostat marking the likely position of a central chamber. At the southeast extent of the cairn another orthostat, measuring 1m by 0.4m and standing 0.6m high, may indicate the remains of the cairn passage.

The scheduled area comprises two parts: a circular area centred on the northern cairn measuring 40m in diameter and a circular area centred on the southern cairn measuring 43m in diameter. The scheduling includes the remains described above and an area around them within which evidence relating to the monument's construction, use and abandonment is expected to survive, as shown in red on the accompanying map. The post and wire fence is excluded from the scheduling. The monument was first scheduled in 1964, but the documentation does not meet current standards: the present amendment rectifies this.

2. Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria (SHEP, 2011) pp71-73**

* 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
Intrinsic	
Condition in which monument survives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The monument consists of two of burial cairns visible as mounds of earth and stone, and retaining good field characteristics.• The orthostat in the centre of the southern cairn is likely to indicate the presence of a chamber and the orthostat at the southeast may indicate the location of the passage.• The northern cairn has remains of an outer kerb, visible as at least two kerb stones at the southern edge of the cairn.
Archaeological, scientific,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The cairns retain their structural integrity in their plan form, in

technological or other interest or research potential of the monument	<p>the surviving stratigraphy and in their architectural elements. These elements can help us understand more about ritual and funerary practice, the architecture of prehistoric burial and the construction, use and abandonment of these monuments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is still good potential for the survival of other archaeological deposits, including burial remains, artefacts such as pottery, and environmental remains such as charcoal or pollen, within, beneath and around the intact elements of the monument. These elements can help us understand more about ritual and funerary practice, and the significance of materials, technology and craft in a burial context.
Apparent developmental sequence of monument (either long or short may provide insights of importance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cairns probably date from the late Neolithic to early Bronze Age (the fourth and third millennia BC). • The close proximity of the two cairns could provide evidence of site development; one may pre-date the other or they could be contemporary. • Scientific excavation of the site would allow us to develop a better understanding of the chronology of the site, including its date of origin, state of completeness and any possible development sequence.
Original or subsequent functions of the monument and its parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The original function of the monument was as a burial or funerary site. The site may also have had other ceremonial or ritual uses for the local community.
Contextual	
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"> • There are eleven confirmed and possible prehistoric burial cairns within a 5km radius of the monument. This monument is significant as an upstanding and well-preserved example.
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"> • There are numerous broadly contemporary monuments in the landscape surrounding the monument including hut circles, cairn and field system located 1.3km southwest (Canmore ID 13811). Another chambered cairn is located 1.5km N (Canmore ID 13859). There is potential to study these sites together to understand their functions within the local communities and possible chronological development in the area. • The monument is within a small group of cairns in the Struie Hill to Dornoch Firth coastal area and offers potential to carry out spatial and landscape analysis of these cairn in comparison others nearby, and other prehistoric monuments in the vicinity, enhancing our understanding of the placing of such sites in the landscape and the organisation, division and use of land in the Neolithic.
Relationship of the monument and its parts with its wider landscape and setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chambered cairns are often placed in conspicuous locations within the landscape, at the edge of arable land and overlooking or inter-visible with other ritual monuments. These cairns are located on the southeast slope of Struie Hill, overlooking the coastal plain and the nearby Dornoch Firth. • The siting of the two cairns in such close proximity is unlikely to be a coincidence as there would have been intervisibility between the two cairns. Their paired presence would also

	have increased the prominence of this feature in the landscape.
Associative	
Historical, cultural and social influences that have affected the form and fabric of the monument, and vice versa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
Aesthetic attributes of the monument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
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"> • N/A
Associations the monument has with historical, traditional or artistic characters or events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

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 is of national importance because of its potential to make a significant addition to knowledge and understanding of the past, particularly the design and construction of prehistoric burial monuments during the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age.</p> <p>Chambered cairns are often our main source of evidence for the Neolithic in Scotland, and can enhance our understanding of Neolithic society and economy, and as well as the nature of burial practices and belief systems. These cairns continue to be visible as upstanding field monuments and have good field characteristics with significant potential for the presence of buried archaeological remains. This evidence allows us to interpret their form, function and position in the landscape. The cairns are part of a group of Neolithic burial monuments in the Struie Hill to Dornoch Firth coastal area and represent important surviving components of what would have been a wider prehistoric landscape of settlement, agriculture and ritual. The loss of the monument would significantly diminish our future ability to appreciate and understand funerary practice, death and burial in prehistoric times, and the placing of cairns within the landscape.</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	
Its place in the national consciousness [a factor that may be considered in support of other factors]	

References

Historic Environment Scotland <http://www.canmore.org.uk> reference number CANMORE IDs 13860 and 13861 (accessed on 04/05/2016).

Highland Council HER References: MHG 8076 and 8075.
