

## Case information

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Case ID	300016738		
File Reference	AMH/3839/2/1		
Name of Site	Brahan Wood, chambered cairn 710m W of NW Lodge		
Local Authority	Highland		
National Grid Reference	NH 504 552		
Designation No. (if any)	SM3839		
Designation Type	Scheduled monument	Current Category of Listing	N/A
Case Type	Amendment		
Received/Start Date	05/05/2015		
Decision Date	27/04/2016		

## 1. Decision

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The monument was first scheduled in 1976 and the documentation does not conform to current standards. The assessment against the scheduling criteria (Scottish Historic Environment Policy, Annex 1) demonstrates that the monument continues to be of national importance. The decision is to amend the entry in the Schedule as **Brahan Wood, chambered cairn 835m NW of Brahan House**.

## 2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

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### 2.1 Designation Background

The monument was scheduled in 1976 and no previous amendments to the entry in the Schedule have taken place.

### 2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals affecting this assessment.

### 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 5 May 2015.

#### 3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

An assessment against the Scheduling was carried out (see **Annex A**) and the monument was found to continue 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

The existing 1976 legal documents are not adequate to support definition of the extent of the scheduled area or capture the full potential of the monument.

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#### **Elizabeth McCrone**

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

### SM3839 Brahan Wood, chambered cairn 835m NW of Brahan House

#### 1. Description

The monument is the remains of a chambered cairn dating from the Neolithic period, probably built between 3800 and 2500 BC. It is visible as a group of large stones that define a two-compartment chamber. The cairn lies 150m above sea level, on a terrace near the top of a south facing slope above the valley of the River Conon.

The monument is an Orkney-Cromarty type chambered cairn, with a central slab dividing the chamber into two compartments. Seven stones define the chamber that measures 7.8m north-south by 2.6m transversely, and this is divided by a very large east-west aligned slab.

The scheduled area is circular on plan, measuring 30m in diameter, centred on the large, central slab that divides the chamber, to include 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 monument was first scheduled in 1976, 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
<b>Intrinsic</b>	
Condition in which monument survives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The monument has been denuded of its cairn material, exposing the key structural features of the chamber.</li><li>• Although the monument has lost its cairn material, the monument is in a relatively good, stable condition at present, located within a small clearing surrounded by conifer forestry.</li></ul>
Archaeological, scientific, technological or other interest or research potential of the monument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stones that define the two-compartment chamber are exposed, but there is also good potential for the survival of further archaeological deposits, including human burials, artefacts and environmental remains such as charcoal or pollen, within, beneath and around the upstanding structure of the cairn.</li><li>• Excavations of chambered cairns elsewhere show continuing potential for undisturbed deposits, evidence of earlier</li></ul>

	<p>structures, and artefacts and ecofacts such as pottery, flints and human and animal bone (Davidson and Henshall 1989).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This cairn has potential to add to our understanding of ritual and funerary practices during the Neolithic period, and to provide information about contemporary agriculture, economy and environment.</li> </ul>
Apparent developmental sequence of monument (either long or short may provide insights of importance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few radiocarbon dates have been obtained for Orkney-Cromarty chambered cairns because many of them were excavated before the advent of modern scientific techniques. From the dates available, and on the basis of typological study of the pottery found at such sites, it appears that chambered cairns were constructed and in use between around 3800 and 2500 BC.</li> <li>• At Brahan Wood, there is no clear indication of whether the cairn remains derive from an extended development sequence. However, it is likely that this tomb was in use through several or many generations.</li> <li>• Scientific study of the tomb's form and construction techniques compared with other tombs would enhance our understanding of the development sequence of this site and of chambered cairns in general.</li> </ul>
Original or subsequent functions of the monument and its parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The monument was a place of burial and ritual during the Neolithic.</li> <li>• It is likely to have had a prominent place within a group's territory and to have been a focal point in the landscape.</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>• Orkney-Cromarty cairns are found only in north and west Scotland, with the greatest concentration in Orkney. Their design is particularly interesting because the shape and form, with subdivisions formed by upright slabs, is comparable with contemporary house forms e.g. Knap of Howar, Orkney. It is likely that this was deliberate, with the tombs representing 'houses for the dead'.</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>• Brahan Wood is one of a group of well-preserved burial monuments lying relatively close to the coast between Brora and Beaulieu. The proximity of these monuments can give important insights into the Neolithic landscape and add to our understanding of social organisation, land division and land-use.</li> <li>• Brahan Wood is an interesting example of a chambered cairn with stones delineating a two compartment chamber; it contrasts with several other chambered cairns in the vicinity that show a different arrangement of east-west oriented chamber with narrower entrance passage to the east.</li> <li>• There is potential to carry out spatial and landscape analysis of this 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.</li> </ul>
Relationship of the monument and its parts with its wider landscape and setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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. This cairn is located on a shelf near the top of a southfacing slope, above Strathconon.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The monument is currently situated in a small clearing of a forestry plantation and the views from the cairn are therefore not readily apparent.</li> </ul>
<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>The form of the monument is influenced by attitudes to burial and commemoration of the dead in the Neolithic, but may also reflect the influence of Neolithic social structure.</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></li> </ul>
Associations the monument has with historical, traditional or artistic characters or events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></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 has potential to make a significant contribution to our understanding of the past, in particular the design and construction of prehistoric burial monuments. It continues to be visible as an upstanding field monument, and with a two compartment chamber this cairn shows a different form to many other examples in the area. 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. This chambered cairn is one of an important group of well-preserved Neolithic burial monuments close to the coast between Beaulieu and Brora which represent an important surviving component of what would have been a wider prehistoric landscape of settlement, agriculture and ritual. The loss of the monument would diminish our ability to appreciate and understand the meaning and importance of 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 ID 12792 (accessed on 26/04/2016).

The Highland Council Historic Environment Record reference is MHG7142.

Davidson, J L and Henshall, A S 1989, The chambered cairns of Orkney: an inventory of the structures and their contents, Edinburgh.

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