

## Case information

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Case ID	300016774
File Reference	AMH/1820/2/1
Name of Site	Torrish Burn, stone rows 400m NW of the bridge over

Local Authority	Highland Council
National Grid Reference	NC 9657 1902
Designation No. (if any)	SM1820
Case Type	Amendment

Received/Start Date	27/04/2015
Decision Date	16/08/2016

## 1. Decision

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The monument was first scheduled in 1940 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 update to entry in the schedule as **Torrish Burn, stone rows 245m W of**.

## 2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

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### 2.1 Designation Background

Monument first scheduled in 1940; with no later amendments.

### 2.2 Development Proposals

N/A.

## 3. Assessment

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### 3.1 Assessment information

The site was considered for amendment as part of the North 2015 Scheduling Enhancement Project.

The site was visited on 27/04/2015.

### 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 published in the Historic Environment Scotland policy statement June 2016, Annex 1, pp. 48-50.

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/planning-and-guidance/legislation-and-guidance/historic-environment-scotland-policy-statement/>

### 3.3 Other considerations

N/A

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

### **Torrish Burn, stone rows 245m W of.**

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#### **1 Description**

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The monument is a group of earthfast stones, aligned in rows, thought to date from the Bronze Age (2500 to 800 BC). Within Scotland, stone rows are a site type only found in Caithness and Sutherland. The monument is located on a southeast facing slope within moorland and lies around 90m above sea level.

The monument is visible as at least 12 small earthfast stones, typically measuring around 0.4-0.5m in height and similar in width, set out over two parallel alignments. The stone rows run for approximately 8m and the rows are about 1-1.5m apart. An early survey of the monument, in 1909, recorded at least 17 earthfast stones running in two rows for a length of around 13.5m. The monument is located on open moorland and set upon a slope on the north side of the Strath of Kildonan. The site offers views across the valley floor to the southeast, south and southwest while the hillside to the northwest and north overlooks the monument.

The scheduled area is irregular on plan and 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 monument was first scheduled in 1940, but the documentation did not meet current standards: the present amendment rectifies this.

#### **2 Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria** (Historic Environment Scotland policy statement June 2016, Annex 1, pp. 48-50.)

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##### **2.1 Intrinsic Characteristics**

The monument consists of stone rows visible as parallel lines of small standing stones. Overall the site survives in good condition with no record of an excavation at the site. The monument is well-preserved with two partial stone rows still visible. The plan of the monument can still be discerned and this helps us understand possible ritual practice at the site and the construction, use and abandonment of these types of monuments. There is potential for the survival of archaeological deposits, including buried 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 contribute to our understanding of possible ritual practice, and the significance of materials, technology and craft in a prehistoric context of stone rows.

The monument probably dates from the Bronze Age (around 2500 to 800 BC). This is supported by scientific dating from an excavation at nearby Battle Moss stone row

(scheduled monument reference SM506, Canmore ID 9021) in 2003. Scientific investigation 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. Such scientific research at Battle Moss indicated the site was constructed over a period of time with stones gradually added to the site. Further investigation could help clarify how the stone rows were developed. Such investigations could also allow us to better understand any possible relation between the aligned stone rows and the adjacent mounded enclosure at the northwest of the monument. Immediately to the northwest of the stone rows is a mounded enclosure of unknown origin or function and could be the remains of a cairn, prehistoric enclosure or even a later sheiling.

The original function of stone rows is unknown but it has been suggested that they were constructed to make astronomical, solar and lunar observations. Alternatively, the site may also have had ceremonial or ritual uses for the local community.

## 2.2 Contextual Characteristics

There are twenty-one confirmed stone rows in Caithness and Sutherland, which accounts for all the known stone rows in Scotland. There are nine scheduled monuments classified as stone rows in Scotland, including this monument. There are two stone rows within 5km of this monument; Learable Hill (scheduled monument reference SM1803 and Canmore ID 6718) approximately 8.7km northwest and Allt Breac (scheduled monument reference SM1763 and Canmore ID 7036) which is only 1.2km west-southwest. Some previously recorded stone rows in the area have not been located in recent years. This emphasises the importance of Torrish Burn as it is an easily located and well preserved example. The stone rows at Torrish Burn have the potential to enhance and broaden our understanding of the belief systems of prehistoric peoples and how they conceptualised their physical environment.

There are numerous broadly contemporary monuments in the landscape surrounding the monument including Torrish Burn hut circles and cairnfield (Canmore ID 6984) around 110m northwest and Torrish Burn kerb cairn (Canmore ID 7056) about 125m southeast. There is potential to study such sites together to understand their functions within the local communities and possible chronological development in the area. This dense cluster of prehistoric remains in the Torrish area offers potential to study domestic sites alongside ritual practices and draw comparisons with evidence from other prehistoric monuments around the locality and more widely in Caithness and Sutherland.

The stone rows sit on sloping moorland, facing the southeast, with open views over the valley floor to the southeast, south and southwest. The site is slightly overlooked by adjacent hillsides to the northwest and north.

## 2.3 Associative Characteristics

N/A.

### 3 Purpose and implications of scheduling

The field investigation concluded the site is in a stable condition and well preserved. There are no immediate threats to the preservation of the monument. Designation as a scheduled monument remains the most appropriate mechanism to secure the preservation of the monument, and ensure the recognition of its national importance.

### 4 Assessment of national importance

The monument is of national importance because of its potential to make a significant addition to our knowledge and understanding of the past, particularly the design and construction of stone rows in Caithness and Sutherland. The stone rows at Torrish Burn have good field characteristics, allowing us to interpret their form and position in the landscape. The site has potential for the presence of buried archaeological remains, including artefacts and palaeoenvironmental evidence. There are numerous other broadly contemporary monuments in the vicinity, including other stone rows and prehistoric settlements, which together can contribute to our understanding of the form of the prehistoric landscape. This is important for enhancing our understanding of Bronze Age society, its organisation, economy and beliefs. The loss of the monument would significantly diminish our future ability to appreciate and understand the use of stone rows and their role and function within the prehistoric communities which constructed them.

### 5 References

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