



Case information

Case ID	300016779
File Reference	AMH/1854/2/1
Name of Site	Duchary Rock, fort S of Carrol, Loch Brora

Local Authority	Highland Council
National Grid Reference	NC 85100 04800
Designation No. (if any)	SM 1854
Case Type	Amendment

Received/Start Date	27/04/2015
Decision Date	16/09/2016

1. Decision

The monument was first scheduled in 1935, but an inadequate area was included to protect the full extent of archaeological remains. The assessment against criteria demonstrates that the monument continues to be of national importance. The decision is to update the entry in the Schedule as **Duchary Rock, fort**.

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The monument was first scheduled in 1935; no subsequent amendments.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals affecting this case.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The site was considered for amendment as part of the S18 Highland scheduling project and visited on 27/04/2015

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Scottish Charity No. **SC045925**
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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

Duchary Rock, fort

1 Description

The monument is the remains of a fort, probably dating from the Iron Age (between 600 BC and AD 400). It occupies a steep sided ridge around 230m above sea level, taking advantage of the natural protection afforded by steep cliffs. Substantial stone walls are visible at the north and south ends where the cliffs give way to steep slopes. The walls and cliffs enclose an area of around 300m northwest-southeast by about 110m transversely.

The scheduled area is irregular on plan, to include the remains described above and an area around within which evidence relating to the monument's construction and use is expected to survive, and adjoining land essential for the monument's support and preservation, as shown in red on the accompanying map. The scheduled area extends up to, but excludes, the track to the southwest. The monument was first scheduled in 1935, but an inadequate area was included to protect all of the archaeological remains: the present amendment rectifies this.

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

2.1 Intrinsic Characteristics

The monument is a well preserved fort occupying a naturally defensible position. It takes advantage of a steep sided ridge, and is defended by substantial walls on the north and south where cliffs give way to more sloping ground. Within the walls inner and outer wall faces are visible and entrance features such as door checks, possible cells or building joints can also be identified. Although the walls are ruinous and peat cutting has been undertaken in the interior of the fort, there is good potential for the survival of archaeological deposits and features within and beneath the stone walls and within the interior of the fort. The form of the walls can provide information about construction techniques of such defensive ramparts, while evidence relating to potential domestic structures and economy may be preserved as buried deposits inside the fort. By analogy with excavations elsewhere, the fort has potential to tell us how people lived, their trade and exchange contacts, and their social status, as well as provide information about fort architecture and construction methods.

Forts such as the one at Duchary Rock, typically date from around 600BC to around 400AD. There are few precise scientific dates for forts in Sutherland and Caithness and their dating has traditionally been based on typological studies of artefacts recovered from fort sites elsewhere. At Duchary, the presence of a blocked entrance and possible outer wall at the north indicate this site had a complex development

sequence. Scientific study of the site would allow us to develop a better understanding of the chronology of the site, including its date of origin, and any possible development sequence. The original purpose of forts is unclear, but they may have been defended settlements that could have accommodated either an extended family or a small community, a place of refuge for a community or a focal point for seasonal or special gatherings.

2.2 Contextual Characteristics

Forts are found throughout Scotland, but are less common in Sutherland and Caithness. The monument at Duchary Rock is important as an upstanding and well-preserved example with the survival of substantial walls and architectural features such as door checks, possible cells and transverse building joints. This monument is part of a larger network of prehistoric sites and there are a number of broadly contemporary monuments in the landscape to the east and northeast, including hut circles and cairns around 500m to the east (Canmore ID 6530) and a possible broch about 520m northeast (Canmore ID 6458). There is potential to study these sites together to better understand their functions within the local communities, settlement hierarchy and possible chronological development in the area. The monument, therefore, has the potential to enhance and broaden our understanding of prehistoric society and community as well as social organisation, land division and land use.

The fort at Duchary Rock occupies a prominent landscape location, on a rocky ridge about 230m above sea level. The ridge is naturally protected along the east and partially along the west. There are clear open views to the east, northeast, south and southwest, but higher ground to the north and northwest prevents long-distance views in this direction. The focus appears to be over the loch and valley below, and beyond to the coast, where most contemporary settlement has been recorded. The fort is likely to have been located here as an easily fortified site which could control settlements, agricultural land and movement in and through the area.

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 is therefore 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 it has an inherent potential to make a significant addition to our understanding of Iron Age society in Sutherland and the function, use and development of forts and other defended sites. This is a good example of a fort, occupying a spectacular location with contemporary sites in

the vicinity. The outer works of the fort are impressive, formed by substantial stone walls which add to the strong natural defences of Duchary Rock. Architectural features such as wall facings, door checks and building joints are visible, and the site demonstrates how naturally defensive locations were chosen and augmented to create defended settlements. The monument's importance is enhanced by its association with other Iron Age settlement to the north and northeast. The loss of the monument would significantly diminish our future ability to appreciate and understand the character, development and use of forts, and the nature of Iron Age society, economy and social hierarchy in the north of Scotland and further afield.

5 References

Historic Environment Scotland <http://www.canmore.org.uk> reference number CANMORE ID 6535 (accessed on 30/05/2016).

The Highland Council HER reference is MHG10863 (accessed on 30/05/2016).
Close-Brooks, J. (1986) *Exploring Scotland's heritage: the Highlands, Exploring Scotland's heritage series*. Edinburgh.

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Feachem, R. (1963) *A guide to prehistoric Scotland*. 1st. London.

Hogg, A H A. (1975) *Hill-forts of Britain*. London.

RCAHMS. (1911) *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments and Constructions of Scotland. Second report and inventory of monuments and constructions in the county of Sutherland*. Edinburgh.
