

Case information

Case ID	300016790
File Reference	AMJ/9302/1/1
Name of Site	Turnal Rock, hut circle complex 250m NW of Langwell Tulloch broch

Local Authority	Highland Council		
National Grid Reference	ND 0965 2253		
Designation No. (if any)	SM 13631		
Designation Type	Scheduled Monument	Current Category of Listing	N/A
Case Type	Designation		

Received/Start Date	29/04/2015
Decision Date	28/10/2016

1. Decision

The assessment against criteria demonstrates that the monument is of national importance. The decision is to add the monument to the schedule of nationally important monuments.

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The monument is currently undesignated.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals for the site.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The site was visited on 29/04/2015.

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

The monument has been assessed as nationally important, and scheduling is an appropriate mechanism to secure its future.

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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria*

Turnal Rock, hut circle complex 250m NW of Langwell Tulloch broch

1. Description

The monument comprises a complex of three conjoined roundhouses or hut circles, likely to date to the Iron Age (between 500 BC and AD 500). The monument is located approximately 90m above sea level on rising ground on a southeast facing slope above Langwell Water.

The hut circles form a roughly trefoil grouping; the smallest positioned at the north with one to the northeast and another to the south. Each structure is roughly circular and survives as low stone and turf walls up to 3m wide and 1.25m high. The hut circles measure between 10.5m and 15.5m in diameter. Each hut circle has an entrance approximately 1m wide facing into a small enclosed yard. The yard is to the southeast of the hut circles and is defined by a low stone wall, measuring 4m in length and running between the south and northeast circles, with a break for an entrance. The hut circle to the northeast contains a substantial mound of stones in the centre measuring up to 3.5m in diameter and 1m high. A low wall runs southeast from the northeast hut circle and terminates at a sub-rectangular enclosure measuring 6m by 4.5m. This low wall may be contemporary with the hut circles and the enclosure is possibly of later date. Abutting and possibly cutting the northeast hut circle, on the east side, is a sub-oval enclosure, perhaps of a later date.

The scheduled area is irregular in shape 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.

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

* 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 is a prehistoric settlement, likely to date to the Iron Age surviving as a complex of conjoined hut circles with related features.Overall the site survives in excellent condition retaining its plan form, stratigraphy and above-ground elements, with no record of an excavation at the site.

Archaeological, scientific, technological or other interest or research potential of the monument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This complex can help us understand more about prehistoric domestic life, the architecture of prehistoric domesticity, use and abandonment of these monuments. • There is good potential for the survival of other archaeological deposits, including 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 prehistoric domestic practice, and the significance of materials, technology and craft in a domestic context. • The monument is also important for the potential of exploring the relationship between the hut circle complex, hut circles and field systems and other prehistoric remains in the vicinity.
Apparent developmental sequence of monument (either long or short may provide insights of importance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The hut circles within the monument probably dates from the Iron Age (500 BC to AD 500). • The enclosed yard area to the southeast is likely to be contemporary with the hut circles but could be a later addition. • The stretch of wall running southeast from the northeast circle is possibly a later addition with the sub-rectangular enclosure at its terminus almost certainly later in date than the hut circles. • The northeast hut circle has a sub-oval structure built into the east side and this appears to cut into the circle and is almost certainly of a later date. • Scientific excavation of the site would allow us to develop a better understanding of the chronology of the site and possible development sequence.
Original or subsequent functions of the monument and its parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The original use of the site would have been as a non-defended, domestic complex reliant on an economy of agriculture and animal husbandry.
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"> • This monument is a very rare example of three conjoined hut circles with an apparent enclosed yard connecting their entrances. There are examples of two conjoined hut circles in Scotland but there is a lack of records for three or more conjoined, especially with an associated yard.
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"> • Langwell Tulloch broch (SM3441) is only 250m southeast of the monument and Turnal Tulloch broch (SM3440) is approximately 650m northwest. Brochs were also constructed in the Iron Age and may be contemporary in date with the hut circles at Turnal Rock. • It is possible that the monument was part of a wider network of settlements and defensive, or defendable, sites, with different sites fulfilling different functions. Further study could help to refine our understanding of the landscape context of the hut circles and its relationship with other sites in Caithness, in particular, the relationship between this hut circle and the brochs only 250m to the southeast and 650m to the northwest.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Langwell valley contains a substantial number of prehistoric sites, offering potential to study domestic life and draw comparisons with evidence from other hut circles around the locality and Caithness.
Relationship of the monument and its parts with its wider landscape and setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The monument is located on rising ground, the southeast facing slope of a hill above Langwell Water at approximately 90m above sea level. This is a fairly typical location and setting for hut circles in the Caithness area – located on higher ground, on a hillside and many are roughly southeast facing.
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 as an example of a well-preserved prehistoric settlement. It has an inherent potential to make a significant addition to our understanding of the past, in particular the design, construction and use of hut circles in northern Scotland and the Caithness region. There is high potential for well-preserved archaeological remains to survive within and immediately outside the buildings. Unusually for this type of monument, the three hut circles are conjoined with a related connecting yard forming a rare and interesting complex. Its value is enhanced as one of a group of monuments in a remote upland landscape with possibly contemporary defended sites in close proximity. The loss of the monument would significantly diminish our future ability to appreciate and understand late prehistoric domestic buildings in Scotland and the relationship between other sites such as single houses and brochs in the Iron Age.</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]	
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References

Historic Environment Scotland <http://www.canmore.org.uk> reference number CANMORE ID 7528 (accessed on 01/09/16).

Highland Council HER reference MHG9852.

Fairhurst, H and Taylor, D (1970), 'A hut circle settlement at Kilphedir, Sutherland', Proc Soc Antiq Scot, 103, 65-103.
