

Case information

Case ID	300009707		
File Reference	AMH/6575/2/1		
Name of Site	Cowie Line, pill boxes & anti-tank blocks NE of Whitehill		
Local Authority	Aberdeenshire		
National Grid Reference	NO 80733 88216		
Designation No. (if any)	SM6575		
Designation Type	Scheduled monument	Current Category of Listing	N/A
Case Type	Amendment		
Received/Start Date	13/11/2012		
Decision Date	29/01/2016		

1. Decision

Amend: Update to entry in the Schedule

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The monument was first scheduled in 1996.

No previous amendments to the scheduling have taken place.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals affecting the site.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The monument was assessed for amendment as part of the 20th-century military project and visited on 09 August 2013.

3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

The monument was assessed for scheduling against the criteria for determining national importance and found to meet the criteria (see **Annex A**).

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 monument continues to meet the scheduling criteria.

Designation as a scheduled monument remains an appropriate mechanism to secure the preservation of the monument.

The scheduled area as defined in the 1996 legal documents is significantly larger than required to protect the archaeological remains of national importance.

There is a significant benefit in amending the existing scheduled monument designation. It will provide an updated legal document and map, allowing the monument to be defined accurately on the ground. It will also ensure that an appropriate area is designated.

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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria*

SM6575 Cowie Line, pillboxes & anti-tank blocks NE of Whitehill

1. Description

The monument is part of a Second World War anti-invasion ‘stop-line’ dating from 1940. It is visible as two stone and concrete pillboxes overlooking the Cowie Water, and three sets of concrete anti-tank blocks on the S bank of the Cowie Water. The monument is located on the S bank of the Cowie Water where it is crossed by a single lane road bridge.

The pillboxes are both Type 22 form, with stone walls, concrete roof and brick interior blast walls. Both are six-sided, with an entrance in one side, and firing loops in the remaining five. The anti-tank blocks, together with the artificially steepened bank of the Cowie Water itself, would have restricted the manoeuvres of enemy vehicles.

The scheduled area is irregular on plan to include the remains described above and an area around them within which evidence relating to the monument's construction and use is expected to survive, as shown in red on the accompanying map. The scheduling specifically excludes the above-ground elements of all post-and-wire fences around the site, along with the road bridge and the road itself. Also excluded is the line of the modern gas pipeline which was recently installed. The monument was originally scheduled in 1996, but the documentation did not meet modern standards: the present amendment rectifies this.

2. Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria (SHEP 2011, 71-73**)

* 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 is a well-preserved section of the Cowie Line, a Second World War anti-invasion stop-line.• It survives as two stone and concrete pillboxes overlooking the Cowie Water, along with three groups of concrete anti-tank blocks and a section of the south bank of the Cowie Water itself, which has been artificially steepened to provide an anti-tank defence line.• Despite some alterations to the landscape since the

	<p>construction of the site, the monument itself is in good condition.</p>
<p>Archaeological, scientific, technological or other interest or research potential of the monument</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The monument has high potential for further archaeological research as part of the extensive and varied system of anti-invasion defences built across Britain in the early years of the Second World War. It has potential to enhance our understanding of 20th-century defences and the development of defence strategy during the Second World War. • There is significant potential for buried deposits relating to war-time activities around the defences. This could provide valuable information regarding construction methods, the evolution of military strategies, the daily lives of the people who manned the defences, and the impact on the local population.
<p>Apparent developmental sequence of monument (either long or short may provide insights of importance)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial construction of the Cowie Line began in the latter half of 1940. Precise details of the construction are unfortunately sparse for this defence line, but it appears to have been created as a single entity over the course of several months.
<p>Original or subsequent functions of the monument and its parts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The anti-invasion defences in Aberdeenshire and the surrounding area were built to protect Scotland and Britain from the potential threat of a German invasion by the 'back-door'. The network of pillboxes, anti-tank obstacles and gun emplacements were aimed at slowing the enemy's advance and controlling the defence of key areas of Scotland. • The Cowie Line was intended as a defence line to halt or delay an invading force coming from the beaches or airfields of the Moray coastline and attempting to move further south. This particular section protects a crossing point of the Cowie Water around 5km west of the town of Stonehaven.
<p>Contextual</p>	
<p>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</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site represents a good example of an anti-invasion stop-line, examples of which were constructed across Britain in the early part of the Second World War. The Cowie Line is one of many stop-lines built around Britain with the intention of delaying or halting an invading enemy force's movement.
<p>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)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These defences were part of the preparations ordered by the War Office /Scottish Command for defence of the UK in 1940. It was thought likely that German forces would invade from Norway, using beaches such as this to establish a foothold in the NE and then moving south by land. This area was characterised as the UK's 'back door' and the defensive works were deemed vital to deter, or at least slow down, a German invasion. • The Cowie Line runs W from Stonehaven, following the route of the Cowie Water. It was designed as an anti-tank line, utilising a combination of roadblocks, demolitions, defensive strongpoints and tank and infantry obstacles, along with 12 pillboxes. The Cowie Line could control all the routes south (which were suitable for a large force to move through) from the Drumochter Pass on the main Inverness to Perth road (the route of the modern A9) all the

	<p>way to the outskirts of the town of Stonehaven, on the east coast south of Aberdeen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Along the Cowie Line, all of the defended crossings of the Cowie Water have surviving features such as pillboxes, trenches and anti-tank blocks, and the strategic role of the system can easily be understood. Many of the other pillboxes and associated defences are well-preserved and can be studied alongside this example to enhance our understanding of the design and function of the Cowie Line and the nature of anti-tank stop-lines in general.
Relationship of the monument and its parts with its wider landscape and setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This particular site shows the careful thought which went into the placing of these defences, and the use of natural features wherever possible to enhance and assist the man-made defensive features.
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"> The Moray Coast was identified by Home Command as a vulnerable area for enemy invasion following the fall of Norway in April 1940. This resulted in a widespread construction project around the area designed to halt or delay any invading force from the moment it reached the coast.
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"> Although relatively 'young' in archaeological terms, wartime defences have considerable significance within the national consciousness. Their construction was one of the greatest alterations of the British landscape in history and they had a significant impact on local populations and communities. Records exist of the men who built and manned the Cowie Line and there is widespread public interest in these sites. Such sites retain particular significance for those who lived through the War and their descendants. The significance of the material remains of the conflict is likely to increase as people with first-hand memories of the events pass away.
Associations the monument has with historical, traditional or artistic characters or events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between the invasion of Norway on 9 April 1940 and when France surrendered on 22 June, German forces took control of the whole eastern coastline of the North Sea and English Channel. Between 27 May and 4 June, over 330,000 British and Allied troops were evacuated from Dunkirk, leaving behind most of the army's heavy equipment. The Battle of Britain, interpreted as the preliminary bombardment for an invasion, lasted from early July to the end of October. It is clear from numerous sources that both the public and the military saw invasion in 1940 not only as a near certainty, but also imminent. Against this background, the 'absolute priority' (according to primary sources) in the summer of 1940 was the defence of Britain.

Assessment of national importance

Criteria	Assessment
Its inherent capability or potential to make a significant addition to the understanding or appreciation of the past	This monument is of national importance because it has an inherent potential to make a significant addition to our understanding of the past, in particular the anti-invasion defences of the Second World War, and the logistics, construction methods,

Its retention of the structural, decorative or field characteristics of its kind to a marked degree	strategies and training involved in this war effort. These defences were part of preparations ordered by the War Office / Scottish Command in 1940 when it was thought likely that German forces would invade from Norway, using beaches in NE Scotland to establish a foothold and then moving south by land. This area was characterised as the UK's 'back door' and the defensive works were deemed vital to deter or at least slow down a German invasion. This is a well-preserved example of a stop-line, utilising and enhancing the natural terrain to provide a strong defensive feature. The monument offers considerable potential to study the relationship between the various elements of the site, and its relationship both with the other elements of the Cowie Line and the wider defences in place around NE Scotland and beyond. The monument has a significant place in the national consciousness as a tangible and powerful reminder of a defining event of the 20th century. The loss of the monument would significantly diminish our ability to appreciate and understand the construction and use of anti-invasion defences in Scotland during the early years of the Second World War.
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

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland:
<http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/canmore.html> NO88NW 35

Barclay, G 2005, 'The Cowie Line: a Second World War 'stop line' west of Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire', Proc Soc Antiq Scot 135, 119-161.

Barclay, G 2013, If Hitler Comes - Preparing for Invasion: Scotland 1940, Birlinn Ltd.
