Case information

Case ID	300016814
File Reference	AMH/13645/2/1
Name of Site	Heights of Brae, boulder containing prehistoric rock art, 110m SSE of Ivy Croft

Local Authority	The Highland Council
National Grid Reference	NH 51984 61042
Designation No.	SM13645
Case Type	Designation

Received/Start Date	03/02/2015
Decision Date	14/03/2016

1. Decision

The assessment against the scheduling criteria (Scottish Historic Environment Policy, Annex 1) demonstrates that the monument is of national importance. The decision is to add the monument to the Schedule of nationally important monuments as **Heights of Brae, boulder containing prehistoric rock art, 110m SSE of Ivy Croft.**

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

A request to designate the site was received on 3 February 2015.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals affecting this site.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The site was considered for designation as part of the North 2015 project and was visited on 7 May 2015.

3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

An assessment of the cultural significance of the site has been carried out following the criteria set out in Scottish Historic Environment Policy (Annex 1 paras 3-6). Having assessed cultural significance, the site was found to meet the criteria for national importance as set out in Scottish Historic Environment Policy (Annex 1 para 10). Having considered the purpose and implications of designating, it has been concluded that scheduling is the most appropriate mechanism to protect the site. Please see Annex A of this document for further information of this assessment.

3.3 Other considerations

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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria
Heights of Brae, boulder containing prehistoric rock art, 110m SSE of Ivy Croft

1 Description

The monument is an earthfast boulder with two of its faces containing carved prehistoric motifs probably created between about 3500BC and 2500BC. It has been relocated to the Heights of Brae Neil Gunn viewpoint, on gently sloping ground overlooking the Cromarty Firth and the Black Isle to the south, at 200m above sea level.

The oblong schist boulder is approximately 0.85m high by 0.76m wide by 0.42m broad. Each of the two carved panels contains a complex design of cups, cup and rings, conjoined cups and groove marks. The rings are generally concentric around single cups but some are incomplete, forming only a curved channel around a single cup. Several of the motifs are interconnected by grooves. In total there are approximately 13 cups and eight cup and ring motifs on the west-facing panel and 24 cups and three cup and ring motifs on the east-facing panel.

The scheduled area is circular on plan measuring 2m in diameter and centred on the boulder and includes the remains described above and an area around it for its support and preservation, as shown in red on the accompanying map. The scheduling specifically excludes the modern surface surrounding the boulder and the adjoining stone dyke to allow for their maintenance.

2 **Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria** (Scottish Historic Environment Policy, 2011 pp71-73)

2.1 Intrinsic Characteristics

The boulder has been relocated from a position approximately 1km to the west southwest (where it was found in a dyke). As such, the immediate archaeological context of the boulder may have been lost. However, there is considerable significance in the diverse range of rock art motifs that have survived on two of its faces. The individual cups and cup and ring motifs are familiar elements of rock art in Scotland, however, each of the two panels bears a complex set of these motifs and several individual elements are connected with grooves and channels. The presence of two carved surfaces on one boulder is a very uncommon feature.

A development sequence or phasing of the carvings is difficult to determine because most of the component designs respect each other spatially. Collectively, however, they represent a significant undertaking by the person or people who carved them. As well as their high intrinsic value as decorated monuments, these carved panels can enhance our understanding of the carving process and techniques, the relationship between individual motifs and the overall designs, and the meaning and symbolism of the various motifs and designs.

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2.2 Contextual Characteristics

Prehistoric rock art motifs are a geographically limited class of monument with the larger known clusters in Argyll, Dunbartonshire and upland Perthshire. This is a possible outlier to the main groupings, although there are unconfirmed reports of other such sites around Heights of Fodderty. This monument is a relatively uncommon example of the class because of the designs represented and because there are two carved panels present, unlike most boulders which bear a single carved panel.

The monument has been moved and the position of its previous discovery is one kilometre to the West. Researchers have suggested that rock art panels are components of wider ritual landscapes and may have functioned at various levels: from the rock surface and decorated panel as representation of ancestral space; to the immediate area as a venue for ritual or ceremonial activity; to the wider landscape in which the panels are located and the likely connections they had with other broadly contemporary monuments.

2.3 Associative Characteristic

There is a strong aesthetic value and association to this monument because of the decorative nature of the carvings.

3 Purpose and implications of scheduling

Designation as a scheduled monument is the most appropriate mechanism to secure the preservation of the monument, and ensure the recognition of its national importance.

The monument has been moved in the recent past to its current location to ensure its preservation. The field investigation concluded the site is stable and in good condition. There are no immediate threats to the preservation of the monument.

4 Assessment of national importance

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, prehistoric rock art studies in Scotland. The monument is an uncommon variant of the class of monument because it has two decorated panels, each of which contains an unusual assemblage of motifs – cup marks and cup and ring marks, several of which are conjoined by grooves. The monument has the potential to enhance our understanding of the meaning and function of such decorated panels. The loss of the monument would significantly diminish our future ability to appreciate and understand rock art and its place in prehistoric society.

5 References

The Highland Council Historic Environment Record reference is MHG55106.

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