

Case information

Case ID	300016752
File Reference	AMH/529/2/1
Name of Site	Bruan, broch, Ulbster

Local Authority	Highland Council
National Grid Reference	ND 310 395
Designation No. (if any)	SM529
Case Type	Amendment

Received/Start Date	30/04/2015
Decision Date	10/05/2016

1. Decision

The monument was first scheduled in 1934 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 the entry in the schedule as **Bruan, broch 85m SW of Tulloch Lea**.

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The monument was first scheduled in 1934; no subsequent amendment.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The site was considered for amendment as part of the 2015 Highland project and visited on 30/04/2015.

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 continues 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

N/A

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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria

Bruan, broch 85m SW of Tulloch Lea

1 Description

The monument is a broch, a complex stone-built substantial roundhouse, dating to the Iron Age (between 600 BC and AD 400). The broch is visible as a grass covered stony mound with traces of the interior structure visible. It sits on an artificial platform and there is a surrounding ditch and outer bank. The broch is located in an elevated position near the coast, about 80m above sea level.

The mound is approximately oval in shape, measuring around 3m in height and 14m in diameter with a slight depression in the centre. Short sections of walling and stone slabs are visible protruding through the turf. The surrounding ditch and bank survive best on the west, north and northeast, the ditch measuring around 6m in width and 2m in depth. A modern stone wall overlies the location of the ditch and bank on the east and south and beyond this wall the bank and ditch have been plough levelled and are no longer visible. Stonework is visible on the outer edge of the platform and a large depression with exposed stonework adjoining the outer bank on the north-northeast may represent an additional structure.

The scheduled area is circular on plan measuring 65m in diameter, centred on the broch, to include 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 scheduling specifically excludes the above ground elements of a stone wall and post-and-wire fence. The monument was first scheduled in 1934, but an inadequate area was included to protect all of the archaeological remains. The present amendment rectifies this.

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

2.1 Intrinsic Characteristics

The monument is a broch, visible as a grass-covered mound sitting atop a large mound likely to contain outer works and associated archaeological material. Although some disturbance of the broch mound is visible and a stone dyke and ploughing has encroached on the platform and ditch to the south and east, the broch survives in good condition and has very high potential to support future archaeological research. The scale of the mound indicates that the buried broch walls are likely to survive to a considerable height. By analogy with a number of excavated brochs there is potential for buried remains of intramural cells and stairs, scarcement ledges, internal stone partitions, hearths, water tanks and possibly a well

within the broch mound, and potential for the buried remains of outbuildings on the broch platform. Additionally, the broch, outworks and any associated structures will contain deposits rich in occupation debris, artefacts and palaeoenvironmental evidence that can tell us about how people lived, their trade and exchange contacts, and their social status, as well as provide information about broch architecture and construction methods. This monument's high potential is demonstrated by recent excavations at other Caithness brochs, such as Nybster, and by the publication of investigations at Howe on Orkney, where a broch mound was found to preserve rich buried deposits.

Brochs in Sutherland and Caithness are typically thought to date from between 600 BC and AD 400. The presence of outer works at Bruan indicates this site may have 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, state of completeness and any possible development sequence.

Broch towers are primarily seen as a specific specialised development of complex Atlantic roundhouses. They were large complex structures that could have accommodated either an extended family or a small community. While there would have been a social hierarchy within this community, the construction of these elaborate towers is often understood in terms of elite settlement. Other interpretations have stressed their likely role as fortified or defensive sites, possibly serving a community across a wider area. Brochs are complex structures likely to have had numerous purposes and a complex role in prehistoric society.

2.2 Contextual Characteristics

Brochs are a widespread class of monument across northern Scotland with notable concentrations in Caithness, Sutherland, Orkney, Shetland, the Western Isles and the northwest Highlands. This monument is significant as an upstanding and well-preserved example with associated outworks, which is located in close proximity to a number of other brochs. There is high potential for comparative study on a local and national scale to better understand the function of such monuments, their interrelationship and the significance of their placing within the landscape, in particular in relation to our understanding of Iron Age social hierarchy, changing settlement patterns and systems of inheritance.

Bruan is situated near the coast, in prominent position on a locally high ridge with open views out to sea to the southwest, south and southeast. Many broch towers were deliberately sited to be focal points in the landscape, and this example would have been clearly visible from the lower lying ground to the south and from the sea.

2.3 Associative Characteristics

N/A

3 Purpose and implications of scheduling

The field investigation concluded the site is in a stable condition and very well preserved. There are no immediate threats to the preservation of the monument. Therefore 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. The above ground elements of the stone wall and post and wire fence should be excluded to allow for maintenance

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 the past, in particular of Iron Age society in Caithness and the function, use and development of brochs. It is a well-preserved example of a broch mound with related outworks. The size of the upstanding mound indicates this monument is likely to retain its structural characteristics to a marked degree, with potential for significant survival of walls and features such as intramural cells. The broch adds to our understanding of settlement patterns and social structure during the Iron Age in Caithness and this potential is enhanced by the numerous brochs in the vicinity. The loss of the monument would significantly diminish our future ability to appreciate and understand the development, use and re-use of brochs, and the nature of Iron Age society, economy and social hierarchy in the north of Scotland.

5 References

Historic Environment Scotland <http://www.canmore.org.uk> reference number CANMORE ID 8934 (accessed on 04/05/2016).

The Highland Council HER reference is MHG2272 (accessed on 04/05/2016).

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