



Case information

Case ID	300016787
File Reference	AMJ/9327/1/1
Name of Site	Kinbrace Hill, prehistoric settlement 1km NW of Kinbrace Farm

Local Authority	Highland Council
National Grid Reference	NH 866 295
Designation No. (if any)	SM13637
Case Type	Designation

Received/Start Date	29/04/2015
Decision Date	15/06/2016

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 as **Kinbrace Hill, prehistoric settlement 1km NW of Kinbrace Farm**.

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The monument is currently undesignated but recorded in Canmore and the Highland Council Historic Environment Record.

2.2 Development Proposals

N/A.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The site was considered for designation as part of the North 2015 Scheduling Enhancement Project.

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

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

Elizabeth McCrone

Head of Designations
Heritage Management
Historic Environment Scotland

Contact	Kyle Armstrong, Designations Officer Kyle.armstrong@hes.scot Tel: 0131 668 8740.
----------------	--

ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria

Kinbrace Hill, prehistoric settlement 1km NW of Kinbrace Farm

1 Description

The monument is a prehistoric settlement consisting of a number of round houses and structures with related field systems and associated clearance cairns. The settlement is likely to date to the Iron Age (between 500 BC and AD 500). The monument is located in the Strath of Kildonan, on a gentle southwest facing slope and lies approximately 125m above sea level.

The settlement comprises at least six round houses that survive up to 1.2m in height, constructed of a mixture of earth and stone. The round houses are mostly sub-circular in plan with a diameter ranging from 6m to 13.5m; wall thicknesses vary between 1.5m and 3m. Two round houses have evidence for an attached souterrain; one within or adjacent to the wall of a hut circle and another just outside the entrance to a round house. The remains of field systems are found across the site and consists lynchets, banks and small clearance cairns. There is evidence for at least three sub-rectangular plots at the north of the site. Further south on the site lies a sub-square plot which appears to overlie lynchets that echo the field system to the north. Numerous clearance cairns are found across the site and are up to 7m in diameter and up to 0.7m in height. A sheepfold, circular in plan and dating to the 19th century, stands in the centre of the site.

The scheduled area is an irregular polygon, to include the remains described above and an area in which evidence for their construction and use may survive, as shown in red on the attached map. The scheduling excludes the post-and-wire fence, telegraph poles, modern field drains and the above ground elements of the sheepfold.

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 prehistoric settlement surviving as a group of round houses with related field systems and cairns. Overall the site survives in excellent condition with an excavation, in 1911, exploring a single round house. The excavation recovered information about the nature of the settlement with finds such as coarse pottery, a fragment of lignite jewellery and architectural features including a paved entrance passage, stone faced walls and evidence for a possible souterrain.

The overall plan of the site is easily understood with the relationship between the individual elements such as the hut circles and field systems still surviving. Survey

work (RCAHMS 1993) has suggested that one hut circle (north of the central area) has more than one construction phase and another structure could be a later wag (a late Iron Age domestic structure unique to the Caithness and Sutherland area). The potential development sequence adds to the significance of the site and further analysis of the site could allow a better understanding of the chronology of the site.

Archaeological deposits, including artefacts such as pottery, and environmental remains such as charcoal or pollen, are likely to survive within, beneath and around the intact elements of the monument. These deposits can help us understand more about prehistoric domestic and agricultural practice, and the significance of materials, technology and craft in a domestic-agricultural context. The monument is also important for the potential of exploring the relationship between the round houses and field systems and other prehistoric remains in the vicinity. This settlement is likely to have been part of a wider community with potential socio-economic links with nearby sites.

2.2 Contextual Characteristics

The monument is an excellent example of an Iron Age settlement with round houses related to agricultural land and remains. There many examples of round houses in Scotland but sites with surviving field systems and clear associated features are relatively rare. The possible evidence for souterrains at Kinbrace Hill makes this monument a particularly significant example of an unenclosed Iron Age settlement.

There are a number of broadly contemporary sites nearby and it is possible that the monument was part of a wider network of settlements. Cnoc Dail-Chairn (Canmore ID 6650) is a similar site with hut circles and field systems 1.5km southwest of Kinbrace Hill. Further study could help to refine our understanding of the landscape context of the hut circles and field systems and the monuments relationship with other sites in Sutherland. The monument is located within the Strath of Kildonan which contains a substantial number of prehistoric sites, offering the potential to draw comparisons with other prehistoric settlements around the locality and Sutherland in general.

The monument is located on rising ground, the southwest facing slope of a hill above the River Helmsdale at approximately 125m above sea level. This is a typical location and setting for hut circles in the Sutherland area – located on higher ground, and roughly south facing.

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 as an example of a well-preserved Iron Age settlement which has evidence for domestic structures and their associated field systems. It has an inherent potential to make a significant contribution to our understanding of the past, in particular the design, construction and use of round houses and field systems in northern Scotland and the Sutherland region. It is expected that nationally important archaeological remains will survive within and immediately outside the structures. The possible remains of a later walled enclosure demonstrates the likelihood of a substantial time-depth at the site. Its value is enhanced as one of a group of monuments in a remote upland landscape with possibly contemporary 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 Iron Age and earlier settlements.

5 References

Historic Environment Scotland <http://www.canmore.org.uk> reference number CANMORE ID 6636 (accessed on 29/04/2015).

Curle, A O. (1911) On the examination of two hut-circles in the Strath of Kildonan, Sutherlandshire, one of which has an earth house attached', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, vol. 45, 1910-11. Pages: 18-23.

Fairhurst and Taylor, H and D B. (1974) A hut-circle settlement at Kilphedir, Sutherland', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, vol. 103, 1970-1. Pages: 65-99.

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. Pages: 124-5.

RCAHMS. (1993). *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Strath of Kildonan: an archaeological survey*. Edinburgh. RCAHMS.