Case information

Case ID	300016783
File Reference	AMH/2386/2/1
Name of Site	Cnoc Freiceadain, stone rows 640m N of, Upper Dounreay

Local Authority	Highland Council
National Grid Reference	ND 0117 6595
Designation No. (if any)	SM 2386
Case Type	Amendment

Received/Start Date	21/04/2015
Decision Date	16/09/2016

1. Decision

The monument was first scheduled in 1964 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 to entry in the Schedule as **Creag Bhreac Mhor, stone rows 200m ESE of**.

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

Monument first scheduled in 1964; with no later amendments.

2.2 Development Proposals

N/A.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

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

The site was visited on 21/04/2015.

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

N/A

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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria
Creag Bhreac Mhor, stone rows 200m ESE of.

1 Description

The monument is a group of standing stones, aligned in rows, thought to date from the Bronze Age (2500 to 800 BC). Within Scotland, stone rows are a site type only found in Caithness and Sutherland. The monument is located on gently sloping moorland and lies around 70m above sea level.

The monument is visible as at least 18 small standing stones, typically measuring around 0.2-0.4m in height and similar in width, set out over several parallel alignments. A survey in 1911 recorded around 115 standing stones in 13 rows with 56 stones noted as visible over 6 rows in 1964. Many of these missing stones are likely to remain *in situ* but have been obscured by peat and heather growth. The monument is located in a slight hollow on gently sloping, open moorland. The site has extensive views to the northwest while being overlooked from all other directions by nearby hill slopes.

The scheduled area is irregular on plan 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. The monument was first scheduled in 1964, but the documentation did not meet current standards: 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 visible parallel lines of small standing stones. Overall the site survives in good condition with no record of an excavation at the site. The monument is well preserved with at least three partial stone rows still visible although other standing stones are expected to survive beneath the peat. Surveys of the site between 1911 and 1975 record a group of four stones, at the extreme west of the monument, with an indication that the stone rows radiated from, or focussed on, this group. To the west of the monument, are two mounds (Canmore ID 7835) identified as cairns which may be related to the stone rows alignment.

The remains of the stone row can help us understand more about possible ritual practice, the construction, use and abandonment of this monument type. Together with other buried standing stones, there is good potential for the survival of 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.

Scientific dating from another stone row (Battle Moss stone row [scheduled monument reference SM506, Canmore ID 9021]) indicates that such monuments date from the Bronze Age (2500 to 800 BC). Scientific investigation of this site could allow us to develop a better understanding of its chronology, including when it was constructed, its state of completeness and any possible development sequence; scientific research at Battle Moss indicated the site was constructed over a period of time with stones gradually added to the site. Such investigations could also allow a better understanding of any possible relationship between the aligned stone rows and the group of four stones at the west of the monument and the adjacent cairns.

The original function of stone rows is unknown but is has been suggested that they were constructed to make astronomical, solar and lunar observations. Alternatively, the site may have had ceremonial or ritual uses for the local community.

2.2 Contextual Characteristics

There are twenty-one recorded stone rows in Caithness and Sutherland, which account for all of the known stone rows in Scotland. There are three recorded stone rows within 5km of this monument including Borlum (Canmore ID 91620) approximately 4km southwest, Upper Dounreay (Canmore ID 7852) and Druim Na Ceud (Canmore ID 7885). Some stone rows previously identified have not been located in recent years, for example Upper Dounreay (Canmore ID 7852) and Duim Na Ceud (Canmore ID 7885), while Allt Breac (Canmore ID 7036) near Helmsdale has been largely destroyed by road building. This monument is therefore significant as an upstanding and well-preserved example.

There may have been links between neighbouring stone rows or they may indicate community catchments. This stone row has the potential to enhance and broaden our understanding of prehistoric life in the area. There are also numerous broadly contemporary monuments surrounding the monument including the Cnoc Freiceadain chambered cairns (scheduled monument reference 90078, Canmore ID 7831) around 650m south-southwest and Upper Dounreay standing stone (Canmore ID 7841) about 550m north-northwest. There is potential to study such sites together to understand their functions within the local communities and possible chronological development in the area. They offer the potential to study ritual practices and draw comparisons with evidence from other prehistoric monuments around the locality and more widely in Caithness and Sutherland.

The stone rows sit in a hollow on gently sloping moorland with extensive views to the northwest and the site is slightly overlooked by adjacent hillsides.

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 although continued peat accumulation may gradually further obscure the visible standing stones. 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.

4 Assessment of national importance

The monument is of national importance because of its potential to make a significant addition to our knowledge and understanding of the past, particularly the design and construction of stone rows in Caithness and Sutherland. These stone rows have good field characteristics, allowing us to interpret their form and position in the landscape. There is the potential for the presence of buried archaeological remains, including artefacts and palaeoenvironmental evidence. There are numerous other broadly contemporary monuments in the vicinity, including other stone rows, which together can contribute to our understanding of the nature of the prehistoric landscape. This is important for enhancing our understanding of Bronze Age society, its organisation, economy, religion and demography. The loss of the monument would significantly diminish our future ability to appreciate and understand the use of stone rows and their role and function within society in prehistoric times, and the placing of such monuments within the landscape.

5 References

Historic Environment Scotland http://www.canmore.org.uk reference number CANMORE ID 7898 (accessed on 21/04/2015).

Highland Council HER http://her.highland.gov.uk/ reference number MHG923 (accessed on 17/02/2016)

Caithness: Battlemoss Excavation http://www.caithness.org/history/archaeology/battlemoss/battlemossbackground.htm (accessed on 17/02/2016)

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