Case information

Case ID	300016719
File Reference	AMH/2820/2/1
Name of Site	St Ninian's Chapel & graveyard 90m SSE of Naviedale House

Local Authority	Highland Council		
National Grid Reference	ND 0419 1615		
Designation No. (if any)	SM2820		
Designation Type	Scheduled Monument	**Current Category of Listing**	N/A
Case Type	Amendment		

Received/Start Date	2015
Decision Date	19/09/2016

1. Decision

The monument was first scheduled in 1969 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 entry in the schedule as **St Ninian's Chapel 70m ESE of Naviedale Farm**.

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The monument was first scheduled on 31 October 1969; no subsequent amendment.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals affecting this decision

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The site was considered for amendment as part of the 2015 Highland scheduling project and visited on 24/04/2015.

3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

An assessment against the Scheduling criteria was carried out on 10/11/2015] (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*
St Ninian's Chapel 70m ESE of Naviedale Farm

1. Description

The monument is the buried remains of a chapel within a burial ground probably founded in the early historic period. The chapel is visible as a slight platform around 0.3m in height within the centre of the graveyard. It is aligned roughly east-west and measures about 18m in length by 8m transversely. The chapel is located at 20m above sea level, in a prominent position on a hillside immediately above the foreshore.

The scheduled area is irregular on plan, to include the remains described above as shown in red on the accompanying map. The scheduled area extends up to, but excludes the surrounding wall to allow for its maintenance. The scheduling also specifically excludes all memorial stones and burial lairs where rights of burial still exist. The monument was first scheduled in 1969, but the documentation does 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 site of the chapel is located within a stone walled enclosure, probably of 19th century date, and survives in a stable condition at present. A slight platform, aligned roughly east-west, is visible within the centre of the graveyard and may represent the buried remains of an early chapel. Burnt stones uncovered during grave digging may relate to this chapel, which is recorded as having been burnt in 1556. Therefore there is good potential for the survival of archaeological deposits including structural remains, human burials, artefacts and environmental remains such as charcoal or pollen, within, beneath and around the remains of the chapel.

A chapel was present from at least the 16th century, when it is recorded as having been burnt by the Mackays, but it is likely to have had a much longer development sequence. A Pictish symbol stone, comprising an undressed sandstone slab with triple disk and elephant decoration, was uncovered in the burial ground in 1968, indicating an early foundation and it is possible that this site has been in continual use since the early historic period. Scientific study of the form and character of the probable chapel would enhance our understanding of the date and development sequence of this site and of early chapel sites in general, while the chapel, graves and related archaeological deposits offer high potential to study changes in belief and culture.

2.2 Contextual Characteristics

There are few confirmed early chapel sites in Caithness. St Ninian's, therefore, represents a rare example of a probable early chapel with a long sequence of use. The sites of two further pre-reformation chapels can be identified in Helmsdale (St John the Baptist's Chapel 1.8km southwest; Canmore ID 7431. Gartymore 3.5km southwest; Canmore ID 7490), though there are other unconfirmed records of chapels in the region, suggesting that St Ninian's was part of a network of chapels and burial grounds. The remains of this chapel could enhance our understanding of the organisation and spread of Christianity in northern Britain and there is potential to compare it with other early historic or medieval chapels in the north of Scotland.

2.3 Associative Characteristics

It has been suggested that the name 'Navidale' may be a hybrid name from the Gaelic neimhidh, a sanctuary or holy place, and Norse dalr meaning valley. This may imply that there was a '*neimhidh*' or sacred place at this site before the Norse arrived which they used to name the glen or 'dalr'.

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.

4. Assessment of national importance

The monument is of national importance because it has an inherent potential to make a significant contribution to our understanding of the past, in particular of early chapel sites in the north of Scotland. There is high potential for the survival of archaeology that can make a significant contribution to our understanding of early church architecture and burial and to the development of belief and culture. Its importance is enhanced by the recovery from the site of a Pictish symbol stone dating from the mid-1st millennium AD. The loss of this monument would diminish our ability to appreciate and understand early chapels, the role they played in the adoption and spread of Christianity, and the development of belief and practice.

References

Historic Environment Scotland http://www.canmore.org.uk reference number CANMORE ID 7438 (accessed on 17/06/2016).

The Highland Council HER references are MHG10290 and MHG45522 (accessed on 17/06/2016).

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Macdonald and Laing, A D S and L R. (1973) Early ecclesiastical sites in Scotland: a field survey, part II', Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, vol. 102, 1969-70.

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