



## Case information

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<b>Case ID</b>	300016732
<b>File Reference</b>	AMH/3429/2/1
<b>Name of Site</b>	Langwell Water, chapel, Brae-na-h'Eaglaise

<b>Local Authority</b>	Highland Council
<b>National Grid Reference</b>	ND 0707 2304
<b>Designation No. (if any)</b>	SM3429
<b>Case Type</b>	Amendment

<b>Received/Start Date</b>	29/04/2015
<b>Decision Date</b>	12/10/2016

## 1. Decision

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The monument was first scheduled in 1974 and the documentation does not conform to current standards. The assessment against the scheduling criteria demonstrates that the monument continues to be of national importance. The decision is to amend the entry in the schedule as **Brae-na-h-eaglaise, chapel and burial ground**.

## 2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

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### 2.1 Designation Background

The monument was first scheduled in 1974; there have been no amendments.

### 2.2 Development Proposals

N/A.

## 3. Assessment

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### 3.1 Assessment information

The site was considered for amendment 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

N/A.

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#### **Elizabeth McCrone**

Head of Designations  
Heritage Management  
Historic Environment Scotland

<b>Contact</b>	Kyle Armstrong, Designations Officer Kyle.armstrong@hes.scot Tel: 0131 668 8740.
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# **ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria**

## **Brae-na-h-eaglaise, chapel and burial ground**

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### **1 Description**

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The monument is a medieval chapel and burial ground. The chapel is visible as a number of low, turf-covered banks with occasional protruding stones. The burial ground is also defined by a low, turf-covered bank on the north side; to the south the ground falls steeply to the river. The monument is located on a high terrace above Langwell Water and lies about 105m above sea level.

The site lies on the south edge of the natural terrace on ground that may have been artificially levelled. The chapel measures approximately 12m long by 6m wide and is orientated east southeast - west northwest, which is typical of medieval chapels in Scotland. The eastern end of the chapel is sub-divided by a low wall or possible footing for an internal platform that lies about 3m from the east wall. Directly east of the chapel, small depressions and hummocks indicate the possible location of graves and several exposed stones may be grave markers. A low, curvilinear dyke or enclosure wall, now turf-covered, lies north of the chapel, the ends terminating to the east and south-west of the chapel at the steep terrace edge.

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 1974, but the documentation did not meet current standards: the present amendment rectifies this.

### **2 Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria** (Historic Environment Scotland policy statement June 2016, Annex 1, pp. 48-50.)

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#### **2.1 Intrinsic Characteristics**

The chapel and enclosure are visible as low, turf covered banks indicate while shallow depressions and possible stone grave-markers indicate features within the burial ground. Overall the remains survive in a stable condition with no record of any excavation at the site. The original function of the monument was as a place of worship and burial. The site may also have had other ceremonial or ritual uses for the local community.

There is potential that buried archaeological deposits survive that can provide additional evidence for the form and construction of the chapel. There is considerable potential for burials within the monument, and scientific study could reveal evidence for health, diet, illness, cause of death, and perhaps the types of activities people undertook during life over an extended time period. Buried artefacts

and ecofacts may also provide information about the nature and use of this ecclesiastical site.

The chapel could date from as early as the 7th century AD but it is more likely to have been established after the creation of the Diocese of Caithness in the 12th century. Scientific study of the site would allow us to develop a better understanding of the monument's chronology, including its date of origin and development sequence. Study of other medieval chapels has shown that they were often remodelled and structurally adapted over a period of time. There is potential to clarify how the chapel relates to use of the burial ground and to the enclosing bank.

## 2.2 Contextual Characteristics

There are historical references to this and three other chapels in the Parish of Latheron, dispersed across an extensive area. Of these, the chapel at Braemore (Canmore ID 7581) lies 7.5km to the north in the next river valley; while that at Ballachly (scheduled monument reference SM2704, Canmore ID 8134) lies 11 km to the north east near Dunbeath. The evidence for a network of medieval chapel sites in the parish increases the cultural significance of this monument and offers opportunities to study the siting, inter-relationships and precise functions of such sites. Such networks of chapels were of particular importance in large upland parishes where it was difficult for parishioners to reach the parish church. However, the survival of medieval chapels as visible features is not very common as many have been adapted, demolished and rebuilt or cannot be traced in the archaeological record (the example at Braemore seems to have been demolished in the 19th century, and the site used for a family mausoleum). As a consequence their role in the medieval period is not well understood adding to the significance of sites such as Brae-na-h-eaglaise.

The chapel sits on the edge of a high, natural terrace, overlooking Langwell Water in the valley floor below and has open views up and down the valley. The monument, when complete and standing, would have been a prominent feature and focal point in the landscape.

## 2.3 Associative Characteristics

There are four chapels listed in 'A handbook of the Church of Scotland' for Latheron Parish including a chapel at Br'na heglish (Brae-na-h-eaglaise) or Kirkbree (Kirk Brae) on Langwell Water. The English translation of the placename Brae-na-h-eaglaise is Church on the Hill or Brae of the Church. A local tradition states that this chapel and others in the area were served by a single priest. The track running beside the chapel was known as Priest's Walk and reflected how the local priest would travel between chapels to hold services.

## 3 Purpose and implications of scheduling

The site visit showed the site is in a stable condition. 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 it has an inherent potential to make a significant addition to the understanding of the past, in particular to the study of Early Christian and medieval chapels and burial grounds in Caithness. The upstanding and buried archaeological remains appear in good condition and have the potential to reveal important information about the form, layout, construction and development of chapels, and their relationship with associated burial grounds. Spatial analysis of this and other contemporary monuments can provide information on the distribution and siting of pre-Reformation religious sites within the landscape and within the overall network of parishes. The loss of the monument would impede our understanding of the development of Early Christian and medieval churches and the history and development of burial practices in the Highlands.

#### 5 References

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