Case information

Case ID	300016789
File Reference	AMJ/9303/1/1
Name of Site	Carn Nan Uaigh, prehistoric settlement

Local Authority	The Highland Council
National Grid Reference	NC 9347 1404
Designation No. (if any)	SM13627
Case Type	Designation

Received/Start Date	25/04/2015
Decision Date	13/01/2017

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 **Carn Nan Uaigh, prehistoric settlement.**

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The monument is currently undesignated.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The site was considered for designation as part of the S18 Highland scheduling project and visited on 25/04/2015.

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

The monument has been assessed as nationally important, and scheduling is an appropriate mechanism to secure its future.

Elizabeth McCrone
Head of Designations
Heritage Management
Historic Environment Scotland

Contact	Kirsty Millican, Designations Officer kirsty.millican@hes.scot, 0131 668 8764

ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria

Carn Nan Uaigh, prehistoric settlement

1 Description

The monument consists of the upstanding remains of a later prehistoric or early historic settlement, consisting of two aisled buildings known as ‘wags’, probably dating to between around 100 BC and AD 600. They are visible as two long buildings, set around 10m apart, defined by low turf banks with pairs of edge-set slabs in the interior. The settlement lies 170m above sea level, on the sloping ground of the valley side, overlooking the Loth Burn.

The southeast most structure is rectangular on plan, defined by low turf banks measuring about 13m east-west by 6.6m transversely, though the west end is overlain by a later wall. In the interior two parallel rows of edge-set stones define a central space around 2m wide. The second structure lies around 10m to the northwest and measures about 13m east-west by 5.8m transversely with upright slabs in the interior. The west end is overlain by the foundations of a later structure, and the north wall line has been robbed and is indistinct, with large displaced stones visible.

The scheduled area is irregular on plan, to include the remains described above and an area around within which evidence relating to the monument’s construction and use is expected to survive as shown in red on the accompanying map. To the northwest, the scheduled area extends up to, but excludes, a later stone wall.

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 visible as two rectangular structures defined by low turf covered banks with edge set slabs in the interior. The east structure appears the better preserved of the two and is visible as turf covered banks representing the outer walls. Pairs of edge-set slabs set two metres apart are visible within the interior. It is overlain by a later wall at the west end. The west structure is overlain by the later foundations of a probable farmhouse and the north wall line has been robbed in the past.

Both structures have been disturbed by later buildings but the structures are in relatively good, stable condition at present, with their plans discernable. Furthermore there is good potential for the survival of archaeological deposits, including occupation and abandonment debris, floor deposits, artefacts and environmental remains such as charcoal or pollen within, beneath and around the upstanding

structures. The settlement therefore has the potential to add to our understanding of settlement and economy during the later Iron Age and early historic periods.

Only two ‘wag’ settlements have been excavated, both before the advent of modern scientific techniques, so no radiocarbon dates have been obtained. From the excavated finds and sequences uncovered, and on the basis associated structures, it would appear that ‘wag’ settlements were constructed and in use during the later Iron Age or early medieval period. The precise function of such buildings is unclear but the stalls suggest that they have housed livestock. It has been further suggested that they were storehouses for produce, potentially in the form of cattle, the collection of which related to local networks of tribute (Baines 1999, 358).

At Carn Nan Uaigh, there is no clear indication whether the settlement had an extended development sequence or what its precise function was. Scientific study of the structure of the settlement would enhance our understanding of the development sequence and function of this site and of ‘wag’ settlements in general.

2.2 Contextual Characteristics

Wags are a rare class of monument, found only in Caithness and Sutherland. Around 20 examples are currently known. Carn Nan Uaigh is one of a group of ‘wag’ sites identified within Glen Loth. Two structures lie around 210m northeast at Uiagh Bheag (Canmore ID 7110), a second ‘wag’ is recorded around 270m to the south (Canmore ID 7131) and a further two about 1.5km southeast (Canmore ID 7132).

The group within Glen Loth is of significance as it lies at the southernmost extent of the known distribution of this site type and is the only known concentration of these sites away from the ‘wag’ sites further north in Caithness. All four sites are in a similar landscape context and this context contrasts with earlier Iron Age settlement in the area. The proximity of these monuments can give important insights into the late Iron Age and early historic landscape and add to our understanding of settlement patterns, social organisation, land division and land-use. There is high potential for comparative study of this monument with other settlements in the area to better understand the function of such monuments, their interrelationship and place within contemporary society and economy.

The structures are situated on sloping ground on the valley side, overlooking the Loth Burn. They stands at 170m above sea level, in the upper reaches of Glen Loth.

2.3 Associative Characteristics

At this time, there are no known associative characteristics which significantly contribute to the site’s cultural significance.

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

This monument is of national importance because it makes a significant addition to our understanding of the past, in particular of late Iron Age and early historic society in north Scotland and the construction, use and development of 'wag' settlements. Such settlements are restricted to Caithness and Sutherland. The survival of outer walls as well as internal features means that the monument can significantly expand our understanding of domestic buildings, agriculture and economy. As an example of a rare form of domestic settlement, this monument represents an important component of the wider late Iron Age and early historic landscape of settlement and agriculture. The loss or damage of the monument would diminish our ability to appreciate and understand the character of late Iron Age and early historic settlements, as well as society and economy during these periods.

5 References

Historic Environment Scotland http://www.canmore.org.uk reference number CANMORE ID 7108 (accessed on 5/9/16).

The Highland Council Environment Record reference is MHG43811 (accessed on 5/9/16).

Baines, A C W 1999 An archaeology of Iron Age domestic settlement in northern Scotland, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow.