Case information

Case ID	300009956
File Reference	AMJ/9271/1/1
Name of Site	Ceann na Coille, homestead

Local Authority	Perth and Kinross
National Grid Reference	NN 8074 5859
Designation No. (if any)	SM13576
Case Type	Designation

Received/Start Date	08/05/2014
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.

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 2014 North project and visited on 08/05/2014

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

Elizabeth McCrone
Head of Designations
Heritage Management
Historic Environment Scotland

Contact	Dr Kirsty Millican, Designations Officer kirsty.millican@hes.scot, 0131 668 8600 ext. 5103

ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria

Ceann na Coille, homestead

1 Description

The monument is a homestead, a large monumental roundhouse dating to the Iron Age (between 600 BC and AD 400). It is visible as a substantial circular bank of stone rubble that indicates the outer wall of the structure. The wall has tumbled, filling sections of the interior with rubble. The monument lies on a terrace on the hillside overlooking Loch Tummel, at about 190m above sea level.

The homestead walls have spread to about 2m – 4m in width and stand up to 1m in height internally and 2m in height externally. Sections of stone facing are visible in places on the internal wall face, while a dip in the wall indicates an entrance on the east, measuring around 1.2m in width. A small annex of about 2.5m high and 1.15m wide is built against the inner wall face on the west side. This is likely to be of a later date.

The scheduled area is circular on plan, measuring 50m in diameter, to include the remains described above and an area around within which evidence relating to the monument's construction, use and abandonment is expected to survive as shown in red on the accompanying map.

2 Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria

(Historic Environment Scotland policy statement June 2016, Annex 1, pp. 48-50.)

2.1 Intrinsic Characteristics

The monument consists of the remains of a homestead, a monumental roundhouse dating to the Iron Age (between 600 BC and AD 400). Although these structures have often been termed 'ring forts', they are now interpreted as large, domestic buildings. The walls of the roundhouse have spread but its plan remains easily appreciable and there are surviving sections of coursed masonry.

There is no record of an excavation or similar disturbance at the site, therefore there is good potential for the survival of buried archaeological deposits, including occupation and abandonment debris, artefacts and environmental remains such as charcoal and pollen within, beneath and around the remains of the homestead. The buried archaeological deposits, artefacts and ecofacts have the potential to add to our understanding of settlement, land-use and environment during later prehistory. They can provide information about the economy, diet and social status of the occupants, the structure of contemporary society and economy as well as provide information about architecture, construction methods and the development of later prehistoric settlement.

Excavations at comparable sites such as Black Spout demonstrate that architectural features such as intermural galleries, cells, and entrance passages may be preserved within the wall structure (Strachan 2013), and comparable sites also show evidence for internal features, such as the postholes of roof supports, hearths and other occupation evidence (Hingley 1997, Strachan 2013).

Such substantial homesteads or monumental roundhouses are Iron Age in date. Excavations elsewhere have demonstrated several phases of use and reuse (e.g. at Aldclune, Hingley 1997). At Ceann na Coille the presence of a small internal annex within the homestead indicates later re-use. The monument, therefore, may have had an extended development sequence. Scientific study of the form and construction of the structure has the potential to clarify the date of the remains and the duration of occupation, and to provide information about the design, construction and development of later prehistoric settlement.

2.2 Contextual Characteristics

The monument at Ceann na Coille is part of a well-defined regional group of structures in northwest Perthshire, characterised by a generally circular form, massive construction and non-defensive locations. Ceann na Coille is important as an upstanding and well-preserved example of the group. At least ten comparable structures lie within a 5km radius of the monument, including Tom Chaiseil (scheduled monument reference SM13575; Canmore ID 25044) about 2.25m west-southwest, Tom Donn Nan Eun (Canmore ID 25083) and Donanean (Canmore ID 25063) about 2.4m southwest, Tom An T'sasunnaich (Canmore ID 25051) about 2.2m west and Grenich (scheduled monument reference SM257; Canmore ID 25871) about 1.9m north-northwest. There may have been links between neighbouring homesteads or they may indicate community catchments.

The homestead at Ceann na Coille enhances and broadens our understanding of the development of this regionally distinctive group of buildings and of the prehistoric communities that built them. Further study can improve understanding of the function of the structures, their interrelationship, the significance of their placing within the landscape and their relationship to agriculture and economy. This will enhance knowledge of Iron Age social hierarchy, changing settlement patterns and systems of inheritance. The monument increases our understanding of prehistoric society and community, and the development of a regionally distinctive group of monuments.

Homesteads in northwest Perthshire are often located in non-defensive locations, on hillslopes between the valley floor and upland pastures. Ceann na Coille is built on a natural terrace on the hillside above Loch Tummel. The ground drops away steeply to the north, giving extensive views to the north, east and west, across the Loch towards the hills beyond. The monument was constructed overlooking the valley floor and western end of the loch (the present level of Loch Tummel is significantly higher than it would in the Iron Age). The homestead may have been positioned here to increase the prominence of the monument and to better control agricultural land and movement through the area.

2.3 Associative Characteristics

Cultural and social factors are likely to have influenced the circular form and thick walls used in building this structure.

3 Purpose and implications of scheduling

Designation as a scheduled monument is an 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 contributes to our understanding of Iron Age settlement in Scotland and in particular the construction, use and development of monumental homesteads in central Scotland. It is a good example of a regionally distinctive class of monument that retains its field characteristics, with good potential for the survival of archaeological deposits within, beneath and around the upstanding remains. As a well-preserved example of a homestead, the monument can significantly add to our understanding of large Iron Age domestic buildings, the development of a regionally distinctive group of buildings, their role in the settlement hierarchy, and the structure of local Iron Age society. The monument's importance is enhanced by its association with a wider cluster of later prehistoric homesteads around Loch Tummel. The loss or damage of the monument would diminish our ability to appreciate and understand the character and development of Iron Age settlement in Perthshire, the placing of settlements in the landscape, as well as society and economy during this period.

5 References

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