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Our ref: AMH/5164/2/1

4 June 2009

Dear Mrs Maxwell

**Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979**

Protection of monuments of national importance in Scotland is provided under the terms of the above Act by a process known as scheduling.

The purpose of this letter is to let you know that we propose to schedule the monument known as **Balblair, enclosure 120m E of** which lies within your area. Before Scottish Ministers take a final decision on whether or not to proceed with the scheduling, it is necessary for us to know if there are any current planning consents or applications for the areas proposed for scheduling. The enclosed map shows the proposed scheduled areas and the accompanying statement indicates why we consider the monument to be of national importance.

To enable Scottish Ministers to make their decision, it is important that we receive your reply – including a nil return – within 21 days of the date of this letter.

We thank you in advance for your assistance and co-operation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss any aspect of the proposal.

Yours sincerely



**Christine Kelly**  
**Scheduling Admin Manager**

H. C. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE		
05 JUN 2009		
PASS TO	INITIALS	DATE
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**PROPOSAL TO SCHEDULE AN ANCIENT MONUMENT  
STATEMENT OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE**

5164

**Council: HIGHLAND**

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Balblair, enclosure 120m E of

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The proposal arose from programme : SEP

Map & Grid Ref. : 27 NH805514

The monument comprises the remains of a prehistoric, narrow-ditched sub-rectangular enclosure. It survives as a cropmarked feature partly visible on oblique aerial photographs, under cultivated land. It is likely that the monument's circuit extends beyond the boundary hedge that marks its visible NE extent. The monument is located 45m above sea level on the coastal plain overlooking the southern shore of the Moray Firth, 300m SW of Loch Flemington. The monument was first scheduled in 1991 and is being rescheduled now to bring it up to date, according with current scheduling standards.

The visible portion of the monument forms the SW part of a sub-rectangular univallate enclosure (with rounded corners) which measures approximately 25m by 35m. This space is enclosed by a ditch approximate 1.5m wide and in total, the area of the overall enclosure is estimated at approximately 35m by 50m.

The area to be scheduled is rectangular on plan, to include the remains described and an area around within which evidence associated with their construction and use may survive, as shown in red on the accompanying map.

#### Cultural Significance

The monument's cultural significance can be expressed as follows:

##### Intrinsic characteristics

The monument is a very uncommon and large example of a sub-rectangular enclosure which is likely to represent the remains of prehistoric activity. Its shape is common to a number of functions such as domestic, ceremonial or mortuary use. The survival of cropmarked monuments in this part of Scotland is relatively uncommon and this example has the potential to yield information that can help us understand the nature of their construction (such as the materials and techniques used) as well as their function. The lack of other visible features on aerial photography does not necessarily indicate the absence of them in reality. It is possible that they survive in the ground and are simply masked by the prevailing conditions at the time of the photography. Environmental evidence is likely to have been preserved in the fills of the ditch and the internal features and collectively, this can tell us something of the climate and land cover when the monument was being built and when it was in use.

##### Contextual characteristics

This monument is one of group of broadly-rectangular, prehistoric enclosure monuments distributed on fertile, cultivated land in Scotland with very few examples known of elsewhere. Those that have been discovered through aerial photography are located in NE Scotland in Aberdeenshire, Angus and NE Perthshire and in S Scotland (in NE Scotland for example some 40 broadly-rectilinear enclosures are known of). They have variously been dated

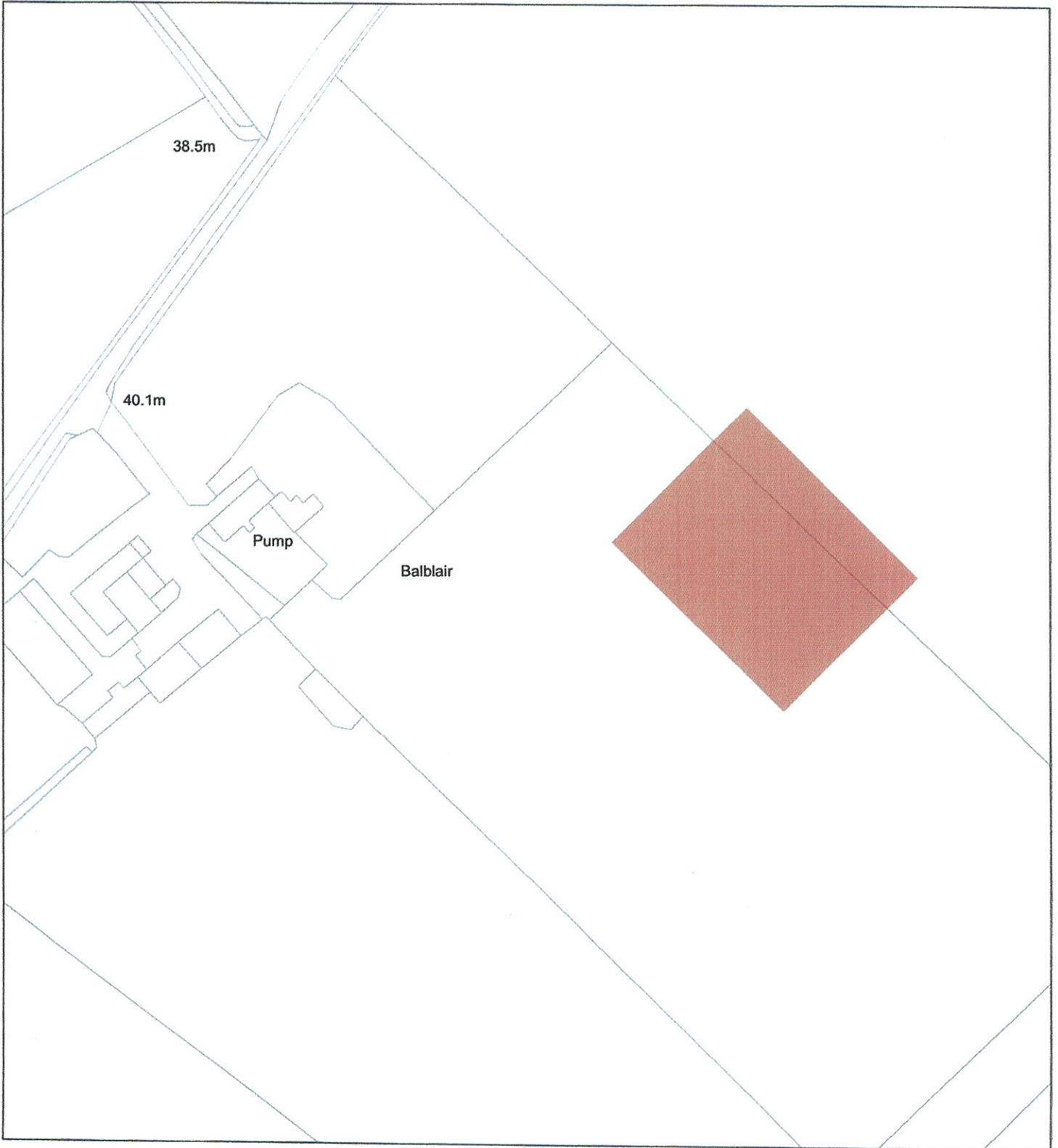
to Roman or earlier periods and are attributed to a number of functions. What makes this example noteworthy is its interpolated size and the apparent lack of associated remains (such as pits, posthole alignments or other cropmarked features) that are common in other examples. We know that this part of Scotland was significant for settlement, agriculture, ceremony and religion throughout prehistory and the Neolithic, Bronze- and Iron-Age monuments that survive in NE Scotland are the physical record of this exploitation. The site at Balblair forms part of the regional picture along the Moray coast and it indicates one or more of these activities, surviving as it does among a locally rich complex of prehistoric monuments of burial and domestic monuments. It therefore has much to tell us about the wider picture of prehistoric life and death here.

#### National Importance

The monument is of national importance because it has an inherent potential to make a significant addition to our understanding of the past, in particular prehistoric settlement and exploitation of land and natural resources in this part of Scotland. Structural, artefactual and environmental evidence is likely to survive in the buried soil horizons that represent this monument and these can tell us about the design, form and function of an unusual type of prehistoric enclosure. Its loss would limit our ability to understand the prehistoric settlement of coastal plains in NE Scotland.

This is the plan referred to in the entry in the Schedule affecting:  
Balblair, enclosure 120m E of

dated: / / and is signed as relative thereto.



Index No: 5164  
Balblair, enclosure 120m E of

Petty Parish  
Scheduled Area



Mapsheet(s):  
NH85SW

Scale: 1:1,250  
0 10 20 30 40 50  
Metres

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