

Case information

Case ID	300010080		
File Reference	AMJ/9182/1/1		
Name of Site	Belnahua, slate quarries and settlement		
Local Authority	Argyll and Bute		
National Grid Reference	NM 7130 1270		
Designation No. (if any)	SM13216		
Designation Type	Scheduled Monument	Current Category of Listing	N/A
Case Type	New scheduling		
Received/Start Date	10/04/2012		
Decision Date	15/02/2016		

1. Decision

The decision is to add this monument to the Schedule of nationally important monuments.

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The monument was first considered for scheduling in 2000, but the proposal was not taken forward at that time. The site was flagged up as a scheduling candidate again in 2012 when it was formally assessed and visited as part of the Argyll scheduling project, together with the nearby slate island of Easdale.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals affecting this monument, although one of the buildings (which was complete to wallhead height) has recently been re-roofed by the owner for use as a bothy.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The site was considered for scheduling as part of the Argyll project in 2012.

The site was visited on 25/05/2012.

3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

An assessment against the Scheduling criteria was carried out (see **Annex A**).

The monument was found to meet the criteria for scheduling.

The designation criteria are found in the Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP), pp. 71-85. <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/shep-dec2011.pdf>

3.3 Other considerations

Historic Environment Scotland has commissioned an archaeological underwater survey of the machinery and other remains in the quarries (to be undertaken in 2015/16). The island has also been recommended for terrestrial archaeological survey.

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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria*

Belnahua, slate quarries and settlement

1. Description

The monument comprises the extensive remains of the slate quarrying industry on the island of Belnahua: its excavations, waste material, associated industrial and domestic buildings, machinery, infrastructure and other archaeological evidence, dating mainly from the middle of the 18th to the early 20th century.

The remains are visible as two substantial quarries (now flooded), widespread loose material (the by-product of slate extraction and processing), and the buildings, machinery and infrastructure used to excavate, process and transport the slate, and accommodate and service the quarry workers and their families. The main quarry measures up to 180m across and occupies a significant part of the island.

The scheduled area is the whole island extending to the Mean Low Water (Springs), to include 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. Specifically excluded from the scheduling are the above-ground remains of the sole roofed building, located in the south east of the island and formerly known as 'the shop', to allow for its occupation, together with the building extensions immediately north and south of its western end.

2. Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria (SHEP 2011, 71-73**)

* This assessment is based on our current state of knowledge. It will form the basis of any new or updated scheduled monument record.

** A monument may be found to meet the scheduling criteria but in some circumstances may not be added to the Schedule. The purpose and implications of scheduling are issues that require to be taken into account when assessing monuments for scheduling. Scheduling may not be the only, or the most appropriate, mechanism to secure the future of all sites, even those that may otherwise meet the criteria.

Cultural significance

Characteristic	Assessment
Intrinsic	
Condition in which monument survives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The monument comprises the island of Belnahua on which survives a complex of quarries, waste material, machinery, infrastructure, accommodation and related facilities for the quarrymen and their families, all resulting from the industrial quarrying, processing and transporting of slate. Surviving elements include: the quarries and quarry faces / floors, sea walls, sheds, winding and crane machinery and their buildings, boilers, houses, a school house, outbuildings, a pier, tracks, waste slate and the wider archaeological footprint of slate quarrying. The most visible remains are the quarries themselves (currently flooded), and the various buildings and building ranges in their

	<p>vicinity, most of which are roofless but complete to wall-head height.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The island is less than 300m across. The largest of the quarries, carved out of the centre of the island, is over 180m north-south by nearly 100m east-west and likely to be at least 50m deep. • There is a substantial amount of loose, waste slate material scattered across the island: research suggests that over 90% of the quarried slate was 'wasted' in order to produce a quality roofing product. • The remains survive in generally very good condition although the remains of machinery and other metal infrastructure is corroding. • Diving activity in 2014 has indicated an exceptional level of survival in the flooded quarries – not only of slate waste material and products (in one case an abandoned stack of slate in a lifting mechanism), but also of the machinery and infrastructure used to transport slate from source to the top of the quarry. An underwater archaeological survey has been commissioned for 2015/16.
<p>Archaeological, scientific, technological or other interest or research potential of the monument</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The surviving elements reflect the processes for locating, winning and processing slate – from the removal of loose material in the early days, to the development of industrial techniques to extract large volumes of slate and process the slate for different functions but mainly for roofing. • Belnahua is particularly interesting because the surviving remains (quarries, machinery, settlement and other ruined buildings) have seen almost no disturbance since the island was abandoned for quarrying in the early 20th century. • The geology of the island has entirely shaped its character, and the slate produced is distinctive for its colour, texture and relative thickness. Traditionally it was cut in a range of sizes, which produced a distinctive architectural and aesthetic effect when used for roofing. • The monument and its various components has the potential to add significantly to our understanding of an important industry in the Lorn area of Argyll and to our understanding of the processes of extraction industries, innovation and technological developments during a formative period in Scottish history, and the impact of industrialisation in Scotland in general. • The underwater remains can enhance our understanding of the industrial processes within and around the quarries.
<p>Apparent developmental sequence of monument (either long or short may provide insights of importance)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first recorded settlement (croft) on Belnahua dates to the early 17th century, followed by a succession of inhabitants and families before the industrial settlement was established. • Records indicate that industrial quarrying was established on Belnahua in 1766 and developed successfully until the latter part of the 19th century by when it had begun to decline. • During this period, the technology of industrial processes changed and developed significantly and the remains at Belnahua are likely to reflect this. Evidence for mechanisation and the survival of much of the machinery to pump, lift and process the slate indicates that quarrying

	<p>techniques were advanced here. The site therefore has an important contribution to make to the story of the commercial development of the Scottish slate industry from the middle of the 18th century onwards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 marked the final decline of industrial working here.
Original or subsequent functions of the monument and its parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The primary function of the monument was the supply of worked slate products (mainly roofing slate) for local, home and export markets. • By the late 19th century, the island was producing about 1,000 tons of slate each year. • The slate resource of Belnahua was deemed 'exhausted' when all of Scotland's former slate quarries were assessed for any continuing viability in 2002.
Contextual	
Present rarity or representativeness of all or any part of the monument, assessed against knowledge of the archaeology of Scotland and of the region in which the monument occurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belnahua is part of a geographically limited distribution of slate quarries in Scotland, entirely dictated by the underlying geology. • The quarry was owned by the Marble and Slate Company of Netherlorn established in 1745. The company operated the quarries in Easdale, Ellenabeich, Luing and Belnahua up into the 1860s. • There are other contemporary slate quarries elsewhere in Scotland. The main groups are: Ballachulish, Aberfoyle and MacDuff. The Ballachulish group is part of the same group as Easdale: they are both aligned to the Great Glen Fault and share the same geological origin. • Belnahua is rare as an undisturbed and well-preserved 'time capsule' of c 150 years of commercial slate quarrying in Scotland.
Relationship of the monument to other monuments of the same or related classes or period, or to features or monuments in the vicinity. (Particularly important for monuments forming part of a widespread but varied class)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belnahua is part of a local, geologically-distinct slate strata known as the 'Slate Islands'. The other islands in the group are Ellenabeich, Seil, Luing and Easdale, all of which had broadly contemporary slate quarries. • Elsewhere in Scotland, slate is found in the Ballachulish slate belt, Banff-Aberdeen slate belt, and the Highland Border belt, all of which bear comparison with the geology and extraction history of the Easdale slate belt. • The history of slate quarrying forms part of the wider story of the historic buildings of Scotland and the range of stone types used in different areas and for different purposes. By the late 18th century Scottish slate was the predominant roofing material in Scotland's growing towns and cities.
Relationship of the monument and its parts with its wider landscape and setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landscape character of Belnahua is dominated by its slate quarrying heritage – most obviously, in the massive quarry at its centre and the quantities of waste slate material littering the island.
Associative	
Historical, cultural and social influences that have affected the form and fabric of the monument, and vice versa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The international reach of Belnahua slate has left a visible legacy in the form of roofing and building materials on many historic buildings, both in Scotland and further afield. • The wider settlement and different buildings encapsulate the social history of slate quarrying and the daily lives of the slate quarriers and their families. • There is good potential for further historical and

	documentary research on the several generations of people who lived and worked on Belnahua.
Aesthetic attributes of the monument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belnahua's quarrying heritage dominates and characterises the island landscape.
Significance in the national consciousness or to people who use or have used the monument, or descendants of such people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belnahua has significance in the national consciousness because of the importance of the slate industry in Scotland's history and its impact on the appearance and durability of many of Scotland's historic buildings. • There are local museums dedicated to the story of slate quarrying both in Ellenabeich, the closest point on mainland Argyll, and on Easdale Island.
Associations the monument has with historical, traditional or artistic characters or events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first recorded settlement (croft) on Belnahua dates to the early 17th century. Family history records indicate a succession of inhabitants and families before the industrial settlement was established. • The industrial history of Belnahua is documented through company documents, accounts and production records, including the names of the three final companies involved in roofing slate production here.

Assessment of national importance

Criteria	Assessment
Its inherent capability or potential to make a significant addition to the understanding or appreciation of the past	<p>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, the development of the slate quarrying industry in Scotland. Belnahua is one of the '<i>Slate Islands</i>' which became known for the quality and robustness of the roofing tiles produced from their quarries and exported to various parts of the world. Belnahua is particularly important as it has lain almost undisturbed since quarrying ceased in the early 20th century, which means that the remains are unusually well preserved. This intact relict industrial landscape of quarries, waste material and related infrastructure and accommodation is a key element in the story of Scotland's industrial heritage. Collectively, the surviving remains can tell us much about developments in the winning of slate and the associated industrial processes, and changes in the daily lives of the quarrymen and their families, over some 150 years. As well as the clearly visible remains across the island, the flooded quarries are known to contain well-preserved equipment and other archaeological evidence. In addition, documentary and historical evidence for the companies that operated here, including records and plans of the surviving remains, and for the daily lives of the quarries and their families, can add to our understanding and the interest of the site. The loss of the monument would significantly diminish our ability to appreciate and understand the Scottish slate industry in the 18th and 19th centuries.</p>
Its retention of the structural, decorative or field characteristics of its kind to a marked degree	
Its contribution, or the contribution of its class, to today's landscape and/or the historic landscape	
The quality and extent of any documentation or association that adds to the understanding of the monument or its context	
The diminution of the potential of a particular class or classes of monument to contribute to an understanding of the past, should the monument be lost or damaged	
Its place in the national consciousness [a factor that may be considered in support of other factors]	

References

The monument is recorded by Historic Environment Scotland (<http://www.canmore.org.uk>) as CANMORE NM71SNW 2 and by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service as WOSAS PIN 877.

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