



Designation Consultation

This designation consultation is open for comment until 13/10/2022

Give us your comments

Historic Environment Scotland consult with those who are directly affected by designation proposals – including owners, occupiers and tenants – and with the planning authority.

We also welcome comments from interested persons or groups.

When we consult about a designation case we will have carried out research and set this out in a **report of handling**. This report is an assessment produced for consultation and it sets out our view, including a proposed decision. The assessment is not intended to be a definitive account or description of the site or place. We consider the comments received before we take a final decision.

We consider comments and representations which are material to our decision-making, such as:

- Your understanding of the cultural significance of the site or place.
- Whether sites or places meet the criteria for designation.
- The purpose and implications of designating the site or place. We consider whether these are relevant to the case.
- Development proposals related to the site or place. Where there are development proposals, we consider whether to proceed with designation in line with our designation policy.
- The accuracy of our information.

You can find more guidance on providing comments and how we handle your information on our [website](#).

Information on how we treat your personal data is available on our [Privacy Notice](#).

How to make a comment

Please send your comments to designationconsultations@hes.scot and provide us with the case reference. You can also make comments through our [portal](#) by clicking on the link 'email your comments about this case'.

If you are the owner, occupier or tenant or the planning authority please email us at: designations@hes.scot. If you are unable to email your comments please phone us on 0131 668 8914

Report of Handling Case information

Case ID	300058591
Name of Site	Northern Meeting Park pavilion and boundary walls, Ardross Street, Inverness
Postcode (if any)	IV3 5NS

Local Authority	The Highland Council
National Grid Reference	NH 66322 44901
Designation Type	Listed Building
Designation No. and category of listing (if any)	LB51129 Category B
Case Type	Amendment

Received/Start Date	18/05/2022
Decision Date	Pending

1. Proposed decision

Previous Statutory Listing Address	Ardross Street, Northern Meeting Park Pavilion Building and Boundary Walls	Previous category of listing	B
New Statutory Listing Address	[no change]	New category of listing	A

Our assessment using the selection guidance shows that the Northern Meeting Park pavilion in Inverness continues to meet the criteria of special architectural or historic interest. The current statutory listing address is adequate however we are proposing to change the category of listing from B to A.

The supplementary information in the listed building record will also be updated.

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

Historic Scotland listed the Northern Meeting Park pavilion and boundary walls at category B on 09/07/2008. The Northern Meeting Park is located within the Inverness (Riverside) Conservation Area (CA112).

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no current planning applications submitted on the Highland Council's planning portal (as of 02/09/22). However, planning applications are due to be submitted to the planning authority in September. The Highland Council received funding from the UK Government Levelling Up Fund for its Zero Carbon Cultural Regeneration Project and part of the bid seeks to renovate the Northern Meeting Park (The Highland Council).

Our proposal to change the category of listing is not a statutory change to the designation. However, we may not proceed with a change of category whilst there are development proposals which may affect the building. For more information about the circumstances which affect our decision making, see '3.3. Policy considerations' below.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

We received a proposal to review the designation of the Northern Meeting Park pavilion and boundary walls on 18/05/2022.

We visited the Northern Meeting Park on 30/06/2022.

We saw the exterior and interior of the pavilion (ground floor only) and the park grounds.

3.2 Assessment of special architectural or historic interest

We have found that the Northern Meeting Park pavilion and boundary walls continue to meet the criteria for listing.

We carried out an assessment using the selection guidance to decide whether a site or place is of special architectural or historic interest. See **Annex A**.

The listing criteria and selection guidance for listed buildings are published in Designation Policy and Selection Guidance (2019), Annex 2, pp. 11-13, <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/designation-policy>.

3.3 Policy considerations

We consider the individual circumstances of each case. In deciding whether to designate a site or place or amend an existing designation while there are ongoing development proposals, we will consider:

- the implications of designation on development proposals;
- the effect of the proposed development on the significance of the site or place; and
- the extent to which plans have been developed for the site or place – where these are particularly advanced, we will not normally list or schedule.

A change to the category of listing would change the consultation requirements for any planning application affecting the building or its setting.

Further information about development proposals and designation is found in Designation Policy and Selection Guidance, pp. 7-8.

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/designation-policy>.

4. Consultation

4.1 Consultation information

Consultation period: 22/09/2022 to 13/10/2022.

We have consulted with the owner and the planning authority.

The consultation report of handling is published on our portal for comment from interested parties.

4.2 Designation consultations

What you can comment on

We will consider comments and representations which are material to our decision-making, such as:

- Your understanding of the cultural significance of the site or place and whether it meets the criteria for designation.
- The purpose and implications of designating the site or place. We consider whether these are relevant to the case.
- Development proposals related to the site or place. Where there are development proposals, we consider whether to proceed with designation in line with our designation policy.
- The accuracy of our information.

Comments we don't consider

We do not consider comments and representations on non-relevant/non-material issues, such as:

- Economic considerations
- Abusive or offensive remarks
- Whether you personally like, or do not like, a proposal

Our video about consultations explains how you can comment on our designations decisions, and what we can and can't take into account when considering your views. <https://youtu.be/ZlqU51tRA6g>.

4.3 Consultation summary

N/A

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ANNEX A

Assessment of special architectural or historic interest

1. Statutory address

Ardross Street, Northern Meeting Park Pavilion Building and Boundary Walls

2. Description and historical development

2.1 Description

Built in 1865, the Northern Meeting Park pavilion is a two-storey, 13-bay, symmetrical, rectangular-plan, 1,000-seat covered grandstand. The Ardross Street (north) elevation is designed in an Italianate-style with gabled end bays. The meeting ground (south) elevation is open with tiered seating facing the grassed meeting ground. The street elevation is harled with painted ashlar dressings and has overhanging eaves.

The Ardross Street (north) elevation has a central entrance opening with double, two-leaf, timber-panelled doors with a fanlight, mullioned side lights, and bracketed cornice and pediment above. The entrance is flanked on each side by six bays and there are four blind gablets rising from the roof eaves with short ridge chimneystacks. The end bays are slightly advanced with two-leaf, timber panelled doors in corniced, round-arched architraves with prominent keystones and fanlights, a corniced string course above and a round-arched window at first floor level.

The meeting ground (south) elevation is 13-bays wide to its seating area. The roof is supported on cast-iron columns with ornamental timber fretwork panels between the columns and highly ornamental cast iron cresting in the same style. There are six tiers of raked seating with timber benches and panelled boxes at the rear. The gabled end pavilions have round-arched doorways at ground floor level and double round-arched windows with prominent keystones at first floor level. There are late-20th century single storey, flat-roofed toilet block extensions to the outer left and right of the pavilion.

The windows are predominantly four-pane glazing in timber sash and case frames. The chimneystacks are tooled and coped ashlar with assorted clay cans. The roof is covered in grey slates with lead flashing and there are cast-iron rainwater goods throughout.

The meeting park grounds are enclosed by high, ashlar-coped boundary walls constructed in random rubble stone. There are pairs of stop-chamfered, pyramidal-capped gatepiers to the six gated entrances. The wrought iron gates were added in 2000.

2.2 Historical development

The pavilion was built by the Northern Meeting, a Highland society established to provide pleasure and entertainment (The Northern Meeting) as well to foster a sense of identity and community. The Northern Meeting was formed in 1788 by a group of Highland men, mostly landowners and wealthy members of the middle class, as an annual social gathering which included dinners, balls and, later, sporting events.

From 1835 onwards, sports and games began to be held in and around Inverness in temporary grandstands and the annual Highland Games opened to the public soon after. An exhibition of piping and dancing was added from 1841 onwards (Bagpipe News). In 1864 the Northern Meeting purchased land to provide a permanent home for the games (The Northern Meeting). The first gathering was in September 1864 and a temporary grandstand was built (The Nairnshire Telegraph).

The current pavilion was built in 1865 and is thought to be the world's first purpose-built Highland Games stadium (Dundee Courier). The boundary walls were probably built soon after the land was purchased in 1864 and prior to the first gathering.

An advert (dated October 1864) was repeated in the Aberdeen Press and Journal over a number of weeks, calling for plans and specifications for a permanent pavilion "of a plain [and] substantial description" to seat between 800 and 1000 people (see Aberdeen Press and Journal, 9 November 1864). The pavilion cost £1709 to build (according to the current listed building record).

The pavilion is shown on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1868, set within a diamond-shaped ground. An additional spectator stand was added to the west of the pavilion sometime before 1903, but this was later removed and sold to Inverness Thistle F.C. around 1949 (Aberdeen Press and Journal, 1949). A detached, square-plan tea point building was added in the northwest corner of the grounds sometime in the mid-20th century (as shown on the 1962 Ordnance Survey map).

The Northern Meeting Park was the venue of the annual Highland Games for the next 70 years. The park was also used for other events throughout the year, including sports such as cricket and athletics (see for example The Northern Chronicle, 1894 and 1907), and for the exhibition of livestock (Moray and Nairn Express).

The Northern Meeting Park was sold to Inverness Burgh Council in 1946, now The Highland Council. Flat-roofed shower and toilet blocks were added at both ends of the pavilion in around 1950. In 1999 part of the boundary wall was temporarily removed and some of the park entrances were widened and new iron gates added in preparation for the Millennium celebrations (Highland Council planning portal, 99/00859/FULIN). The Northern Meeting Park continues to be used for sporting and music events today (2022).

3. Assessment of special architectural or historic interest

To be listed a building must be of 'special architectural or historic interest' as set out in the [Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) \(Scotland\) Act 1997](#). To decide if a building is of special interest for listing we assess its cultural significance using selection guidance which has two main headings – architectural interest and historic interest (see Designation Policy and Selection Guidance, 2019, Annex 2, pp. 11-13).

The selection guidance provides a framework within which judgement is exercised in reaching individual decisions. The special architectural or historic interest of a building can be demonstrated in one or more of the following ways.

3.1 Architectural interest

The architectural interest of a building may include its design, designer, interior, plan form, materials, regional traditions, and setting and the extent to which these characteristics survive. These factors are grouped under two headings:

3.1.1 Design

The Northern Meeting Park is a substantial and architecturally distinctive example of its building type. Its design is symmetrical to its street elevation with simple Italianate detailing, characterised by a pedimented doorpiece and arched openings with keystone decoration. The meeting ground elevation, with its fretwork panelled front, cast iron columns and well-detailed end pavilions is highly decorative. The retention of the timber benches is also of design interest, but they may be of a later date.

A photograph taken in the 1870s shows that the pavilion once had a moveable screen which fully covered the seating area and protected it from rough weather when not in use (Am Baile, ID 46382). This has since been removed and the pavilion seating area is now largely exposed to the weather.

The plan form and footprint of the pavilion and meeting grounds appears largely unaltered since the time of construction in 1864-5. The position of the pavilion, facing south, is typical for the building type to ensure spectators are not facing the setting sun. Similarly, the overhanging roof eaves to the park elevation are designed to combat glare and provide some shelter from adverse weather, and the stepped seating allows for optimal spectator viewing across the meeting ground.

The layout of the pavilion, with a central entranceway leading from the street into the stand, is a typical design feature of the building type. The tiered seating is above suites of rooms, including changing rooms and storage areas, which are situated at either side of the central entrance on the ground floor. From the pavilion accommodation areas, participants enter the meeting ground via an upwards slope, thereby providing those in the stands with a good view of competitors as they enter and leave the ground.

The highland games organised as part of the Northern Meeting in Inverness from the 1860s onwards were extremely popular events. Historic photographs from the 1890s and 1920s show the highland games were well-attended (Am Baile). The high boundary walls and numerous gated entrances into the meeting ground were necessary for crowd control, however the current gates are replacements, dating from around 2000.

According to *Scotland's Sporting Buildings*, the architectural firm of Matthews and Lawrie designed the pavilion (Haynes, pp.67-69), however Alexander Ross is named as the architect in the building entry in the Dictionary of Scottish Architects. Ross designed the adjacent St Andrew's Cathedral (built 1866-69) and a number of the villas along Ardross Street, built between 1878 and 1889 (for example, LB35135).

The use of harled stone and ashlar dressings is of note when compared with the fully timber-constructed (but later in date) patron's pavilion and private enclosure at The Princess Royal and Duke of Fife Memorial Park used for the Braemar Gathering (LB52167, listed at category C).

The overall design quality of the Northern Meeting Park pavilion and boundary walls is of interest in listing terms because it appears largely as it would have been when constructed and, although it has remained in use, it has not been radically altered. Its Italianate design is largely intact, and the building is prominent in the streetscape.

3.1.2 Setting

The Northern Meeting Park pavilion is located along Ardross Street in Inverness, set within a grassed park and enclosed by boundary walls and gated entrances. The pavilion is prominent in the streetscape. The Northern Meeting Park is within the Inverness (Riverside) conservation area (CA112). The building's location in Inverness is significant as the largest Highland settlement, which is also widely known as the 'capital of the Highlands'.

The pavilion's historic setting is largely intact and remains the same as that shown on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1868. The park's high boundary walls are bounded on three sides by four listed buildings: a large house now housing The Highland Council Headquarters built in 1875-76 (LB35144), St Andrew's Cathedral (LB35330), the former Bishops Palace (LB35331) and Eden Court Theatre (LB49959). Together these listed structures, except the later Eden Court, are a good grouping of late-19th century historic buildings.

There have been some minor changes, for example some of the gatepiers have been moved and the entrances widened, however these changes are minimal and they have not affected the overall historic setting of the park. The former west stand that was constructed sometime before 1903 was removed around 1949 and a small square-plan tea point building was added around this time. The Northern Meeting Park today largely resembles how it did at the time of its construction in 1864-5.

When the land was purchased and developed into the Northern Meeting Park in 1864, it was sandwiched between new residential housing along Ardross Street to the north, and the Ness Walk Nursery and Northern Infirmary to the south. The wider setting, particularly to the south, has largely been developed for housing, however the park remains within its enclosed setting and is well-shielded by mature trees.

3.2 Historic interest

Historic interest is in such things as a building's age, rarity, social historical interest and associations with people or events that have had a significant impact on Scotland's cultural heritage. Historic interest is assessed under three headings:

3.2.1 Age and rarity

The Northern Meeting Park pavilion is a rare example of a permanent highland games structure in Scotland and is understood to be the earliest known building of its type in the world (Haynes, pp.67-69 and Dundee Courier).

Highland games are held all over Scotland, and across the world, but buildings for the event are often temporary structures. Therefore, the pavilion at the Northern Meeting Park is unusual in being a permanent structure.

3.2.2 Social historical interest

Social historical interest is the way a building contributes to our understanding of how people lived in the past, and how our social and economic history is shown in a building and/or in its setting.

The association of the Northern Meeting Park pavilion with the highland games is of social historical and cultural interest. Highland games, in the form that we know today, largely began in the early-19th century.

The tradition of highland games is said to have originated with King Malcolm III (also known as Malcolm Canmore) who reigned between 1058 and 1093 and who held competitions at the Brae of Mar as a method of selecting the ablest athletes to be soldiers and couriers. Highland games were held on a regular basis in the area surrounding Braemar by nearby clans, using it as a chance to meet and socialise. The Ceres Games in Fife are thought to be the oldest free games in Scotland, and they have been, more-or-less, continually held since 1314 (The Scotsman).

Following the 1745 Jacobite Uprising, the Act of Proscription was passed which was designed to dismantle the clan system and outlawed Scottish dress, customs and gatherings, such as highland games. Following the repeal of the Act in 1782 there was a modern revival of highland games, and they became an important aspect of rebuilding and remembering Scottish culture.

The Inverness Highland Games are now held at nearby Bught Park. The Northern Meeting Park is owned by Highland Council and managed by Highlife Highland and is used for paid-for music and sporting events.

3.2.3 Association with people or events of national importance

The Northern Meeting, established in 1788, began as an annual gathering for a small group of wealthy men. Fifty years later it opened to the public and came to include sports and games, piping competitions and traditional dancing (The Northern Meeting). The Northern Meeting Park was purchased as the permanent home of the Inverness Highland Games in 1864. The pavilion was built in 1865 and it is the earliest purpose-built structure associated with of highland games in Scotland.

4. Summary of assessment

The Northern Meeting Park pavilion and boundary walls meet the criteria of special architectural or historic interest for the following reasons:

- The pavilion is a fine, little-altered example of a covered grandstand, built in 1865.
- It is the earliest and largest permanent structure associated with the sport of the highland games in Scotland, and possibly the world.
- The Italianate detailing on the pavilion is prominent in the streetscape and the design quality of the park elevation, including timber fretwork, cast iron columns and pediments, is of note.
- The immediate historic setting of the park is little altered since the time of construction.
- The building has an important historical association with Scottish sporting culture and to the history of the Highlands.

5. Category of listing

Once a building is found to be of special architectural or historic interest, it is then classified under one of three categories (A, B or C) according to its relative importance. While the listing itself has legal weight and gives statutory protection, the categories have no legal status and are advisory. They affect how a building is managed in the planning system.

Category definitions are found at Annex 2 of Designation Policy and Selection Guidance (2019) <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/designation-policy>.

5.1 Level of importance

The Northern Meeting Park's level of importance is category A.

Buildings listed at category A are defined as 'buildings of special architectural or historic interest which are outstanding examples of a particular period, style or building type.

In our current state of knowledge, the Northern Meeting Park pavilion and walls is significant as the earliest and largest permanent structure associated with the highland games in Scotland. Taking into account the rare building type and its well-detailed design and largely unaltered setting, category A is considered to be the most appropriate level of listing.

6. Other Information

The Northern Meeting had their Meeting Rooms in the centre of town on the corner of Baron Taylors Lane and Church Street (as shown on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1868). Built by the society in 1790, it was here that the annual ball took place. It was used by the Northern Meeting until the building was demolished in 1962 (Am Baile).

7. References

Canmore: <http://canmore.org.uk/> CANMORE ID 297526

Maps

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The Northern Meeting. History, at <https://northern-meeting.org/history/> [accessed 26/08/2022].

The Scotsman. A History of the Scottish Highland Games, at <https://www.scotsman.com/whats-on/arts-and-entertainment/history-scottish-highland-games-1476223> [accessed 31/08/2022].

Other Information

Information provided courtesy of the proposer (2022).

8. Indicative Map

A map of the proposed listed building is attached separately.