

# **New car park, Yarrows Caithness**

## **Yarrows trail new car park**

### **Watching Brief Report and Risk Assessment**

# Yarrows trail new car park

## Design, Risk Assessment and Method Statement Project

Report No.	PDH 2
Client	Yarrows Heritage Trust
OS Grid Ref.	
HCAU/Planning Ref	13/04515/FUL
Date	27 10 2014
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## Aims and objectives

To minimise any possible delay or cost to the development by anticipating archaeological requirements as far as possible, timetabling and integrating archaeological recording work with the project, and dealing with any issues arising quickly and efficiently.

To determine as far as possible the character extent, condition, period and significance of any archaeologically significant remains. To preserve these where possible and record, where necessary, in line with national and local policies and standards.

To ensure that artefacts or human remains are dealt with in accordance with legal requirements and current Historic Scotland policy guidance.

## Location

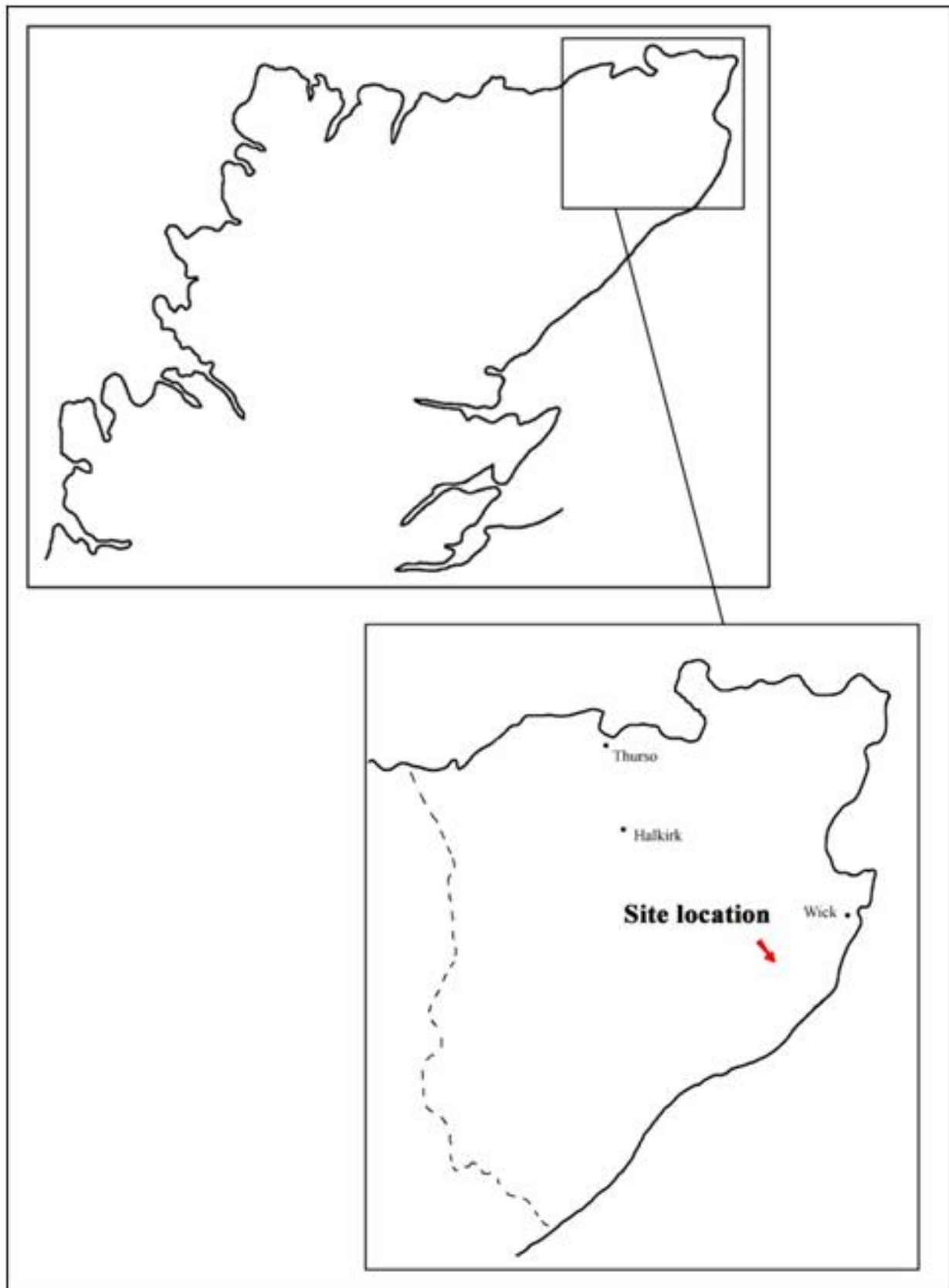


Figure 1 – Area location

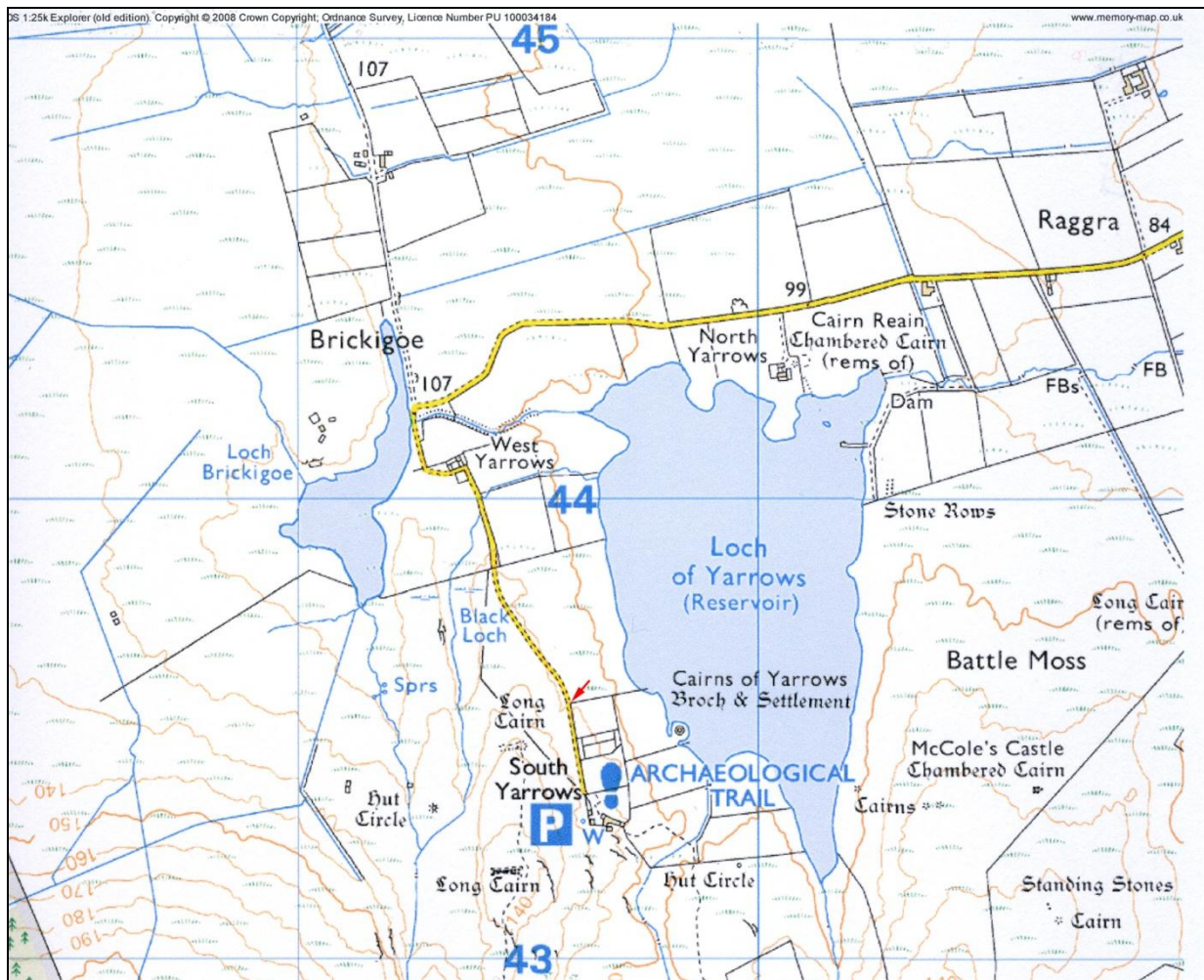
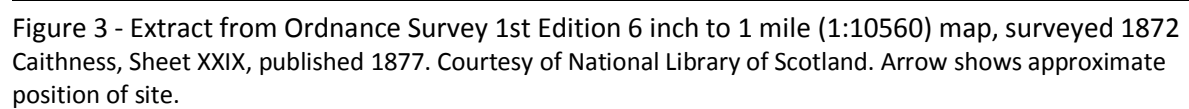


Figure 2 – Car park site location



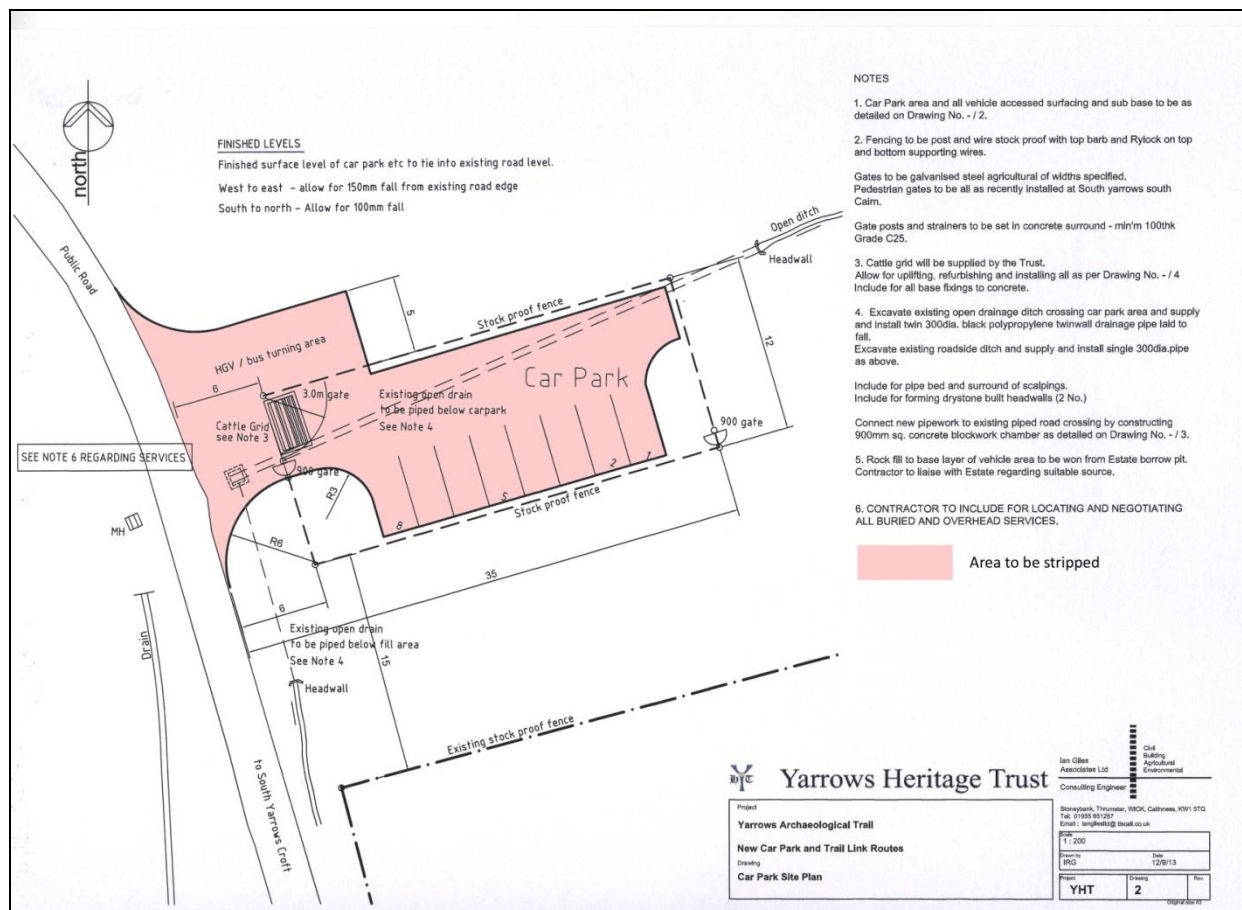


Figure 4 – Site plan of proposed works

## Introduction

A programme of archaeological work is proposed by Paul Humphreys in response to a planning requirement at Yarrows for the construction of a new visitor car park. The purpose of this programme is to identify and record the nature and extent of any archaeological features affected by the development.

This document sets out the work to be done, its objectives, method, and proposed outcomes. It is intended to form the basis of an agreement with the client and other interested parties to fulfil the archaeological requirements. The programme consists of archaeological mitigation and recording in line with the Highland Council's and the Scottish Executive's current planning policies and advice. It includes a risk assessment and health and safety method statement. All work will be carried out in accordance with Highland Council Standards for Archaeological Works.

## Archaeology and policy background

An archaeological evaluation was requested in this case because there was potential for finds or features of interest to be discovered during site works.

The policy framework includes the Highland Council's Structure Plan<sup>1</sup>, and Scottish Government's Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), issued in February 2010, which consolidates and supersedes the previous SPP and NPPG series. The fundamental principles underpinning all the above legislation and policies are set out in 'Passed to the Future: Historic Scotland's Policy for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (2002)<sup>2</sup> and the 'Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS 1999)<sup>3</sup>.

The Codes of Conduct and Approved Practice and Standards of the Institute for Archaeologists<sup>4</sup> are applicable to this work.

The Highland Council's archaeologist noted in response to the planning application, "The application site lies within an area where prehistoric remains are recorded. There is a potential that further unrecorded buried remains survive within the application site and will be impacted by the development."

Yarrows is located in an area on the east coast of Caithness, south of Wick and lies within the Thrumster estate. The land at Yarrows is predominately moorland, managed as a sporting estate, but a number of crofts exploit pockets of improved arable and pasture.

The landscape of the Yarrows basin takes the form of a roughly saucer shaped area of land rising from the shores of The Loch of Yarrows to a ridge that frames the Yarrows basin to the south and east. The ground rises more gradually to the west to a plateau that extends to the Hill of Warehouse and gradually falls away to the coast.

The new car park site is located circa 250 m from The Broch of Yarrows and circa 150 m from South Yarrows North long cairn within an extended relict archaeological landscape of national importance encompassing a Neolithic necropolis, Bronze Age burials and settlement.

An enclosed area of improved agricultural land bounds site to the south while rough pasture lie to the north and east. The proposed car park opens onto an existing metalled single track road so some disturbance to the land can be expected.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/developmentplans/structureplan/thehighlandsstructureplan.htm>

<sup>2</sup> [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/pasttofuture.pdf](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/pasttofuture.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.icomos.org/australia/burra.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.archaeologists.net/>

## Proposed programme

These proposals are designed to meet the requirements of the Highland Council's Historic Environment Team.

1. Initial Photography - An initial photographic survey of the site overall as existing will be undertaken, and the results will be included with the final report.
2. Desk Based Assessment - A check of all relevant archaeological / historical records, maps and aerial photographs will be undertaken as specified by the Highland Council.
3. Controlled Topsoil Strip The area to be investigated is shown on Figure 2 above. It measures approximately 450 sq m.

These proposals are indicative and may need to be adjusted according to conditions on site.

The method will be to remove topsoil and overburden to the first visible soil change, using a back-acting mechanical excavator fitted with a straight-edged bucket. They will be cleaned if necessary

by hand to identify any features. Any pits identified will be half sectioned, and any linear features will be subject to 10% sample hand excavation. Finds will be retained, conserved and recorded and declared as necessary for Scottish Treasure Trove.

In the event of exceptional discoveries which cannot be reasonably recorded within the watching brief, or other unexpected occurrences which might significantly affect the archaeological work and /or the development, the client and the Planning Authority will be notified immediately and arrangements agreed for any follow-up work required. The finds or features will be left in situ until arrangements have been agreed for safeguarding or recording them.

Plans will be produced of the trench layout, and of any archaeological features discovered. Depths of trenches will be taken from the adjoining surface; where necessary, detailed plans and scaled drawings of archaeological features will be made at 1:20 scale.

Any human remains found will be immediately reported to the local police and to the Highland Council Archaeology Unit and will not be excavated as part of this work. They will then be dealt with in accordance with Historic Scotland's published guidance.

No archaeological excavation will be undertaken as part of this work beyond the minimum necessary to achieve the objectives above. Palaeo-environmental sampling will only be undertaken if initial results demonstrate a need for this.

## Reporting

Following the fieldwork stage the site records and information will be analysed and a Basic Report (as defined by the Highland Council Archaeology Unit Development Guidance) will be produced, setting out the results of the work and making recommendations if necessary for any follow-up work considered advisable (a post excavation research design or PERD). This follow-up work will be agreed with the client and the Highland Council before implementation and any post-excavation strategy will be carried out in line with HCAU Development Guidance.

The principal method for recording and reporting the project details will be via the online OASIS form. Digital copies of the report and supporting material will be supplied on CD or DVD which will include digital copies of all site plans and photographs, as well as a photographic index, and a digital copy of the report itself. The report will be provided in PDF format; tables as Excel spreadsheets; and digital mapping as images and ArcView shape files. Photographs will be taken using a digital camera and all images will be presented as uncompressed JPEG files.

The site archive will be deposited with the RCAHMS. A brief summary of the results will be sent to the Council for Scottish Archaeology for inclusion in Discovery and Excavation in Scotland.

## Operational Matters

All work will meet or exceed the standards usually required by Historic Scotland, the Highland Council, and the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The company's health and safety, environmental and quality policies and standard procedures will be followed.

## Health and Safety: Statement of general policy and arrangements

In this instance the archaeologist on site (Paul Humphreys) is acting as a sole operator and as such is responsible for his own personal health and safety.

Statement of general policy	Responsibility	Action / Arrangements
To prevent accidents and work related ill-health and control hazards and risks	Paul Humphreys	
To maintain own competence and vigilance on site	Paul Humphreys	Self monitoring
To adapt to changing on site circumstances to maintain safe working environment.	Paul Humphreys	
To adhere to the golden rules of safe working practice		

### Golden Rules

The following safety golden rules will be observed at all times:

- 1 Reverse Park: It is safer to drive out of a parking space than to reverse out.  
When you reverse in, you can always check your approach is clear first.
- 2 Wear PPE: Use the personnel protection equipment required for the task.
- 3 Assess Risks: Work to the agreed risk assessment or method statement, don't take short cuts and continually consider how changing conditions affect your works.
- 4 Hold Handrails: Use the handrails using steps.
- 5 Accept Challenges: Respond positively if someone points out a safety risk or lapse.

### First Aid Box

First-aid box carried in car

Smaller first aid kit will be carried in the field.

### Emergency contact

Nest of Kin; Mary Humphreys 01847 851 275

Nearest emergency department - Caithness General Hospital, Wick

### Working procedures

During the fieldwork, the conditions encountered will be continually monitored and assessed to ensure that the method statement remains appropriate and the risks adequately managed. If this is not the case, the works will be suspended until conditions improve or appropriate arrangements are made.

## **Method Statement**

A controlled topsoil strip is proposed by Paul Humphreys, Dunnet, Caithness on behalf of Yarrows Heritage Trust. All work will meet or exceed the standards usually required by Historic Scotland, the Highland Council, and the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

### Personnel

The work will be directed and undertaken by Paul Humphreys (mobile phone no. 07887775747)(home number 01847 851 275) who will liaise with relevant Highland Council staff to ensure that they are aware of fieldwork dates and able to visit as required.

### Plant and equipment and transport requirements

Provision and transport of necessary plant will be the responsibility of the client.

The archaeologist will transport any necessary survey and site recording equipment.

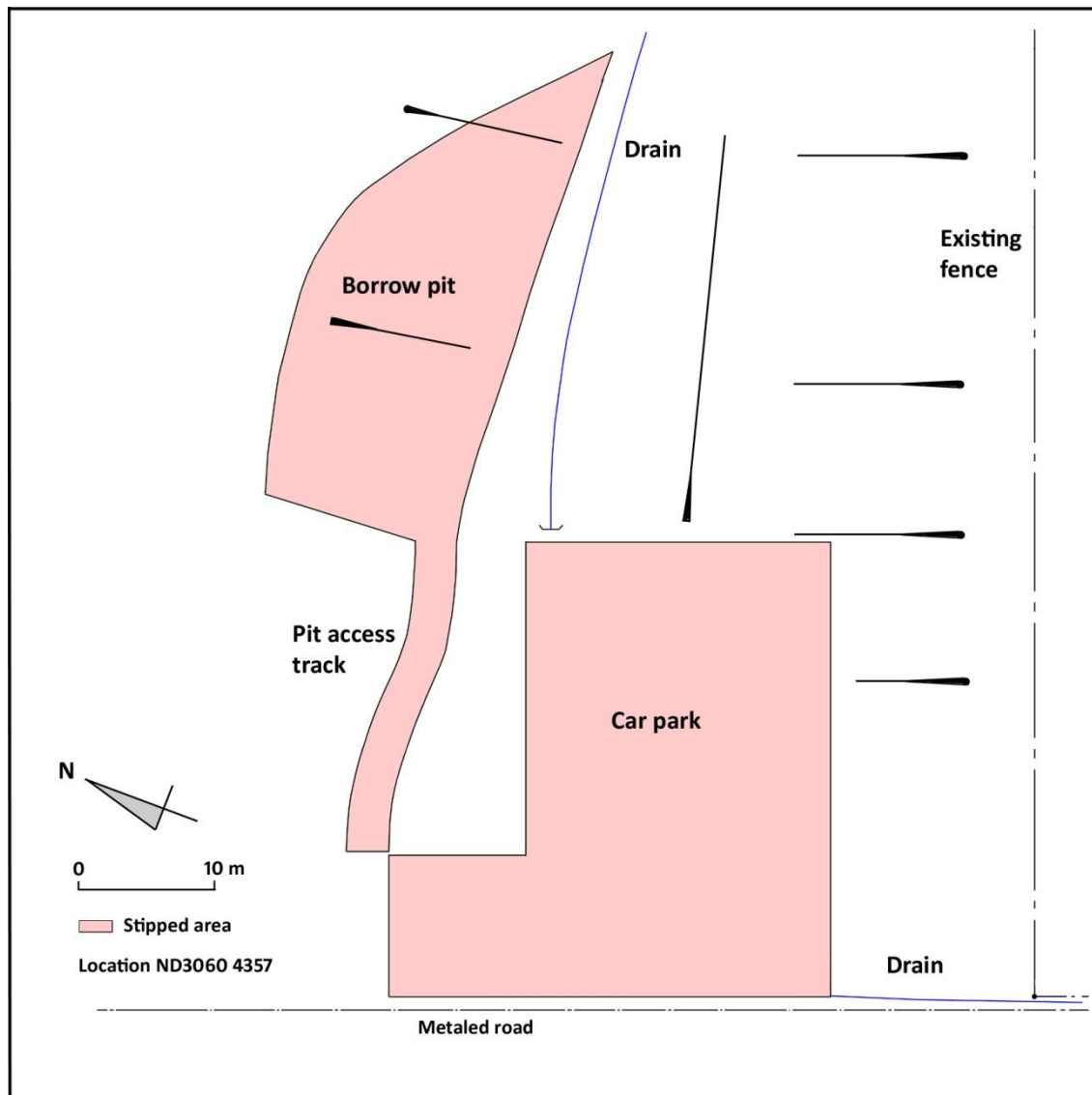


Figure 5 – Stripped area

## Findings

The site located in an area of blanket peat of variable depth and consistency. The peat of the car park area was up to 500 mm deep being homogeneous black peat overlaid by fibrous brown peat and turf. The nature of this peat was determined by a local depression in the underlying glacial till which encouraged water to drain into the area. In more recent times natural drainage had been canalised to improve drainage. The underlying glacial till was predominantly orange of a type commonly found in Caithness. The till was streaked with pale grey material derived from decayed calcareous sandstone; local to the area.

The borrow pit was located on the southern flank of a low ridge of soft sandstone bedrock. It had been extensively weathered which had rendered it amenable to quarrying by mechanical excavator. The vegetative cover was of low growing herbs and grasses that had given rise to relatively thin fibrous blanket peat.

This potential for buried archaeology was considered to be greater in the borrow pit area than the car park area because of the local topography. However no evidence for archaeology was observed in either area.

## Table 1 Figures

Figure No.	Title	Subject	Location (Centre E,N)	Drawn by	Date
1	Area location				
2	Car park site location				
3	Extract from Ordnance Survey 1st Edition				
4	Site plan of proposed works				
5	Stripped area			PDH	06 02 15

## Table 2 Photographs

Photo No.	Notes	Taken by	Date
1	Site looking E	PDH	27 10 14
2	Car park area stripping looking E (strip 1)	PDH	27 10 14
3	Car park area stripping looking NE	PDH	27 10 14
4	Car park area stripping looking E (strip 2)	PDH	27 10 14
5	Borrow pit area stripping looking N	PDH	27 10 14
6	Borrow pit access stripping looking NW	PDH	27 10 14
7	Typical till surface after stripping	PDH	27 10 14



Image 1 – Site looking E



**Image 2 – Car park area stripping looking E (strip 1)**



**Image 3 – Car park area stripping looking NE**



**Image 4 – Car park area stripping looking E (strip 2)**



**Image 5 – Borrow pit area stripping looking N**



**Image 6 – Borrow pit access stripping looking NW**



**Image 7 – Typical till surface after stripping**