

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
TO
SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN ENERGY**

**33KV REBUILD
GRUDIE BRIDGE TO KINLOCHEWE,
HIGHLAND**

**Watching briefs
at Kinlochewe
February & March 2016**

*Lismore
Dollerie Terrace
Crieff
Perthshire
Tel: 01764-652638
email: scotarc@btinternet.com*

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of archaeological watching briefs undertaken on a section of a new 33kv power line between Grudie Bridge, at the head of Loch Luichart, and Taagan, at the head of Loch Maree, 2km north-west of Kinlochewe. The line will extend from approximately NH 3095 6237 westwards to approximately NH 0125 6401, an overall distance of some 17km. When completed it will comprise two sections of overhead line and two where the cable is buried underground.

The new line will take power generated from a large number of hydro-electric stations in Wester Ross. It will run roughly parallel with an existing overhead line which distributes power to dwellings and businesses in the area but was never intended to support the new load that is to be generated. Hence there is a requirement to establish a separate, dedicated power line to cope with the increased load.

From a power station at Grudie Bridge the route will be underground, running westwards on the north side of Loch a' Chuilinn and along Strath Bran as far as a point just outside Achnasheen, at approximately NH 1576 5861. From there it will continue as an overhead line along the shore of Loch a' Chroisg to the head of Glen Docherty, at approximately NH 0779 5849. From that point the line will revert to an underground cable, running north-westwards along Glen Docherty as far as NH 0456 6177. The remainder of the route, around the north side of Kinlochewe, will be overhead as far as Taagan.

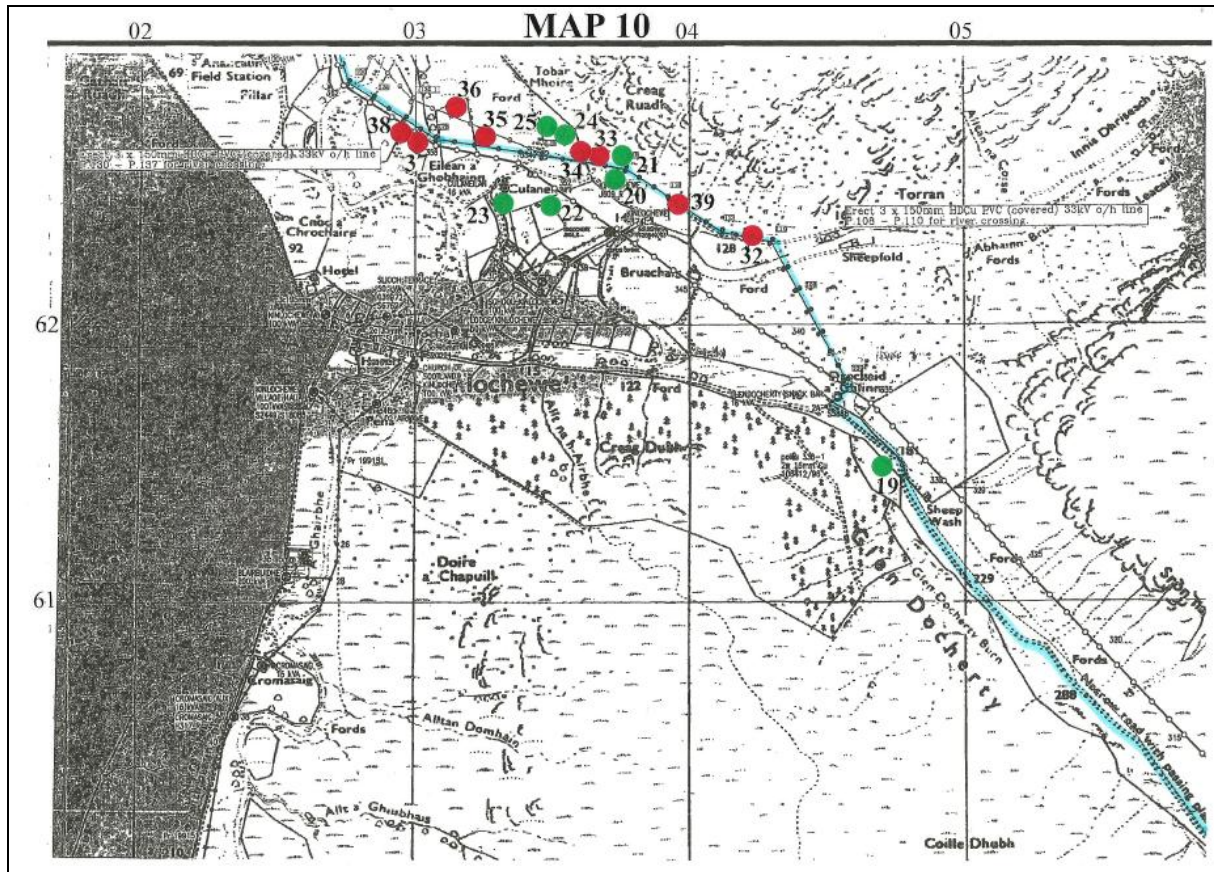
Scotia Archaeology was commissioned by Scottish & Southern Energy plc (SSE) to undertake a desk study of archaeological and historical sites on or in close proximity to the route of the new line. This study was followed by walk-over surveys of the route, the work being carried out by John Lewis between November 2014 and April 2015 and, where part of the route was changed around Loch a Chroisg near Achnasheen, in February 2016. Details of those surveys are contained in reports submitted to SSE and archived with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) (Lewis 2015; Lewis 2016).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A range of sites of archaeological significance were identified by the desk study and several more brought to light by the walk-over surveys. One area that proved to have a rich archaeological landscape lies a short distance to the north of Kinlochewe and the hamlet of Incheril. Within this area are what appear to be remnants of prehistoric settlements and several burial mounds together with two pre-Improvement townships or farmsteads.

This section of line will run overhead and the locations of poles were surveyed with these sites in mind. Every effort was made to avoid archaeological sites although it proved impossible to by-pass them all completely. Only three poles were sited close to known archaeological sites although consultation between SSE and Scotia Archaeology ensured that little or no damage would be caused during the construction of the new line.

A map showing the locations of sites in the vicinity of the new overhead line near Kinlochewe is shown below. The two sites affected by the new development are described below. Sites numbers used here are taken from the report of the relevant walk-over survey.



Map showing the location of archaeological sites around Kinlochewe

Site 32 Farmstead/township

The remains of four buildings and some associated features which straddle a gravel road that runs along the north side of the Abhainn Bruachaig to the north of Kinlochewe were identified during the walk-over survey.

Structure 1

Structure 1 survives as a maximum of one course of rubble masonry defining a rectangular building on the north side of the road at NH 04219 62297. It measures approximately 5m east/west by 4m wide over rubble walls now covered with vegetation and of indeterminate thickness.

Scoop

Approximately 5m to the west of Structure 1 is a rectangular scoop measuring 4.2m north/south by 3.2m east/west. Its east side is somewhat indistinct whereas its other three sides are more clearly defined.



Site 32: Structure 1, viewed from the north

Structure 2

Structure 2 is located 3m to the north of Structure 1, at NH 04227 62308, and, at the time of the survey, was partially covered with bracken. It measures 10.5m north/south by 4.2m wide over drystone rubble walls 0.8m wide and up to two courses high.

Structure 3

Some 40m west of Structure 1 at NH 04175 62280, on the south side of the road, stand the remains of Structure 3. It measures 14m east/west by 5m wide over drystone rubble walls 0.8m wide and standing to a maximum height of two courses, mostly covered in vegetation. Field clearance boulders have been deposited against the west end of the building. There are traces of what might be an enclosure to the immediate north of Structure 3.

Sparse remnants of a field wall extend some 20m to the east of this building and some 80m to its west.

Structure 4

Structure 4 is located approximately 60m west of Structure 1, at NH 04143 62311. It measures 10m east/west by 4.2m wide over drystone rubble walls, 0.8m wide, only one course of which survives.



Site 32: Structure 4, viewed from the east

Site 37 Farmstead/township

Site 37 comprises the remains of what appears to be a pre-Improvement settlement consisting of three structures, two of them rectangular and one roughly circular.

Structure 1

The remains of a rectangular structure measuring 12m east/west by 5m wide is located at NH 03015 62698. Its walls are covered in vegetation and stand to a maximum height of 0.4m. To its south are what may be the remains of an enclosure.

Structure 2

A short distance south of Structure 1, at NH 03015 62663, are the foundations of a roughly circular structure measuring some 5m in diameter and 0.4m high but whose east side is badly eroded.

Structure 3

At NH 02986 62633 are the remains of a rectangular structure measuring 12m east/west by 5m wide with grass-covered walls 0.8m high.



Site 37: Structure 1, viewed from the north



Site 37: Structure 2, viewed from the east

THE WATCHING BRIEFS

Watching briefs were considered important at the above locations because of the very close proximity of pre-Improvement settlements to new poles. Although the pole trenches would not impinge directly on any visible structures or features, it was possible that associated features, such as the buried remains of buildings, early field systems or roads, might be revealed by excavation.

Before any construction work commenced, the various elements of these two sites were surrounded by temporary markers to ensure that no damage was inflicted on them during the excavation of trenches and the movement of vehicles to and from them. These markers remained in position during the entire process.

Work on the new line proceeded from west to east, from Taagan towards Glen Docherty. Three poles were positioned close to archaeological sites: Pole 129 within the settlement of Site 37 and Poles 113 and 112 close to Site 32. Watching briefs were undertaken at Pole 129 on 26 February 2016, during dry, frosty weather, and those at Poles 113 and 112 on 3 March 2016 a sunny but cold day. Pole and stay trenches were dug using a mechanical excavator operated by SSE.

Pole 129

Pole 129 is located at NH 03022 62712, some 4m from the north-east corner of Structure 1 of Site 37, the remains of a pre-Improvement settlement.

The pole trench measured 2.2m east/west by 1.4m wide and 1.6m deep. It cut through vegetation of coarse grass, reeds and moss and 0.3m of pale to mid-brown, sandy topsoil which gave directly onto fluvio-glacial deposits of coarse sand, gravel and rounded boulders.

Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in this trench and no artefacts of any age retrieved from it.

Pole 113

Pole 113 is located at NH 04126 62335, just beyond Structure 4 of Site 32, another pre-Improvement farmstead or township. It is situated at an angle in the power line and an H-pole was used because of the especially heavy cable that it has to carry. Because of the angle, two stays were required to the south of the pole. A further two stays were needed to the east of the pole in order to facilitate the lifting of the cable.

Pole trench

The pole trench measured 4m north/south by 1.6m wide and 1.6m deep within boggy ground covered with sphagnum moss and reeds. It cut through 0.3m of dark brown, peaty soil which lay directly on fluvio-glacial gravel and boulders with no features or deposits of archaeological interest being uncovered.

The boggy conditions resulted in the trench being waterlogged at its base (see photograph below).



Trench for Pole 113, viewed from the north

Stay trench 1

This trench, located 7m south of the pole trench, was large enough to accommodate two stays and measured 6m east/west by 1m wide and 1.8m deep. It cut through 0.3m of mid-grey/brown silty soil and underlying deposits of coarse orange sand, gravel and boulders. Again, nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered.

Stay trench 2

Located some 17m east of Pole 113 and 5m north of Structure 4, this stay trench measured 5m north/south by 1m wide and 1.6m deep. The ground was very wet in this area and the trench became waterlogged very quickly. The materials through which the trench was excavated were identical to those in the pole trench. Nothing of interest was uncovered within it.

Stay trench 3

Stay trench 3 was located 27m east of the pole trench and 5m from Structure 4. It measured 7m north/south by 1m wide and 1.6m deep, cutting through the same materials as those in the pole trench and Stay trench 2. Nothing of archaeological significance was found in this trench.



Lifting Pole 113 into position, viewed from the east



Structure 4 of Site 32 with H-pole 113 beyond and stay trench 3 in foreground, viewed from the east

Pole 112

Located at NH 04178 62325, just beyond the eastern limit of Site 32, the trench for Pole 112 measured 3m east/west by 1.5m wide and 1.6m deep. It cut through 0.2m of dark, silty soil and underlying fluvio-glacial deposits of gravel and rounded boulders, nothing of archaeological interest being uncovered.



Trench for Pole 112, viewed from the east

CONCLUSIONS

Although nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in any of the trenches described above, they were sited sufficiently close to the remains of early settlements that watching briefs are thought to have been justified at these locations.

REFERENCES

- Lewis, J 2015 *33kv rebuild Grudie Bridge to Kinlochewe, Highland: desk study and walk-over survey, November 2014 - April 2015*. Unpublished report to SSE.
- Lewis, J 2016 *33kv rebuild Grudie Bridge to Kinlochewe, Highland: re-survey of Loch a Chroisg area, February 2016*. Unpublished report to SSE.