

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
TO
SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN
ELECTRICITY NETWORKS**

**LOCHAILORT TO GLENFINNAN
33KV OVERHEAD
POWER LINE REPLACEMENT**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WALK-OVER SURVEY
APRIL 2017**

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INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a walk-over survey undertaken for Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks (SEN) between Lochailort and Glenfinnan, Highland. This work was commissioned by Max Bigham, wayleave officer at SEN, Oban and carried out by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology in April 2017. It was undertaken in advance of the rebuilding of an overhead power line which will involve replacing a number of poles in the same locations, rebuilding some sections along new routes and taking the cable underground in other places.

Prior to the commencement of fieldwork, a desk study of readily available source material was carried out to identify known sites of archaeological or historical significance along the routes of the existing line and of the proposed new sections. Much of the land through which the line passes is very rough and machinery may have to take circuitous routes to access some of the poles. As a consequence, the survey covered ground at least 100m beyond both the existing line and stretches where new poles and underground trenches will be located.

The routes of the existing lines and their replacements are shown on the two maps below, supplied by SEN.

THE DESK STUDY

Sites described below are listed according to the numbers attributed by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), eg NM88SW 6, or by the Highland Council Archaeology Unit, eg MHG 30162.

1 NM88SW 6 Loch Eilt: memorial cairn

The cairn was erected at NM 8008 8273 on the day of the funeral (30 June 1874) of Duncan Cameron of Lochailort.

2 NM88SW 4 Farmstead

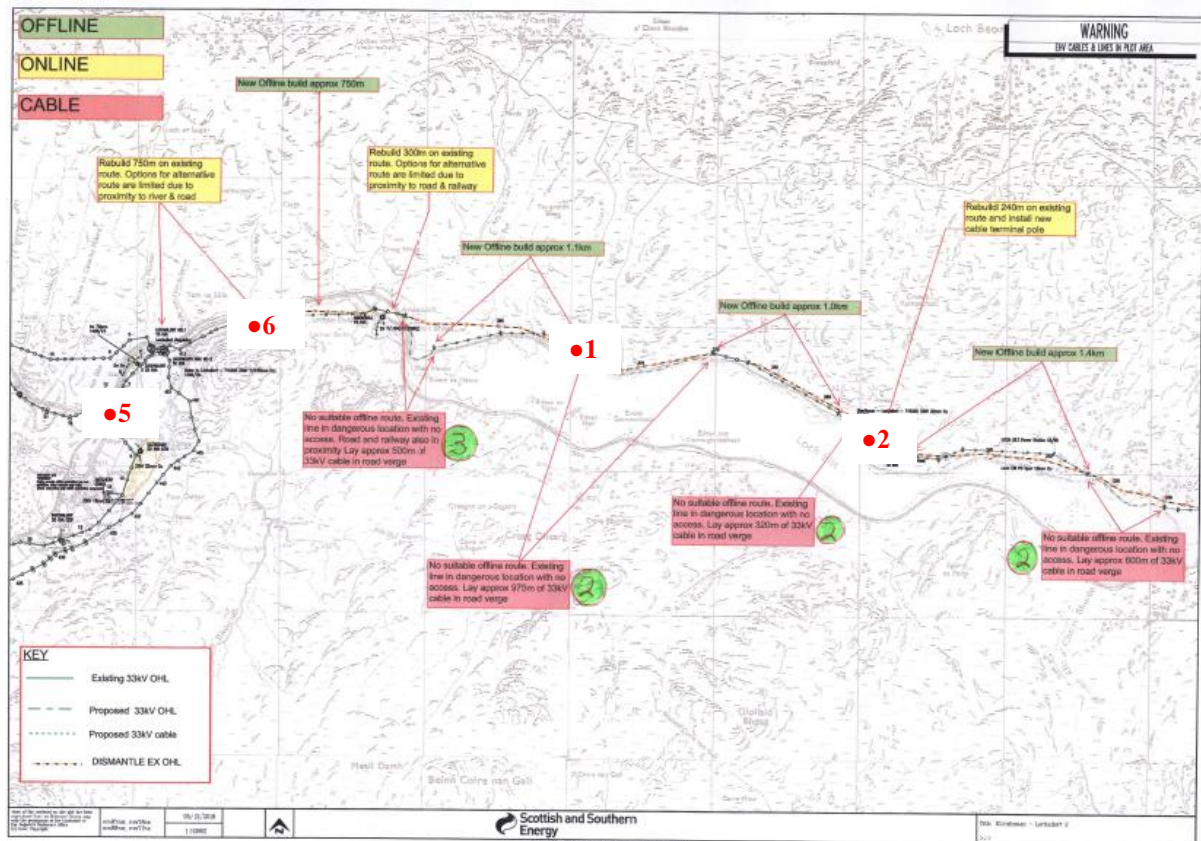
A farmstead of two roofed and two unroofed buildings and one enclosure is shown at NM 8210 8220 on the first edition 6-inch Ordnance Survey (OS) map (Inverness-shire 1876, sheet 136). The 1973 1:10,000 map shows one roofed building and an attached enclosure at Ranochan.

3 MHG 30162 Platform

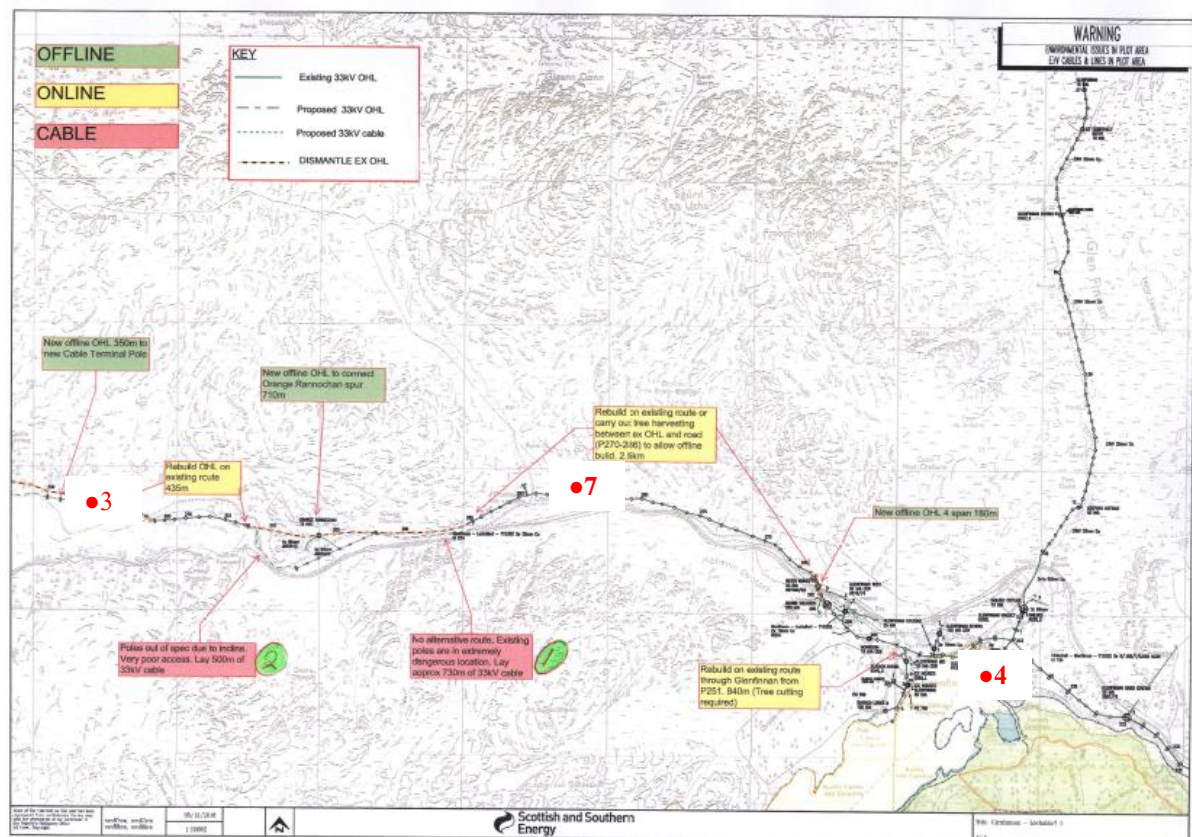
A platform has been identified at NM 8430 8180.

4 NM98SW 26 Cultivation remains

Cultivation remains have been identified at NM 90685 80554, a short distance from the Glenfinnan Monument



Map 1: the west section of the survey area



Map 2: the east section of the survey area

THE WALK-OVER SURVEY

The survey was carried out on 18 and 19 April 2017 during cloudy but dry weather. The route passes close to the A830 trunk road, following valleys occupied by the River Ailort, Loch Eilt, the Allt Lon a Mhiodhe, the Allt a Ghuibhais and the Abhainn Shlatach. It crosses a landscape dominated by rough vegetation comprising predominantly coarse grasses, bracken and heather. Small birch woods were also crossed as was one commercial conifer plantation.

The survey area runs from an H-pole on an existing overhead line, near the north bank of the River Ailort at NM 76827 82293, as far as cultivation remains identified at Glenfinnan, at NM 90685 80554.

The two maps supplied by SSEN and reproduced above show the locations of sites, shown as red dots, identified in the desk study (Sites 1-4) as well as those not shown in existing records but encountered during the walk-over survey (Sites 5-6).

PREVIOUSLY RECORDED SITES

1 NM88SW 6 Loch Eilt: memorial cairn (Map 1)



Memorial cairn to Duncan Cameron of Lochailort at NM 8008 8273, viewed from the south.

2 NM88SW 4 Farmstead (Map 1)

The farmstead of Ranochan is still occupied although the layout of its buildings has changed since the publication of the first OS map.

3 MHG 30162 Platform (Map 2)

The platform described as being at NM 8430 8180 proved difficult to identify. There is no real evidence of any man-made structure at this location.

The photograph below was taken at that location where there is little to suggest that this feature is anything other than a natural one. It comprises a rounded mound, probably of glacial origin, measuring some 4m by 3m.

The surface of this feature undulates considerably and not really suitable as a house platform. In addition, there was no evidence that it had been used as a charcoal-burning stance.



Putative platform MHG 30162, viewed from the north

4 NM98SW 26 Cultivation remains (Map 2)

The cultivation remains centred on NM 90685 80554 appear to comprise a series of lazy beds running north/south and measuring typically 2.2m between ridges.



Putative lazy beds at NM 90685 80554, viewed from the north

PREVIOUSLY UNRECORDED SITES

5 Structure (Map 1)

A short distance from the west terminus of the survey, at the base of a slope and close to the River Ailort at NM 76846 82334, are the scant remains of a rectangular structure. It measures 5m east/west by 2.5m wide within drystone rubble walls, 0.6m wide and surviving to a height of only one course above ground.

No trace of an east gable was visible, perhaps because of stone-robbing although it may have been an open-ended building. There is some evidence of a return northwards from the north-east corner of the building although the stonework did not extend far. No features were evident within this structure.



Structure at NM 76846 82334 with extant farm building to its right, viewed from the west

Adjacent to this structure is a much larger building with stone foundations 1.1m high supporting walls and roof of corrugated iron. This structure, currently used as a farm building, is shown on the first edition OS map of 1876 whereas the scant remains nearby are not although it is possible that they co-existed at some stage.

6 Boundary bank (Map 1)

Remnants of a stone and earth bank were encountered at NM 77803 83031. It runs south-eastwards for 8m before being cut by a small stream from where another stretch continues downhill towards the River Ailort. The bank measures 1.2m wide at its base and 1m high. Although now covered with vegetation, some of the stones of its construction are still visible.



Turf bank at NM 77803 83031, viewed from the west



Turf bank approaching the river, viewed from the north

7 Possible borrow pit (Map 2)

At NM 87842 81770, within a cleared corridor through coniferous forestry, is what appears to be an artificial scoop, measuring approximately 12m by 12m. Its location, close to the A830 road, suggests that it was a borrow pit utilized during one of the road's phases of construction.



Putative borrow pit at NM 87842 81770, viewed from the south

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Previously recorded sites

Site 1, the memorial cairn to Duncan Cameron (NM88SW 6) stands in a prominent position by the side of the A830 road and should not be difficult to avoid during the line refurbishment. Similarly, the settlement of Ranochan (Site 2; NM88SW 4) is easily recognizable but should any work be necessary in this area, care should be taken to avoid any upstanding remains of derelict structures associated with the early occupation of this site.

Although there is little evidence that Site 3, the putative platform MHG 30162, is anything but a natural feature, care should be taken to avoid it during any development work in its vicinity.

The cultivation remains of Site 4 (NM98SW 26) at Glenfinnan may lie beyond the limits of the redevelopment. However, should work extend into this area, it is recommended that the integrity of the lazy beds be preserved.

Unrecorded sites

Only a small number of previously unrecorded sites were identified during the walk-over survey.

The slight remains of the small structure (Site 5) adjacent to an extant farm building at Lochailort, but not depicted on any known map, may represent a remnant of a pre-Improvement settlement. Similarly, the short stretch of boundary bank (Site 6), 1.2km east of Lochailort, appears also to be related to pre-modern farming. Both features should be avoided during the line refurbishment.

Of less significance is the possible borrow pit (Site 7) some 3km west of Glenfinnan. This feature may be related to the construction of one of the phases of the nearby A830 road and is considered of little archaeological or historical significance.