

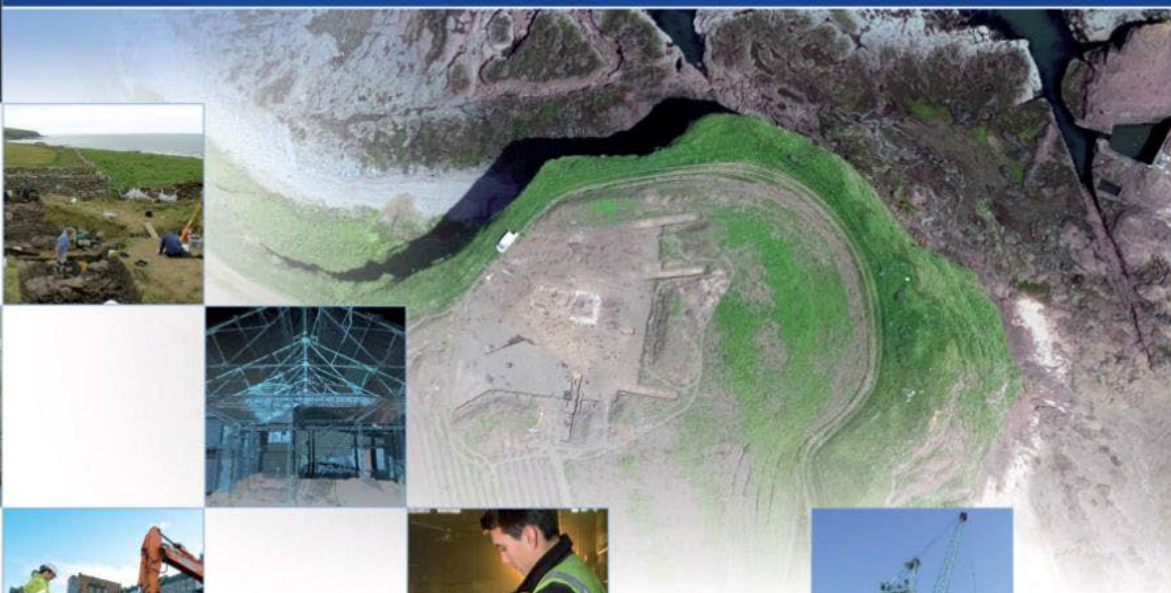
Rigifa BESS, Caithness

Archaeological Watching Brief

Data Structure Report

March 2024

AOC Project Number: 70830



Rigifa BESS, Caithness:

Archaeological Watching Brief, Data Structure Report

On Behalf of:	Curtins Queens House 29 St Vincent Place Glasgow G1 2DT
National Grid Reference (NGR):	ND 29246 71320
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OASIS No:	aocarcha1-523857
Date:	25 th March 2024

This document has been prepared in accordance with AOC standard operating procedures.

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Abstract

This report details the findings of an archaeological watching brief which was required by Curtins during ground investigation on a site proposed for a Battery Energy Storage Site (BESS) on land south of Rigifa, Caithness (National Grid Reference (NGR) ND 29246 71320).

Archaeological monitoring work was carried out between 27th and 29th February 2024. A total of 28 trial pits were monitored.

No archaeological features or deposits were identified during the watching brief. As such, no further archaeological work is proposed in relation to the development area.

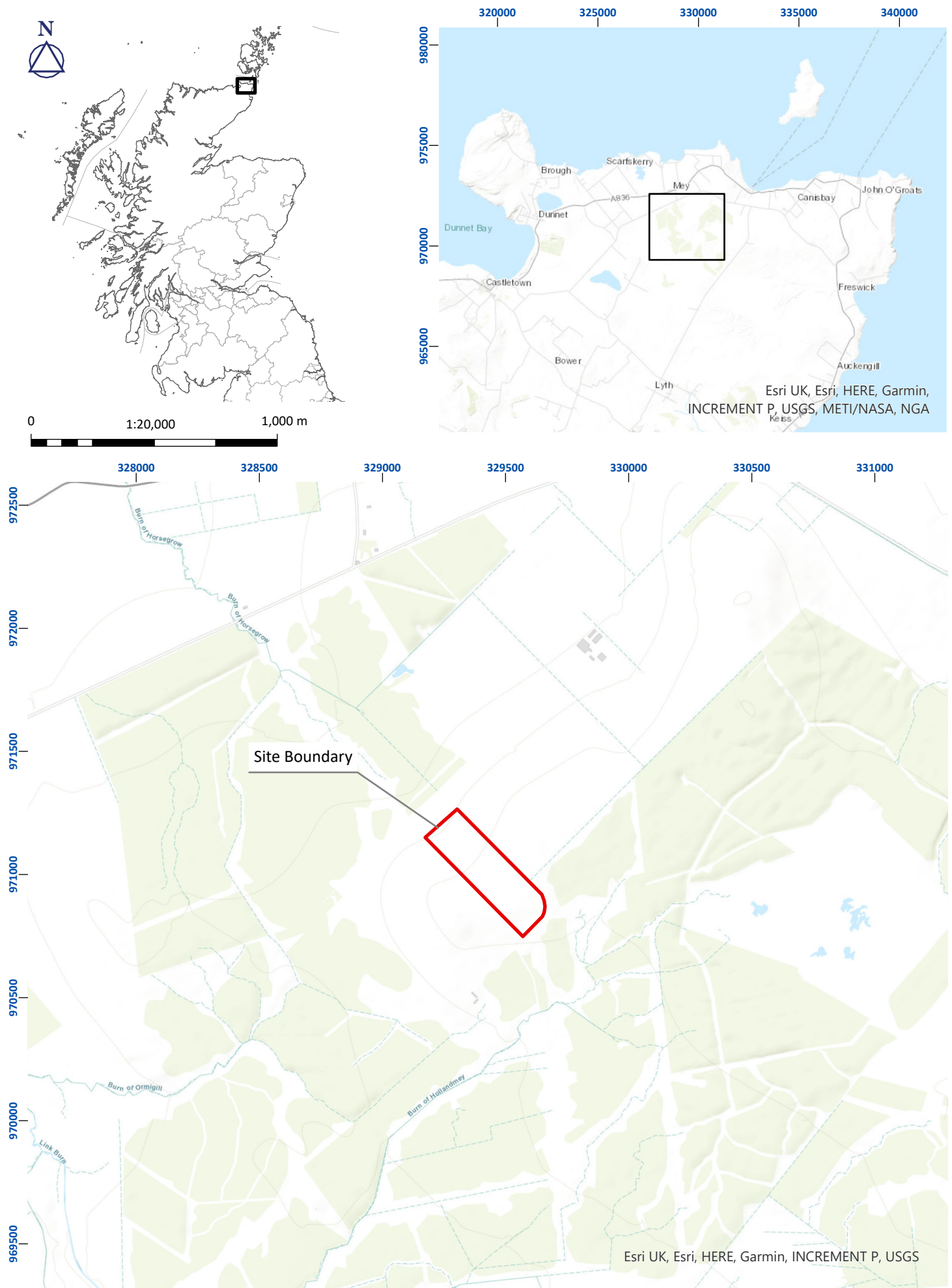


Figure 1: Site location plan

01/70830/DSR/01/01

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological watching brief was required by Curtins during ground investigations on a site proposed for the development of a new Battery Energy Storage Site (BESS), on land near Rigifa, Caithness. The proposed development site (hereafter referred to as 'the Site') is located approximately 1.7km to the southwest of Rigifa and is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) ND 29246 71320. The works were carried out between 27th and 29th February 2024.
- 1.2 The archaeological monitoring was undertaken during a programme of Ground Investigation works across the proposed development site. This included the excavation of 28 trial pits.
- 1.3 The Site lies within the administrative area of the Highland Council, which is advised on archaeological matters by Kirsty Cameron of the Highland Council Historic Environment Team (HCHET). The archaeological works were conducted in accordance with the principles set out in National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (2023) and PAN 2/2011 Planning and Archaeology (2011), and adhere to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Universal Standard for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording* (2023) and *Code of Conduct* (2022), and the Highland Council *Reporting Standards for Archaeological Work* (2023).
- 1.4 The objective of the archaeological works was to determine the existence of any buried archaeological remains within the watching brief area and to help inform decisions on the requirement and scope for any further archaeological works during the lifetime of the proposed development.
- 1.5 The objectives for the fieldwork had previously been set out in a *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) (Mabbitt 2024).

2. BACKGROUND

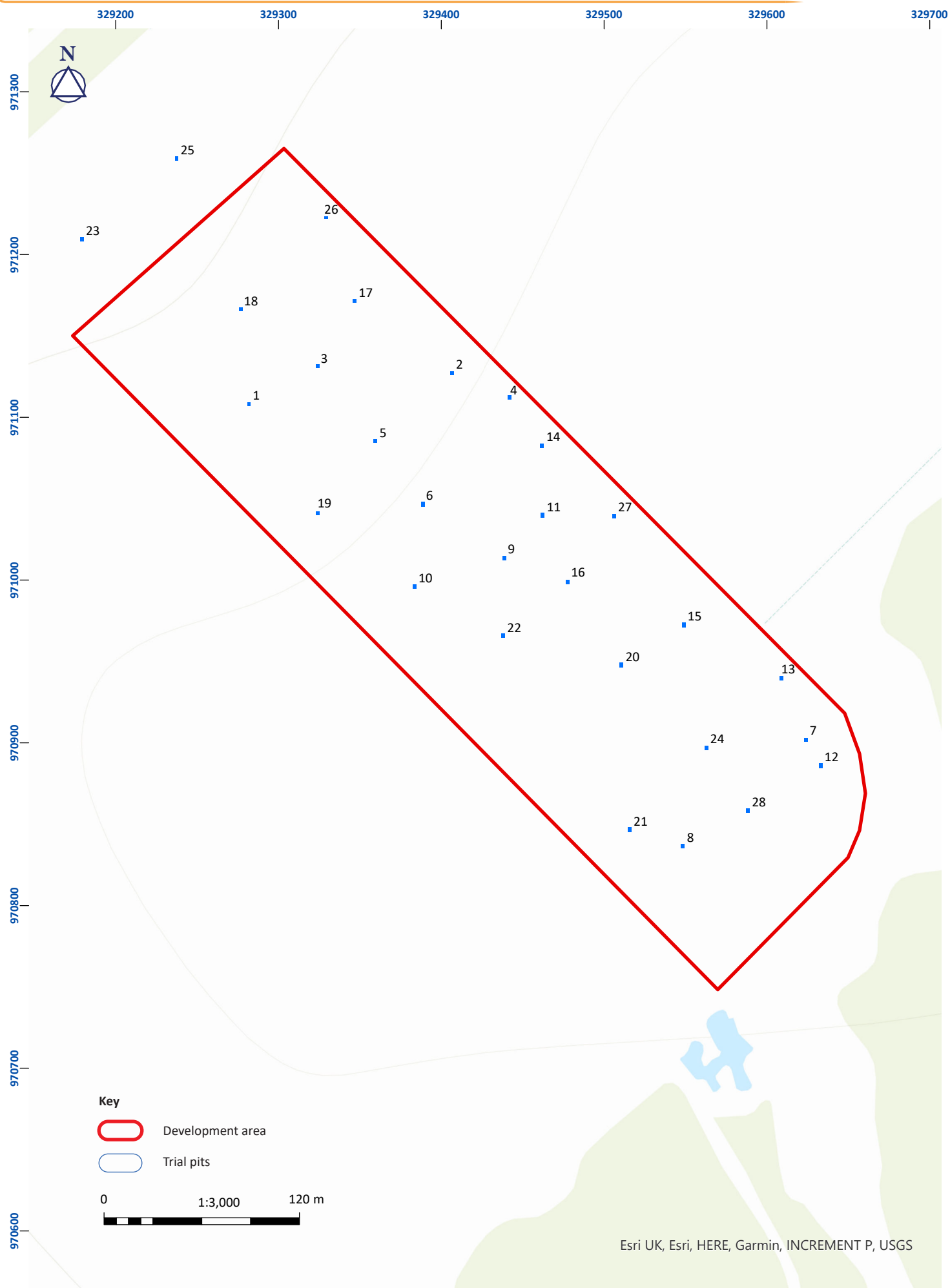
- 2.1 The Site is located within an area of enclosed pasture approximately 1.7km southwest of Rigifa and is centred on NGR ND 29246 71320 (**Figure 1**). The Site lies at between 58m and 74m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), on a shallow western aspect.
- 2.2 The Site is underlain by siltstone of the Spital Flagstone Formation, a sedimentary bedrock formed between 407.6 and 382.7 million years ago during the Devonian period. The superficial geological deposits comprise Devensian Till and Diamicton, sedimentary deposits formed between 116 and 11.8 thousand years ago during the Quaternary period (BGS 2024).
- 2.3 A review of available sources was carried out as part of the WSI for the Site using the Historic Environment Scotland (HES) Pastmap Resource, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) Canmore database, and the Highland Council Historic Environment Record (HER). This review identified that the Site lies in close proximity to several sites of local or regional historic interest as noted within the HER principally relating to the former use of the site for

farming and agricultural-based activity. Situated on the Site itself is Hollandmey (MHG18927), a former farmstead, and sheepfold (MHG56465), both first recorded on the 1877 first edition OS map (Caithness 1877, sheet vii). However, previous assessment in 2004 observed no visible remains. Also situated c.325m southwest from the development site is a possible Iron Age Broch (MHG2251) (Mabbitt 2024).

- 2.4 Given the proximity of the site to these recorded non-designated heritage assets, the site therefore had the potential for further undiscovered archaeological remains to be present. Consequently, while the proposed Ground Investigation works have been designed to avoid all recorded and observed above-ground archaeological remains, there was potential for the area to be investigated to contain buried remains of settlement activity, or more likely, elements of the wider field system and enclosures around the settlement that were not apparent at the time of the walkover survey.

3. OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) defines an archaeological watching brief as *'formal programme of observation, investigation and recording conducted during works carried out for non-archaeological reasons, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed* (CIfA 2023).
- 3.2 The aims of the archaeological works were:
- i) To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area prior to the destruction of any significant material;
 - ii) To excavate, sample and record any features or to propose arrangements for their safeguarding, where possible;
 - iii) To sample deposits for post-excavation work, including environmental analysis and dating;
 - iv) To make recommendations for further measures necessary to mitigate the impact of the development; and
 - v) To make recommendations for post-excavation work that will require completion to fulfil the archaeological planning condition.



4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of 28 test pits (TPs). The proposed development site, which covered approximately 6.8 hectares (ha), was located within an area of enclosed pasture.
- 4.2 Excavation was monitored by the archaeological watching brief officer until the natural geological horizon or the impact depth of the groundworks was reached. Excavation of the trial pits was carried out using a mechanical excavator fitted with a straight-edged bucket. The location of all test pits was plotted using a Trimble DGPS.
- 4.3 The archaeological monitoring was recorded using high-resolution digital photography in order to record the process as well as any features or finds of interest. Written records were compiled utilising digital pro-forma record sheets giving details of dimensions, soil compositions, and any observations of note within the excavations.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 A total of 28 trial pits (Figure 2, Plates 1-28) were monitored during topsoil removal to the surface of the natural geology.
- 5.2 The topsoil (001) comprised a dark black-brown sandy silt with occasional small, rounded stones (20-50mm) with an average depth of 0.2 to 0.4m. The natural (002) comprised a light reddish-grey clay sand with frequent inclusions of fragmented sedimentary stone.
- 5.3 A possible field drain with a cobble infill was identified within TP12, Plate 25.
- 5.4 No archaeological features or finds were identified during the watching brief.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 No archaeological features or deposits were identified during the watching brief. As such, no further archaeological work is proposed in relation to the development area.
- 6.2 Final decisions on further archaeological mitigation rests with the planning authority.

7. REFERENCES

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<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/> (Accessed 22/03/2024)



Plate 1: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 26



Plate 2: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 18



Plate 3: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 01



Plate 4: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 03



Plate 5: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 17



Plate 6: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 02



Plate 7: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 05



Plate 8: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 19



Plate 9: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 10

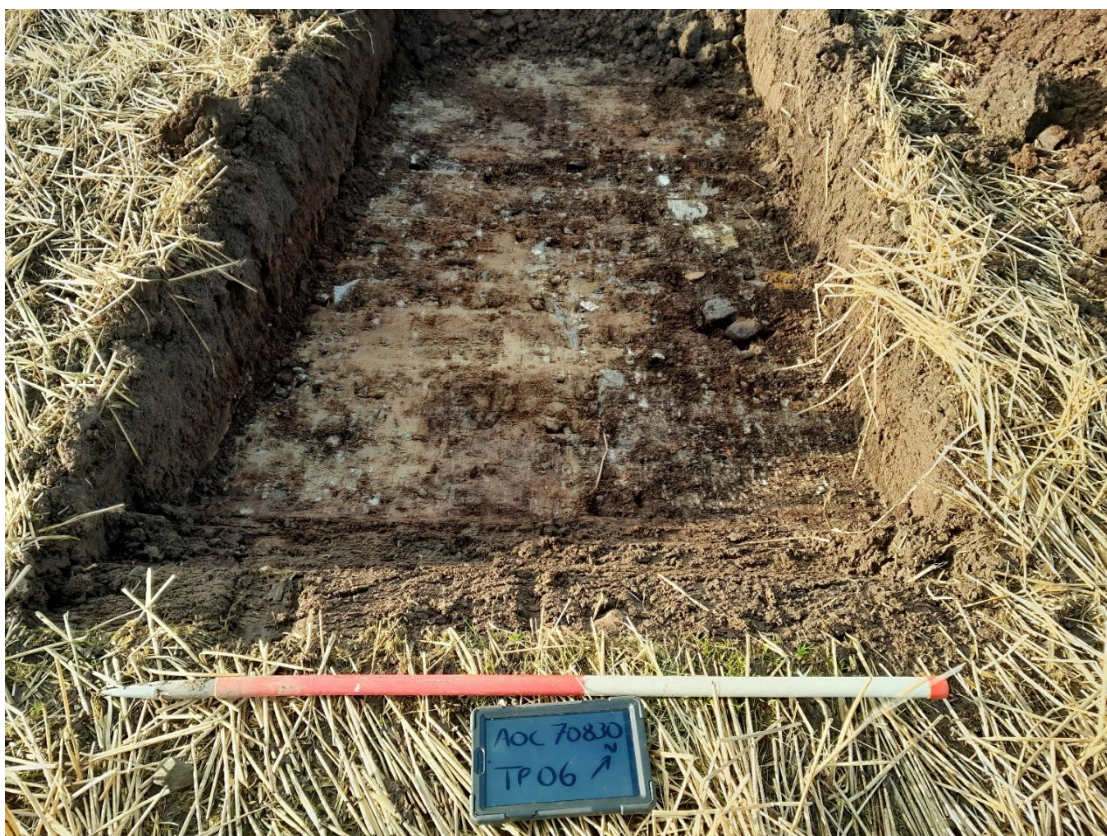


Plate 10: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 06



Plate 11: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 09



Plate 12: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 11



Plate 13: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 04



Plate 14: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 14



Plate 15: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 27



Plate 16: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 16



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Plate 19: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 15



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Plate 21: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 24



Plate 22: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 21



Plate 23: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 08



Plate 24: Post-excavation of Trial Pit 28



Plate 25: Post-excitation of Trial Pit 12



Plate 26: Post-excitation of Trial Pit 07



Plate 27: Post-excitation of Trial Pit 25



Plate 28: Post-excitation of Trial Pit 23

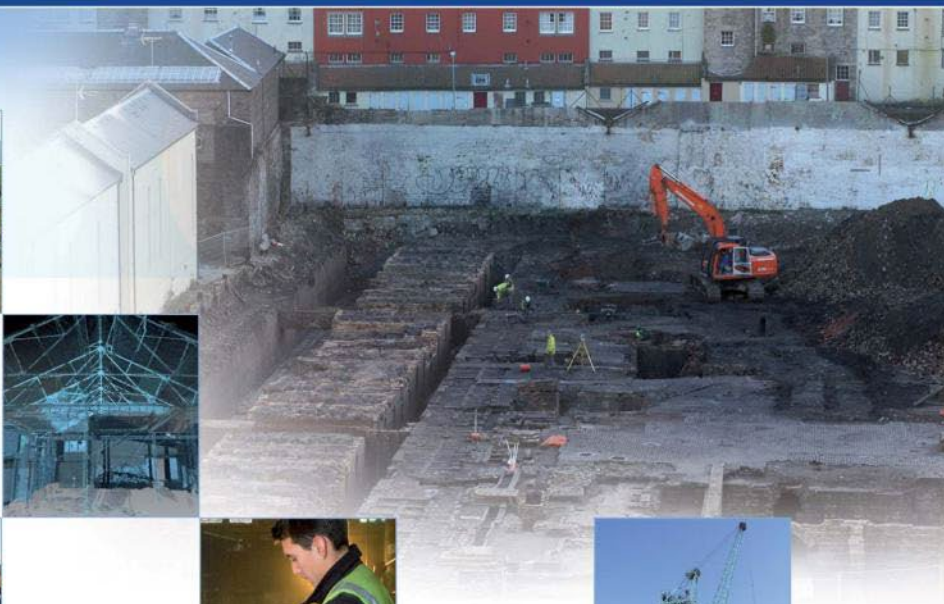
Appendix 1: Photographic Register

Photo No.	Description	Direction Facing	Date
1	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 26	NW	27/02/2024
2	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 18	NW	27/02/2024
3	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 01	NW	28/02/2024
4	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 03	NW	28/02/2024
5	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 17	NW	28/02/2024
6	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 02	NW	28/02/2024
7	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 05	NW	28/02/2024
8	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 19	NW	28/02/2024
9	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 10	NW	28/02/2024
10	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 06	NW	28/02/2024
11	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 09	NW	28/02/2024
12	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 11	NW	28/02/2024
13	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 04	NW	29/02/2024
14	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 14	NW	29/02/2024
15	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 27	NW	29/02/2024
16	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 16	NW	29/02/2024
17	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 22	NW	29/02/2024
18	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 20	NW	29/02/2024
19	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 15	NW	29/02/2024
20	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 13	NW	29/02/2024
21	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 24	SE	29/02/2024
22	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 21	SE	29/02/2024
23	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 08	SE	29/02/2024
24	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 28	SE	29/02/2024
25	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 12	SE	29/02/2024
26	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 07	SE	29/02/2024
27	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 25	SE	29/02/2024
28	Post-excavation of Trial Pit 23	SE	29/02/2024

Appendix 2: OASIS Summary

OASIS Summary for aocarcha1-523857

OASIS ID (UID)	aocarcha1-523857
Project Name	Watching Brief at Rigifa BESS, Caithness
Sitename	Rigifa BESS, Caithness
Sitecode	70830
Activity type	Watching Brief
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Pre-application
Organisation Responsible for work	AOC Archaeology Group
Project Dates	28-Feb-2024 - 29-Feb-2024
Location	Rigifa BESS, Caithness NGR: ND 29246 71320 LL: 58.624000773701255, -3.219991398197478 12 Fig: 329246,971320
Administrative Areas	Parish: Canisbay Council: Highland Country: Scotland
Project Methodology	Archaeological monitoring was carried out via machine excavation of Ground Investigation Trial Pits. Excavations were undertaken using a flat-edged bucket and recorded via a handheld GPS device and digital photography.
Project Results	Over two days, a total of 18 trial pits were monitored with no archaeological features identified.
Keywords	
Funder	Electricity company Curtins
Person Responsible for work	Peta Glew
Archives	
DES description	
NGR	ND 29246 71320
Previous Work	No
Future Work	No
Caption(s) for illustrations	



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